Bomb the Base in the Bus.

Public Transport as Intersections of a Local Popular Culture in

Padang, Indonesia

Most research into consumption and popular culture in Indonesia has been focussed on the middle and upper classes who have been characterised as opting for a consumption-based culture over traditional ways of life. However, this paper on popular culture in Padang, West Sumatra, demonstrates that consumption is also an important element of working class Indonesians' lives. The *angkutan* (modified vans used for public transport) and *bis kota* (city buses) in Padang in the Indonesian province of West Sumatra are brightly decorated with pictures and items depicting local and global themes. They are also equipped with expensive entertainment systems, produced by an expanding global marketplace, that broadcast local, Indonesian and foreign music in a variety of genres. In this paper, I explore the different factors that shape visual and musical expression on local transport. After providing a description of this popular cultural formation, I identify two constructions as the most prominent organising sensibilities: a youth culture that celebrates modernity and the culture of an older generation that emphasises an ongoing relationship to tradition and nature.

Most research about the impact of increased consumption and globalisation in Indonesia, and Southeast Asia more broadly, has tended to focus on the wealthy upper class. Richard Tanter and Kenneth Young, in their introduction to The Politics of Middle Class Indonesia, which helped start a wave of analysis of the Indonesian middle class that flowed through the 1990s, set aside the broader question of class analysis in Indonesia in order to focus on the growing 'middle class'.1 Analysis of consumption, due to its links with capitalism, class and status, germinated within this body of work about the

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[1] They write: 'The general task of Indonesian class analysis is set aside in favour of a concentration on a particular segment felt to be of greater importance now than in the earlier history of independent Indonesia - the middle class' (Tanter, 2000, p. 9).

Indonesian 'new rich',2 who have had the greatest capacity to engage in conspicuous consumption. Later publications, such as the widely read New Rich in Asia series, have continued the trend of locating analysis of consumption in Indonesia within the analysis of the 'new rich'.3 However, the practices and politics of consumption have spread in Indonesia beyond the boundaries of the new rich. Other research into both consumption (Gerke, 2000, pp. 146-7) and the urban poor (Murray, 1991, p. 138) indicates that consumerism also influences the habits of the urban poor and working classes.

In this paper, I analyse a local expression of popular culture, made possible by the growth of consumption and globalisation in the lives of the urban working class. Public transport in Padang in the Indonesian province of West Sumatra, with its loud music, personalised ornamentation and elaborately painted panels, indicates the impact of globalisation in its two principal senses: the integration of markets and the global circulation of information including symbols. However, research about consumption must also be aware of the influence and importance of local conditions and histories. Chua Beng Huat argues that local cultural practices 'absorb [consumer] products into their own idiom' (2003, p. 15) while also reflecting the hierarchies of status integral to capitalist consumption (2003, p. 8). Such a model moves beyond the notions of unidirectional cultural exchange that framed earlier debates about cultural imperialism.

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[2] New rich is another way of referring to what others, such as Dick (1985), have termed the middle class while avoiding confusion over the more specific meaning given to the term 'middle class' by others (such as Robison, 1996, pp. 84-95) to differentiate them from the bourgeoisie.

[3] For instance, Ariel Heryanto conducted his important work on the politics of consumption within the limits of the 'new rich' (1999).

I first became interested in the *Angkutan* and *Bis Kota* while in Padang in July 2001 researching cultural policy for my doctoral dissertation. I met with a local researcher with a social science background who in passing complained about the noise of the music on public transport. He then related how the provincial government had attempted to ban the music but the drivers had responded by refusing to run routes and blockading terminals, after which the provincial government backed down.[4] Coming from a cultural studies background with an interest in popular culture, I decided to return to Padang and explore a local practice that was important enough to warrant a large protest against government interference.

