Theory of Field For Media And Culture Study

AMIRUDIN

Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities,
Diponegoro University, 50275 Indonesia
Email: amdjtg@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper discusses the theoretical study of the cultural production through the media which have been discussed since the 2000s. This study was introduced for the first time by Eric Low in 2001 through the book "The Media and Cultural Production". It is only Low who still limits the study of cultural production in relation to power. It describes the production of culture as if it were merely an objectification of the workings of power systems outside the media organizations that mutually contribute and influence the process of cultural production. Power is preserved and maintained its dominance through the use of media in the creative, maintenance, and shifting power relations processes. The writer sees the weakness of Low's study, this paper is presented to provide a new study through the theory of "the field" of Pierre Boudieu (2005, 1993, and 1977) and Victor Turner (1974) to provide a more dynamic, more realistic, and holistic cultural production process.

Keywords: Cultural Production, Media, Imagination, Field

Introduction

Cultural production is a creative process that involves the resources, expectations, and imaginations, which transformed by the actors involved in producing cultural products in a particular space and time (Low 2001). The outcome of the cultural production process can be in three types: drama, non-drama, or news if it is done in the media. However, if it is done in the arena of art, the process of culture production produces cultural products in the form of; dance, painting, music, and others. Meanwhile, if it is done in the arena of literature then the production of cultural products can be; poetry, prose, short stories, novels, and others. While the media are defined cultural institutions as well as economic institutions in the form of conventional media (radio, TV, print media), new media [online, social media, Over the Top (OTT), video on demand (VoD)], outdoor media (billboard, videotron), and performance. So in this context, what is meant by cultural production in the media is the creative process by actors in producing cultural products in a number of media according to the types.

Since the 2000s, the study of cultural production has been actually become a huge discussion in media studies. In conventional media studies, media practices are generally divided into four sub-courses; production studies, content studies, audience studies, and media effect studies (Valdivia 2003; Williams 2003). The sub-field of the study was based on the definition of mass communication as the process of delivering messages (message production), the form of the message (content/text), the reception of the message (audience), and the relationship or impact of the dissemination of the message to the community. The mapping by Denis McQuail (1983) in that context appears to be highly influential in media studies so that the four subfields of the study are often become the standards in analyzing media practices.

Nevertheless, a number of multidisciplinary media studies are not solely dominated by linear mass communication perspectives. Many studies provide a viewpoint of study enriched by various social science research strategies, including ethnography that characterizes anthropological studies. Influenced mainly by Stuart Hall (1980), media studies advanced by linking each stages of media practices with the whole socio-cultural process.

The study of the audience, for example, no longer puts audiences isolated from their activities in everyday life. Audiences are not only passive recipients of the message, but also actively interpret the message, text, and content. The power that determines the final form of the message is no longer merely monopolies by the producer, but also created by the audience. In other words, the audience is also actively producing cultural forms (Ang 1991).

At the production level, media studies which originally dominated the cultural industry research with an economic-political perspective gradually began to evolve into the field of dynamics production as a complex social process. The set of multidisciplinary scholars in the Mayer, Bank, and Caldwell (2009) book entitled *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* shows how cultural production is studied by combining ethnographic methods; cultural, economic, and political analysis. Production practices are not merely seen as part of the market struggle as often dominated by the study of political economy. However, production practices are seen as an integral part of the process of social history, cultural formation, and everyday life (Ortner 2009, Zafirau 2009). Starting from that, this paper seeks to view the production process in this way; especially anthropologists who always view social practices, including the practice of media, holistically. As Mark Peterson (2009) emphasized, one of the hallmarks of anthropology in studying media practice is the way of connecting the various stages in the practice with daily life and putting it into a larger social structure.

> Anthropology is better positioned than many other disciplines to explore media practices around the world. Ours is a discipline accustomed to linking the richness of everyday social action to broader structures. More importantly, ours is a discipline that tends to look at media as situated within other sets of human action

rather than approaching social phenomena with a priori assumptions about what media 'is' (Peterson 2009: 121).

The relationship between the cultural production process and the larger social structure, is often placed within the framework of preservation of the dominant ideology as seen in the study of the culture industry inspired by Theodor Adorno (1991). Accordingly, anthropologists often pay attention to the strategies of the media industry in producing a dominant cultural representations. However, more recently, some of these studies tend to peel not only from the perspective of the institutional structure of the media industry but also from the perspective of the cultural agency and cultural context of the producer (Abu-Lughod et al 2002: 17). Therefore, in this paper, more attention is paid to the dynamics of the practice of actors involved in the process of cultural production.

