

## Negotiating Autonomy: Art Workers, Media, and the Cultural Industries in Indonesia

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigates the autonomy of art workers within the Indonesian cultural industry through a case study of two local television stations, ADiTV and Bali TV. The main objective is to examine how art workers maintain their autonomy while navigating the demands of the market and the organizational values imposed by their institutions.

**Methods:** This study adopts a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with television managers, art workers, and observers. The observers interviewed in this study were individuals with a deep and long-standing concern for the dynamics of local television. ADiTV and Bali TV were selected as research sites due to their distinctive characteristics. ADiTV operates as a local television channel with an Islamic missionary orientation, while Bali TV is embedded within the *Ajeg* Bali cultural movement.

**Findings:** This study found that the autonomy of art workers in the cultural industry on local television shows a negotiated position. This study found that economic interests in pursuing profits and mass production within the cultural industry do not always harm the autonomy of art workers. Pressures on art workers actually come from non-market forces that are more cultural, such as Islamic values on ADiTV or *Ajeg* Bali on Bali TV.

**Originality:** This research contributes to the debate on artists' autonomy in the local television. By taking non-economic factors into account in determining artists' autonomy, this study makes an essential contribution to the discussion on artists' autonomy in the cultural industry, which tends to emphasize commercial factors.

**Keywords:** Art Workers, Negotiated Autonomy, Cultural Industry, Local Television.

### Introduction

The autonomy of art workers in the cultural industry has been a matter of debate among social scientists. The pioneers of cultural industry analysis, [Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer \(2006\)](#), from the Frankfurt School, have questioned the autonomy of art workers. Like their pessimistic analysis of the role of the cultural industry in society, Adorno and Horkheimer also expressed pessimism about the autonomy of art workers in the context of cultural industry production. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the autonomy of art workers has been subjugated and surrendered to the market's drive to produce mass culture standardized to market needs.

In modern society, arts workers often face challenges in their relationship with the market, which can lead to strategies of separation and the maintenance of the cultural sphere's autonomy ([Featherstone, 1992](#)). However, they are also involved in interdependence and power competition with other groups, especially economists, which encourages them to use the market to reach broader audiences and increase their social

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power. This situation has given rise to the so-called art versus commerce dilemma, which concerns cultural products and their consumption, as well as cultural labor--and, thus, the autonomy of workers (Barna & Blaskó, 2021).

According to Yucheng Liu (2024), autonomy is an ambiguous concept because it is shaped by how art workers construct it in relation to the market or the state. The market is considered a threat to the autonomy of art workers, along with political regulations (Kann-Rasmussen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2021) and the attitudes of dominant groups in society toward minorities (Beirne et al., 2017; Hamdaoui, 2021; Kuokkanen, 2024; Røyseng, 2019; Sasaki & Baba, 2024). As a result, both cultural autonomy and the autonomy of art workers have received significant scholarly attention among social scientists since the mid-1970s, with capitalism identified as the social system that fundamentally shapes the autonomy of art workers (Wikström, 2025).

Banks (2010) defines autonomy as the capacity of individuals (and also institutions and organizations) to exercise discretion or freedom of choice. According to Banks, the subject of autonomy is an individual who can determine the pattern and form of their own life. In the current era of the cultural industry, where artistic and cultural creativity has become a commodity to be sold (Lee, 2022; Su, 2015), discussions about the autonomy of workers are intensifying, especially amid demands for the commercialization of cultural products. This has given rise to several perspectives in viewing the autonomy of cultural workers (Banks, 2010). The *first* perspective, pioneered by the Frankfurt School, posits that the industrialization of art and cultural production gradually dominates and erodes the autonomy of cultural workers. An artist or creative worker is relegated to being part of a machine. They become only 'detail' workers, bound by contracts, employer orders, and demands to adjust their creativity to predetermined schemes and formats.

The *second* perspective refers to neo-Foucauldian governmentality. This perspective states that workers are trained to accept and reproduce their own conditions of subordination (Banks, 2010). This perspective does not reject the freedom of cultural workers, as the Frankfurt School does, but it does raise the discussion about the suppression of creativity. This perspective firmly argues that flexibility and freelance work are good things and increase autonomy. However, they obscure their true aims and effects, such as reducing costs, blurring the distinction between work and non-work environments, and weakening the distinction between those who work and those who do not. This neo-Foucauldian perspective argues that the freedoms granted to artists are illusory. Managers and capitalists grant art workers freedoms only to the extent that they can accommodate the needs of the commodity market.

The *third* perspective, Bank (2010) identifies with Pierre Bourdieu. In Bourdieu's view, the world of art and cultural production is characterized by the pursuit of various types of capital, particularly economic capital in the form of income and profit. Additionally, there is symbolic capital in the form of legitimacy, prestige, and devotion (Banks, 2010), it is the artists themselves who betray the possibility of autonomy through their disguised actions because autonomy and agency are directed only at the individual's pursuit of status, prestige, and other external rewards.

