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8. Ghosthunting and vulgar news: Popular realities on recent Indonesian television

BERNARD ARPS AND KATINKA VAN HEEREN

THERE can be little doubt that the media, and television in particular, have contributed significantly to the immense changes that have been occurring in Indonesian societies since Reformasi.¹ A cultural concern that we identify as central to Indonesian media discourse is the desire for representation of ordinary people's everyday realities. This desire currently lives both with audiences and

¹The research for this chapter was carried out under the auspices of the Indonesian Mediations Project, part of the Indonesian in Transition programme (2001-2005), funded by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The first case study derives from Katinka van Heeren's research, the second from Ben Arps's. Katinka says thank you to Dimas Jayasrana for helping her record the *Pemburu Hantu* programme while Ben would like to thank Dr Setya Yuwono Sudikan for providing a video recording of the *Pojok Kampung* broadcast described below, and the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University, where he finalized his contribution to this chapter. Both authors are grateful to Don Emmerson, Faye Ginsburg, Edwin Jurriëns, Mikihiro Moriyama, and Henk Schulte Nordholt for their comments on earlier versions.

with producers. It is being produced and gratified in novel ways, involving new or renewed attention to the themes and phenomena of participation and interactivity, common people's voices, mentalities identified as local (whereby the scope of the localness varies), reality and authenticity, transnational media models and formats, and the merging of the categories of information and entertainment. We will try to demonstrate that and illustrate how Indonesian broadcast media, in appropriating foreign genres and revamping established ones, contribute to establishing a new relation between discourse, place, and time.

In this chapter, then, we discuss media as factors in recent cultural change, both reflecting it and contributing to it. This change includes, indeed quite prominently, the surfacing of issues that were suppressed during the New Order period. Although other media have had their roles to play as well, we focus on commercial television. More specifically still, we use two popular television programmes to give our observations flesh and blood. Initially these programmes, a mystery reality show and a news programme, may appear disparate. However, the issues and themes just mentioned run through both of them, manifesting themselves in sound and vision and their interrelations. We will argue that it is these issues and themes in particular that endow them with their evident appeal.

Before presenting the case studies, we want to note that certain large socio-cultural phenomena have been producing a climate in which the changes we examine are not only possible but also desirable and enticing. We cannot delve into these phenomena here. They include historical events like the abolishment of the Department of Information by President Abdurrahman Wahid in 1999, restored two years later in the less powerful form of a Minister without Portfolio for Communication and Information, the Regional Autonomy laws which came into effect in 2001 and the 'euphoria' (a notion

that is customarily invoked in this connection) that they have given rise to, and the Broadcasting Law of 2002 which among other things allowed the founding of local television stations. Relevant, too, are the recognition of initially (in 1999) radio stations and slightly later also television stations as potentially extremely profitable financial investments – investments that now could actually be made, due to changes in the law. On quite a different plane, in the background of our case studies linger the phenomena of religious and ethnic identity politics (the former sometimes, the latter often in conjunction with what may be called regionalism). While by no means absent during the New Order, these were tightly controlled and only allowed to manifest themselves at certain points in certain ways. Finally we want to mention that whereas the fall of the New Order marked the beginning of an unprecedented degree of freedom of expression, a massive eagerness to seek out the truth, and real democratization, certain cultural norms associated with that regime are persistent, especially but not exclusively in government discourse.

Indonesian mediumizations: chasing ghosts on screen

Half a decade after the stepping down of President Suharto one of the new phenomena on Indonesian television is an increasing popularity of reality shows that concentrate on authenticity, interactivity, and expression of voices of common people. Within this trend that has had worldwide circulation, Indonesian television has contributed with several programmes based on both transnational and national concepts. In 2004 almost every Indonesian commercial television channel had its reality programmes. Many of the reality programmes were related to transnational hypes such as the British *Pop Idol* and the Mexican *La Academia* concept: *Akademi Fantasi Indonesia* of AFI (Indonesian Fantasy Academy, broadcast by Indosiar), *Indonesian Idol* (broadcast by RCTI), *Kontes Dangdut Indonesia* or

KDI (Indonesian Dangdut Contest, broadcast by TPI), *Cantik Indonesia* (Beautiful Indonesia, broadcast by Trans TV).² Cultural critic Teuku Kemal Fasya notes that in the excessive production of reality shows on Indonesian television lies the attempt to establish a new intimacy with the viewers. In his opinion: 'Reality shows are perceived to be able to present the authentic reality of peoples' lives, and at the same time entertain through the imaginative reality that one watches. To watch a reality show is to watch documentation of oneself caught on camera, without the need for special montage, editing, and visual tricks'.³

While most reality programmes on Indonesian television were based on transnational commercially successful formulas of 'self documentation', a few stand out as local, that is (in this context) Indonesian. One of these is reality shows of the *infotainment horror* (horror infotainment) formula, that is to say horror/mystery reality shows. These are perceived as Indonesian for both their theme – horror/mystery tales are thriving in Indonesian popular culture – and their

²Or other transnational formulas such as candid camera shows, as for example: *Mbikin Orang Panik* or MOP (Making People Panic), *Ngaciir* (To take off without having time to say goodbye), *Komedi Paling Jahil* or Kopaja (Most Naughty Comedy), *Uang Kaget* (Surprise Money; taken from a branded formula from Japan, broadcast by RCTI), *Emosi* (Emotion), *Bule Gila* (Crazy Whitey) with its abbreviation Bugil (also meaning 'stark naked'; broadcast by Trans TV), *Playboy Kabel* (Cable Playboy, a playboy who keeps in contact with several girls via the telephone), *Harap-Harap Cemas* or H2C (Between Hope and Fear), *Hipnotis* (Hypnotic, broadcast by SCTV), and *Ketok Pintu* (Knock on the Door, broadcast by TV7). See Teuku Kemal Fasya 2004.

