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ABSTRACT

This paper relates to my introduction to Brian Shoesmith and my involvement in his research project on satellite television and the audience reception of the Australian Television International channel in Surabaya, Indonesia in 1993 and 1995. It also discusses the impact of Brian and his research on the development of the Department of Communication in Airlangga University in Surabaya and to the transformation of television audience studies in the Indonesian context. I will examine Brian's publications on satellite television in Asia and the account of the Australian Television International channel's failure in Asia in the early 1990s. Taking my cue from Brian's writings about the challenge of the Australian Television International channel in Asia, I will discuss the situation of national audiences in Indonesia and their attitude towards the persistence of imported/foreign programmes, including Australian television programmes. In fact, the consumption of Australian cultural productions in Indonesia continues to be problematic and less widespread compared to the more dominant Western (US) and Asian (Korean) productions.

KEYWORDS
Audience reception; foreign programme; Australian Television; cultural consumption

Initial engagement

In 1993, Airlangga University's Faculty of Social and Political Sciences was visited by two Australian academics. Airlangga University is located in Surabaya, which is the second major city in Indonesia. It was the first international research collaboration for the Faculty with Australian universities. Brian Shoesmith, from Edith Cowan University, and Hart Cohen, from the University of Western Sydney, conducted audience reception research on the Australian Television International, hereafter referred to AusTV, which was delivered by satellite. Australia Television International went through a number of rebrandings and was finally closed down in 2014. A new service called Australia Plus was launched later that year. This was rebranded in July 2018 as ABC Australia, through all these transformations these have been known in Indonesia as AusTV. I was the youngest research assistant and, at that time, a very early career lecturer in the Department of Communication. I worked with three other lecturers, who were asked to assist Brian and Hart's fieldwork. We translated the English version of the research questionnaires and

interviewed the subscribers of the satellite television audience in urban Surabaya. Brian then revisited the University in 1995 to follow up the research, with further fieldwork. It was an opportunity for me, and a privilege, to become his fieldwork assistant again, and to use a different qualitative method. It also opened up for me the possibility of pursuing my Masters degree study in Australia. Being involved with Brian's research, my knowledge and perspective of communication studies developed, as his approach was very different than what I had so far experienced in an Indonesian university. Brian taught Media and Cultural Studies, at the time a new field in Indonesia, and one that was yet to be delivered as part a tertiary education. As a graduate of Communication Science, Brian stimulated my interest in studying Media Studies for my Masters degree. Listening to Brian's expressiveness when talking about Perth, where he lived at the time, and his commentary on Australian culture at a dinner one evening, I started to dream and imagine Australia, and specifically Perth, as my first overseas study destination. Brian strongly motivated and encouraged several young early career lecturers in the Communication Department, including me, to study with him at Edith Cowan University (ECU). I was the only lecturer interested in applying for a scholarship awarded by the Australian Agency for International Development in Indonesia (known as AusAid Indonesia), a highly regarded and very competitive scholarship for young lecturers and researchers in Indonesia and other developing countries. In short, I was accepted and granted the AusAid Development scholarship, and studied for my Masters degree in Media Studies at ECU in 1997 with Brian. I was the only Indonesian awardee to study Media Studies; Media studies was not of interest to other Indonesian students studying overseas, who tended more towards MBA and International Business programmes.

Media and Cultural Studies were relatively new in Indonesia in the 1990s, in the sense that there were very few studies that addressed the socio-cultural significance of television, film, radio, and the internet as part of everyday life. The term 'Media Studies' was not well-known compared to the terms 'Mass Communication' or 'Communication Science'; not only generally but among scholars in the field. The influence of the positivist (American) approach to media and communication was dominant in Indonesia. Studies of 'the power effect' of the mass media were the main concern and interest of many Communications scholars and students.