Barna and Blaskó (2021) suggest that studies on autonomy are primarily conducted in global center countries, such as England, and those in Europe. This trend occurs because these countries are centers of the cultural industry and have a strong presence in high art history. In high art, artworks are for art's sake and not for commercial purposes. The tendency is slightly different in countries where the cultural industry is located in peripheral areas, such as those in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, for example, although

debates about culture have occurred throughout most of Indonesia's independence (Jones, 2015), political authoritarianism has prevented many from discussing the autonomy of art workers. While the television industry has grown significantly since the late 1980s, discussions about the autonomy of art workers have been almost nonexistent. Instead, studies of television in Indonesia generally employ a mainstream political economy perspective, dominated by themes of ownership and diversity (Armando, 2014b; Masduki et al., 2023; Nainggolan, 2018; Rahayu et al., 2024; Souisa, 2020), as well as media regulation (Wahyuni, 2016). Other studies with a cultural approach, for example, are somewhat limited, such as those conducted by Barkin (2006) or Rianto et al. (2024).

The presence of local television in Indonesia's broadcasting landscape is not new; however, its emergence following the enactment of Broadcasting Law No. 32 of 2002 is noteworthy for at least three reasons. *First*, the presence of local television results from the struggle among the government, capital, and civil society to support the democratization of broadcasting (Armando, 2014a). *Second*, the birth of local television carries a crucial cultural mission. Local television is expected to serve as a counterculture to national television, which is a cultural agent at the national and global levels (Hendrawan, 2017). Therefore, its existence is expected to voice local culture and identity, which has been marginalized by national television (Armando, 2014a). *Third*, most local television is commercial, so it is not much different from national television; local television is also profit-oriented. In such situations, tension is inevitable between artists and commercial interests.

While political economy dominates national television studies, studies on local television in Indonesia have been dominated by studies that focus on the role of local television in representing local culture and identity (Bogaerts, 2017; Hendrawan, 2017; Putri et al., 2018) or a political economy and media ecology (Fadhilah et al., 2016; Maryani et al., 2018). Within the first line of approach, the role of local television as a cultural guardian is not only confronted with national culture but also with global culture. For instance Haryono et al. (2025), argue that when national television fails to represent culture, local television is expected to serve as a guardian of local culture. Similarly, Astuti et.al (2024) employ an economic perspective to examine the dynamics of local television by emphasizing a much more specific niche market, namely religious programming.

Despite these contributions, none of the aforementioned studies has directly addressed the autonomy of art workers in the local television cultural industry. At the global level, research on local television has likewise overlooked the issue of art workers' autonomy. Most of these studies have concentrated on the role of regional television in serving community needs through news broadcasting (Brown & Chin Roemer, 2016; Calfano et al., 2022; Edy et al., 2024; Midberry & Walters, 2025). Other studies have examined local television viewing (O'Brochta, 2022). Yet within this body of scholarship, no attempt has been made to investigate the autonomy of art workers in the local television cultural industry. Although the aforementioned studies provide valuable insights into the dynamics of local television, they fail to examine those of cultural industry workers. In fact, the products of local television are symbolic and therefore cannot be detached from their position within the cultural industry (Garnham, 2000; Si, 2017). Hence, discussions of art workers' autonomy become crucial. Accordingly, this study offers a new perspective on local television by focusing on the independence of art workers within its cultural industry. By investigating the autonomy of art workers in this

context, the study contributes to theoretical debates on artistic autonomy, a discourse initiated by [Adorno and Horkheimer \(2006\)](#).

This study argues that the commercial orientation of local television influences art workers' autonomy, albeit to varying degrees. At one time, market interests limit art workers' autonomy, while at other times they expand it. Therefore, this study aligns with [Banks' \(2010\)](#) concept of compromised or negotiated autonomy. The argument is that art workers are unique and cannot be equated with workers in other industrial sectors. In other words, art workers are not easily replaced, and creativity in art requires autonomy. In addition, values outside economics must be considered, especially in a society where national and local cultural tensions are high, such as Indonesia ([Jones, 2015](#)). This is because the values and 'ideological' interests of local television sometimes have greater power in shaping television programs than commercial interests.

The investigation of art workers' autonomy itself within the cultural industry of local television is crucial for at least two reasons. *First*, if local TV is expected to serve as a guardian of local culture, then cultural programming becomes central. In this regard, the expression of culture on local television is primarily determined by the autonomy of art workers. Here, autonomy is understood as the extent to which art workers can express culture while facing external pressures, whether economic or non-economic. *Second*, positioning cultural programs as central to local television highlights the importance of engaging with the notion of the cultural sphere. Autonomy, as an integral and enduring concept in political economy reflections on the relationship between culture and economy ([Kim, 2009](#)), becomes essential in this context. Once culture is transformed into an industry, the autonomy of cultural workers vis-à-vis external interventions becomes questionable, as the cultural industry continually seeks to exploit new markets. Consequently, cultural products inevitably become subject to market demands.