³Reality show dianggap mampu menghadirkan realitas asli dari kehidupan manusia, sekaligus menghibur melalui realitas imitatif yang diperontonkan. Menonton reality show seperti menonton dokumentasi diri sendiri yang terperangkap kamera, tanpa perlu efek montase, editing, dan trik visual' (Teuku Kemal Fasya 2004).

contents, featuring peoples' daily lived experiences of encountering the supernatural. Horror has a long history in Indonesian media culture and the genre enjoys widespread popularity in the form of comic books, novels, radio and television programmes, and cinema. The horror genre in Indonesian film has its own format and peculiarities and the term 'horror' is often used to refer to all things mysterious or supernatural. Indonesian cultural commentators have tried to explain the horror genre's popularity by stating that it is closely related to Indonesian peoples and eastern culture, which is perceived to be synonymous with mystics and supernatural matters. Every region and ethnic group in Indonesia, according to these explanations, has its own superstitious beliefs and mystery tales about supernatural occurrences. All kinds of shamanism, superstition, mystical objects, ghosts and an endless number of supernatural beings are rendered as an undeniable part of the beliefs and culture of Indonesian peoples. To a great extent Indonesian horror films built on that and according to some film producers, horror stories formed a characteristic Indonesian cultural asset that should be exploited in films for both the Indonesian as well as foreign markets.⁴

Under New Order rule it was feared that the popular horror films would feed superstition and beliefs of Indonesian people in the mysterious, thereby hampering the 'development' of Indonesia into a modern nation. In official New Order discourse about the genre, horror/mystery was manoeuvred to be part of 'traditional culture', related to legends, folk stories, and beliefs of the (ancient) past, but far from modern society and the prospected future the

⁴See for example 'Tema mistik dan horor bisa menutupi tekor', *Pos Film*, 24-1-1993; 'Film horor punya kans ke pasaran internasional', *Kedaulatan Rakyat* 2-1-1994; 'Persoalan realitas budaya film horor', *Pikiran Rakyat* 20-4-1997; and Suyono et al. 2003.

nation was heading for.⁵

In the post-Suharto mediascape, subtle shifts in conceptualizations about contemporary Indonesian identities and society transpire in linking the horror genre to the context of daily lived realities in popular horror reality shows. To demonstrate how horror reality shows produced after Reformasi challenge New Order discourses of how to represent the supernatural, and therewith of how to imagine contemporary society, in the next part will follow a case study of the horror/mystery reality show *Pemburu Hantu* (Ghosthunters) screened in May 2004 on the Lativi channel. The focus will be twofold. Firstly, it will be on the stressing of truth and reality to underscore the existence of the supernatural as part of modern Indonesian society. Secondly, attention will be given to subtexts of representations of the supernatural through 'mediated' voices. These mediated voices are expressed either literally via a medium, or in remarks that are made about ghosts or supernatural forces in both the voice-over of the programme and by members of the *Pemburu Hantu* team who speak on behalf of these forces.

The concept of the mystery reality show *Pemburu Hantu* is based on the Hollywood blockbuster *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman 1984), a film about a team of men hunting down and catching ghosts. In *Pemburu Hantu* this is applied in real life. People at home can call the television programme to report ghosts or a haunted place. Then the team of *Pemburu Hantu* sets out to investigate the place and, if present, to capture the ghosts or other supernatural beings and cleanse the place and its surroundings of 'negative energies'. After the ghosts are captured a sticker is glued on a wall with the image of a ghost and the words 'under observation' (*dalam pengawasan*; see Figure 1). If after a few weeks the ghosts have not reappeared, this

⁵For more details, see Van Heeren forthcoming.

sticker will be replaced by another sticker with the image of a ghost behind a streak, and the words 'free of ghosts' (*bebas hantu*). The programme's slogans sound like commercials for a detergent: 'Ghosthunters, the supreme solution to overcome ghosts!' (*Pemburu Hantu solusi jitu atasi hantu!*) and 'Ghosthunters: contact us, we'll come, we'll cleanse [the place]!' (*Pemburu Hantu; hubungi kami, kami datang, kami bersihkan!*)



Figure 1. The 'under observation' sticker

The *Pemburu Hantu* show of 31 May 2004 opens with an introduction by the presenter Terta Mayasari. She welcomes the viewers at home to '*Pemburu Hantu*, a mystery reality show that is not only nerve-jangling but also brings a solution and conclusion'.⁶ Then she

⁶'*Pemburu Hantu sebuah reality show misteri yang tidak hanya menegangkan tapi juga memberikan solusi dan penyelesaian*'.

turns to the subject of today's show: a disturbance by mysterious forces at the office of Hardrock FM Radio, which is located in an office building on top of Sarinah Department Store, one of Jakarta's malls in the centre of the metropolis. Terta remarks that 'the intervention of supernatural beings is apparently not influenced by the progression of time nor the location that they inhabit'.⁷ Even skyscrapers packed with all kinds of highly developed facilities cannot escape the intrusion of supernatural forces. In the meantime the words 'Contact the *Pemburu Hantu* Team' with a telephone number appear on screen.

In the next scene, images are shown of the *Pemburu Hantu* team that was invited for an interview on Hardrock FM that morning. In the coverage of the radio interview the slogan of the Hollywood film *Ghostbusters*: 'Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!' is voiced, and the *Pemburu Hantu* team is asked questions about features and proceedings in their show. Also one of the features of the show, the process of 'mediumization' (*mediumisasi*), is carried out. In this feature a volunteer takes on the role of a medium to get possessed by a spirit under the guidance of members of the *Pemburu Hantu* team. Members of the team then talk to the spirit and ask questions about its origins and intentions. After this feature of 'mediumization' the voice-over mentions that the studio discussion of *Pemburu Hantu* continued, and stresses that the show is broadcast live.

Then the programme cuts back to Terta who states that 'as proof of this [liveness]' now will follow the coverage of complaints about the disturbance of hidden forces experienced by a presenter of Hardrock FM Radio, Bayu Octara, who the team met earlier that day. In the next scene, Bayu and Pak Idris Hayoto, a security guard, are

interviewed. They state that in the building the presence of strange forces is felt and sometimes ghosts are seen. Also, peculiar things happen, such as elevators going up and down of their own accord. Thereafter a spooky image of the building appears on screen with in writing information about: 1. The location: the eighth floor of an office in Jalan Thamrin; 2. The person who reports: Bayu Octara; 3. The complaint: a felt presence of negative energies.

