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Institute of  
Social Studies**

*Erasmus*

## **Uncomfortable Laugh**

**Understanding the Role of Stand-up Comedy from a Storytelling Approach**

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*For my son Billy and my husband Bagus,  
I love you, you love me,  
we are happy family, with a great big hug  
and a kiss from me to you  
won't you say you love me too?  
#Barneythemesong #yousingyoulose*

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## List of Acronyms

DVD	Digital Video Disc
FPI	Front Pembela Islam/Muslim Defender Front
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
HRW	Human Rights Watch
Jokowi	Joko Widodo (the 7 <sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Indonesia)
Komtung	Komedi tunggal/Stand-up comedy
KONTRAS	Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan/Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Partai Gerindra	Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya/The Great Indonesian Movement Party
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia/The Communist Party of Indonesia
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/Prosperous Justice Party
Stand-up Indo	Komunitas Stand-up Comedy Indonesia/Indonesia Stand-up Comedy Community
Stand-up UGM	Komunitas Stand-up Comedy UGM/UGM stand-up comedy community
UGM	Universitas Gadjah Mada/University of Gadjah Mada
USA	United States of America

## Abstract

This research is an unlearning journey, particularly in the process of knowing-being. In this study, with the help of Motta's (2018) storytelling approach, I analysed both, the opportunities and limitations of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics beyond its entertainment purpose. During fieldwork, I worked closely with 16 participants from the stand-up community at *Universitas Gadjah Mada* (University of Gadjah Mada), Yogyakarta to understand their testimonies and experiences of the show *Juru Bicara* (Spokesperson) by well-known stand-up comedian, Pandji Pragiwaksono. The findings point at stand-up comedy possibilities in acknowledging the diversity of knowledge and contesting official Indonesian government stories of historical and present-day marginalisation and human rights violations. Furthermore, the fieldwork results suggests that the showcase has a chance to be an alternative experiential learning medium to publicly open a conversation about complicated, taboo, sensitive, unspoken topics in a casual way with relatively privileged target audiences. At this point, stand-up comedy is a pedagogical platform to access new alternative stories in the process of knowing. However, since both the comedian and the audience position themselves as separate from the marginalised, stand-up comedy as an interactional event appears to be an ambiguous space that reproduces the hierarchical boundary between the privileged (us) and the oppressed (them). Therefore, this medium is limited to only nurturing sympathy/empathy as the result of the 'process of knowing' but seems not to automatically foster solidarity and advance social movement or political organisation as the expression of becoming political or more politicised—the 'process of being'.

## Relevance to Development Studies

In development studies, this research is a self-reflective project to acknowledge stand-up comedy as justifiable knowledge, equal to other sources of knowledge endorsed by more traditional approaches in the field. The exploration of the role of stand-up comedy through the comedian audience experience in enjoying the show found out that: *firstly*, stand-up comedy holds the potential to challenge the practices of knowing where only hegemonic forms of power have the authority to produce "an objective truth" through "the official story" (Dinerstein, 2016: 4-5). I would like to emphasise that in this research, authority is not limited to government and the bodies (sovereign power) but also the elite who contribute to the othering of oppressed groups. *Secondly*, unfortunately, the study revealed that both the comedian and audience were not occupying the show from a marginalised positionality. Motta (2018: 134) argued that positionality is important in the process of knowing because it helps to resonate with the voices from the margins and value the struggle as a dignified resistance to decentre dominant knowledge. The intention to expand an alternative story about the 'inferior' unconsciously reinforces the dominant gaze parallel to act altruistically in front of the oppressed. Therefore, using a stand-up comedy as a pedagogical learning platform potentially risks not only validating the privileged morality complex but also creating a hierarchical gap of superiority-minority between them. Finally, the glorification of the process of knowing as a contribution to the development discourse should be carefully followed by affirming the positionality to nurture mutual relationships for both parties.

## Keywords

Stand-up comedy, storytelling, knowing-being, Pandji Pragiwaksono, the *Juru Bicara* Tour, Indonesia contemporary politics.



# Chapter 1 Introduction

*Knock! Knock!  
Who's there?  
It's me, a stand-up comedian!  
Stand-up comedian who?*

I would like to start with a short story from my private journal about my encounter with stand-up comedy. I put much consideration to share this moment because it is quite personal. However, since it is essential as the point of departure to illustrate the research context and demonstrate my positionality, I cannot find any better way to report my research journey without telling this piece—*so, please bear with me.*

## 1.1 Encounter to stand-up comedy: laugh in three acts

I divide this section into three parts. *First*, when I went to the live stand-up comedy showcase for the first time and enjoyed stand-up comedy from rational thinking mind. *Second*, when I wholeheartedly experienced the emotions of stand-up comedy. *Third*, when I eventually found the courage to explore the role of stand-up comedy. However, throughout the research, it is important to frame the story as a personal transformation as a human being (positionality) and the setting of contemporary Indonesian politics (research context).

### 1.1.1 First laugh

It was Saturday evening, 8 September 2012, almost ten years ago. Since it was a hilarious story, I can remember vividly the first time I came to a live stand-up comedy event like it just happened yesterday. A week before, my crush asked me to accompany him to watch a stand-up comedy by Pandji Pragiwaksono—*of course, I could not refuse the opportunity.* Back then, I did not really care about stand-up comedy nor Pandji, I just wanted to have quality time with my high-school crush.

I have prepared myself since afternoon. I said goodbye to my Javanese parents and kissed their hands, a typical gesture of devotion from a child to parents in a Muslim family. I waited for him at the meeting point in the venue. I was so surprised when he brought his mother since I thought it was a date. Later, the three of us was sitting together with him in the middle between the mother and me—*it was so awkward.*

Feeling hopeless with this failed date scenario, I tried to distract myself by paying attention to Pandji's performance. It was his second national comedy tour titled *Merdeka dalam Bercanda* (Freedom in Laugh) (2012). That year, he performed in 12 cities across Indonesia, including in my hometown Yogyakarta, where I watched the show with around 200 people. One of his memorable double-punchlines jokes was about the student protest after 1998 tragedy<sup>1</sup>, which according to him, failed in navigating their existence:

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<sup>1</sup> The 1998 tragedy refers to massive riots targeting Chinese descendants throughout Indonesia and series of protest triggered by monetary crisis, unemployment, disparity between Chinese and indigenous people. The series of student/democracy activist protest led to the resignation of Soeharto (the authoritarian leader), after 32 years in power, and marked the beginning of a democratic period of governance in Indonesia.