Furthermore, the actors do not emerge from empty social space, but depart from unequal social space so it can be assumed that each actor brings different imagery of the cultural product that they want to form. Agreeing with Peterson (2009), anthropology's job is to broaden and deepen the understanding of media involvement in human life as a whole. Similarly in the process of cultural production, the actors involved are placed in the whole of social life and not solely in cultural production events.

One of the cultural production studies that has become a classic in this field was by the sociologist Todd Gitlin in his book, *Inside Prime Time,* first published in 1983. Gitlin revealed how successful television programs in Hollywood are produced by interviewing the people involved, such as executive producers, screenwriters, agents, actors, and advertisers. Prior to Gitlin, nobody analyzed channels which connecting management with show producers, or attempts by advertisers, writers, and lobbyists to influence television.

An important contribution of Gitlin's (1983) research is to elucidate the importance of roles and activities other than those done by the producers in the production process of television shows. Prior to Gitlin, production research tended to focus on the role of the producer only, as was the research by Muriel Cantor (Gitlin 1983) in the late 1960s. The research published in *The Hollywood TV Producer: His Work and His Audience* (Cantor 1972) stands out as one of the few sociological studies on contemporary television production.

By extending its focus to others who are also involved in the process of creating a show, including on the part of management and advertisers, Gitlin disclosed negotiations made by the producer in realizing his creative image. With this, Gitlin also provided a framework for viewing the production process of television shows, which are then used by later researchers to understand practices that affect the process of cultural production. Gitlin also revealed that the cultural production process is not predictable as Miege and Hesmondhalgh's theory (Bayer, Banks, & Caldwell 2009), as a complex, ambivalent, and contested media industry operation.

RIKSAWAN INSTITUTE

The cultural production researches of Gitlin then developed not only where the show program was produced but also related to other things. According to television researchers Horace Newcomb and Amanda Lotz (Bayer, Banks, Caldwell 2009), there are five levels of analysis used in the television show production studies. First, the economy of political economy (economism), for example the study of television production in Canada in relation to cultural imperialism of the United States by Newman and Levine (2011).

Second, studies about production and the media industry with certain topics such as feminism issues in relation to the influence of cultural forces (culturalism). These two types of studies are too linear or appear less dynamic in uncovering the production process that links social life to the media stage, as if cultural products are limited only as a result of the process of contesting political economic power outside the media, or simply directed by certain cultural power. There needs to be a disclosure of cultural production studies using a more dynamic and holistic perspective, a perspective that illustrates the dynamics of actors actively practicing and acting in the process of cultural production. In this context, Bourdieu's (1993, 1977) and Turner (1974) ideas on the field are relevant to be introduced in the study of cultural production processes.

The Concept of The Field

Bourdieu (1993.1977) introduced the concept of the field from his desire to elaborate on the concept of "agent" that defined and defines the habitus of a social group or social class that is the sphere of subculture as it is described in his book *The Outline of a Theory of Practice*. The context of this agent's concept can be obtained by knowing the game and the relationship between the habitus in the process of domination. To see how these dominant ways happen, Bourdieu used a concept called field.

Bourdieu (1977) said, "I define a field as a network or a configuration, of objective relation between position objectively defined, in their existence and in determination they impose upon their occupant, agent or institution, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of distribution of power (or capital) whose possesion commands acces to specific profit that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other position, ..."

The field by Bourdieu is seen as the structure of a social system inhabited by individuals or groups, and the relationship of each position will be determined by the network of capital channeled differently. Bourdieu (1992: 229-231) distinguishes capital in four types, namely economic capital such as money, ownership of goods and the like; cultural capital such as knowledge and skills and the like; symbolic capital such as social reward and prestige; and social capital that is valuable social relationships with important people. In the social field, the capital can flow from one form of capital to another capital. Educational qualifications for example can be exchanged for profitable types of work.

RIKSAWAN INSTITUTE

The field for Bourdieu is also a system of forces present between the various positions, which they are structured internally in terms of power relations. These positions illustrate the relationship of dominant subordination or equivalent relationship based on the superiority of each power possessed by capital at stake in the social arena.

Jenkins (1992: 86) mentioned that the concept of the domain is used in three ways. First, it is placed in the social arena of power to recognize the dominant or superior power in society, and recognize the source of the hierarchical power relations that form the framework for other social arenas. Second, to construct a map of each of the positions that make up the social arena and the relationships between those involved in the competition. Third, the habitus of each of the actors in the field is analyzed in line with the strategies that are the product of interaction between the habitus and the constraints and opportunities determined by the social arena.