In the following scene Terta appears on the set of the *Pemburu Hantu* 'headquarters'. The walls on set are decorated with paintings of ghosts and other supernatural beings that appeared in previous shows. Terta is accompanied by members of the *Pemburu Hantu* team, consisting of four persons: the supernatural expert type (a *dukun kejawen* or Javanese magic specialist) Pak Hariry Mak, the Ustaz (Islamic authority) Aziz Hidayatullah, a young *kejawen/santri* type (Javanese mystic/Islamic scholar) Ki Gusti Candra Putih, and a painter who makes portraits of the beings with his eyes covered. Apart from the painter, the team is gathered to discuss their survey of supernatural forces at the office of Hardrock FM earlier that day. Terta asks what sort of supernatural condition can be expected at Hardrock FM and what possible problems might occur later in the show. Pak Hariry and Ustad Aziz say that they encountered several beings but that most of them were not disturbing the Hardrock FM surroundings. Ki Gusti expects that the busting of ghosts on the eighth floor of a building will not cause extra difficulty. He assumes that with the 'interactive prayers' (*doa interaktif*) of the viewers at home asking for God's support (*doa restu*) their mission will be completed safely.

Before departure to hunt ghosts a communal prayer of the *Pemburu Hantu* crew takes place, and again viewers at home are asked to participate. In this scene a voice-over prays aloud, asking God for help and guidance. In the background plays the music theme from

⁷'Intervensi makhluk-makhluk gaib nampak tidak terpengaruh oleh kemajuan zaman berikut juga lokasi yang ditempati'.

the American television programme about supernatural occurrences *The Twilight Zone*. Then, as written in the corner, at 9 pm the team departs for the haunted place. In the car on their way the members of the *Pemburu Hantu* team are asked for comments on today's mission. Pak Hariry says he feels the presence of a powerful force, supposedly not from the eighth floor but residing somewhere else in the building. According to Ki Gusti one never knows what one will encounter since inhabitants of that realm sometimes tend to be deceitful (*bangsa itu kadang-kadang suka bohong*). Also, he feels some strange tension. And Ustaz Aziz once more asks for 'interactive prayers' of the viewers at home. The voice-over of the programme stresses the importance of participation in prayer of the viewers at home for the mission to succeed.

The next scene shows their arrival at the location at 10 pm, and the team walking through the department store to the elevators. In the background a music theme typical of American Westerns is played. Upstairs the members of the team get prepared by arranging the tools needed for capturing the supernatural beings, namely empty bottles. Furthermore a painting board is set up, and the three 'ghostbusters' perform prayers and utter special mantras in order to be protected with supernatural energy. There follows an interactive session with those who reported the disturbances: Bayu and Pak Idris. They, together with the team, search the Hardrock FM office for the presence of supernatural energies. In one of the rooms where the presence of unseen forces is strongly felt one of the show's items, the process of 'opening the eyes of the inner soul' (*membuka mata batin*), takes place. In this process Bayu and Pak Idris, who are standing in the dark, are enabled by Pak Hariry and Ki Gusti to see the unseen. Bayu and Pak Idris are filmed in night-view mode standing in the dark room, resulting in a grey-green fuzzy image with the eyes of Bayu and Pak Idris reflecting red light. On the screen

appears the text 'This is not fictitious' (*Ini bukan rekayasa*; see Figure 2). When asked what they see, Bayu answers he sees something dark resembling a woman standing in the corner of the room. Pak Idris admits he does not really see anything very clearly. In the next scene another interactive session of opening the eyes of the inner soul takes place. In this case it is a 'participant in proving the existence of supernatural energies' (*peserta pembuktian gaib*). This witness is a sceptical viewer of the show who has phoned the programme to undergo a test to verify that the show is bona fide. Other unconvinced viewers at home are invited to do the same and test for themselves whether the show is truthful.



Figure 2. Ki Gusti Candra Putih 'opening the eyes of the inner soul' of Pak Idris

In the meantime Pak Hariry is getting ready to catch ghosts. While on the left-hand side a frame is inserted that shows the sceptic outsider anticipating to see the unseen in the dark, Pak Hariry is

filmed walking around in the toilets of the Hardrock FM office making large *pencak silat* (martial art)-like arm movements. In the following scene it is written in the corner that it is 11 pm, and that the team gets ready for the busting of ghosts. With 'metaphysical energy' (that is to say grotesque arm movements accompanied by swooshing and puffing sounds) they drag ghosts into empty glass bottles (Figure 3). This is a tough job, and because of the strong 'resistance' of one of the beings a bottle falls. In the end the team succeeds. However, Ki Gusti needs to be 're-neutralized' from certain powerful negative energies. Next, the team is called to listen to the experiences of the witness. He explains what he saw and that while he was in doubt before, he now truly believes the supernatural exists.

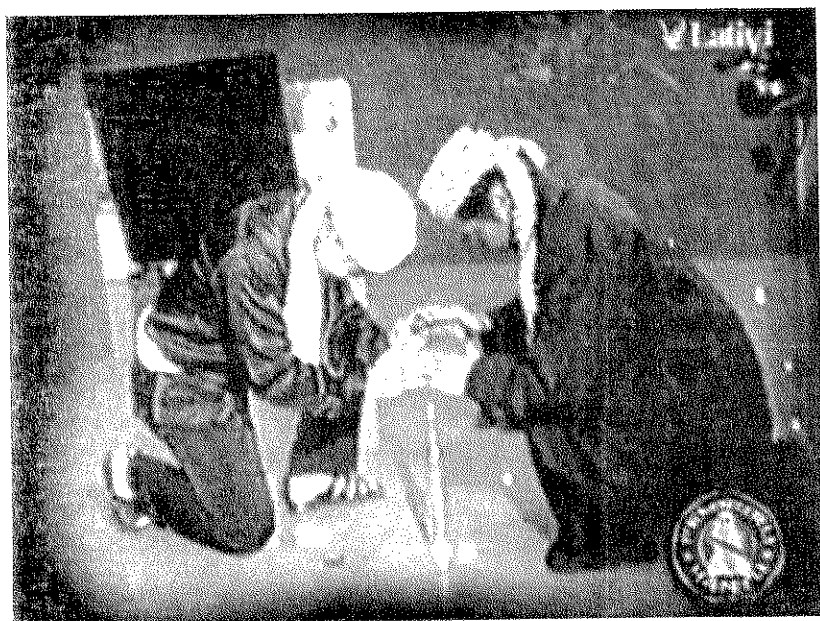


Figure 3. Ustaz Aziz and Pak Hariry dragging ghosts into empty bottles

Thereupon another feature of the show, the above-mentioned process of 'mediumization', begins. During this process the painter