First line:

*“How come a protest is only attended by seven grumbled students without any specific purpose and catches public attention only because they potentially cause traffic jams?”*

Second line:

*“Well, if you are aiming to talk to the governor, you better open the gate nicely instead of breaking it because it is unlocked, and like everyone, you could book a session.”*

That night, between applause and laughter, I felt the show was beyond entertaining. In my opinion, Pandji tried to frame current social phenomena and speak to his audiences using comedy language. At the same time, the audience has options to react differently to his jokes. Back then, as a political science fresh graduate who works as a junior researcher in the university, I thought Pandji wants to criticise the student movement that only focuses on symbolic gimmicks rather than concrete political gains. However, something was missing from the performance, and at that time, I did not realise yet, not until four years later.

### 1.1.2 Second laugh

My second chance to watch a live stand-up comedy was in Jakarta. It was the same comedian, Pandji Pragiwaksono. The day before, my boyfriend—*yes, the same guy who brought his mother on (what I thought was) our date*—won last-minute giveaway tickets for Pandji’s fourth special tour titled *Juru Bicara* (Spokesperson). Pandji chose Jakarta as his final stage after performed in 24 cities on five continents. The show was held on the Human Rights Day, 10 December 2016 (Mardiastuti, 2016)—*I did not recognise this until I saw the press conference documentation*. Additionally, Pandji mentioned the involvement of Kontras (a national NGO that focus on human rights advocacy) as an official partner on this tour (Kontras, 2016). Personally, it was an unusual collaboration between a comedian and social justice organisation because they have different aims and target audiences.

At this time, I had moved to Jakarta—*for life and love*. I am a first-born daughter and the first generation from my parents’ sides who managed to go to university. I gave up my dream to be a researcher who works from project to project due to the uncertainty of a career path. When the government was recruiting candidates for civil servant positions, I applied for a position at a ministry and got accepted. I have never dreamt of working as a government official, but being a bureaucrat was a shortcut for sufficient and stable income because, as a first-born, I felt responsible for tackling a financial challenge when needed. Hence, I moved to Jakarta because the job required me to stay in the capital city. It was during a phase when I was struggling to fit into the megapolitan rhythm that I crossed-path with my future husband. Like any other urban *Jakartans*, for me, the weekend is a perfect time for a recreational event. Therefore, when Pandji gave a free couple-tickets—*of course, I could not refuse the opportunity*.

The *Juru Bicara* (2016) had a concert ambience that differed from the show *Merdeka dalam Bercanda*, which I watched four years prior. There was a bigger stage with massive audience of five-thousand people. Pandji situated himself as a ‘spokesperson’. He performed on Human Rights Day and took a fifteen-minute session to talk about human rights violations. He discussed what I would consider as a sensitive and complex topic to be discussed publicly, ranging from solidarity movements to campaigns seeking justice (*Aksi Kamisan*), how communism ideology is perceived post-1965 tragedy, the LGBT rights, and the 1998 tragedy. This seemed to be a witty breakthrough to talk about sensitive subjects in society. However, I felt something was missing this time. The same feeling from the *Merdeka dalam Bercanda* show, but I did not realise it back then. I talked to my boyfriend, and he replied, *“Well, Pandji always works around political comedy themes, but after all, it was a comedy show aiming for pleasure, so do*

*not take it seriously.*” As a former researcher, it was the moment when I thought I needed to do a further investigation about stand-up comedy beyond recreational purposes.

When I got home, curiosity led me to contemplate and write some notes in my journal about the show. *What are Pandji’s motivations? Why stand-up comedy? Who is the audience? Does Pandji expect something from the show?* That night I recklessly situated stand-up comedy as part of a new social movement that targeted the middle class in Indonesia. At that time, I assumed Pandji had unconsciously formed a movement targeting the middle class by questioning social affairs like environmental issues, human rights violations, and identity (Edwards, 2004: 113). *Pandji wants to encourage the middle-class audience to reflect on their society, quality of everyday life, and human rights situation through popular culture like stand-up comedy—to initiate a social change.* The next day, as the excitement were off, I lost my appetite to continue the research. *I chose to believe that probably last night, I caught an aftershow-hangover, an indescribable tantrum after attending an exciting showcase, reading a meaningful book or watching a beautiful movie.*

### 1.1.3 Uncomfortable laugh

As time goes by, as I embarked on my master’s degree, I could not pick a topic for my research project. I walked through my old journal and found a random note about stand-up comedy I wrote after watching *Juru Bicara* tour four years prior. I questioned myself, *should I? but how?* I realised the new social movement framework was not my cup of tea to approach stand-up comedy. I talked to my supervisor about my intention to further investigate the role of stand-up comedy, and she helped me set the research context.

Currently, as recorded by the media, Indonesia is facing several incidents in public discussions about sensitive social-political topics. I identified several trends of persecution from the cases that I position as part of the government official stance in the human rights field. Under the excuse to maintain social order among the community, several events were prohibited while the participants also suffered from unidentified attacks risking their privacy and security. This pessimistic interpretation of current trends is also supported by many “*Indonesianis*”. For instance, Power and Warbuton (2020: 1-2) described the degree of Indonesia democratisation is declining as indicated by deterioration of civil liberties.