Studying Media Studies at ECU opened up for me new forms of knowledge and broadened my learning experiences. It brought about significant changes to my perspective and the way I understood Media and Cultural Studies. I learned and grappled with new concepts such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, global culture, cosmopolitanism, critical studies, semiotics, discourse, and so forth. All these, for me, were very new terms and theories and challenging to understand. As a graduate of Communication Science in Indonesia who had grown up with the New Order authoritarian government, my experiences with the authoritarian regime's education system had left me with the State's political propaganda and top-down developmentalism perspectives. These perspectives and approaches made students passive. Students were dictated to, and the State designed the curriculum to cater to its ideological position. There were strong links between the social sciences and political power, together with the flourishing of developmentalism and the technocratic applications of the social sciences, particularly during the New Order regime. The character and orientation of sub-sciences under the banner of the social sciences, such as communications science or mass communication,

had also been directed mainly to national development issues (i.e., developmental communication, top-down political communications). During the development of communications in Indonesia, Developmental Communication lost its critical edge and was revised into focusing on an information system – mainly expounding techniques for agricultural work and government programmes (e.g., family planning and developmental journalism) (Susanto 1986; Effendy 1986). Communication and developmentalism theories (e.g., Everett M. Rogers's diffusion innovation and Paul Lazarsfeld's two-step flow) have deeply influenced Indonesian communication studies and research. Even the New Order's Department of Information's discourse adopted the linear model of communications, which was dominant from the 1970s to the end of the 1990s.

Brian's engagement with our University, and through his teaching and mentoring of other lecturers in Media Studies in ECU during 1997–1999, had a significant impact on pedagogy. It was particularly so for my institution, the Department of Communication, where I began to introduce and contribute to the 'new' study perspective in Communication Science upon completing my study. It was not easy for me to convince my colleagues of the importance of the new field of 'Media Studies.' However, because I was the only recent overseas (Australian) graduate in the Department, my colleagues finally accepted a new way of thinking. We then restructured and deconstructed many courses in the undergraduate curriculum, transforming it from a heavily American positivistic mass communication tradition to the more critical European cultural studies tradition. In 2002, we established a Masters program, and we used the name 'Media and Communication Studies.' The first-ever study program in Indonesia to use the name 'Media Studies,' and it offered courses benchmarked to Media Studies at ECU.

It was my good fortune to come back to Indonesia after my MA study in Perth in 1999 when the New Order government of Indonesia had just ended, and the reformation era was beginning. It was the right time to take apart the higher degree curriculum to study Communication Science at my institution and introduce the new theoretical perspectives into many course contents. I took all the courses I had studied at ECU, such as Global Culture, Cinema Studies, Asian Mass Communication, Media Studies, and revised my Department's offerings. I also introduced the students to postmodern theories, semiotics, discourse analyses, audience reception, and so forth, all ideas embedded in courses that I had studied with Brian Shoesmith in his classes, as well as with other ECU lecturers such as John Hartley, Alan McKee, Rod Giblett, Debbie Rodan, Lelia Green, Michael O'Shaugnessy, and others. I started to introduce issues that, previously, had been considered subversive and forbidden to be delivered in university classes. These included Marxist theories, discussions about homosexualities (LGBTQ), gender and feminist studies, multiculturalism, and other 'provocative' and critical theories that continue to be taught up to the present day. These courses have become popular with undergraduate students who have learned to apply semiotic and critical discourse analyses in their undergraduate theses. These theories were previously unknown in Indonesian higher education, because of the former emphasis on quantitative study, to be able to measure the effect of mass communication. Where previously the courses were predominantly about mass communication, communication development, public communication, and similar, these have been changed with some new courses added such as Media, Gender and Identity, Media, Sexuality, Multiculturalism, Cinema Studies, Global Media, Economy and Politics of the Media, and so forth. These changes have been followed by introducing new critical

themes and ground-breaking qualitative research in undergraduate and postgraduate theses. For example, the word 'sexuality' has also been used to name a course, and many undergraduate and masters theses can openly use words such as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'queer,' 'homosexuality,' 'Marxist media,' even in their theses' titles. As Baden Offord asserts, there is 'as deeply embedded "heterosexism" in Indonesia, which means that any deviation from heteronormativity is seen as dishonourable and shameful' (Offord 2011, 148). During the New Order, under Suharto and in the post-Suharto period, the Indonesian State and Islamic discourses sought to regulate gender and oppress diverse sexualities. The introduced courses and research at Airlangga University on sexuality are, therefore, politically salient.