of the *Pemburu Hantu* team, whose eyes are doubly blindfolded, paints the image of the supernatural being that enters the body of the medium. First, questions are asked why the person, in this case Yon Selamat, volunteers to be a medium. He answers that he just wants to feel what it is like. The process of getting the ghost to enter the body ensues. In the next scene the spirit enters the medium and at the same time, inserted in a frame on the left-hand side of the screen, the spirit is seen being painted. Ustaz Aziz asks the spirit questions while he, Ki Gusti, and Pak Hariry are holding down the struggling body of the possessed medium (Figure 4). The spirit says that his name is Ki Baro,⁸ that he is from West Java, and that he has occupied this space since 1911. Ustaz Aziz then asks the spirit, who he believes to be the chief spirit of all supernatural beings in the building, to ensure that his 'subordinates' (*anak buah*) will not be naughty. In the next scene Ustaz Aziz speaks on behalf of the spirit that entered the medium, and explains what was said during the process of mediumization. He states that the spirit was a Dutch spirit, and that it would not be busted because it was doing no harm. Next, the painted image of Ki Baro and the unfolding of the eyes of the painter are filmed.

⁸'Ki Baro' is a conjecture. The name is not clearly audible on the recording.



Figure 4. The process of mediumization. Ustaz Aziz and Ki Gusti hold down the struggling body of the possessed medium, while the image of the spirit is painted in the bottom left corner

At 12:15 am, in conclusion of the ghost-busting process, a supernatural fence is placed around the Hardrock FM office. Again this is executed by *pencak silat*-like arm movements and swooshing and puffing sounds by the *Pemburu Hantu* team. The voice-over makes a comment about the supernatural fence keeping out bad influences from outside, while in the meantime the streets and buildings of Jalan Thamrin and a McDonald's logo are seen. The show ends with the gathering of all participants: those who reported the ghosts, the witness, the medium, and the *Pemburu Hantu* team. A recap of the show is given and Terta asks the opinion of everyone involved. As a final comment Ustaz Aziz confirms the existence of supernatural beings and explains that this is also acknowledged in the Quran. The show is closed by Terta Mayasari who glues the sticker 'under

observation' on a wall. If after a few weeks the Hardrock FM office has remained free of ghosts it will be replaced by the sticker 'free of ghosts'. The show ends with Terta voicing the slogan '*Pemburu Hantu*, contact us, we'll come, we'll cleanse [the place]'.

As part of the worldwide trend of reality shows *Pemburu Hantu* can be identified as portraying both daily and imaginative realities of large parts of Indonesian peoples/television viewers. In *Pemburu Hantu* the aspect of (daily-lived) reality is emphasized by means of participation of 'common people': before the show begins, when viewers can call the programme to report ghosts; on set, to prove that what happens is real; and during the programme in the bid for viewers at home to join in prayer.

Following the view of Teuku Kemal Fasya that reality shows aim to represent authentic realities of people's lives, the presence of horror 'reality' shows putting down experiences of the mysterious and supernatural as part of daily lived reality in Post-Suharto society, reflects an important shift in representation, imagination, and commercial exploitation of the supernatural from how these were dealt with during the New Order. On several occasions in the *Pemburu Hantu* show of 31 May 2004 the existence of the supernatural particularly as part of modern society is underscored. This is mainly represented in the audio features of the programme, for example in remarks by Terta Mayasari that 'the intervention of supernatural beings is apparently not influenced by the progression of time or the location that they inhabit', but also in transnational references in the programme in the choice of the music theme of the American programme *The Twilight Zone* and a musical style associated with Westerns. Moreover, the core idea of the programme, in this case study accentuated by the yell 'Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!' during the Hardrock FM interview, refers in itself to 'modern' times

of globalization.

While the underscoring of modernity in the programme is mostly displayed in its audio features, either in remarks or music themes, in its visualization many references to old Indonesian/Javanese cultural traits are apparent. For example these can be seen in the paintings of Indonesian ghosts in the *Pemburu Hantu* headquarters, the *dukun kejawen*, *santri*, and Islamic authority figures, and the *pencak silat* movements to bust ghosts. In all, emphasizing the supernatural as part of modern Indonesia and at the same time maintaining 'traditional' cultural traits, the horror reality show *Pemburu Hantu* stands for a new possible form of imagining the supernatural and Indonesian contemporary society. Other than the choice for either the one or the other, as was often the case during the New Order, both aspects continuously interact in the show.

Languages in the media: new idioms for the news

Another dimension of the desire for representation of ordinary people's everyday realities in the Indonesian media is to do with language, or rather with languages in the plural. Although there have been thriving local recording industries and radio scenes involving some of Indonesia's so-called regional languages for decades, the mass media were dominated by Indonesian. It is no exaggeration to say that Indonesian was promoted throughout the New Order period as the sole legitimate language of public discourse. The state succeeded in carrying through this policy most effectively in centralized institutions like education and television. But the hegemony of Indonesian has never been accepted by all, and in recent years initiatives have been taken to make changes.

Our first observation on the interaction between languages and media since the demise of the New Order, one that is relatively easy to make on the basis of public discourse (newspapers, seminars,

and so on), is that there has been a great deal of discussion about language in connection with Reformasi and regional autonomy, with even voices calling for expansion of the social, governmental, and educational roles of the 'regional' languages. It was especially since 2001, when the regional autonomy laws began to gain practical momentum, that 'regional' languages appeared on the agenda.

However, this debate is overwhelmingly concerned with the language policy of state, provincial, or district governments, and largely with the school curriculum, especially with the question of whether the 'local content' slot (*muatan lokal*) should be used for the 'regional' language or rather another locally useful subject. The discussion is pessimistic in tone and usually concerns measures that should, or sometimes should not be taken by the authorities to ensure the survival of this or that 'regional' language. The commercial use of these languages, which has turned out to be very important in the same period, seems hardly to be a subject of discussion at all.