The study of the field is not merely Bourdieu's. Previously, anthropologist Victor Turner (1974) had also introduced the concept of the field in his book *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Turner departed from Manchester's tradition pioneered by Max Gluckman who tried to address the unanswered theoretical problems within the functional structural framework of the time. In summary, the concept of social process adopted by Turner presupposes that individual action is not manifestation of manuscripts printed in the structure. Social dynamics, for Turner, is more than just a pre-programmed show.

> In other words, I do not see social dynamics as a set of "performances" produced by a "program," as certain of my colleagues, notably the New Anthropologists, believe to be the case. Living action, for the human species can never be the logical consequence of any grand design. This is not because of the inveterate tendency of man's "free will" to resist manifest good and manifest reasonableness, as Dostoevsky, Berdyaev, Shestov, and other "alienated" Russians would have it, but because of the processual structure of social action itself (Turner 1974: 13).

If it is analyzed more, Turner's proposition that said "action for man is never a logical consequence of great design", seems very close to Bourdieu's concept of agency in his theory of practice. Turner then saw that it was not departed from a free individual, independent of any history or social pressure, but rather by the "structure of social action itself." Actor's actions interact, contest and compete for the same resources.

These are the different interpretations of the important concept of a "field". For Turner, "field" refers to "an ensemble of antagonistic relationships between actors leading to a prize or equal value" (Turner 1974: 135). In other words, the "field" does not refer to a concrete physical location, but rather refers to the complexity of conflicting relationships between actors in order to win the same "gift".

RIKSAWAN INSTITUTE

Turner proposed another concept to refer to the concrete location where the relations of action are, namely, the "arena". Interestingly, the "arena" is not only a concrete setting where actors embody various content actions (action of competition and fight), but also a space for actors to compete symbols and metaphors (Turner 1974: 17). As what we have known, Turner is an important initiator of symbolic and symbolic action. Here, symbols and metaphors are part of the actors' directed, contemporary actions. The whole process of contestation is what Turner calls "social drama" (Turner 1974: 17).

John Postill (2013) provided a study about the peculiarities of the concept of "field" in Victor Turner's thinking. According to Postill, Turner sharpened the concept of "field" further into a "political field". The political aspect of Turner's theory is the totality of relationships between the actors that directed at equal rewards and values. The political field is built not on behavior but action, especially the group's goal-oriented collaborative action. Despite the conflict and coalition, collaborative action is often built to serve the purposes of contemporary action.

Furthermore, the acts of disagreement take place in an "arena", which Turner defined as "a fenced spatial unit, in which antagonists, individuals and groups, contradict each other for a prize or honor". The arena becomes an "explicit frameworks" in which "nothing is left implicit", where major decisions are made in the public (Postill, 2013: 4). The motion of social history is determined by various contradictions involving various actors, institutions, symbols, and metaphors.

For Turner, the historical episode is a social drama in which the "political field" of various people, institutions, and resources are mobilized to support or quell deviations. The social drama, for Turner, is a political conflict that originates within a social group but can spread to other large groups unless there are corrective actions (Postill 2013: 3-4).

It appears that Turner and Bourdieu's "field" has some parallels. Postill identified at least three main points. *First*, both Turner and Bourdieu used game metaphors to refer to "field", while at the same time rejecting the concept of rational actors as models of human agency. *Second*, Bourdieu and Turner studied the social arena diachronically, thus they rejected structural-functional ideas that assumed structures were self-governing entities. *Third*, these two scholars put conflict as the main focus of their theory. If Turner tracked conflicts that start from group conflicts which then widen into certain established fields, Bourdieu was more interested in the direction or trajectory of individual agents within a particular arena (Postill 2013: 5).

However, there are specific concepts that Bourdieu referred to which distinguish him from Turner. As Postill asserted, Turner departed from the conception of group driven by social conflict, in which the arena is a manifestation of the extension of group conflicts as part of social drama. Meanwhile, Bourdieu tended to track down the individuals of the actors involved in the conflict. Bourdieu focused more on the strategies of the actors based on the "habitus" and "capital" attached to him.

RIKSAWAN INSTITUTE

Therefore, in Bourdieu's study, the concept of field cannot be separated from the concept of "habitus" and "capital". An important point in Bourdieu's theory is that the position of the actor in relation to the specific "capital", is attached to a particular field (Postill 2013: 4). Bourdieu assumed that the modalities themselves which determine the fight will be different in character and efficacy from one field to another. In a certain field, capital A becomes the determinant of the fight, but not in other fields, it is the capital B.