This article explores public transport in Padang as 'intersections' of different influences that give rise to a unique popular culture with specific features and within which locals negotiate their own identities on a day to day basis. The framework for my analysis is drawn from Lawrence Grossberg's model for analysing popular culture. The article's starting point is Grossberg's statement that popular culture 'is increasingly visible, not only as an economic force, but as a powerful force of education and socialization, and as one of the primary ways in which people make sense of themselves, their lives and the world' (1992, p. 69). Popular culture on public transport in Padang is the result of a cultural formation, or a set of relationships between different cultural and social practices that have arisen due to specific economic and social conditions and events. Within the broader set of relationships of the cultural formation, each vehicle is considered an 'intersection' of popular culture where specific practices are articulated together – in

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[4] This was confirmed by interviews with drivers. A search of the national newspapers indicated that the protest was not widely publicised.

Grossberg's terminology as a 'local ... concretization of the more abstract cultural formation' (1992, p. 71). Local residents engage with the cultural formation in their daily routines, making negotiation with the politics and aesthetics of public transport an unremarkable but powerful aspect of everyday life in Padang.

I use the phrase 'popular culture' with the broad meaning of 'culture which is widely favoured or well liked by many people' (Bennett et al., 2005, p. 262). As the previous paragraph suggests, I have the opinion that popular culture is formed by intersections of histories at particular junctions, which reflect relationships of power, but do not necessarily mirror hierarchies of status or political influence between different groups. According to the definition adopted in this article, popular culture existed before mass production and mass communication, although the importance of the latter two phenomena in our lives, and the lives of public transport users in Padang, has profoundly influenced popular culture. The influence of the 'massification' of culture has not been uniform although similarities can be observed.

Padang, West Sumatra

Padang is the capital of West Sumatra, an Indonesian province in Sumatra, the second most populated island in the Indonesian archipelago. West Sumatra stretches 320 kilometres down the coastline and 160 kilometres inland to the centre of the mountain range that is the spine of central Sumatra. The majority of the inhabitants of the city and the province are the malay-speaking Minangkabau people. Minangkabau society combines a matrilineal system of inheritance with a commitment to modernist Islam,

features which have attracted a great deal of debate amongst academics regarding the circumstances that lead to what on its face appears to be a contradiction (Thomas and von Benda-Beckmann, 1985). Although it is a smaller province (of approximately 4.2 million according to the latest available population figures from 2000), West Sumatrans have had a disproportionate influence over Indonesian nationalism and identity. Leaders from the region, such as Indonesia's first Vice President Mohammad Hatta, were second to only the Javanese in the nationalist movement and Minangkabau writers, including Indonesia's most famous modernist poet, Chairil Anwar, were prominent in the development of Indonesian language literature. Although highly committed to the nationalist movement, West Sumatrans were opposed to the centralism of early Indonesian governments, which led to a short and unsuccessful rebellion against the central government in 1958.

After 1958, a much greater level of central control was asserted in the region and was intensified further under the Suharto regime (Kahin, 1999). Although the early expectations of West Sumatrans for a democratic and decentralised national system were disappointed, West Sumatrans have continued to pursue their desire for autonomy and improvement, notably through the Minangkabau tradition of temporary migration (*rantau*) that has spread West Sumatran people and food across Indonesia and beyond. The fall of Suharto in May 1998 was followed in Padang by student demonstrations calling for greater decentralisation and the end of the corruption that assisted the Suharto regime (Kahin, 1999, pp. 271-8). An example of the new found desire and capacity to assert local differences in the region was the push to return to the local *nagari* system of

village government from the autocratic *desa* system forcibly applied across Indonesia by the Suharto regime. The return of the *nagari* was driven by local conservative sentiment for a traditional cultural order, illustrating a trend across Indonesia towards revitalising traditional power structures that strengthen the position of local elites in the name of cultural authenticity (Schulte Nordholt, 2003). This kind of appeal to local cultural traditions contrasts with the experiences of locals on Padang's public transport, where a vibrant and diverse form of local cultural expression literally circles the city.