Other changes than the greater intensity of public debate are less obvious and more interesting. We see, in some realms of mediation, a tendency to re-conceptualize the interrelations between on the one hand language (still, as of old, connected to ethnicity) and on the other hand place. From what may be called congruence, within bounded areas, the conceptualization of the relationship sometimes shifts to one of a concentration in centres. Indeed the boundaries of the reach of most media – broadcasting, internet, also VCDs and cassettes – are difficult to fix, while their sources are easier to pinpoint. But at the same time – not unlike the 1950s, as described in the chapter by Remco Raben et al. (see this volume) – a strong disposition towards 'regionalization' of cultures and identities continues as well, with boundaries between administrative regions being marked and public space within them being filled with emblems of cultural regionality. These emblems are visual and auditory, and –

cross-cutting this distinction – both lingual and otherwise. Many of them are also intermittent in space and time, perhaps sporadic. As to their nature, they may be characterized as ‘popular culture’: programmes, musical and dramatic genres and formats, albums, hits, shows, painted concrete statues, banners and graffiti, ritual celebrations and performances, contests, anniversaries (*hari jadi*) of districts and towns, festivals, seminars, and so on. Now the fact that this marking of regionality is partly done through ‘regional’ languages, and often in media like radio, television, recordings, amplification, and sometimes film, is historically remarkable, given the relentless effort in New Order policy to make and keep public space and public occasions, and in connection with them, these media, Indonesian. Linked in turn to the use of such languages in the media are the repeated instances of a local mentality being tried as, and actually turning out to be, a popular and commercial success. That the attractive point is a mentality, an attitude considered characteristic of a social category, that is expressed in this case in ways of speaking, will be a point of attention below.

Because it is supposed to report what is relevant here and now in a language that is viable here and now, local news programmes can illustrate well how conceptions of the relations between language and place are being reflected as well as reconstructed in the recent Indonesian media. Let us therefore try to give the above abstract observations substance with the case of *Pojok Kampung* (Neighbourhood Corner), a news show broadcast twice daily by the Surabaya-based television station called JTV or Jawa Pos TV, since 7 July 2003.

The evening broadcast of 6 January 2004, for instance, began with *Pojok Kampung*’s usual opening visuals (00:00–00:11). Part of a circle occupying the left-hand side of the screen serves as a frame for a rapid-fire succession of shots: a crowd dressed and moving like dancers in a street, a group of officials in civil servant uniforms, young people parading, a bulldozer, angry protesters, and so on. The right-hand side of the

screen, which also changes quickly, mostly shows computer-drawn images. Superimposed in the middle letters appear, ultimately forming words: ‘Pojok Kampung’ and, less conspicuously because the letters are transparent, ‘Berita Suroboyoan’ (News in Surabaya).

The opening sequence fades into a shot of the newsreader sitting at the end of a schematic, computer-generated street typical of a working-class urban environment. The camera quickly zooms in on her while she begins speaking (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. The presenter

The view of the newsreader fades into a sequence of other shots: folders and documents covering a table, men behind a desk talking, blurred street scenes shot through a wet car windscreen, policemen searching a store, and so on (00:34–01:06). Of course this is the preview of tonight’s topics. It leads back to a close-up of the newsreader.

This description should suffice to demonstrate that *Pojok Kampung* largely looks like any Indonesian television newscast. But it sounds very different.

During the opening visuals we do not hear a dramatic signature tune of the kind that we associate with television news but something that is easily recognized as gamelan music, though it is strongly distorted because it is played at high and irregular speed.

The newsreader does not produce, in the velvety mezzo-soprano typical of female TV presenters, the soft consonants and mellow vowels of standard Indonesian, but she says, in a fairly sharp-toned drawl abounding with glottal stops and explosive consonants:

Assalamu alaikum Dherek, ya apa kabare? Bengi iki JTV nyapa Pena maneh liwat berita basa Surabayaan, Pojok Kampung. Mbarek aku Ning Festine, telung puluh menit teka pukul sanga, ngajak Pena ndelok apa wae kedadeyan nang Surabaya ambek nggon liya nang Jawa Timur. Dherek, iki lho sing metu, mari ngono.

(Peace be upon you, friends, how are you going? Tonight JTV greets you again through the news in the Surabayan language, *Pojok Kampung*. With me Sister Festine, for thirty minutes from nine o'clock, [we] take you along to see what has been happening in Surabaya and other places in East Java. Friends, this is what will appear, after the following.)

And the female voice (not that of the newsreader) accompanying the preview says:

KPU kota Malang nemokna pirang-pirang ijazahe calon legislatif sing ditengeri palsu.— Udan deres nang Surabaya mau sore nggarahi dalan-dalan macet polahe banjir. — Mau awan, toko Matahari Ramayana Sidaarja, nang Dalan Gajah Mada, diincim bom. — Pojok Kampung, jendhelane arek Surabaya, jendhelane wong Jawa Timur.

(The General Elections Committee of the city of Malang has found several diplomas of candidates for the legislative body to be falsifications. — Heavy rain in Surabaya late this afternoon caused traffic jams due to flooding. — This afternoon the Matahari Ramayana shop in Sidoarjo, on Gajah Mada Street, received a bomb threat. — *Pojok Kampung*, the window of the Surabayan people, the window of the East Javanese.)

The sounds are not Indonesian but Javanese. What is more, the Javanese is of a variety associated with the city of Surabaya, so called 'Suroboyoan' (meaning 'Surabayan' in the Surabayan dialect itself).

Pojok Kampung soon became very popular. It was the talk of the town, and outside the town too.⁹ *Pojok Kampung* got the highest

⁹The first enthusiastic account of *Pojok Kampung* was heard by one of us

ratings among JTV's programmes, and hence was popular with advertisers as well (ani/tom 2004). This is not because of how it looks, nor because of its contents per se – which, covering as they do local sports, criminality, political events, natural disasters, are hardly special – but because of the way in which these visuals and contents are coupled with a particular variety of language.