Studying media in Indonesia revolves around the figures of culture and the nation, especially during the New Order regime. The national communication and information policies continue to advance the cause of 'national development.' At the same time, national media proposes the promise of preserving national identity and tradition, and serves as a line of resistance against foreign cultures' influence. Therefore, the culture reproduced in the media becomes a key site for discerning signs of the national character. The political control over the media, and therefore of culture, in Indonesia since the time of the New Order had triggered lecturers and students of 'Communication Science' in Airlangga University to deconstruct media or cultural texts to analyse the construction of political and/or power interests.

In his second visit to Airlangga University in 1995, Brian Shoesmith introduced lecturers in the Communication Department to Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz's 1990 work, *The Export of Meaning*'. It examines the shifting paradigm of audience studies from the passive audience to the active audience, who create meanings (Liebes and Katz 1990). I remember when Brian explained the term 'couch potato' to describe the passive audience. For us, the term sounded strange. Following up what Brian taught about the 'couch potato' audience, we began to switch the focus of our study to researching the active audience, reception, and the making meaning process rather than just quantifying and measuring the number of mass media effects. We also learned from Brian how to research domestic audiences who consumed foreign programmes, as Brian did in studying the reception of the middle-class Indonesian audience of programmes broadcast on Australian Television International.

On the study of satellite television audience in Surabaya

I would see transnational broadcasting in Asia as both encouraging cross-cultural dialogue and encouraging identification with local cultures simultaneously. Viewing practices indicate that this is an already deeply ingrained practice but it varies from country to country, culture to culture. In Indonesia there has been a perception among middle class audiences that news (in the Suharto era certainly) was suspect and Australian TV news was watched closely [...] (Shoesmith 1999 in TBS, January 1999)

Wang and Dissanayake (1984) suggest one of the features of culture is an open system, which at the same time accepts, integrates, or rejects stimuli for change. For them, culture is the 'constant interaction of elements within the system and interaction with the outside environment brings stimuli to change, and the extent of change varies (1984, 4). Culture

will change, but one or two manipulated stimuli do not always bring the desired change. Taking up the ideas of Wang and Dissanayake, it has undoubtedly happened that Indonesia cannot close its territory off from the influence of foreign culture. It is because globalization and modernization are always embedded in the process of cultural development in the country. These views suggest that the notion of hybridity might explain the process of cultural combination occurring between the local and the foreign, particularly in many Asian countries, including Indonesia. As Lent writes: Other forms and artefacts of popular culture have been transformed by Asians into hybrid blending foreign and indigenous characteristics in often innovative and culturally appropriate ways' (1995, 5).

As part of a process of globalization and the implementation of the 'open sky' policy on satellite broadcasting (Shoesmith 1994b) by the New Order government, Indonesian audiences had celebrated the coming of foreign television broadcasts since the introduction of satellite television at the end 1980s. This enthusiasm was demonstrated in the mushrooming of parabola satellite discs outside of urban middle-class households. The popularity of satellite television watching was followed by the launch of the first private/ commercial television station, RCTI, in Jakarta in 1989 (Shoesmith 1994a; Sen and Hill 2000; Kitley in TBS 1999; Kitley 2000). Indonesian audiences could access various information and entertainment programmes, especially foreign television programmes, including AusTV. In 1993 Australian Television International, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's external television service, became one of the broadcasters to use the Indonesian government's Palapa satellite (Atkins 1995; Shoesmith 1994a). It was following this start of AusTV, a 'new' international broadcasting service, in addition to the predominant US and European programmes available in Indonesia, that Brian Shoesmith and Hart Cohen undertook their fieldwork in 1993 and 1995. From Brian's point of view, the arrival of Australian broadcasting services in Indonesia brought significant benefits not only for the transformation of the country's socio-political structure but also for the process of modernization and as a source of new creativities for the domestic television broadcasting productions. Brian explained,

> [. . .] in many respects television production in countries with authoritarian political regimes was pretty dull stuff which made the US-and European-produced materials look pretty good when they became available. In Indonesia, a number of colleagues have observed to me that the open skies policy with respect to TV had an entirely beneficial effect on local production. They became more polished with higher production values. The fact that they were clones of Western programmes (quiz shows, variety shows, etc.) was not seen as a problem (Shoesmith in TBS 1999).