"Capital" does not appear by itself, but rather through an accumulation process that intersects with "habitus". Postill saw sharply how, in Bourdieu's study, the "habitus" of a person is not merely a pile of habits. Habitus is a product of socialization within a particular cultural environment, the product of a long time "reading" the social world with mind and body. It is a "disposition matrix" linked to one's position, both in a social space as a whole and in a certain field. Habitus manages our perception of ourselves and other agents. For Bourdieu, field is an established domain of cultural life which slowly changing, where actors-practitioners get the 'feel for the game' for years. For example, the field of art, the field of sociology, or the field of boxing (Postill 2013: 5).

If we are relying on the idea of Bourdieu (1993), the cultural production process of a show involving actors which have mutual and strategic relationships, mutually transforming resources, and competing imagination in winning cultural representations, can be viewed as a field. This field is not limited by the concrete spaces where the cultural production process is located. The concrete spaces will limit the analysis not only to the interactions that occur in certain physical spaces (studio, for example), but also by the extent to which actors relate throughout the production process (Bourdieu 2005: 30-31).

Through the concept of the field, the ethnographer makes it possible to see the actions of subjects in real social relationships, without having to be trapped in the determinism of the socio-economic structures that generally dominate the economic-political studies. In addition, the concept of the field also provides a space for ethnographers to observe more specifically the patterned relationship of actors in a particular and relatively autonomous set of practices from larger social structures (Bourdieu, 1993). In short, a closer analysis of the efforts, attractiveness, positioning, and strategies of actors in negotiating the imagination that constitutes a cultural product.

In the field of cultural production, there are two types of logic which work. First, the logic derived from market logic. It requires that every cultural product is measured by its success on the basis of the commercial profit which gained. Secondly, the other logic is the logic that is derived from perceptions of the "quality" of cultural product. In terms of artwork, the quality is often identified with the term "art for art". In this case the definition of quality is not a commercial size, but rather a network between artists, curators, critics, arts institutions and conferences, colleges, etc. (Bourdieu 1993; Moore 2007).

Generally, in this context, the practice of cultural production is assumed that every cultural product must follow the logic of a profit-oriented industry (financial economic). However, on the other hand, it has to consider the "quality of cultural products" (cultural economic). How the dynamics of the two types of logic color and shape the display of the show becomes important to be seen empirically in making ethnographic descriptions.

Bourdieu's conception of the field is written in reference to the context of artistic production in 19th-century in France. When the concept is drawn into the cultural production area on 21st century television, it certainly requires a certain amount of modification. Looking at the differences in aspects between "literary work" and "television" is important, but the conceptual framework of cultural production's field remains a productive analysis blade. A number of scholars have adopted such a framework for analyzing various forms of culture in the 21st century, such as punk music and television documentaries (Moore 2007).

Field Theory

Field theory used to study the process of cultural production, first of all, defining which cultural production field will be the object of the study. For example, ethnographer is interested in making the show "Indonesia Lawyer Club" in TV-One Station as an object of the study. The focus of the study is on the dynamics of the show production practices in studios, involving actors such as production teams, creative teams, hosts, speakers/informants, studio audiences, and outside audiences.

Each movement of the actors and their dynamics relationship in each "relationship system structure" is closely followed and observed through a procession approach. Things that are observed in a relationship system include: the built habitus, images, negotiation process and/or capital contestation of the actors taking place in the structure of the relationship system. After that, the ethnographer analyzes the overall dynamic of the relationship that goes on to obtain his metaphor, including "market metaphor" (Bourdieu 1993) which describes the competition between actors and their capital transformed in cultural products. In addition to the "market metaphor", there is "game metaphor" (Turner 1974) which includes "championship game" (a game of getting a prize), or "game show" (a game to feel the enjoyment of the game itself). How a cultural product is produced through an analysis of the practice and dynamics of relationship between actors in the process of cultural production that becomes the orientation of the theory of the field.

Conclusion

Based on a study of the theory of Bourdieu (2005, 1993, and 1977) and Turner (1974), the writer proposes an argument. The argument is that the cultural production space can be seen as a relatively autonomous field of cultural production

RIKSAWAN INSTITUTE

that has its own logic and pattern of play, rather than the subordination of the macro environment (the power of political economy) as something that definitely determines the course of action and its outcome. Focusing on the field, this study shows how dominant economic forces do not always dominate the process of cultural production. Practices in the cultural production's field, have their own logic and they form the social and material network that leads to a particular purpose. Seeing the dynamic development of cultural production in media, the writer believes the study of the field will be a challenging topic in anthropological studies. Based on that framework, it appears that there are some important strategic agendas to be developed in the study of media anthropology.