The importance of the language is widely realized and commented on (Siwidana 2004). While the vocabulary and to an extent the intonation used in *Pojok Kampung* are characteristically Surabayan, what is at play is not language in a narrow sense only. Lingual etiquette is the facet of *Pojok Kampung* that has triggered most criticism as well as praise (we will return to this). The Surabayan used contrasts with standard Javanese, especially its famous polite style (*basa*), but more importantly, it also contrasts with the standard Indonesian that one hears in all other TV news. Beyond etiquette, the audience's fascination with *Pojok Kampung* owes to the very mentality or ethos manifested in the programme, as evidenced by qualifications like 'rude', 'blunt', 'egalitarian', and comments like that now even big shots see themselves forced to speak Javanese (a language of the people). 'The presenters and the viewers feel more like relatives' (Dhani 2004:38). Indeed, watching the programme, one often notices the pleasure with which ordinary men and women give their opinions and accounts of events in their everyday language (see Figure 6, not all accounts are cheerful and not all faces happy,

in September 2003 almost 300 kilometers from Surabaya, in Banyuwangi, where at the time JTV could not be received. Later JTV established several transmitters and claimed to cover most East Javanese cities and a total population of about 37.5 million (<http://www.jtvrek.com/coverage.php>, accessed on 24-5-2005). Some of its broadcasts are relayed by stations elsewhere in Indonesia, such as Riau in eastern Sumatra (rpg 2005), and it has also been included in cable TV packages outside East Java.

however). Moreover, many of the interviews in *Pojok Kampung* are participatory. More often than not bystanders are in the frame. They tend to react to what is said and thereby, albeit in the background, to contribute to the event (Figure 7). Among *Pojok Kampung*'s interviewees are people who rarely appear in ordinary television news, for instance adolescents (Figure 8). Such vox populi scenes in *Pojok Kampung* at the same time serve as a kind of certificate of authenticity for the programme. The very name *Pojok Kampung*, 'Neighbourhood Corner', is meant as a reference to people 'in the kampung' (not a village as in Malay but a working-class urban area as in Javanese). The name indicates a particular social category (nuy 2003), that of what we call, in brief, ordinary people. It will come as no surprise that judgements are made about *Pojok Kampung* that fit the terms in which media professionals like to think, like 'easy to understand' (*gampang disurasa*) (Herman 2004), 'more communicative' (*luwih komunikatif*) (Dhani 2004:38), 'it helps raise public problems (*masalah publik*) in a more effective way (*lebih efektif*)' (ani/tom 2004).



Figure 6. The pleasure of speaking Surabayan on TV

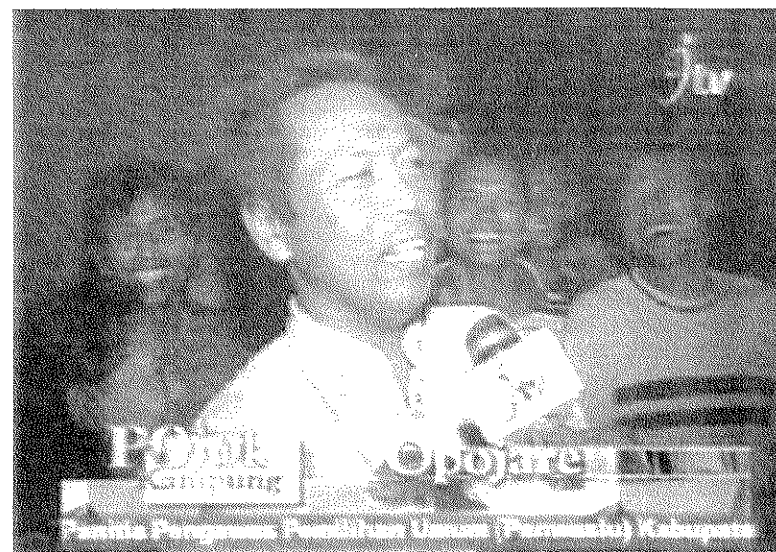


Figure 7. The bystanders are amused



Figure 8. A young interviewee

While the news under the New Order was highly ritualized (Kitley 1997) – a fortiori the Javanese-language news, which in addition

consisted of unnecessary translations from Indonesian reports, or alternatively of specialized agricultural news – *Pojok Kampung* represents real life, and indeed life in the city. The notion that unlike Indonesian, 'Javanese is now not a language of politics or government. Nor a language of economics' (Dhani 2004:30) helps to explain why *Pojok Kampung* has again and again been characterized as an audacious initiative: 'JTV is indeed brave in producing a news broadcast in the 'Suroboyoan' dialect' (Dhani 2004:30). In actual fact, of course, Javanese has been a medium for politics and economics all the while, but this was in conversations, in the street, in food stalls, and in the market, and very rarely in public writing or speech, where the medium has been Indonesian. This evaluation of JTV's initiative reflects a language ideology concerning the division of labour between 'national' and 'regional' tongues that Indonesian and colonial intellectuals have been promoting throughout the twentieth century.¹⁰

Meanwhile it is clear that also at JTV Indonesian remains a powerful force. Many reports in *Pojok Kampung* are actually produced for JTV's Indonesian-language news and just furnished with new voice-over commentary in Javanese, though sometimes, as discussed above, with additional interviews in Javanese. The framing is Indonesian too: the banners are in that language, as are the preceding and following programmes (although they may have titles in Surabayan Javanese) and the commercials and previews with which *Pojok Kampung* is interspersed. While this framing may represent lingual realities in contemporary Indonesia and especially in its big cities, critics and studio personnel have also identified oddities and dif-

¹⁰See Arps 2000 for strikingly similar discussions in the 1930s, not to do with the use of the Javanese language in general but with the kinds of things that could be discussed in Javanese verse writing.

ficulties in presentation and pronunciation, due to inexperience in reading (Surabayan) Javanese, a spoken language.

The reasons for JTV to go for this kind of news were above all else commercial. The programme 'is typically Surabayan and has a local nuance' (*bernuansa lokal*), which is presented as logical because, according to the director of JTV in June 2003: 'After all we are a local TV station. Therefore we must continually produce programmes with a local nuance. Otherwise we would certainly have to yield to TV stations with national networks' (nuy 2003). Commentators have also related the initiative to political innovations such as regional autonomy: 'Moved by the spirit of regional autonomy, the broadcasting of that programme is a strategic move towards positioning themselves as a trustworthy local television station' (Yunani Prawiranegara 2004).