## Methods

This study examines the autonomy of art workers in the local television industry in Indonesia, using ADiTV and Bali TV. This study employed a qualitative approach utilizing a case study strategy. The research was conducted from 2023 to 2024. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted with ADiTV and Bali TV managers, art workers involved in cultural programs, observers, and members of the Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPID). Interviews focused mainly on television missions, commercial orientation, and how art workers are given space to express themselves. Interviews with observers, including researchers, lecturers, and media activists, were conducted to enrich the discussion of the dynamics of cultural programming on local television. All the informants interviewed in this study are listed in [Table 1](#). As shown in [Table 1](#), they come from diverse backgrounds.

Table 1. Informants Demographic

No.	Infomants	Gender	Ocupational Background	Age
1	Informan 1	Male	Television directur	65
2	Informan 2	Female	Program manager	27
3	Informan 3	Male	Program manager	40
4	Informan 4	Male	Editor in chief	55
5	Informan 5	Male	Art worker	57

6	Informan 6	Female	Lecture/media activist	45
7	Informan 7	Male	Researcher/media activist	59

Note: There were seven informants in this study, consisting of 5 males and two females

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. In the first stage, all interviews were transcribed. The second stage involved thematic coding of the data, while the third stage focused on data presentation and conclusion drawing. Two key considerations underlie the selection of these two local television stations as case studies. The first concerns their geographic and cultural locations. ADiTV operates in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, while Bali TV is based in Bali. Both regions are widely recognized as cultural centers and occupy significant positions of reference in discussions of Indonesian culture (Jones, 2015; Larasati, 2022). The second consideration concerns their status as commercial broadcasters. This commercial orientation provides a compelling context for examining the tensions that may emerge between market imperatives and the artistic ideals of cultural workers (Banks, 2010; Garnham, 2000).

## Results

The history of television in Indonesia began with the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia Television (TVRI) as part of President Sukarno's lighthouse project. TVRI was established on Independence Day on August 17, 1962. Its birth cannot be separated from President Soekarno's ambition to compete with Japan, which had already mastered television technology, on the one hand, and to promote Indonesia during the 1963 Asian Games on the other (Sudibyo, 2004). At its inception, TVRI broadcast for three hours a day and had only one relay station in Yogyakarta. Starting in the 1970s, TVRI began to develop by establishing several regional stations (Sen & Hill, 2000). However, local TVRI broadcasts (regional TVRI) have limited broadcast hours due to resource constraints, including both financial and human resources. According to Hince Panjaitan (1999), TVRI's de facto monopoly lasted until 1990, but regulatory updates occurred in 1971, 1986, and 1987. The third stage of renewal in 1987 marked a crucial moment for liberalization in Indonesia's broadcasting sector, foreshadowing the dominance of private television in the current broadcasting system. Through the Decree of the Minister of Information of the Republic of Indonesia Number 190A / KEP / MENPEN / 1987 dated October 20, 1987, the government opened up opportunities for private television to participate through the Limited Broadcast System (*Sistem Siaran Terbatas* (SST)) arrangement. The critical point of this decision is the affirmation that the Directorate of Television of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Indonesia, in addition to organizing General Channel Broadcasts (*Sistem Siaran Umum* (SSU)), also gives authority to the TVRI Foundation to organize SST for the Jakarta area and its surroundings (Panjaitan, 1999).

In implementing the decision, the TVRI Foundation, as the authorized party, may appoint another party through a cooperation agreement with the other party, provided that the agreement benefits the community. In addition, SST can be inserted into commercial broadcasts. The other party referred to in the Ministerial Decree is PT Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (or now known as RCTI). RCTI received a principal permit from the Indonesian Ministry of Information and the Director of Television/Director of the TVRI Foundation on October 28, 1987, No. 557/DIR/TV/1987, to participate in organizing SST. In 1988, this was followed by a cooperation agreement between the Director of the

TVRI Foundation and the Director of RCTI, who was appointed to organize SST. The public can enjoy the broadcast by subscribing. RCTI has relationships with commercial broadcasting institutions established in Bandung, Surabaya, and Denpasar. Although its permit prohibits it from networking, RCTI buys and makes programs for related broadcasting institutions (see [Souisa, 2020](#)).

In 1990, RCTI renewed its contract with TVRI and changed its name to Jakarta Private Public Television Broadcasting Station (SPTSU), with unlimited broadcast hours (24 hours) per day, up from the previous 18 hours. Since July 1991, RCTI has been permitted to utilize the Palapa satellite, enabling households with satellite dishes to receive RCTI broadcasts. Only in January 1993 did RCTI receive permission to broadcast nationally, with its headquarters in Jakarta. This was a joint broadcast between RCTI Jakarta and RCTI Bandung.