Moreover, I identified some memorable examples of violation and resistance against authorities’ attempts to restrict controversial discussions to further illustrated context of my research. In Bali, the 2015 Ubud Writers and Readers Festival director refused to drop three sessions talking about the communist massacre in Indonesia in 1965 after the international literary community chose to stand with her and signed a statement condemning the enforced silence (Groves, 2015). The 2016 Human Rights Watch Report (HRW Report) stated that Indonesia’s LGBT activities had endured sporadic discrimination and violence (HRW, 2016). For instance, a LGBT discussion held by student press organisation in Diponegoro University was cancelled under the instruction of the university’s rector because it goes against religious teachings (The Jakarta Post, 2015). Recently, an online discussion intended to discuss the merits of the president’s dismissal from the constitutional law perspective was called off due to security reasons after the committee members and families started receiving death threats and phone hacks (Nurbaiti, 2020).

Initially, I wanted to unpack stand-up comedy as an alternative platform to discuss sensitive topics in contemporary Indonesian politics without hesitation of being abused by hiding the subject in the humorous punchline. However, during my fieldwork, I found out that comedians were also facing a similar occupational risk of violence. Therefore, I decided to readjust my frame by exploring how the comedian adapt to this challenging situation. *As I*

*started the research process, the uncomfortable feeling made a return somewhere in my body feeling, every time I replayed some footages from Juru Bicara tour, but I still prefer to ignore it.*

## 1.2 Point of departure

This research is a reflective journey aiming to understand the role of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics. Therefore, by situating the stand-up comedy as an interactional event, I would like to answer:

***By focusing on the comedian and audience experience, what are the opportunities and limitations of the stand-up comedy role in contemporary Indonesian politics?***

Briefly, stand-up comedy is an expression of interactional event, a process of an interwoven moment of collective remembering, recreating, reweaving experience between storyteller narratives and audience participation (Motta, 2016: 44). This is consistent with my interest to understand the interconnection between the comedian and audience experience. I am conscious the focus could be in other elements such as the linguistic or the performativity, but my interest in interactional phenomena drives me to particular focus.

To answer the main research question, I foreground the comedian-audience experience and understand that stand-up comedy does play a role in the country's contemporary politics. To advance some tentative answers, I address three sub-questions:

1. How has the role of comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics been conceptualised?;
2. How can stand-up comedy be studied in contemporary Indonesian politics?; and
3. What can stand-up comedy does to contemporary Indonesia politics, and how?

I decided to begin this thesis on my relationship with stand-up comedy to explicitly show how as part of the audience, I gradually encounter stand-up comedy differently. During the literature review, I recognised the meaning of the peculiar feeling at *Juru Bicara* tour with the help of Sarah Motta's (2018: 134) storytelling framework. Four years ago, I could not rationally explain the emotions I felt after the stand-up comedy show, and so I chose to put it aside. Motta (2018: 128) addresses the importance of emotions and positionality in the storytelling, not as method, but as an epistemology, in other words, a way of knowing. As an epistemology it informs a way of working with knowledge, or methodology. Reading Motta's work, it occurred to me that I always enjoyed the humour about the oppressed through the positionality of the fortunate Indonesian audience—the holder of privileges. I am a well-educated Javanese Muslim heterosexual young mother living in the urban setting with a fixed monthly income and able to access recreational events almost every weekend.

Therefore, as an unlearning process, methodologically, I select the storytelling framework to approach the practice of stand-up comedy in the context of contemporary Indonesian politics. During data collection, I used qualitative interview techniques to directly listen and reflect on the opportunities and limitations of stand-up comedy's role in contemporary politics from the comedian (Pandji Pragiwaksono) and audience's (stand-up UGM) perspectives. Due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions to Indonesia, with the help of a research assistant, I managed to work with the stand-up comedy community from Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) and create a virtual group of a stand-up comedy audience for *Juru Bicara* tour. I prefer to work with the stand-up comedy enthusiasts from UGM in this project, considering their age and education backgrounds, which mirrored the majority of stand-up comedy audience in Indonesia. At last minute, I decided to have a reflective discussion with the former director of Kontras, Haris Azhar, to learn about the partnership with a popular medium like stand-up comedy to promote social justice.

I divide the thesis into five chapters. It begins with describing my encounter with stand-up comedy and how it motivates me to conduct the research (chapter 1). The chapter is followed by a short explanation of the theories and concepts that helped me approach the fieldwork methodologically (chapter 2). In the next section, I concisely elaborate the research findings foregrounding the comedian's perspective and his audience to ponder the role of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics using *Juru Bicara* tour as case study (chapter 3). Later, I contemplate the practice of stand-up comedy in Indonesia's contemporary politics from a storytelling approach using the same case study, *Juru Bicara* tour (chapter 4). I deploy a (self) reflexive exercise around the experiences emerging from Pandji and his audience. The final chapter reflects on the findings and presents some general conclusions (chapter 5).

## Chapter 2 Theoretical framework and methodological choices

*Roses are red, violets are blue  
Stand-up comedy, what are you up to?*

This chapter consists of three parts that address how the role of stand-up comedy in Indonesian contemporary politics has been both studied and conceptualised, from different disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, and methodological approaches. Hence, this chapter is to advance some answers for sub question first and second of this research.

In doing so, I elaborate first on how I entered the fieldwork and conceptualised stand-up comedy. In particular, I justify how I situate stand-up comedy in this study and how the concept of Motta's (2018) 'storytelling' helped me to explore the opportunities and limitations of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics. While in the second and third part, I explain the methodology and methods I used during the research.

### 2.1 Stand-up comedy beyond your laugh

Since trending around 2010-2011 in Indonesia, I would argue that stand-up comedy is too grand if aimed only for pleasure. In this section, I begin the discussion by exploring mainstream theories of humour and comedy in politics to approach the practice of stand-up comedy in Indonesia. The contemplation is essential to reflect the role of stand-up comedy in traditional discourse. Later on, with the help of Motta's (2018) storytelling approach, I offer the alternative framework and situate stand-up comedy as a storytelling event between the performer—or in stand-up comedy commonly known as comic/comedian—and the audience to reflect its opportunities and limitations in the context of contemporary Indonesian politics. Lastly, I briefly explained the connection between stand-up comedy and politics to nurture pedagogical learnings and advance epistemic justice.