Popular Culture and Padang's Public Transport

Padang is far from the only city with bright and eclectic pictures on the local public transport or with loud music blaring from speakers seated beside local commuters. Catching public transport in Lombok in Eastern Indonesia provides an opportunity to sample local musical tastes at high volume. The metropolitan buses around Wonosobo in Central Java are also brightly painted with personalised pictures as are the rickshaws in Yogyakarta and certain trucks circling Java. Bright adornments are a feature of public transport in locations across Asia, such as the Philippines. John Lent (1995, p. 175) observes, 'Asian public transport vehicles … are a reflection, as well as a manifestation, of foreign and national popular cultures'. Popular culture has existed on public transport for a number of years. Commuters in Indonesia in the 1970s travelled between municipalities on tray-top trucks with locally constructed wooden shelters and seats, and with wooden or glass shutters over windows. These buses often had locally constructed sound systems, comparable to portable cassette players, playing popular music at a low volume. These buses were replaced in the 1980s with the style of buses common to most

countries. The system of private ownership of public transport in Indonesia, which still includes rickshaws, motorbikes and horse and carts, has led to greater investment in the decorative and experiential aspects of travel. As I explore in this paper, the personal and financial investment by drivers in their vehicles creates the opening where a popular culture takes shape.

Popular images and music are consequently not unique to Padang's public transport, but typological uniqueness may not be the best criteria for assessing popular cultural forms in an age defined by globalisation. In his analysis of Australian reality television, Graeme Turner (2005, p. 416) suggests that the genre demonstrates 'that the way to examine 'the local' in such process these days may well be through mapping processes of appropriation and adaptation rather than through the proposition of a thoroughgoing specificity or uniqueness.' Like Chua, Turner's emphasis on appropriation and adaptation indicates that within the impact of globalisation, creative adaptation to local conditions both determines the rate of uptake and generates local hybrid forms. In Padang, new technologies have been embraced on public transport to a degree not encountered in other locations, creating the conditions for adaptation and integration into everyday life that were absent from other locations. The next two sections, on the two primary forms of public transport in Padang, describe the characteristics of the music, ornamentation and images. The final section identifies and analyses important structural features of the cultural formation.

Angkutan

Angkutan are small vans with benches around the edge of the enclosed space behind the driver and passenger seats, commonly used to transport passengers locally for a small fee. The drivers are almost entirely male and most are under thirty. Passengers tend to be either school children or working class adults. Middle and upper class adults generally have their own vehicles. Many of the *angkutan* in Padang also function as mobile stereo systems turned up loud. In 2001, Indonesian (particularly Clarion) or Taiwanese radio-tape players were the most popular choice amongst drivers. A 300 watt player with a seven band graphic equaliser cost $95[5] (Rp. 500 000), which at the time was approximately two months of the nominal Indonesian wage. Most *angkutan* drivers received less than the average wage. Sony was considered the best player but at a cost of $190 (four months of the average wage), was rarely used. A complete system, with a slight discount, cost approximately $190.[6] However, there are 'super systems' in a few *angkutan* that cost $950 (ten months average wages) and include a VCD player and television suspended in the air to cushion the equipment from the bumpy Indonesian roads.[7]

Most of my research was with the drivers whose practices, opinions and tastes are integral to how music is played on the *angkutan*. I chatted often to Edy, a young driver who liked *slow rock* music, generally from Malaysia. Edy varied his choice of music depending on the time of day and the weather. If it was during the daytime and dry, Edy played a genre known in Padang as *tripping*. *Tripping* is fast music with loud simple bass

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[5] All of the monetary values are in Australian dollars.
[6] Speakers cost $38 for a 300 watt bass speakers and $75 for two 100 watt vocal speakers. Most drivers also use tweeters (small speakers for treble) costing $7.50 per speaker.
[7] The exchange rate in December 2001 was approximately $1 AU:5,500 RP and $1US:10,500 RP.

lines and ranges in influence from punk rock to house music. Indonesian *house* at times has influences from *Dangdut* while the imported *house* music was much like *techno* music heard in Australia. *Dangdut* is a form of popular music with its genesis in Indonesia that drew from older style Malay orchestras, Indian film songs and used Islamic lyrics. Now *Dangdut* is local, national and international in its production and influences.[8] *Dangdut* is now popular throughout Southeast Asia. *Tripping* was popular with school children who had a reputation amongst drivers for not getting on *angkutan* if they did not like the music or the sound system. When it rained, Edy played local *Minang* music more popular with older passengers who had no alternative transport. I was in Padang during school holidays and many drivers, but by no means all, were playing *Minang* music or *Dangdut* to attract older passengers.