In 1990, Surya Citra Television (SCTV) went on air as the second private television station with a limited broadcast scope. SCTV was established in Surabaya to serve the broadcast needs of the Surabaya area and its surrounding regions. SCTV shares were owned by Bimantara (owned by Bambang Trihatmojo, the second son of President Soeharto) before being restructured in 1996 to allow both to share facilities and programs ([Souisa, 2020](#)). This limited broadcast policy was dissolved in January 1991, when the Indonesian Educational Television (TPI) was established. By conducting educational television, TPI became the first commercial television station to obtain a national broadcasting license, surpassing RCTI and SCTV ([Souisa, 2020](#)). The birth of the television owned by President Soeharto's eldest daughter was unique because it lacked sufficient facilities at the time of its establishment, and therefore "piggybacked" on TVRI's broadcast facilities. The granting of TPI's permit for national broadcasting and access to the national market gave TPI significant advantages over its predecessors, RCTI and SCTV. This has invited 'jealousy' and encouraged 'sibling rivalry,' and has further deregulated the industry through Ministerial Decree No. 4A/1993, which allowed all private channels to broadcast nationally via the Palapa satellite. Thus, it can be said that the emergence of TPI became a precursor to the development of national private television, while also undermining the network system that had been established since the inception of private television in Indonesia.

After the authoritarian system of President Suharto fell in 1998, major reforms emerged, with the main agenda being the democratization of politics and the media. This reform manifested itself in the decentralization of government administration through Law No. 22/1999 concerning Regional Government and in the democratization of media through Press Law No. 40 of 1999. One of the critical points of the regional government law is the granting of autonomy to regional governments in granting broadcasting permits (Article 7 of Law No. 22/1999).

The first private local television station in Indonesia is Riau TV. This local television station was established in Pekanbaru, Riau, on May 20, 2001. PT Riau Media Television, a subsidiary of the Riau Pos Group, established Riau Television (RTV). This company is a subsidiary of the Jawa Pos Group, headquartered in Surabaya, one of Indonesia's largest local media groups. After Riau TV, the Jawa Post group established Jawa Timur TV (JTV). This station began broadcasting on November 8, 2001. The initial capital for establishing JTV was around Rp. 50 billion with operational funds at the beginning of its operation, between Rp. 800 million-1.2 billion. As a strong local media group network, JTV has adequate infrastructure and resources compared to other television stations established at the beginning of the reformation, such as Lombok TV,

Balikpapan TV, and Manado TV. JTV serves people in East Java, such as Gresik, Bangkalan, Mojokerto, Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Lamongan. On May 26, 2002, the Bali Post media group (another of the largest local media) established Bali TV. Bali TV also has adequate resources, including capital, human resources, and infrastructure. The initial capital for establishing Bali TV was around Rp. 30 billion. ABG Satria Naradha, President Director of Bali TV, stated that "*Bali TV was designed to preserve customs and traditions.*" (Haryadi et al., 2001). The spirit of regional autonomy has encouraged various initiatives from local figures and entrepreneurs to establish local television stations, which are expected to contribute to the democratization of media and culture at the local level. The presence of local television is expected to dismantle the television industry's monopoly, which is controlled by certain capital groups that represent and serve only specific interests. In addition, the presence of local television is expected to decentralize capital and economic profits, in line with the spirit of regional autonomy, while fostering diversity (Armando, 2014a). In this case, the euphoria surrounding democracy and political decentralization at the beginning of the reform era created a highly conducive environment for the emergence of local television stations, even though many of them were established with limited capital (Haryadi et al., 2001). Following the ratification of Law No. 32 of 2002, local television experienced even faster growth due to the legal guarantees it received. Article 6, paragraph (3) of Law No. 32 of 2002 states, 'In the national broadcasting system, there are broadcasting institutions and fair and integrated network patterns that are developed by forming network stations and local stations.'

The guarantee of local television's existence is manifested in three types of broadcasting institutions: local public broadcasting, community broadcasting, and local private broadcasting. The existence of public broadcasting is guaranteed in Article 14, paragraph (3), which states, 'Local Public Broadcasting Institutions may be established in provincial, district, or city areas.' Local private broadcasting institutions are mentioned in Article 31, paragraph (1) and paragraph (5). Article 31 paragraph (1) of Law No. 32 concerning Broadcasting states that broadcasting institutions that provide radio broadcasting services or television broadcasting services consist of network broadcasting stations and/or local broadcasting stations, while paragraph (5) states that local broadcasting stations may be established in specific locations within the territory of the Republic of Indonesia with a broadcast coverage area limited to that location. The existence of this article encourages the establishment of local television, continuing the development of local television that began with the enactment of Law No. 22/1999 concerning the Regional Government.

As previously noted, the aspiration to serve local communities and showcase their cultural identity has been a dominant motive in the establishment of local television stations. In this regard, cultural programming has become the 'core content' of Indonesian local television in the post-1998 reform era, functioning both as a space for negotiation and as a cultural safeguard (Haryono et al., 2025; Rianto et al., 2024) while simultaneously serving as a marketing strategy to target local audiences (Warto, 2019). Ultimately, culture has been transformed into a commodity within the landscape of the local television cultural industry.