#### 2.1.1 The practice of stand-up comedy

According to Turner in Mintz (1985: 73), stand-up comedy offers an opportunity for the audience to reflect their social structure and values. On the stage, a comedian will usually perform to discuss their view about specific phenomena humorously. When the audience responds to the joke through laughter, it is not only that the comic delivered the show successfully, but also because the audience is sharing a parallel reality to the story (Hutchison, 2018: 2). Sometimes, to build connection, the comic carefully finds 'something in common' and decide to work around the social, political, or historical aspects of everyday reality.

As a planned humorous entertainment, initially, back in the Athenian period, comedy functioned as a peaceful mechanism to criticise the elites (Henderson, 1993: 308). In the theatrical performance, the comedian confronts the authority as a comedy subject to address public affairs without being judged as rebellion. It is morally prohibited for the comic to mock ordinary demos and put them as comedy targets. However, back then, the comic argued that they bullied people on the stage, not to belittle them, but to show the contrast between the powerful and the powerless (Henderson, 1993: 308). Therefore, by making a joke targeting the powerless without proper reason, like Henderson stated, the role of a comedian is dethrone into an oppressive agent who has the power to silence, dehumanise, subdue, and annihilate the marginalised groups in a given society (Motta, 2016: 37).

At the same time, the peculiar narratives create a fun atmosphere and provoke the audience's response through laughter. Thus, as Bakhtin argues, comedy performances can generate temporary liberation, like a carnival exhibition where the diverse groups of society gather, celebrate and ridicule alternative reality (Holoch, 2012: 24). Hence, it is limited only by the event. After it is concluded, society, or in this case the audience, return to their world bringing with them reflections of incongruities between the official story and the carnival, yet deriving pleasure from the relationship between them (Holoch, 2012: 25). To simplify, stand-up comedy in this framework becomes a knowledge production machine. Thus, the role of comedy as entertainment and as a platform to voice the critiques and recognise public concern is inseparable. Therefore, Henderson (1993: 311) emphasised the classic function of comedy as a medium to exercise accountability without insulting the sovereignty of powerful authority.

However, comedy is also potential to be a double-edged sword (Goldman, 2013: 3). Hence, the scale of this medium's contribution towards democratisation (by contest power) could be challenged because the comic/storyteller is not a free-value communicator. Stand-up comedy can be used to attack the weak or to defend the vulnerable (Shouse & Oppliger, 2020: 24). To some extent, the comic breaks the accepted ethics to be funny by abusing the stage (Gencarella, 2017: 238). For instance, by delivering bad jokes which belittle, discriminate, stereotype, judge other groups, such as homophobic, racist, or misogyny jokes (Shouse & Oppliger, 2020: 17). These intolerant narratives brought the whole arena, consisting of the comic and audiences, into a problematic and ethically questionable situation. Holoch (2012: 33) later doubted the value of people inside the theatre, do we laugh together with them as a community, or do we laugh at them as superior to the minority?

Furthermore, I will argue that in this research, stand-up comedy is not only limited to a live-performance encounter between a standing performer behaving comically and saying funny things, but stressed more on the directness of the content communication between the comedian and audience over the narrative (Mintz, 1985: 71-72). Following the broad scope of stand-up comedy's definition, although quite different in the development of plot and stage-act, the classic theories on the function of comedy as a popular message delivery platform are still relevant for today's 21<sup>st</sup> century stand-up comedy. Therefore, from this mainstream departure, I would summarise that both comedy and stand-up comedy have a similar role as knowledge production medium regardless of the message positionality. However, when taking positionality seriously, stand-up comedy and its conceptualisation via mainstream theories reveal the limitations as the next section aims to argue.

### **2.1.2 Stand-up comedy as a storytelling event**

Positionality is a crucial point of contemplation in the current academic discourse when talking about knowledge production. While Källstig (2020: 48) is aware that comedy is an open space for knowledge production despite its complexity—a resistance movement to disrupt power or a reifying tool to reproduce the authoritative power (double-edged sword). Motta (2016: 41), from a feminist decolonial perspective, challenges the classic approach and argues that it is necessary to understand knowledge production as a subjective (not universal) process of development—because there is no single absolute truth, and people might accept or reject reality differently. Motta (2018: 130) continues that to learn, unlearn, and relearn about the societal problem, we need to embrace the multiplicity embedded in our historical and contextual world by opening the possibility to doubts and questions and discontents the official knowledge. *Thus, positionality helps us to reroute our process of knowing from rational mind to embedded body feeling.*

At this stage, following Motta (2020), it is crucial to broaden the horizon and reimagine the role or the effect that considering positionality has for our understanding of stand-up comedy: not as a sermon but storytelling session between the comic and its spectators. From Motta's perspective, the comic is not an external knower bringing the truth to their privileged group about the oppressed and nurturing a hierarchical relationship between powerful and powerless to invite sympathy/empathy (Motta, 2020: 134). In contrast, from a storyteller approach, a comedian act as a facilitator who resonates the voice from margins and values their struggle as a dignified resistance to decentre dominant literacy (Motta, 2020: 134). Furthermore, Sjöbohm (2008:5), quoting Seinfeld, argued that stand-up comedy is a dialogue, not a monologue and emphasised the power of the audience to listen and respond to the jokes actively. However, back to Motta's (2018) storytelling approach, we also need to recognise audience's positionality as either privileged, laughing, clapping, shouting, whistling through the wounds of others or as a listener who shares mutual relationship and integrity. *Thus, positionality helps us to reweave our process of knowing collectively from sympathy/empathy to solidarity.*

We can say that positionality is important to understand the shape of our knowledge production. On the one hand, stand-up comedy transforms into a problematic space when the comic arrogantly embraces their superiority as a saviour educator by reproducing a victim's trauma and/or leaving the audience in uncertain crossroads; who to pity, to admire, to mock, or to emulate (Källstig & Death, 2020: 15). On the other hand, stand-up comedy progress into an epistemic space when the comic can powerfully perform critical intimacy show and encourage people to recognise their standpoint—as demos, as margin subject—and start the solidarity resistance (Källstig, 2021: 54). *Thus, positionality helps us to recover our sacred space from hierarchical to emancipatory.* Finally, we could reflect on the opportunities and limitations of stand-up comedy practice in contemporary Indonesia by embracing positionality.