The use of communication technologies such as satellite and cable televisions in Asian countries had also become the source of adaptation. In his study on cable television in Wuhan, China, Brian showed that the arrival of cable television had the effect of providing more program choices for Chinese audiences. However, the foreign programming also became the source of massive duplications in programming, impacting station managerial issues (Shoesmith 1998).

Indeed, global cultural formations have, to a significant extent, impacted local television programming in Indonesia since the 1990s, right up to today. Local programmes such as music, quiz shows, talk shows, and teledrama programmes are examples of how foreign programming formats have been adopted or borrowed but with some

modifications to meet the taste of the Indonesian viewers. The popularity of foreign television productions has challenged the local cultural productions of the Indonesian television industry. However, the policymakers and television critics, those concerned with modernization, but at the same time, with preserving a claimed authentic Indonesian identity, continue to believe that foreign/imported cultural productions will affect the local or traditional cultural identities of Indonesians:

> To many policymakers, foreign programmes—whether imported or brought in by satellite television—need to be limited not merely because they are in great numbers and may acculturate the audiences, but because their transportability across markets and low prices have made it difficult for local programmes to compete (Wang and Dissanayake 1984, 260).

In addition, for many developing countries, the arrival of foreign cultural productions is seen as threatening local ethnic culture and, more widely, the founding traditions of the societies (Katz 1979) in which those programmes are broadcast. For those countries, modernization is seen to carry in its wake 'a standardization and secularization of culture' (Katz 1979) where the arrival of Western, in particular, (or foreign in general) popular culture has overwhelmed the traditional values and cultural artefacts that give a culture its distinctive character. In Indonesia's case, the emergence of national commercial television and transnational programming through satellite and cable television has provided a greater variety of programming for audiences. Nevertheless, the conservative values and ethical standards forced on the society by particular interest groups, together with that particular state's apparatuses, continue to be a political threat and a force for communal control of media institutions up to the present. This is what Brian Shoesmith had believed. He argued that 'The contradictory potential of the technology combined with its spatial bias means that the state probably has more problems with television than the audience [. . .]' (Shoesmith 1998, 45).

Media technologies (including television), like the highway and super shopping mall, are implicated in social change and personal transformation, embodying what Raymond Williams (1990) called 'mobile privatisation' during the time of industrial capitalism. Williams looks at how people use media technology such as television to support various agendas. He summarizes that the media technologies and their uses are permanently embedded in people's lives, and in fact, they are 'a social complex of a new and central kind' (Williams 1990, 31) in the formation of industrial capitalist societies. The influential work of Raymond Williams suggests that although the omnipresence of media technologies produces 'media saturation,' it also shows that the uses to which media technologies are put and the individual's experience with media are unpredictable and non-uniform. The use of media technologies is not only personal but also a diverse cultural experience. As such, and drawing on an idea of Harold Adam Innis, Brian believed that the global reach of communication technologies, including satellite-based television, the spatial bias of electronic communications creates a disequilibrium that foreshadows shifting political power and new configurations in culture and society' (Shoesmith 1994a, 126). For Brian, the coming of new communication technologies in the early 1990s in Asian countries such as China, Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia brought significant consequences for social conditions and the institutions of control, especially in terms of censorship. He believed that

> All modernist media systems in Asia have occupied censored terrain. The degree of overt censorship has varied from regime to regime, but the concept of censorship invariably inherited from a colonial power has defined state/media relationships. The advent of satellite broadcasting has directly challenged this relationship and satellite communication appears to be largely beyond the control of the nation-state (Shoesmith 1994a, 128).

In Indonesia, notably, Brian argued that with the deployment of satellite discs in the main cities in the early 1990s and the satellite's spatial capacity to transcend the restriction of Indonesia's archipelagic nature, the technology continued to be a primary concern of the state. During the New Order government, the use of Bahasa language was forcefully imposed, especially on foreign media productions, as a political strategy to maintain the status quo. As Brian commented: 'Like the term Asia, the term Indonesia connotes a uniformity and homogeneity that does not in fact exist. Physical, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity have always been important factors in Indonesian politics' (Shoesmith 1994a, 133).