Culture is a system of meanings and significance that is historically formed or leads to similar outcomes (Parekh, 1997). Culture encompasses a system of beliefs and practices through which a group of people understands, organizes, and structures their individual and collective lives. Here, culture encompasses not only internal meanings but

also how these meanings are expressed in everyday life. Parekh (2008) then details how culture is articulated in communal life. The most basic articulation is linguistic, encompassing syntax, grammar, and vocabulary for dividing and describing the world. Articulation at the second level is expressed through proverbs, sayings, myths, rituals, symbols, collective memory, jokes, body language, non-linguistic communication models, customs, traditions, institutions, and ways of greeting. At another, slightly different level, Parekh states that culture is also articulated in literature, art, music, as well as in oral and written literature, moral life, ideals of excellence, exemplary individuals, and visions of a good life. At the third level, articulation includes rules and norms that govern all activities and social relationships, such as eating habits (how, where, when, and with whom people eat), socializing and making love, how a group mourns and forgets death, and how (a culture) treats parents, children, wives, neighbors, and strangers.

Culture has become the main content of local television (Surokim, 2015). Cultural programs on local television have two main functions. Cultural programs are a means of cultural expression for local communities (Bogaerts, 2017; Putri et al., 2018), as well as a means of cultural resistance (Rianto et al., 2024). On ADiTV and Bali TV, this function is expressed in various ways. On ADiTV, culture, understood as Javanese culture or, more precisely, cultural arts, is presented through *gamelan* music, a typical Javanese musical art. According to Javanese etymology, the word *gamelan* comes from the words *gamel*, meaning to hit or beat, and *an*, meaning object. *Gamelan* musical instruments are usually made of wood, bronze, metal, brass, tin, and copper. The cultural program on ADiTV, featuring *gamelan* elements, includes *Jenggleng Manasuka* and *Wedang Ronde*. All three are broadcast through a variety show format.



Figure 1. One of the segments in *Jenggleng Manasuka* (source: Researchers document)

As shown in Figure 1, Javanese culture is depicted in *Jenggleng Manasuka* through the artists' clothing, the house that serves as the stage backdrop, and the *gamelan*. The language used is a mixture of *Kromo* and *Kromo Inggil*. The use of this language indicates the level of the person being spoken to. There are three levels of language in Javanese society: *ngoko*, *kromo*, and *kromo inggil* (Udasmoro et al., 2023). *Ngoko* is generally used to speak to children or people of lower social status.

In contrast, *kromo* is a more polite language and is usually used to show respect to the person being spoken to, or to address a child to an elder. The highest level is *kromo inggil*, which is typically used when the person being addressed has a significantly higher social status (Mukhzamilah et al., 2021). However, in everyday life, Javanese is increasingly being abandoned because most people use Indonesian. Therefore, the use of Javanese in cultural programs is an essential means of preserving Javanese culture.

On Bali TV, culture is understood much more broadly than on ADiTV, and therefore expressed much more diversely. This understanding arises because the Balinese people recognize that culture, customs, and religion are deeply integrated into everyday life (Informan 3, interview, February 29, 2023). Therefore, Bali is closely associated with Hinduism, and Balinese culture cannot be separated from Hindu beliefs and practices. Thus, unlike ADiTV, Bali TV managers generally view all broadcast programs as cultural programs. This is reflected in almost all programs, allowing viewers to recognize Bali TV immediately through its distinctive cultural elements. However, several programs are explicitly designated as cultural programs, namely *Taksu*, *Dharma Wacana*, *Orti Bali*, and the local Balinese music program.



Figure 2. One of the segments in *Taksu* (source: Live footage from the *Taksu* program broadcast on YouTube)

*Taksu* (see Figure 2) showcases individuals with creativity, intelligence, and intellect across various fields of art and culture, bringing them to the forefront. The choice of the program's name, *Taksu*, and other programs is intended to convey a strong nuance of Balinese language and culture (Informan 3, interview, February 29, 2023). *Dharma Wacana* is a Hindu religious program. On national TV or other local TV, it is known as *kultum* or *dakwah* (MS, interview, February 28, 2023), especially in areas with substantial Muslim populations. *Orti Bali* is a news program. However, it is broadcast using Balinese music, which is finally a local music program. The primary difference between the local Balinese music program and general music programs lies in the language and artists. The songs are sung in Balinese, and the singers are local performers.

The second function of cultural programs on local television is as commodities, becoming part of the cultural industry to be sold. As a cultural industry, cultural programs must adhere to two primary principles. First, exchange in the cultural industry is not a material good, but a symbolic product. Therefore, its usefulness depends on the meaning given to the product compared to the usefulness of the goods (Garnham, 2000). Second, the production, distribution, and consumption systems operate according to the laws of capitalist exchange. In other words, cultural products must be commercially viable and generate profits. This rule also applies to cultural programs on ADiTV and Bali TV, although their content levels differ. This can be seen from the considerations of a cultural program being broadcast. On ADiTV, economic concerns, including production costs and the presence of sponsors or advertisers, significantly influence the existence of cultural programs. For example, the cultural program *Jenggleng Manasuka*. This program was

initially broadcast on TVRI and was very popular. On TVRI, the program was called *Pangkur Jenggleng*. At that time, *Pangkur Jenggleng* became one of the cultural programs that was widely watched by the public (Rianto & Poerwaningtias, 2013). The permanent sponsor is the Amiens Rais Center. On ADiTV, *Jenggleng Manasuka* gets permanent sponsors, namely Hanum Rais Foundation and Ummat Center. All of them come from the Amien Rasi family, one of the popular reform figures. Meanwhile, the Umat Center is part of the Ummat Party, which Amien Rais founded after he left the party he had previously established, the National Mandate Party (PAN).