### **2.1.3. Stand-up comedy and politics**

Stand-up comedy, as argued by Mintz (1985: 71), is the oldest, basic, most universal, and most significant form of public communication in a scripted humorous expression. Practising stand-up comedy is not about one person performing some funny narratives in front of the audience. Still, it specifically emphasises on the directness of the narrative delivery through comedian-audience interaction in a more complex theatrical medium. Mintz (1985: 72) provided some examples to support the definition of stand-up comedy. For instance, when an actor provided a comical narrative in the film; when a circus clowns provided a speech in 'premise and punchline' style in the travelling amusement tent; when a seated storyteller shared funny bits in the campfire—all of them are stand-up comedy. Shortly, stand-up comedy can be featured in any popular comedy culture and not only about standing behind the microphone. From this definition, the research will be focused more on the content delivery as epistemic dimensions of stand-up comedy by examining the interaction between the performer, the audience, and the narrative.

Therefore, politics in this research is not just about parliaments and elections or the contentious and dramatic street protest directly contesting power. Instead, politics is understood in its epistemic dimensions as a struggle to recognise and collectively resist against the coloniality gestures within the rationalising process of thinking in order to nurture epistemic justice (Icaza & Vázquez, 2013: 685). For instance, politics in pedagogical learning to counter the dominant ways of thinking that only authority has the power to perform the process of knowing-being over the oppressed subject (Motta, 2018: 123-124). In TedTalk speech, Chimamanda Adichie (2009) also elaborated the importance of epistemic struggle and

celebrated the diversity of information from powerful and powerless parties and avoided single stories. She further explained that an incomplete story is dangerous as it could lead to stereotyping. From this departure, I aim to reflect on the dynamics of stand-up comedy as a pedagogical learning platform to embrace the multiplicity of knowledge and facilitate the process of knowing-being.

Furthermore, in stand-up comedy, the audience has a chance to be involved in pedagogical learning through a dialogical mechanism. I would define dialogue beyond a reciprocal verbal conversation between communicators, instead of based on Bakhtin's concept, emphasising the relation to constitute meaning (Selg & Ventsel, 2019: 33). The latter admitted the power of the audience to actively listen and respond to the jokes, as argued by Seinfeld and quoted by Sjöbohm (2008: 5). Since people are the bearers of all meaning (Gottdiener, 1985: 986), communication aims to deliver information and build consciousness. According to Ott (2007), the audience is powerfully involved in the process of meaning-making by generating the stand-up narrative as part of critical pedagogical learning.

I would argue that in this research the concept of dialogical mechanism is very useful to explain the interconnection between the comedian and audience, although theoretically this might be debatable. As a result, from this approach, it is impossible to interpret and respond to the whole showcase in one solid meaning because every audience might reflect experience differently. Yet, at this point, as argued by Ott (2007: 30-31), entertainment is a semiotic system that allows the audience to be active producers (not passive recipients) that engage with the narrative in an indefinite subjectivity spectrum based on their needs and experiences—*for pleasure, identity building, or a plurality of meaning*. A semiotic understanding of stand-up comedy allows me then to reflect on the dynamics and diversity of interpretations to the exact same narrative. The benefit of this approach is its applicability to different contexts with an awareness of cultural specificity that became a cul-de-sac in early analysis on stand-up comedy and politics.

At this point, I would emphasise that as experiential learning, stand-up comedy is political. This kind of politics exists from embodied responses that are emotionally complicated yet personal and influenced not only by the performance delivery but also audience positionality, behaviour, and backgrounds.

## 2.2 Approaching the field

Given the context of the contemporary Indonesian regime, to narrow the research landscape, I focused on process of unlearning the stand-up comedy from the interconnection between Pandji Pragiwaksono as the comedian, the members of the stand-up UGM as the (designated) audience, and the selected bits from *Juru Bicara* tour as the narrative. Inspired by Motta (2011: 181), I situate unlearning as a process of epistemological reflections by destabilise my own privilege as researcher to understand the dynamics of stand-up comedy as justifiable knowledge. I am well aware that the comedian, the audience, and the narratives are entangled as an interactional event. The comic presented the stage-act around the Indonesian social-political phenomenon, and each audience connects to the narrative differently. However, in this research, I presented those three dimensions separately for explanatory purposes. Hence this section will divide into three parts focusing on the comic, the narrative, and the audience.

### 2.2.1 The comic: Pandji Pragiwaksono

The comic is a comedian who delivers humour in a stand-up comedy show. Behind the stage, the comic also crafts the comedy script based on personal experience or everyday

phenomena, and exercise the material, commonly known as open-mic. The success of a stand-up comedy show is measured based on the performer's ability to communicate and provoke a laugh. A professional comic who performs commercially makes a living from stand-up comedy production consisting of open-mic, stand-up tour, online performance, or simply distribute the recorded version of the show via audio or audio-visual.

To be recognised, a comic typically builds a unique distinct from their off-stage self and others. Persona is a communicative manner to imply that bodies also carry meanings, discourses, histories, cultural codes, and assumptions (Goltz, 2017: 17). For instance, a Muslim comic has a credential to mock their community not because it is 'their story' but because they could reflect and question through the 'point of view' of a Muslim comic. Thus, a persona is also set as a boundary for crafting comedy material. Therefore, usually personas are created based on backgrounds and identity markers such as gender, race, religion, class, geographical region, occupation, behaviour, belief, or political views (Sturges, 2015: 4).

In this research, to understand the role of stand-up comedy, I critically analyse Pandji Pragiwaksono's work as a case study. Pandji Pragiwaksono is a prominent Indonesian comic who started his career as a comedian in 2010, the same year when stand-up comedy hit its peak in the country. During fieldwork, Pandji stated that he prefers to be known as a storyteller (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 07.40). In this persona, the comic presents humorous narratives (some are facts, some are hyperbolics) to engage with the audience. From my interview, I also learned that Pandji's audience mostly comes from a generation known as *millennials* or *zoomers* born between 1981 and 2010.