First, the field theory can be developed by examining the variation of symptoms and forms of media. Generally, a study is limited only to study television media and certain forms of shows. The studies of other forms of media such as radio, print, widescreen or other product forms such as soap operas, movies, news, radio plays, will produce compelling analysis that is interesting, enlightening and contributive to the development of media anthropology.

Secondly, experiments or the development of the field theories in anthropological studies can also be directed to see the process of cultural production involving many arenas, for example not only confining to one type of cultural production arena, the arena of live/taping production. In today's media production process, many media products involve multiple arenas, e.g. arena A to produce event type X, then arena B for type Y-which is a whole series. The processual paradigm in the field theory makes it possible to see processes in different arenas. Analysis of processes in one arena or between one arena to another will be a productive experimental space for media anthropology.

Third, the presence of new media allows simultaneous production and consumption processes in one arena. This will be a challenging area of research for media anthropology. The field theory has the advantage of looking at the overall practice and interaction between actors in an arena (or multiple arenas within a field), which allows to examine a wide variety of activities-whether categorized as production or consumption. At that point, of course, the field theory will be tested for its strength to what extent that it is capable of being an analytical framework to view a complex process of media and actor relations. However, theoretical courage and ethnographic clarity will be able to bring researchers later on enlightening new insights. ***

References

Abu-Lughod, Ginsburg, and Larkin B., (2002). *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Adorno, T.W. (1991).*The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, J. Bernstein (ed). London: Routledge.

RIKSAWAN INSTITUTE

Ang, Ien. (1991). *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1977). *The Outline of a Theory of Practice,* trans. R. Nice. Cambridge M.A.: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1992). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Eassys on Art and Literature.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1996). *On Television*. New York: The New Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (2005). *Distinction: a Social Critique of a Judgement of Taste.* trans. R. Nice. Cambridge, M.A.: Cambridge University Press.

Brauchler, B., dan Postill, J. (2010). '*Theorizing Media and Practice',* in *Anthropology of Media Vol. 4*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Cantor, Muriel. (1972). *The Hollywood TV Producer: His Work and His Audience.* New York: Routledge.

Fisher, Michael M.J. (2007). '*Culture and Cultural Analysis as Experimental Systems',* in *Cultural Anthropology 22 (1):* p 1-65.

Gitlin,Todd. (1983). *Inside Prime Time*. New York: Pantheon.

Hall, Stuart., *et. al.* (eds). (1980). *Culture Media Language*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, Richard. (1992). *Key Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.* London: Routledge

Low, Eric. (2001). *The Media and Cultral Production*. London. Routledge.

Mayer, V., Banks, Caldwell. (2009).*'Introduction to Production Studies',* in Bank V Mayer, Miranda J., Caldwell, dan John T (Eds) *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge). p1-5

McQuail, Denis. (1983). *Mass Communication Theory: an Introduction*. London: Sage Publication.

Moore, Ryan. (2007). *'Friends Don't Let Friends Listen to Corporate Rock: Punk as a Field of Cultural Production'*, in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography Volume 36 issue 4.* Muzakki, Akh. (2008). '*Islam as a Symbolic Commodity: Transmitting and Consuming Islam through Public Sermons in Indonesia*', in Pattana Kitiarsa (ed); *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods* (New York: Routledge). p.205-219

Newman, M.Z. dan Levine, E. (2011). *Legitimating Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status.* New York: Routledge.

Ortner, Sherry B. (2009). *'Studying Sideways: Ethnographic Access in Hollywood,'* in MayerV. Banks, M. CaldwellJ (Eds); *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge). p.78 – 92.

Peterson, Mark, A., (2009). '*Response to John Postill Social Anthropology/ Anthropologie Sociale',* in *European Association of Social Anthropologists. Vol 17, (3) p334–344*.

Postill, J. (2013). '*Fields as Dynamic Clusters of Practices, Games and Socialitie'*, in Amit (ed); *Sociality: An Anthropological Interrogation* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn). Diakses melalui *http:/wwww. academia.edu/2046704/ Fields_as_dynamic_ clusters_of_practicgames and_socialities* pada 25 April 2013.

Turner, Victor W. (1974). *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Valdivia, Angharad., N. (2003). *A Companion to Media Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Williams, Raymond. (1974). *Television: Technology and Cultural Forms*. London: Routledge.

Zafirau, Stephen. (2009). *'Audience Knowledge and the Everyday Lives of Cultural Producers in Hollywood',* in Mayer, Vicki, Banks, Miranda J., Caldwell, John T (eds); *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge).p 302-324.