In addition to sponsors, production costs also determine the sustainability of cultural broadcasts. This case is exemplified by ADiTV's Islamic-themed cultural broadcast, *Mocopat Syafaat*. This program has been running for dozens of episodes, and this happened for two reasons. *First*, production costs are almost 'zero.' In other words, ADiTV does not incur additional production costs beyond routine expenses, such as human resources. This program is a monthly religious study activity led by the renowned cultural figure Emha Ainun Nadjib. ADiTV has the privilege of broadcasting the program without paying royalties, but can sell advertising space. *Second*, *Mocopat Syafaat* has a large audience. They are generally fans of Emha Ainun Nadjib, who resides in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas, such as Magelang and Tawangmangu. From the perspective of television political economy, viewers are a commodity. If the audience is large, then the television will be much easier to sell to advertisers because the number of viewers is related to the rating. The higher the rating of a program, the higher the advertising received by a television station (Devi, 2019).

In Bali TV, the case is somewhat different from ADiTV. If in ADiTV the primary consideration is the economy, Bali TV's first consideration is the mission: maintaining *Ajeng Bali*. *Ajeng* means constant or unchanged. Therefore, when planning a cultural program, the primary consideration is to fulfill the mission of promoting *Ajeng Bali*. On Bali TV, the program has been broadcast regularly under the same name, namely *Ajeng Bali*. However, overall, cultural programs on Bali TV, such as *Taksu*, *Dharma Wacana*, *Orti Bali*, and the Balinese-language news program *Lila Cita*, are part of the *Ajeng Bali* campaign. However, like private television, which is profit-oriented, the cultural program must generate sponsors, advertising, and other revenue streams to sustain itself. For example, in the news program *Lila Cita*, indigenous communities can request that Bali TV cover their traditional ceremonies by paying coverage and broadcast fees.

Sponsorship is generally obtained through funding from local governments and local companies. Some cultural programs, such as Film Television (FTV), receive sponsorship from the government or local companies. Bali TV offers several FTV programs that feature local stories, including those about King Jayapangus. To attract viewers, the packaging of the legend story must be engaging and interesting. Generally, it is spiced up with a love story. Meanwhile, because it concerns a community legend passed down through generations, the planning and production of FTV involve many parties, including academics and artists. This involvement is done so that what is shown in FTV does not deviate from the story passed down from generation to generation within the community. In this situation, tension often arises between artists on one side and efforts to present FTV as an interesting and widely watched program, thereby attracting more advertisements or sponsors.

By examining the considerations and creative processes employed by ADiTV and Bali TV in producing cultural programs, it appears that the two television stations have

different starting points. This difference also has implications for the way art and culture workers produce cultural programs. At ADiTV, economic considerations are the initial consideration in producing cultural programs. On the other hand, for Bali TV, the primary consideration is its mission, specifically its *Ajég Bali* campaign (see Figure 3).

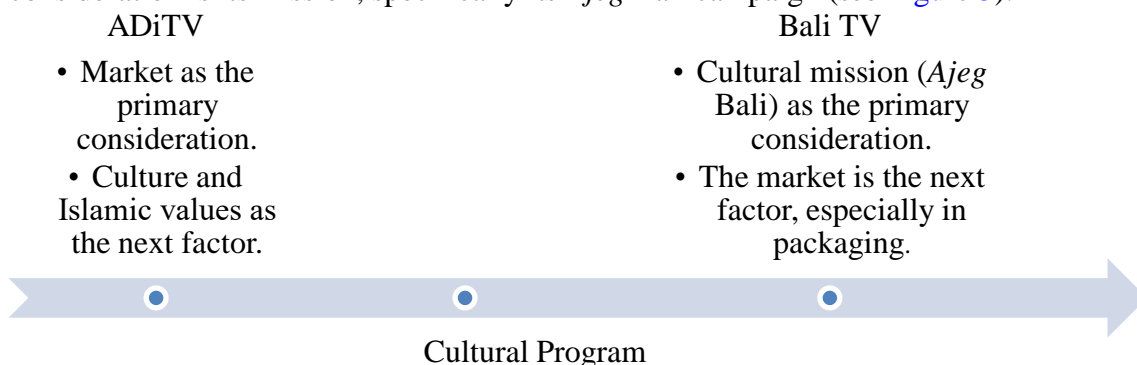


Figure 3. The Dynamics of the relationship between Art Workers and the Market and the Television Mission (source: Results Derived from the Researcher’s Analysis)

**Discussion**

Cultural programs on local television are a profit-driven industry, so there will always be tension between the autonomy of cultural arts workers on the one hand and market demands on the other. Autonomy is an absolute requirement for creative work and is a key concept for rethinking essential issues and values (Holt & Lapenta, 2010). Unlike jobs in other industrial sectors, cultural workers possess unique characteristics that make them difficult to equate with other industrial workers (Garnham, 2000). The commercialization of cultural products has been recognized as a significant factor influencing the autonomy of cultural workers. In this regard, Nicholas Garnham (2000) argues that the challenge posed by the development of the cultural industry is the provision and domination of publicity based on the logic of objects rather than on autonomous morals. In a capitalist system, the choices of workers and company managers cannot be separated from the system's overall workings, which limits workers' ability to determine their choices or actions in producing symbolic commodities. The capitalist system, however, includes a production system that is generally produced by wage labor and distributed through market mechanisms (Harris & Delanty, 2023), so there is always tension between art workers and the market.