I present now a set of three justifications for selecting him as the subject of this study. *Firstly*, he is the most productive comic in comparison with other professional comics in Indonesia. He started his career in 2010, produced his first tour in 2011, *Bhinneka Tunggal Tawa* (Unity in Laugh) <sup>2</sup>, and regularly produced a special tour every one to two years (Andriansyah, 2020). Therefore, he has made eight special that toured globally over ten years. Recently, Pandji also established *comika.id*, a talent management enterprise that focus on developing entrepreneur knowledge and skills for comics who want to pursue a professional career (Aritama, 2021). *Secondly*, his role in stand-up comedy Indonesia is significant. He co-founded the *Stand-up Indo*, a community to support comics to develop comedy skills and nurture companionship (Wahyudi, 2021). *Thirdly*, outside the comedy arena, Pandji is also involved in political practice as a spokesperson for Anies Baswedan, the elected candidate of the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017<sup>3</sup> (Yudhi & Sadono, 2018: 99). He is also an actor, director, presenter, podcaster, content creator, rapper, writer, illustrator, co-founder, and executive board of *Yayasan Pita Kuning Indonesia* (Yellow Ribbon Community), a philanthropy to support children with cancer. Previously, he produced *Provocative-Proactive*, a political talk show for a young audience around 2011-2012 and hosted *Sebelas-Dua Belas* (Eleven-Twelve), a late-night show around 2015 on national television.

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<sup>2</sup> *Bhinneka Tunggal Tawa* (Unity in Laugh) is a twist from Indonesia national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), signifying the unity of Indonesian people despite their diverse backgrounds (Oktafiga, 2017). The theme was chosen because laugh could unite despite the diversity of people's backgrounds (Pragiwaksono, 2012: 117).

<sup>3</sup> Anies Baswedan formally has the support from Prabowo Subianto (Gerindra party chair, former general, Soeharto ex-son-in-law) and PKS, a right-conservative Islamic party. He also informally backed by headline religious-based paramilitary group, FPI. According to Pandji, he was chosen as spokesperson by Anies himself (not by the campaign team) to indicate that Anies is not a representative from the radical Muslim nor Soeharto cronies, despite his candidate receiving support from those groups.

### 2.2.2 The narrative: Juru Bicara (Spokesperson) stand-up comedy show

The narrative is a key to a successful performance. Therefore, a comic carefully crafts narratives to produce laughable jokes. Generally, a stand-up comedy show consists of many jokes that are commonly known as bits. The comic creates a premise to give a context and a punchline to conclude the bit funnily and amusingly. The inspiration of jokes could come from the comic's semi-autobiography story or comic view towards reality based on first-hand experience (Dore, 2018: 106). This strategy also helps the comic from abusing the stage and randomly mocking the subject without a specific purpose.

To narrow the scope in examining the narrative, I focus on the special tour from Pandji Pragiwaksono titled *Juru Bicara* (Spokesperson). Pandji emphasised that *Juru Bicara* as the main title departed from an idea that a spokesperson holds an important role—who could also act on behalf of minority groups (Simanjuntak, 2017). In this tour, he acted like a spokesperson who facilitates dialogue about sensitive issues, ranging from human rights violations and the solidarity movements seeking justice, communism in Indonesia post-1965 tragedy, the LGBT rights, and Indonesia post-1998 tragedy. The liveshow was held in 2016 in Bahasa Indonesia across 24 cities around the world. In foreign country, Pandji was targetting the diaspora and Indonesian students. However, the recorded video is available on his Youtube (audiovisual) and Spotify (audio) channel, while also distributed commercially through DVD or digital download.

In *Juru Bicara*, he invited the audience to recognise the ugly truth of several unspoken topics and laugh bitterly towards it. For instance, one of his narratives was about the *Aksi Kamis* (Thursday Movement), where families of victims who experienced various human rights violations and survivors gather in front of the presidential palace, wearing a black dress code and carrying a black umbrella, to protest in the silence between 4 and 5 pm in the afternoon. This movement has been going on every Thursday for 14 years since 2007. The spokesperson, leader, icon of *Aksi Kamis* (the Thursday Movement) is Ibu Sumarsih, Wawan's mother. Wawan is one of the victims of the Semanggi Tragedy. He was killed when participated in a protest that demanded an end to the new order regime and former President's Soeharto resignation in 1998. Pandji started his story with a premise:

*Imagine that Wawan is your son. You gave birth and raised him. Fast forward, he entered elementary school, junior and senior high school, then university. One day, he told you that he went to school, but he never came back at the end of the day. Then you read the newspaper and wonder whether the government have a piece of information about my son? Then for seven years [as the show was held in 2016], you stand still every Thursday, asking where my son is? If he is dead, let me know, so I will let him go, but if he is still alive, let me know, I will wait for him forever.*

Then he escalates those beautiful premises to the bitter but hilarious punchline:

*Following the action, these people consistently sent the letter to the President every Thursday [for seven years], but they [the president(s)] never replied nor responded. You must be very upset! Imagine how you feel when you send a WhatsApp chat, and it's only marked as read without any further response. You must be wondering what the heck! Why didn't they respond to my chat.*

Picture 1 *Juru Bicara* Tour Jakarta, 10 December 2016



Taken from: Pandji Pragiwaksono personal blog <http://pandji.com/satriapiningit/>

Picture 2 Promotional Poster of *Juru Bicara* Tour

2 APRIL SHANGHAI  
23 APRIL BEIJING  
13 MAY HANNOVER  
14 MAY LEIPZIG  
15 MAY BERLIN  
21 MAY FRANKFURT  
22 MAY MÜNCHEN  
4 JUNE MEDAN  
6 JULY PRETORIA  
6 AUGUST YOGYAKARTA  
13 AUGUST TOKYO  
20 AUGUST MELBOURNE