An example from my fieldwork demonstrates the importance of the 'music menu' to passengers when they choose to get on an *angkutan*. Edy wanted me to hear a cassette he had recently purchased while he drove around his route. Instead of putting the cassette in while we were in the terminal, he put on a popular Indonesian pop-punk band while passengers entered his *angkutan*. He only put on his cassette, by a less well-known Indonesian artist, once he had left the terminal. Hearing popular music in a variety of genres influenced passenger transport choices, particularly amongst school children who had the time to wait for the next bus, but also amongst older passengers. Different genres of music appealed to different passenger types, indicating a nexus between economics, hierarchies of taste and identification with different social groups.

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[8] The appeal of *Dangdut* has made it a favourite with Indonesian political parties who employ the most popular bands to draw at times thousands of people to their political rallies.

Music heard on the *angkutan* is therefore a mixture of Western, Indonesian, Minang and Southeast Asian genres. While there is a simple generalisation, made by passengers and drivers, that younger passengers prefer Western *techno*, Indonesian *punk* and *pop* whereas older passengers prefer local *Minang* music, there are genres that disturb this division. Malay *slow rock* was perceived to cross the generational divide, although older passengers are not as fond of Western *slow rock*, and *dangdut*, with its hybrid style and national and international connotations (Sen and Hill, 2000, p. 174), was well-liked by older passengers. A new development in 2001 was the local production of techno music that employed local artists and used the local Minangkabau language. The local artist and producer Nedi Gampo, with a style defined as *disco house* (*disco huss*), was popular amongst younger passengers travelling on the *angkutan*.

Another driver, Erik, also emphasised sound quality, saying it was important to passengers. He used original tapes as he found the quality was far better than copied tapes. A large number of music stores are located in bus terminals, where they play music loudly to waiting drivers and passengers, providing access for drivers and passengers to the latest musical offerings. An owner of a music store emphasised the attraction of music to passengers, 'Drivers often buy new music from me to attract passengers, particularly schoolkids.' While there exists an economic and a status imperative for purchasing new music, this should not be divorced from the personal connection between the driver and his music. Most *angkutan* drivers work for approximately twelve hours a day with breaks. Ahmad, a young driver, repeated the same one hour trip nine to ten

times a day, six days a week. Given the repetitive nature of the work, the music assumes a special place in the daily routines of the driver. Most drivers stated that while they were aware of the tastes of the passengers, they only played music that they liked. However, music choice is a form of consumption that locates the driver within a cultural formation.

Another feature of the *angkutan* was the personalised ornaments drivers placed in and on their vehicles, which, as Lent observes in relation to ornamentation on public transport in Asia, 'become the medium through which owners reflect popular tastes' (1995, p. 174). The ornaments tended to reflect the age and gender of the drivers and their purchasing capacity. Due to the low incomes of the *angkutan* drivers, ornaments tended to be mass produced. Stickers, in both Indonesian and English, were common. The youth and gender of the drivers was reflected in their choices. For instance, one young driver had a 'ska' sticker across the top of his windshield. Ska is a variation of reggae music that became internationally popular for a brief period in the late 1990s and was popular in Indonesia in 2001 (Wallach, 2002, pp. 84,88). As a national trend in youth culture with international overtones, ska generated new meanings, which could be at times more important than its original meaning. For instance, the driver of this vehicle preferred other kinds of music. However, he did like Juventus, the Italian soccer team that has marketed itself internationally so successfully that, despite falling home attendances, it attracts more sponsorship money than Manchester United (Marcotti, 2005). Two Juventus flags protruding from his dashboard in front of his cassette player reflect the obsession of younger Indonesian males with international soccer and provide a reference point for passengers. European soccer matches are broadcast nationally across Indonesia and the

Indonesian language soccer magazine, *Bola*, is nationally distributed. A similar set of references are made through the 'McLaren' sticker on the front of another *angkutan* (pictured). Other ornaments are less ostentatiously linked to international youth culture, such as beads or crystals hanging from the rear-view mirror and coloured windscreen wipers.