But why then the Surabayan language variety? According to the director: 'The Surabayan dialect of Javanese is very peculiar. Its nuance is egalitarian [*egaliter*], it is a bit coarse [*agak kasar*], but also unique [*unik*] and it can sound funny [*lucu*] to the outsider. In this way people who watch *Pojok Kampung* will, apart from getting information, also be able to be amused and smile [*tersenyum geli*]' (nuy 2003). In the discourse surrounding *Pojok Kampung*, it is in particular the coarseness or even offensiveness of its language that has been highlighted. Seminars and discussion meetings have been held about this. The bluntness and occasional rudeness are a source of delight for some viewers but extra painful to others because suggestions for the rescue of Javanese (in the public debate mentioned at the beginning of this section) are often linked to character building, morality, and ethics, for which the Javanese language is regarded as an ideal vehicle (see for instance Anie Soemarno 2004; Dwi Sabdono 2004; Sekarbumi 2004). The use on television of words and expressions like *matek* (meaning something like 'dead as a doornail' and

quite rude when applied to human beings) and *empal brewok* ('hairy fried beef' to refer to the female pudenda; a JTV coinage that has gained widespread currency) definitely does not conform to this view of the utility and standing of Javanese. In January 2005 the *Pojok Kampung* crew were even summoned by the Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Committee (KPID, Komite Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah) to the Province of East Java's Bureau for Information and Communication (Dinas Infokom) to explain their use of such language, branded 'coarse and vulgar' (*kasar dan vulgar*) by the Committee's chairperson (dos 2005a). They managed to justify their use of expressions like those mentioned with recourse to Javanese philosophical reasoning. This unexpected appeal to canonical Javanese values (firmly established as authoritative during the New Order) and the promise that *Pojok Kampung* would be 'more selective' in its usage dissuaded the Committee from taking measures (dos 2005b), although the discussion did not die away (Bonari Nabonenar 2005; Sirikit Syah 2005).

While the choice of a dialectal variety of a 'regional' language was deliberately made, at the same time it was an important decision to not to clothe this marketing ploy in a 'traditional' garb: 'although the language is Javanese, the setting remains modern' and 'the presenters will wear modern clothes, not according to Javanese or East Javanese custom [*adat*]' (nuy 2003). Though hardly remarkable if one proceeds from everyday life in Surabaya, this was another important break with New Order conventions: it was decided not to folklorize this public, performative use of a 'regional' language. This, like the offensiveness of some of the language, involves a continuing struggle. Suggestions keep coming that the outfits of the newsreaders are inappropriate for this type of programme and should be traditional (see for instance tom/sup 2005).

The 'regionalization' we observe here is thus not conservative.

It is distinctly modern, is oriented to the here and now, it is exemplary for the future. It does not lack an Indonesian and global outlook. For instance, the newsreader of *Pojok Kampung* in Figure 5 is Festine Rohrich, who moved to Surabaya only in 1996, has Czech-Indonesian roots, and also works as a radio presenter where 'she more often uses the hip language [*bahasa gaul*] of the Jakarta youth'. Her main model as a presenter is Ananda Lewis (tom 2003), an African American talk show host whose programme was broadcast by a Jakarta TV station in 2003. The point we are trying to make with this example is thus not that there is a news programme in a 'regional' language. That was not uncommon under the New Order, at least on radio; 'regional news' (*berita daerah*) in the 'regional language' (*bahasa daerah*) was broadcast by the state radio system RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia), but it tended to be badly presented and uninteresting (perhaps even worse than the Indonesian news relayed from Jakarta). What is significant is the popularity, the style, the orientation, the commercial considerations and the commercial success.

This success has led JTV to further initiatives in the realm of both local news and the use of local language varieties. Already in 2003, a programme segment called *Pojok Ngalam* (Ngalam Corner) was inserted into *Pojok Kampung*. This has news about the city of Malang in East Java and uses certain typically Malangese inverted words such as Ngalam which derives from Malang. In February 2005 JTV launched *Pojok Meduroan* with news in Madurese, a language with millions of speakers in Surabaya and elsewhere in East Java (dos 2005c). Initially this was a segment within *Pojok Kampung* (which therefore got a bilingual opening by two presenters, one speaking Surabayan Javanese, the other Madurese) but later it was turned into an independent programme. Considering that many inhabitants of Surabaya come from further west, *Pojok Kampung* was also enriched with a segment in the Central Javanese dialect.

In May 2005 JTV began to broadcast drama series and Mandarin and western movies dubbed not into Indonesian, as common, but into Surabayan (doan widhiandono 2005). The idea to do this was first floated by senior Javanese novelist Suparto Brata in September 2002 (Suparto Brata 2002), but it met with scepticism, even derision (Bonari Nabonenar 2004). These programmes have, however, been greeted with enthusiasm by the audience. The success of *Pojok Kampung* has also been exemplary for regional television stations elsewhere. For instance, since 2004 there is local news in Javanese on commercial TV channels in Yogyakarta (here the register used is polite, refined standard Javanese) and Purwokerto (where the Banyumasan dialect is used).

Conclusion

The main theme in the preceding descriptions has been our observation that a desire for representation of ordinary people's everyday reality runs central to these two contemporary Indonesian television programmes and the discourse surrounding them. *Pemburu Hantu* and *Pojok Kampung* kindle and meet different facets of this desire – the unusual and imaginative and the practical everyday – and exemplify different facets of that reality – the supernatural and the lingual – and they do so in different ways. Beyond the shared desire, harboured by the media institutions as well as the people they address, several other important commonalities exist between these programmes, and, we think, the larger genres of which they are instances.

Pojok Kampung is news, one media genre among many, in a specific medium – television – in a particular language variety – a form of Javanese, which in all has over 80 million speakers – in Indonesia's second largest metropolis, situated on the island of Java: in these respects one would expect it to be dominant or prominent or both.