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JURU BICARA

STAND UP COMEDY WORLD TOUR

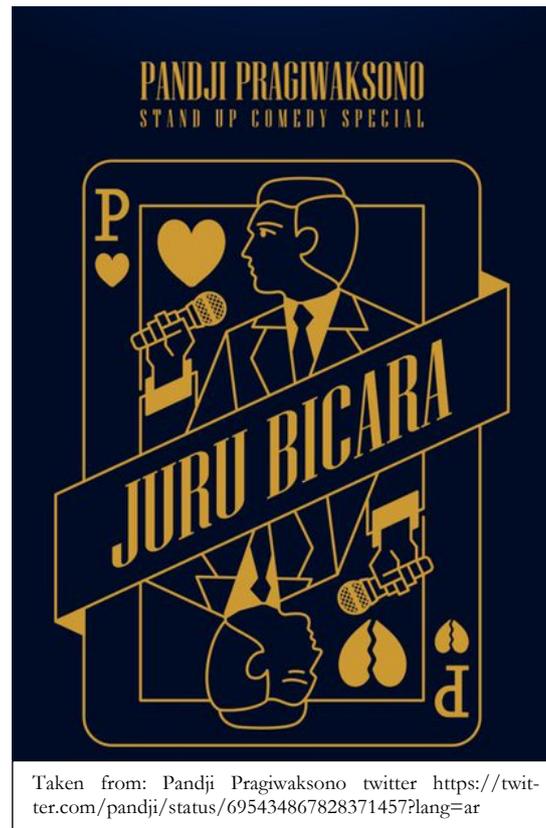
PANDJI PRAGIWAKSONO

vidio.com/@pandjipragiwaksono

27 AUGUST SYDNEY  
3 SEPTEMBER LOS ANGELES  
4 SEPTEMBER SAN FRANCISCO  
10 SEPTEMBER CHICAGO  
11 SEPTEMBER PHILADELPHIA  
16 SEPTEMBER WASHINGTON DC  
18 SEPTEMBER BOSTON  
24 SEPTEMBER LIVERPOOL  
23 OCTOBER BALIKPAPAN  
29 OCTOBER SURABAYA  
13 NOVEMBER MAKASSAR  
10 DECEMBER JAKARTA

Taken from: Pandji Pragiwaksono twitter  
<https://twitter.com/pandji/status/728900164086337536>

Picture 3 Two sides of the stories (the logo of *Juru Bicara* Tour)



Taken from: Pandji Pragiwaksono twitter <https://twitter.com/pandji/status/695434867828371457?lang=ar>

The *Juru Bicara* show's duration was around two hours and forty-five minutes. However, for this research, I specifically selected four jokes from minutes 02.25.57 to 02.38.00 (about 13.03 minutes) on the recorded version of the show. The selection is based on its powerful message and extremely sensitive topics for the Indonesian audience. The narratives are about the solidarity movement to seek justice—*Aksi Kamis*—as previously illustrated, communism ideology after the 1965 massacre, LGBT rights, and the 1998 tragedy. For ethical reasons, I managed to get permission from Pandji to use some parts of *Juru Bicara* show recorded version for research purposes. Finally, using the recorded video, I analysed the direction of narratives, whether they criticise the elite and beautifully utilise the platform to counter the censorship and/or amplify the official narratives and use the comedy to censor the story of the minority groups or something else.

### 2.2.3 The audience: UGM stand-up comedy community

The audience has an important role in the stand-up comedy tour. The primary function of stand-up comedy is to give the audience entertainment and recreational moment. Moreover, the audience's involvement in the show is crucial for measuring successful performance and message delivery. According to Bakhtin, through this platform, the comic and audience collectively interact and reflect the incongruence of everyday circumstances (Holoch, 2012: 24-25). The audience also has the authority to interpret the story (Ott, 2007: 30). Their preference, response, and laughter are the expression of power. Therefore, to explore the role of comedy, I worked with a designated audience and heard their testimony after watching selected bits of *Juru Bicara* show.

This study intends to understand about audience's interpretation of the narratives from the member of UGM stand-up comedy community (Stand-up UGM). I carefully invited

them to participate in the research based on three considerations. *First*, their positionality as youth that represented the stand-up comedy majority audience, as stated by Pandji in the interview (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 01.05.04). *Second*, their background as a university students, which I would argue is part of an epistemic community who can access higher degree education in Indonesia and has the possibility to engage with contemporary Indonesian politics and current social-political issues. Haris Azhar, the social justice activist who was involved in this research also supported this argumentation when I asked him about the demography of stand-up comedy audience in Indonesia, “*I would say that most of Pandji’s audiences are well educated middle class*”. (Azhar, 31 August 2021, Minute 20.10). *Third*, as part of the community, they are enthusiastic about stand-up comedy, whether as performers or audience. So since, I conducted the research virtually from abroad due to pandemic situation, the consideration to work with stand-up UGM was based on technical reason, such as my personal resource and network in the fieldwork to access the participants.

## 2.3 Methodology and methods

In contemporary Indonesian politics, stand-up comedy emerged as a strategic channel to publicly discuss sensitive subjects without worrying about oppression. However, I would stress that as a double-edged sword, the contribution of stand-up comedy towards society, particularly their audience, needs to be carefully observed. Thus, to meet the research objectives, *first*, I conducted a literature review to frame stand-up comedy as the scope of research in relation to power in the context of Indonesia; and *second*, I worked simultaneously with the comic and the audience to gain insight about stand-up comedy from their experience and point of view. I also did a reflective interview with a social justice activist who worked with Pandji during the *Juru Bicara* tour.

Methodologically, I opted to frame the research using Motta (2018) conceptualisation about storytelling. Motta argues that storytelling opens the possibility to create a space for knowledge production from the story of the oppressed (2018: 124). Technically, I chose to work using a qualitative approach by conducting interviews with the comic, audience, and Haris (social justice activist). Haris worked with Pandji as an official partner in *Juru Bicara* tour. This chapter will explain the data collection process, research assistant, ethical issues, and research limitations, including the challenge of conducting virtual fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 2.3.1 The data collection: qualitative interviews

Precisely for this study, I selected four bits (comedy narratives) from Pandji Pragiwaksono's tour, *Juru Bicara: Aksi Kamisan*, communism, LGBT rights, and the 1998 tragedy. These four bits are considered complicated topics if discussed publicly based on several recorded incidents discussed earlier. However, in the 2016 tour or recorded distribution, Pandji managed to explicitly address the issues without risking his safety and well-being. In general, the brief explanation of the premise and punchline on each bit is necessary to position the comedy standpoint to the context of Indonesian politics—to what extent does the shape of stand-up comedy narrative support or contest the authoritative power and official story.