ADiTV and Bali TV are commercial local television stations. Consequently, cultural programs such as *Jenggleng Manasuka*, *Mocopat Syafaat*, or *Wedang Ronde* on ADiTV, and *Taksu*, *Dharma Wacana*, or *Orti Bali* on Bali TV, cannot be separated from profit motives. These programs involve not only television workers but also local art workers in their respective regions. In this context, tensions between art workers and the profit-driven imperatives of television are inevitable.

Nevertheless, the market's influence on shaping art workers' autonomy does not follow a linear pattern, as Adorno and Horkheimer (2006) assumed. While the market indeed plays a role in determining art workers' autonomy, it does so to varying degrees. In both ADiTV and Bali TV, although commercial support is crucial for the sustainability of cultural programs, it does not always emerge as the most decisive factor. In the case of Bali TV, the first consideration is its ideological interest in maintaining Balinese religion, culture, and customs through the *Ajég Bali* movement. *Ajég Bali* is a social movement initiated by Bali Post to maintain *Ajég Bali*. Therefore, program considerations are

primarily framed within Bali TV's ideological mission, which, in turn, leads to economic goals. This is visible in the making of Bali TV's FTV, which tells the story of King Jayapangus (reigned 1178–1181 AD). King Jayapangus is very famous in Bali, and one of the things that inspires his greatness is having two queens, namely Bhatari Sri Parameswari Indujaketana and Paduka Sri Mahadewi Cacangkaja Cihna. According to historical stories from Bali, this second queen is of Chinese descent. In the production process, artists have relative autonomy in producing FTV. They compose the story after extensive research. However, they still must consider the entertaining side of FTV, for example, by highlighting the love story (Informan 3, interview, November 24, 2023).

At ADiTV, artists also have some autonomy in dealing with the market. As stated by Informan 2 (interview, May 8, 2023), the scripts for the cultural programs *Jenggleng Manasuka*, *Wedang Ronde*, and *Pocung Kabudayan* were created by local Yogyakarta artists who contributed to their development. They determine the story's content and plot. However, they must also insert messages from the sponsors who fund the program. For example, the *Jenggleng Manasuka* program is sponsored by the Hanum Rais Foundation. Therefore, on many occasions, the artists must greet Hanum Rais and often praise the figure. However, in the context of the *Mocopat Syafaat* program, Cak Nun has full autonomy, as ADiTV is only a channel for distributing the monthly program. Thus, it can be concluded that the autonomy of cultural industry workers on both television stations is relative and unique to each station.

This study, therefore, corrects the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer, who argued that the commodification of the cultural industry has compromised the autonomy of art. [Adorno and Horkheimer \(2006\)](#) argue that the cheapening of mass-produced luxury goods, along with its complement, universal deception, is altering the character of the art commodity itself. This character is not new; it is the face in which art obediently admits it is a commodity, abandoning its autonomy and proudly taking its place among consumer goods. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the autonomy of art has disappeared when it has become a commodity. Here, the artist is subject to market demands.

The cases at ADiTV and Bali TV are, in fact, closer to [Banks' idea \(2010\)](#) regarding compromised or negotiated autonomy. This is because art workers are unique and cannot be equated with workers in other industrial sectors. In other words, art workers are not easily replaced, and creativity in art requires autonomy. In this regard, Ryan ([Banks, 2010](#)) argues that creation requires the labor of artists, individuals with inalienable and irreplaceable talents and skills, who produce interesting and new works. By definition, creation cannot be easily reduced to a system of rules, or the work of particular individual artists replaced by abstract labor. The important point here is that, according to [Banks \(2010\)](#), societal demand for original products made by specific individuals and groups will interfere with capital's ability to standardize and depersonalize labor input.

What can be concluded from the case of art workers at ADiTV, and Bali TV is that the market remains a critical obstacle to the autonomy of cultural industry workers. As [Lee \(2022\)](#) argues, the logic of finance and capitalism extends into the cultural realm, indicating the convergence of financial markets and cultural policies. Profit remains a key consideration in the cultural industry. However, the relationship between cultural industry workers and the market is complex. On the one hand, cultural industries such as television require cultural industry workers' autonomy to find a new form of authenticity for cultural works. Because the product of the cultural industry is not production, but reproduction, authenticity becomes very important ([Garnham, 2005](#)). In other words, authenticity is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the cultural industry, so innovation must be sustained

continuously. Thus, the capitalist industrial system still requires the autonomy of cultural industry workers. On the other hand, the economic motive that prompts cultural industry workers to compromise their autonomy is not the only factor, as it reduces humans to mere homo economicus.