Bis Kota

The *bis kota* differed from *angkutan* in that they generated more profit and have more personalised ornamentation. My focus here is on the elaborately painted panels with only limited discussion of other ornaments and music. *Bis Kota* are small buses used to transport passengers on longer trips, generally between regional centres. The drivers and passengers tended to be older and the cost of trips more expensive when compared to the *angkutan*. The feature that dominated *bis kota* in Padang was the air-brushed panels on their sides and rear. A back panel costs between $30 and $48 while a set of two side panels and a back panel costs $95.

The themes of the panels can be divided into three categories. The first category encompasses global popular culture themes. These included pictures of a Ferrari, Spiderman, a warrior, and a local version of Popeye complete with spinach. The images here were drawn from globally circulating images and objects. Two of the images are worthy of greater attention. A picture of New York depicts a sunset over Manhattan, with the statue of liberty, in the foreground, separated from the city by the blue waters of the bay and green trees along the shoreline. The city is bathed in an orange glow, depicting a

busy, clean, modern ideal. The depiction of New York exists in a dichotomy with Padang, with its low rise and marginal international position. In the second picture, Spiderman hangs in front of and looking directly at the viewer, with his hand making a skateboarding symbol common to youth culture globally. A twist to Spiderman is that he is hanging in front of a waterfall, rather than in his usual city habitat. Padang is surrounded by mountains and nature constitutes the second category of themes discussed below. Spiderman's relocation to the mountains places him in West Sumatra, adapting the global to local sensibilities.

The second and largest category was themes drawn from nature. These included pictures of fishermen in idyllic rural settings, landscapes against backdrops of mountains, panda bears and a hen and her chicks being guarded by a rooster. These themes have two interesting sets of connections. First, the romanticised rural scenes in particular reference an older form of globalisation linked to imperialism. The landscape genre of painting became popular in Indonesia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, influencing a generation of Indonesian artists including a famous Minangkabau artist, Wakidi. Landscape art is still prominent in art produced for the local and tourist markets. Landscapes painted on the *bis kota* constitute a local version of a globally popular genre. Second, the local *saluang* music[9] also draws many of its themes from nature, indicating that depictions of nature cut across different forms of cultural expression in the region. The greater incidence of this theme also reflects the older age of the *bis kota* drivers compared with the *angkutan* drivers. Similarly, their musical tastes tend towards *dangdut*

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[9] *Saluang* consists of bamboo flutes and singers who take turns singing both rehearsed and improvised lyrics.

and local *Minang* music. An interesting variation on this theme was a stylised depiction of a customary *Minang* house (*rumah adat Minang*) using a graphic style of painting. The picture is modern in form, stripping the traditional house of any unique characteristics, turning it into a symbol of indigenousness or ethnic background. As such it has entered a realm of symbols that are perfected by their representation rather than their detail (1991, pp. 183-5). While this is an extreme example, landscapes drawn in this theme tend not to rely on the depiction a specific place, instead connecting the viewer to a sensibility related to the location of the city of Padang on the edge of mountains, and connections between the urban population and the rural villages to which many locals trace their roots.

The third category encompasses Islamic themes. The existence of Islamic themed panels at all indicates that the drivers do not follow the teachings of a strict Islam that does not allow figurative art. However, the panels did not depict the prophet or historical events as has historically been the case with Christian art. The panels instead centred on the place of Islam in the lives of owners. One owner-driver paid $38 for a picture of the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) he attended as a youth to be painted on his rear panel. He emphasised his ongoing spiritual connection with his *pesantren*. The panel indicated a religious upbringing and a continuing connection to the Islamic practices and beliefs he learnt as a young student. The experience of a *pesantren* education is common to Muslims across Indonesia. The second Islamic themed panel was on a *bis kota* driven by a hired driver. He interpreted the picture of the three ladies reading the Koran in front of a mosque as protecting the bus on the road and maybe bringing profit, and the ladies

themselves as having a personal connection to the owner. Again, the picture emphasised an ongoing commitment to Islamic beliefs and practices.