In the context of AusTV's satellite broadcasting in Indonesia, Brian argued that as in other Asian countries, in Indonesia, the broadcast of AusTV in the 1990s was seen as a propaganda tool of the Australian government:

> The relationship between the state, the imaginary and Asia created under the mantle [of Radio Australia, which was perceived as propagandist] is much more complex than Paul Keating [the then Australian prime minister] suggests' (Shoesmith 1994b, 3).

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was important to position AusTV in an Asian context as an attempt to 'construct a new "voice" for Australia in the Asian region' (Shoesmith 1994b, 4). In media technology, and especially the digitalization processes which have enabled a greater variety of technical forms, audiences have celebrated the greater openness in Indonesian skies with the new variety of information and transnational media productions. There is now little interest in Australian Television and radio broadcasting in Indonesia, and so the 'voice' of Australia is muted as Australian media have been unable to find a way to attract the attention of an Indonesian audience. The flow of information is more from Indonesia to Australia than from Australia to the Indonesian archipelagic continent. More news from Bali and Jakarta flows to Australia than from Sydney and Canberra to Indonesia.

Moreover, with the availability of domestic licences granted to the global media like CNN, BBC, and CNBC by way of Indonesian business owners, such as the big conglomerate Chairul Tanjung of Trans Corporations, information circulation to Indonesia has been dominated by US and UK. It has made Australian broadcasting in Indonesia vulnerable. Indonesian audiences have consumed fewer Australian cultural productions than their American, European, Korean, Japanese, and Indian counterparts. The situation is a continuation of Brian's argument in the 1990s that the failures to articulate and voice Australia in Asia were triggered by factors like the limitation of funds, the problem of a political agenda, and the failure to project the diversity of the Australian nation. For Brian, writing about the difficulties faced by AusTV, these factors represented 'a problematic of the Australian imaginary that is shaped as much by internal factors specific to the Australian condition as external ones' (Shoesmith 1994b, 4). Brian asserted that the Australian cultural production would be well accepted in Asia, including Indonesia, if the Australian media could revamp the Australian-Asian media relationship and speak

within Asia's 'language': 'until it can speak to Asia in an acceptable 'voice' it will continue to expose Australia's failure to imagine its Asian connections' (Shoesmith 1994b, 4).

Where are the AusTV audiences in Indonesia nowadays?

The media is viewed as a rich site for studying cultural circulation, representations, and practices that function at multiple levels of identification from the local/national to the global/transnational: 'Media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways' (Bird 2003, 3). Drawing from quite different theoretical points of view, including Benedict Andersen (1991) and Habermas (1991), Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin (2002, 5) recall that communication technologies have been central in mediating 'the cultural effects of people flows, ideas, and objects' to conceive the formation of 'collectivities' as 'imagined communities' which can be reformulated as 'the public sphere.' As media cannot be separated from social life, studying the interconnections between media practices and cultural frames of reference thus becomes challenging.

Indeed, media reality is a kind of cultural frame that involves audiences. As Hall theorizes, audiences are the active producers of meaning rather than mere consumers (Hall 1980). The audience will respond and behave in unpredictable ways that are a product of their particular identities and cultural backgrounds: 'The conditions and boundaries of audiencehood are inherently unstable' (Moores 1993, 2). Thus, media consumption and reception constitute a media cultural form that can be used to understand the potential of everyday cultural practices and the particular kinds of subjects and collectivities that live in those practices.

Television reception is a crucial and complicated process, one that cannot be described either by the term 'resistance' or 'passivity' or even 'accommodation' (Press 1991, 174). In their classic work on *Dallas*, Liebes and Katz (1990) assert that content analysis, however sophisticated, cannot explain how messages are viewed, interpreted, and discussed by the viewers. Study and analysis of the relationships between the texts and the viewers are vital. They contend that viewing television is not merely a matter of passive activity in which the effect of television influences the audience; instead, it is an active and involving experience that varies with the cultural backgrounds that individuals carry to the viewing. Therefore, the study of television viewing is complicated because of the decoding process, and, consequently, the effects of television messages will vary within any society, particularly those composed of different ethnic and cultural communities (Liebes and Katz 1990).