Pojok Kampung cannot be said, without qualification, to be 'representative' of developments in the realm of languages and media in Indonesia over the years since Reformasi. Analogous points can be made about *Pemburu Hantu*: as a particular kind of reality show, broadcast by a commercial television channel based in the capital, it is not necessarily typical of recent change in the mediation of the supernatural in Indonesia. Yet there is no doubt in our minds that they can be taken as admittedly rather extreme examples of tendencies that are manifesting themselves in other genres, media, languages, and places as well. Recent studies of local pop music industries, television drama in several parts of Indonesia, phone-in radio, even the internet show, like our two case studies, that mediation has, as was to be expected, been involved in and indeed facilitated veritable transformations in Indonesia in the period concerned.¹¹ These studies also help to moderate the common assumptions that mass media liberate discourse, communication, interaction, representation from certain temporal and spatial constraints and that, partly through mediation, society is characterized by fast and dense global flows. Alongside these phenomena, certain sorts of mediation that have been growing in importance provide temporal and spatial anchors for discourse and culture. While people, and thus their discourse, are forever on the move (they and it come, go, return, stay, stay away, and so on), these media institutions and productions embed and fix the discourse, and through it its people, in the here and now.¹² *Pemburu Hantu* and *Pojok Kampung* illustrate this. They also show, not surprisingly in view of the relative nature of these

¹¹See for instance Arps 2003; Arps and Supriyanto 2002; Barendregt 2002; Jurriëns 2003, 2004; Loven 2003; and Suryadi 2003, 2005.

¹²This is an important material basis for some of the processes discussed by Robertson (1995) under the rubric of 'glocalization'.

notions, that the extent of that here and that now are variable. In these particular cases, moreover, it is clear that what is being localized and rendered relevant to the present is indeed transnational genres: reality shows and news. The transnational is captured here and now; for the moment the local is the world.

We have used *Pemburu Hantu* and *Pojok Kampung* to highlight how this localization and actualization are achieved in practice. A range of interconnected strategies is involved. Participation and interactivity are, on the one hand, desired by media institutions and often by audiences, though on the other hand various properties of the medium of television hamper actual participation and interaction. Given these constraints our two programmes succeed rather well in involving their audiences, albeit in different ways: for instance through inviting the viewers to join those on-screen in prayer in a programme that is broadcast live, and by allowing bystanders to contribute to interviews. Secondly, both programmes aim to be television for, and given the first strategy also by, ordinary persons. Exit the Orde Baru's marginalization of folk beliefs and its high-sounding rhetorics; popular notions of the supernatural and everyday ways of speaking take centre-stage. The more or less interactive participation and the ordinariness of the people represented shade into the third strategy, which is the stressing of distinctive (and somewhat controversial) mentalities identified as local. What is considered local varies, of course; the point here is that the mentality is *our* mentality – whether this is our attitude, as Indonesians, towards the supernatural or our attitude, as Surabayans, towards linguistic etiquette. In both cases the local mentality sells. Fourthly, closely connected too, is the stress on realness and authenticity. This stress is admittedly a design feature of both reality shows and the news, but in other media genres, too, even in fictional drama (which in Indonesia used to be characterized by a high degree of styliza-

tion), verisimilitude has become crucial to producers and audiences alike. Foreign media models and formats – whose use is the sixth strategy we have emphasized – are to be credited with that. To be sure, an outside world is always a source of inspiration, but both programmes exhibit a high degree of, and repeated explicit stress on, modernity and indeed cosmopolitan sophistication. In both, a global orientation is merged with a local one. Finally, another merge that is prominent in both programmes is that of information and entertainment. *Pemburu Hantu* is classified as *infotainment horror*, while the director of JTV announced full of confidence that, because of its language, 'people who watch *Pojok Kampung* will, apart from getting information, also be able to be amused and smile.' This merge, too, is a transnational tendency, as is, of course, the separation of information and entertainment as contrasting categories in the first place.

On this abstract level, then, that of the relation between mediation and context and of ideas about that relation, the two programmes have a great deal in common. This is so in spite of the fact that they represent widely divergent genres, and in spite of the almost opposite ways these tendencies are made manifest in sound and image. In both, localities of variable extent interact and interpenetrate. *Pemburu Hantu*'s principal aspirations are obviously nationwide, while *Pojok Kampung* aims to be Surabayan, with forays into other parts of East Java. In *Pemburu Hantu* it is the sound that most clearly represent its principal spatiotemporal orientation. The language is Indonesian, while the American music gives the programme an international tinge. The visuals, meanwhile, prominently include references to local tradition (especially the ghost hunter types and the paintings of the ghosts). By contrast, *Pojok Kampung* looks Indonesian and international, but sounds local.

The use of 'regional' languages for programmes like *Pojok Kam-*

pung can be interpreted as a political move, an appeal to grassroots political discourse. Javanese and other local varieties are indeed more often used for public political expression in recent years, appearing on banners and posters, in yells, and in protest songs. Where its contents are concerned, as local news it helps its viewers to keep abreast of the events and affairs that tend to affect their lives most directly, and it helps them to know and comprehend their quotidian environments in a wider world that is often alien and uncontrollable. Seen as reality shows, the horror/mystery reality programmes primarily depict peoples' fascination with and belief in supernatural occurrences. However, the shows can also be considered in relation to theories about the horror genre. In several theories about horror, the genre is seen to serve as a field for the dramatization of cultural and universal nightmares. Furthermore, horror films have been analyzed as an outlet to show social taboos, or as a channel for political critique.¹³ As such the stories of people's experiences of invisible forces and haunted locations in horror reality shows such as *Pemburu Hantu* can be perceived to disclose what 'ghosts' are haunting Indonesian society. In particular in the performance of the supernatural practitioners who are speaking on behalf of ghosts or other supernatural energies in horror infotainment programmes, silenced voices and other unseen forces that are adrift in society are brought to the surface. Perhaps in its connotation to present a forum for the unutterable during certain times, the mystery programmes ease

¹³See for example Carroll 1990; Coates 1991; and Schneider 2003. About horror film in Indonesia in relation to politics see Gladwin 2003. On the subject of carnival and film as deconstructing political and aesthetic representations see Shohat and Stam 1994:274, and on carnival in film as a form of anti-canonical resistance Shohat and Stam 1994:302-6. For horror films related to Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque see Creed 1995.

peoples' anxieties in contemporary Indonesian society. The programme forms a forum for the unspoken, and displays at the same time that, no matter what, eventually all will be settled in the grave.*

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