Unlike buses in most Western countries, advertising is completely absent. While images also function as a means to get passengers to differentiate one bus from another, a more important element of the panels is their function as an outlet for the self expression of drivers. Since they are more personal, the panels have a different relationship to local popular culture, where they engage with the sensibilities of the local working class rather than projecting the messages of big business. These sensibilities are explored in the following section, which draws from the descriptions of *angkutan* and *bis kota* to analyse the features of working class popular culture in Padang.

The Logic of the Cultural Formation on Padang's Public Transport

For locals, *angkutan* and *bis kota* in Padang are unremarkable intersections of symbols, styles and social forces that they negotiate on a daily basis. These expressions of popular culture were made possible by that mundane form of globalisation where new, affordable technological goods and services, like stereo systems and airbrushing, thought to be devoid of cultural content, are integrated into everyday life. There they intersect with economics and marketing (driven by regional, national and international forces), the work conditions of the drivers, the routines of passengers, and the socio-cultural experiences of locals.

The Role of Drivers and their Relationship to Passengers

The passengers I interviewed tended to be passionate about their music tastes. A lady aged in her mid-30s loved *dangdut* but could not stand 'foreign music', meaning *tripping* and *techno*. The music menu is important to passengers and influences their perceptions of a journey. Drivers respond to the perceived tastes of their passengers through their choice of music, which can change throughout the day with the changing profile of passengers. Particular styles of music are also affiliated with particular *angkutan*, which can influence passenger choices, particularly in the case of high-school students. The driver is in almost exclusive control of the music. Passengers do not request songs or ask for the details of a song and there is little interaction between the driver and passengers. Passengers sometimes asked drivers to turn the music down and they do so until that passenger departs. There are rarely complaints about the music or its volume. The drivers' role in respect to the music is much like a radio DJ, who makes judgements based on musical knowledge, audience perceptions and his/her own musical tastes. They draw on other drivers, television and most importantly the cassette stores in terminals for new music. The entrepreneurial role is tempered by the drivers' desire to play the music they enjoy and to which they relate. The interaction is therefore complex, multifaceted and multiple – like all cultural interactions. Each driver and passenger has their own likes and dislikes which are confirmed and negotiated everyday within a system shaped by preconceived ideas about passenger tastes, a form of marketing, and, as I discuss below, diverging sensibilities amongst Padang's working class.

The Local and the Modern

Discussions of location and modernity are the topics of international debates and a number of academic publications (including this article), flowing from debates over

globalisation and social change. Representations in popular culture on Padang's public transport indicate the importance of these topics in the lives of Padang's working classes. Music and ornamentation on both the *angkutan* and *bis kota* indicate a dichotomy between representations of the *local* and the *modern* that is reinforced by a generational divide and the presence of youth culture. By local, I refer to a particular set of ideas about locality and tradition, quite modern itself in form, that attempt to capture the essence of localness rather than the reproduction of particular indigenous styles. Older drivers and passengers are attracted to themes and forms of music linked to nature, tradition and Islam. While a number of Islamic youth magazines have begun since the relaxation of publishing licences in 1998, their focus on urban youth is quite different from the images on *bis kota*. Younger drivers and passengers are drawn to a more global, cosmopolitan youth culture that is a mixture of globally circulating consumer goods and symbols and Indonesian and Western popular music for youth, with the Indonesian varieties receiving more playing time. Youth culture is central in this division. Its importance to the lives of young working class men underlies the desire of younger drivers for the symbols of modern youth, giving testament to the reach of markets and communications.

The distinction between *local* and *modern* indicates a distinction between products and practices represented as traditional and those represented as modern. This distinction is powered by markets and consumption that engage and interest the working class. For instance, younger drivers consumption of new popular music, both Indonesian and international, allows them to seek an alternative to traditional practices in their everyday lives. The *modern*, it should be emphasised, is not simply consumed but, like Spiderman,

relocated to Padang and integrated into popular understandings of place. An indication that the division between *local* and *modern* is about socio-cultural divisions traced onto generations is a passenger's distinction between 'local' and 'foreign' music mentioned in the previous section. According to its logic, Nedi Gampo, who as I mentioned previously is a local artist who records his music in Padang using the Minangkabau language, is making foreign music because it is *disco house*. As such, popular culture on public transport in Padang celebrates two alternative views about life in Padang. The first links individuals to a locale with tradition and natural beauty. The second emphasises linkages between individuals and a contemporary, urban culture containing the latest styles and trends, presenting Padang as a node in a broader circuit of cultural movements, or needing to become such a node.