Taking my cue from these theoretical perspectives of cultural studies, using Brian Shoesmith's writings on the study of Indonesian media and audiences in the 1990s and relating Brian's work to the current trend of audienceship in Indonesia, I will try to present a short description of how domestic/national audiences consume and act in relation to foreign cultural productions, focusing on Asian productions compared to American and other Western productions, including those of Australia. Brian examined how the arrival of satellite technology, including satellite television, in Indonesia had overwhelmingly served the national audience's needs (Shoesmith 1993). Despite the technological gap between regional/rural audiences, and urban middle classes who could afford a satellite dish in their, the preference of Indonesian national audiences for national productions

remains unchallenged. Nevertheless, the consumption of foreign productions found a supplementary niche, as such texts offered various alternatives for the national audiences. The popularity of Asian productions started in the early 2000s, particularly Korean, Japanese, Indian, and Taiwanese cultural productions that were broadcast on national television. Such productions can be seen as presenting a form of 'cultural familiarity' in terms of the flow of global television for domestic audiences (Ida 2008). In this regard, Western (American) productions have become less consumed. This trend also applies to Australian programmes. While Australia is geographically close to Indonesia, Australian cultural products are neither popular nor well-received by the domestic audiences and remain experienced as distant or 'foreign'. Brian had raised concern about this issue when he researched satellite television and AusTV audience reception in Indonesia. He maintained,

> It is through satellite television that Australia can project images of its culture to Asia as well as disembodied voices. The questions that arise from this changed situation are quite clear: what sort of images should Australia project, and more significantly to whom? (Shoesmith 1994b, 4).

To overcome this problem, Brian suggested the need for a significant change in 'Australian consciousness' (1994b, 16) and its power to imagine Australia to Asia.

Through the Australian Broadcasting Corporation broadcasting its Asian channel, Australian television continues to be available and can be accessed at any time from cable television in Indonesian households. The growing numbers of cable television providers in the country have made the service low-cost not only for urban middle classes but also affordable for urban and regional *kampung* (suburbs/village) inhabitants, by sharing access and the payment between close neighbours within the *kampung*. Nevertheless, the audiences continue to watch local productions such as locally produced soap operas (popularly known as *sinetron*) and music shows. The Australian Television International programmes (ABC) include programmes covering Australian and global news, Australian sports (e.g., AFL), dramas, children's programmes, and comedies. These can be understood as representing a set of social and cultural practices that reproduce the heterogeneous cultures of Australia (Shoesmith 1994b). As such, the broadcast programmes do not attract a significant number of the Indonesian audience, who are looking for program content they can relate to.

I will borrow the argument of John Sinclair et al., that television is always more local than a global or transnational medium: 'although the increasingly multichannel and globalized nature of the industry may alter the balance at the margin in the longer term' (Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham 1996, 10). The importation of foreign programmes in national television has forced local productions to attempt to negotiate and contest with these programmes whether for 'market reasons, for the sake of diversity, to diminish foreign influence, or for new "hybrid" genre' (Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham 1996, 13). Parallel to this view, Brian has suggested the term 'hybridity' as 'a process, which I see as dialogic, whereby one culture borrows from another and transforms that borrowing through specific cultural practices' (Shoesmith 1993, 15). Although Brian was aware that the relation between the members of this dialogue was not equal, one culture is more powerful than the other; the power relation was 'immaterial to both the process and product' (1993, 15). Brian contended that for the foreign producer, the transferred content