Therefore, the analysis of autonomy in this section will follow Oakley's (2008) idea, which posits that being an artist does not lie in its anti-commercial values, but in its affirmation of meaning that transcends commercial boundaries (Banks, 2010). In other words, the value of autonomy sought by cultural industry workers does not lie in their efforts to negate their commercial needs, but in how, through this autonomy, they have personal meaning and, in some cases, social impact (Banks, 2010). The researcher's interview with Informan 7, the actor in the *Jenggleng Manasuka*, effectively reflects this idea. He stated that appearing in the *Pangkur Jenggleng* program on ADiTV is not merely a commercial issue, but also a matter of how artists can express themselves. However, this view is not general because my interviews with other artists paid much greater attention to economic factors, such as income from performing. The critical point in this case is that the autonomy of artists in the television industry is not a simple issue reducible to an asymmetrical relationship between the market and artists. Instead, these relationships must be viewed in a contextual light, taking specific conditions into account. Both on ADiTV and Bali TV, although the market determines the nature of artists' autonomy, the degree is very different.

This study also found that, in both ADiTV and Bali TV, other forces outside the market influence the relative autonomy of art workers: Islam and Javanese culture in ADiTV, and the *Ajeg Bali* cultural movement in Bali TV. Therefore, this study suggests that other factors beyond market forces should be considered when investigating the autonomy of art workers and examining the cultural sphere as a whole. The research supports Featherstone's (1992) idea of exploring the historical dimensions of the emergence of the artistic sphere and related fields. Such an analysis would reveal the factors that influence the autonomy of arts workers and the cultural sphere in greater depth.

Another conclusion from this study is that the market's influence on autonomy depends on two factors: *first*, the amount of capital owned by the cultural industry institution. In the case of ADiTV, because the cultural industry institution lacks sufficient capital to produce cultural programs, art workers' autonomy tends to be greater. As stated by Informan 6 (interview, September 24, 2024), "*Sometimes, the power of local television only limits broadcast time. The need to fill broadcast time, on the one hand, and the lack of capital, on the other, make cultural industry institutions, such as local television, unable to demand more from cultural industry workers.*" This condition is evident in the digital era, when the size of the institution determines the degree of autonomy and creativity of cultural industry workers (Sellas & Bonet, 2023). *Second*, the power of the artist itself. Although there were attempts to demand that artists wear the hijab in the case of *Jenggleng Manasuka*, the artist's consistency in maintaining the Javanese cultural code ensured that this cultural program remained within the code.

This study employs a case study strategy to examine the autonomy of art workers at ADiTV and Bali TV, and as such, it carries certain methodological limitations. While case studies offer advantages over other research strategies (Sadeghi Moghadam et al., 2021), the issue of generalizability has long been regarded as a central concern in case study research (Hanchett Hanson & Ross, 2025; Marková et al., 2020). Another limitation of this research concerns the specific locations where it was conducted. Yogyakarta and

Bali have become centers of cultural discourse in Indonesia and are often considered indicators of ‘high culture’ (Jones, 2015). This background may explain why cultural pressures are more pronounced at Bali TV.

In contrast, at ADiTV, the pressures stem not from Javanese culture but from Islamic values. Accordingly, this study highlights the importance of further investigations into the autonomy of art workers by examining other local television stations across Indonesia. Distinct political and cultural contexts would offer more profound insights. Alternative approaches to understanding autonomy should also be considered, such as autonomy within Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical perspective (Kleppe, 2018) or through a Foucauldian lens (Banks, 2010), including how art workers resist forces that seek to constrain their creativity (Beirne et al., 2017).

## Conclusion

This paper examines the autonomy of art workers in Indonesia’s cultural industry, focusing on local television as a guardian of local culture. The study concludes that ‘negotiated autonomy’ is the most appropriate concept to describe the autonomy of art workers in local television. In contrast to some expert analyses of the autonomy of culture industry workers, this study concludes that although commercial interests determine art workers’ autonomy, the degree of influence can vary significantly. Unlike Adorno and Horkheimer (2006), this study finds that commercial interests do not always limit the creative freedom of art workers. On the contrary, in certain situations where companies lack sufficient capital, commercial interests provide greater autonomy. The theoretical implication of this study lies in the need to consider non-commercial, non-economic factors that may constrain the autonomy of art workers. Cultural values embedded in cultural institutions, such as television, play a significant role in determining the degree of autonomy art workers can exercise. In this way, discussions of artistic autonomy can avoid falling into an overly economic deterministic framework. Future research could expand the scope of inquiry by examining other local television stations in Indonesia operating in different cultural and political contexts. Moreover, since multiple factors influence art workers’ autonomy, further studies may incorporate alternative perspectives in analyzing artistic autonomy rather than relying solely on economic factors and the cultural industry framework. In practice, non-economic factors exert an equally important influence in shaping the autonomy of art workers.

## Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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