While these two themes are the most prominent, the most common organising scale in the popular culture formation is the nation, although it is rarely directly visible. There is a certain irony in the national aspect of popular culture, as key political ideologues since independence have been completely opposed to consumer culture, as in the case of Sukarno, or, in the case of Suharto, highly ambivalent (Jones, 2005, pp. 92-175). The nation is well hidden. No vehicles exhibited explicitly nationalist symbols such as the national flag or nationalist slogans. However, in many cases the national frames local and global themes. The Indonesian language is used for many genres of popular music played on public transport and most slogans adorning vehicles are in Indonesian. Global popular culture, such as European soccer and comics, are distributed and mediated through national systems of circulation. Many musical styles are popular across Indonesia as are

global consumer items such as Disney stickers and toys, which come with Indonesian language packaging and washing instructions. The forebears of 'Indonesian' contemporary fine art used the 'landscape' style before younger painters rejected it because of its connections to colonialism. Now it is a popular style across Indonesia. Jeremy Wallach writes that 'three decades of the New Order's aggressive economic development policies may well have resulted in a more unified popular culture coupled with a more polarised society' (2002, p. 88).

An Example of a Cultural Intersection: the Disney Bus

In considering public transport as a site of socialisation, local, national and global symbols and discourses cannot be considered mutually exclusive or inclusive. Chua's previously mentioned observation that local cultural practices absorb consumer products into their own 'idiom', is clearly the case with air brushing and music on Padang's public transport. However, the notion of 'idiom' is too broad. Understanding what works in a specific 'intersection' provides an opportunity to analyse the personal politics of the working class.

A *bis kota* that I travelled on while returning from one of Padang's outer suburbs provides an interesting illustration of the different elements that interweave into working class popular culture. This *bis kota*'s panels depicted Disney cartoon figures on the outside of the bus and on transfers on the windows and a number of furry figurines hung from the roof. Indonesian youth will wear clothing and accessories with depictions of Disney cartoon characters until a much older age than Australian youth, and Disney apparel can be found across Indonesia. Indonesian language pop music was playing

loudly through the customised speakers. The presence of Disney and Indonesian pop linked the bus to Indonesian youth culture, where global images are linked to a national popular culture through economies of distribution. The appeal to youth culture had drawn younger passengers. Three young men stood around the younger male driver listening to the music and chatting and there were a larger number of younger people on the bus than was generally the case. As such, the driver's use of youth culture had a marketing appeal to a segment of Padang's population and could be expected to attract a large number of teenagers. Older passengers would most likely avoid the bus where possible. The airbrushed pictures and loud music, made possible by the integration of these new technologies into Padang's public transport, reinforced a sensibility of global youth culture, although adapted to local conditions through the Indonesian band and the locally painted pictures. The bus was linked into global representations of youth, adapted to a national market. It differentiated younger people from older generations and representations of Padang as a quiet locale with natural beauty.

Conclusion

The importance of place in working class popular culture reflects the impacts of social changes on the lives of working class in West Sumatra. This can be contrasted to the conspicuous consumption of the Indonesian new rich, which Antlov (1999) argues has caused a division between the new rich and other social groups. Market integration has shifted populations towards regional centres and altered daily practices. Working class popular culture in Padang provides a reflection on these changes, making use of sounds and images provided by the globalisation of markets, which is the major cause of these

social changes. The primary division identified in this paper is the celebration of the modern in youth culture versus the continued connection to tradition and nature found in the popular culture of older generations. The socio-cultural divide here is itself in part a creation of global markets, where the construction of youth overlaps with the experiences of Padang's younger generations. However, both sides of this division are also often celebrations of where they live. Working class popular culture on Padang's *angkutan* and *bis kota* demonstrates the embrace of new technologies and consumer goods to explore everyday life and to find new expressions and interests. Commuters enter a locally specific intersection of markets, messages and technologies, which they accept, reject or ignore, every time they are transported around the city.

Acknowledgements

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