of the program might intend one message, yet there is no guarantee that this message will be received or consumed according to that producer's intention. This view had long been evidenced in the study of the soap opera audience in the cultural studies tradition, for example, in Ien Ang's (1989) seminal study on *Dallas*. Audiences from different cultures watched *Dallas* in different cultural contexts to that of its cultural origin, and the reading of the text is determined by context more than by origin. The receiving country's responds to the foreign program contents in a multiplicity of ways, '[such] that the audience will learn and adopt the behaviours of imported television in a wholesale manner. Without this learning and adopting process, there is no way to form a "global culture" through sameness' (Lee 1998, 277). The reception of foreign programmes does not go in one direction. Rather, how those programmes are received depends on the receiving country's cultural policy, the characteristics of the local television industry, and the audience's autonomy. Brian's study of Indonesian satellite television in 1993 confirms Lee's argument: setting aside the English language barrier and cultural differences, Indonesian viewers felt a detachment from Australian culture, and this was reinforced by the New Order's suspicions of Australian government propaganda being disseminated through the television news content (Shoesmith 1994a). To Indonesia, Australia is the next-door country. However, Australian cultural production continues to be experienced as remote and limited in its appeal; Australia's popular culture is not well-accepted by the national audiences compared to the popularity of Asian cultural productions, particularly Korean pop.

Conclusion

The introduction of Brian Shoesmith to Airlangga University and his engagement with my colleagues in a research collaboration have brought significant transformation in teaching, curriculum content, and research areas, particularly in the Department of Communication. The consequence of the involvement of three young lecturers in Brian's research on Satellite Television reception among the middle class in Surabaya city was that we learned new ideas and started to engage more with other lecturers at Edith Cowan University and its Centre for Asian Communication, Media and Cultural Studies. After completing my Masters degree and Brian's enduring support and ongoing connection to our Department, the curriculums for both undergraduates and postgraduates have been benchmarked to ECU. The Department's research areas and the theoretical paradigms have shifted to the area of critical cultural studies. Since the early 2000s, the Department of Communication of Airlangga University became the first Department in Indonesia to offer Media and Cultural Studies courses. We have discarded the American tradition of Communication Science with its positivistic perspective and have taken a critical media cultural studies perspective on board. The study of audiences, in particular, has been transformed from reliance on quantitative methods and statistics to more in-depth qualitative study making use of the applied ethnography tradition of audience research.

    After the completion of Brian's research project in 1995, we discovered that the development of new communication technologies (satellite and cable television) and the growth of the commercial television industry in Indonesia in the 1990s had enabled local audiences to receive foreign/imported programmes. It was expected to provide

more options in terms of news and entertainment channels for local audiences, and at the same time allow broader coverage for Australian television in Asia, including Indonesia. The open sky policy of the Indonesian government thus provided more options and broader access to news and entertainment for local audiences. However, at the same time, the state's control over the media remained crucial and complicated. As Brian stated,

> All Indonesian social, economic and cultural policy making has been concerned with spatial matters and the methods employed to achieve the security of a definable Indonesian national space, have been underpinned by technologies with a spatial bias (Shoesmith 1993, 16-17).

In the case of Australian television reception, Brian showed that national programming was more popular than the reception of AusTV, which continued to have popularity issues in Asian countries. The changes in communication and information technologies, including cable television and live streaming on the web, together with the popularity of digitalized visual media, have resulted in a more open, autonomous, and fragmented audience. However, Indonesian audiences' consumption of Australian cultural products remains problematic, and indeed it is insignificant compared to the popularity of Asian productions, which are experienced as having greater cultural proximity identified in terms of so-called 'Asian values'.

It was planned for Brian to be a visiting professor in Airlangga University's Department of Communication in 2019; the return tickets were bought, and his research and teaching planned. We were preparing to welcome Brian in March, but due to his sudden illness at that time, he was unable to come. Brian rang me and cancelled the March visit, and asked me to rebook for August 2019. Nevertheless, again, he was not able to fly to Surabaya due to his ill health.

We missed Brian then, and now, forever.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Rachmah Ida is a professor of Media Studies at the Department of Communication, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Airlangga University. She has published in the area of media, gender, politics, and Islam in Indonesia. Her notable books include Imaging Muslim Women in Indonesian Soap Opera (2009) and Komunikasi Politik, Media dan Demokrasi, 2nd Edition (2015), Metode Penelitian Studi-Studi Media dan Budaya, (2014), and Watching Indonesian Sinetron: Imagining Community around Television, (2009). Her most recently published journal articles discuss youth political participation and social media use in Indonesia. Ida is also conducting a collaboration research with Prof. Panizza Allmark of ECU on digital art activism and ethnicity in Indonesia.

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