Meanwhile, the interviews were significant for three reasons. *Firstly*, to learn how Pandji Pragiwaksono as a comic perceives stand-up comedy particularly beyond the entertainment aspect, primarily through the production and performance in *Juru Bicara* as a case study. *Secondly*, to understand how the member of stand-up UGM, as the audience, recognise and reflect the role of comedy. *Thirdly*, to understand the opportunities and limitations of stand-up comedy from the case of *Juru Bicara* tour in the setting of contemporary Indonesian

politics. Based on those intentions, I would argue that a qualitative interview is the most suitable approach to value the stand-up comedy role mainly through comic and audience lens (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 43).

I conducted the interview virtually for all participants using a cloud-based video conference service. The decision to conduct discussions and interviews online is an adjustment made based on the situation in Indonesia that became an epicentre for the spread of a new strand of the virus during the time allocated for data collection. It was impossible to travel, reach the field and arrange face-to-face interviews, not only due to government regulations to follow the health-protocol, but also to protect both the researcher and participants.

I invited Pandji Pragiwaksono, the comic, by formally sending an email and asking his willingness to participate in this research. Following his busy schedule as an entertainment industry worker, I set a semi-structured qualitative interview technique because, at that time, I believed that probably I only had one chance to speak to him within a tight duration. Thus, I could not risk forgetting to ask some crucial questions. Importantly, a semi-structured model was suitable for keeping the flow on the plan but still open for improvisation as I wanted to seek information from his point of view (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 124), particularly regarding the function of stand-up comedy, and to confirm his positionality towards the narratives. My central questions to Pandji were in regard to (1) his opinion related to his comedy activism; and (2) the production of the *Juru Bicara* tour.

Simultaneously, I worked with 16 of 35 active stand-up UGM members as designated audiences—the selection of the participants were based on purposive random sampling and their willingness. In this report, they will be identified as *Audience 1*, *Audience 2*, *Audience 3*, and so on. Their identities are anonymised to protect their privacy and confidentiality, although some interviewees gave permission to explicitly mention their nickname on the concern form. In general, all of designated audience members were 19 to 28 years old, studied in UGM from various departments, fifteen identified as men and one as woman. The limitation in accessing female participant in this research was because there was only one female member from 35 active members of stand-up UGM, and I managed to access her with help from the research assistant.

Considering time limitation for data collection and the homogenous profile of interviewees, I split the online interview into small groups of 4 to 5 participants. Furthermore, since I only met them virtually on the day of the interview for the first time, the small groups model helped the participants feel comfortable and focused since they come from the same community (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2019: 100). I organised the discussions in a semi-structured format, where at the beginning, the participants watched the recorded video from selected bits in *Juru Bicara* tour. After that, I asked them one by one to pick and give testimony on their favourite bit. This interview was necessary to exercise their response on the process of knowledge and recognition of the narrative standpoint. Since I could not travel to Indonesia due to pandemic restrictions and lack of access to reach the members of the stand-up UGM, I counted on my research assistant to help me approach them.

Lastly, I also did a reflective discussion with Haris Azhar, a former director of Kontras (The Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence), a notable social justice organisation in Indonesia which was established in 1998 (Kontras, n.d.). Pandji and Kontras worked closely during the *Juru Bicara* tour in 2016. I decided to do a semi-structured interview with Haris to reflect on the role of stand-up comedy beyond its entertainment purpose from a social justice activist perspective. Moreover, Haris was also involved in the stand-up event as an official partner, an unusual collaboration work between a comic who works in comedy event and an activist who works to advocate tragedy event. I accessed Haris through my network when I was working as a junior researcher in the university.

### **2.3.2 The research assistant: credential, responsibility, and benefit**

I worked closely on several parts with my research assistant during the remote fieldwork. He is an undergraduate student majoring in Political and Governance Science at UGM. We were both come from the same alma mater. I met him virtually through a reference, an ISS alumna who graduated in 2018 and now working as a lecturer in the Department of Political and Governance Science. Initially, I told the referee about my research proposal and wished to work with a research assistant due to pandemics. Later, she helped me to connect with the research assistant based on my requirement. It was destiny that besides coming from the same major, the research assistant is also active as a member of the stand-up UGM, has enthusiasm for the stand-up comedy shows, and is familiar with Pandji Pragiwaksono and his work. Thus, in the research, he is also an insider. Long story short, he was interested in collaborating in the study for two months in August and September during the summer break.

The research assistant's primary responsibility was to help me invite the members of stand-up UGM to participate in the research. I explained to him the aim of the study, how I organise the fieldwork, how we protect the participant's privacy, data confidentiality, and the role of the research assistant. I explicitly mention the ethical restriction to give monetary rewards on the research. Instead, he can benefit from this research experience that is probably useful to his bachelor thesis because I allowed him to follow the interview process. In this research, he also participated as an interviewee and shared his experience in enjoying stand-up comedy. I also offered to spare my time if he needed a discussant buddy on his research project. Thus, the research assistant and I have benefitted from each other's support in our individual research projects.

### **2.3.3 Research limitations**

I identified several challenges in doing research during the pandemic, and in this sub-section, I address how I tackled these issues. Initially, I want to investigate the role of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics based on Pandji Pragiwaksono's latest tour that was supposed to be held on August 2021. However, since he postponed the event due to the pandemic, I needed to adapt and work on his previous recorded show, the *Juru Bicara* tour, with a designated audience to examine the relation of the comic and the audience. The pandemic also forced me to approach the fieldwork virtually and limit physical interaction with participants. Thus, to minimise limitations in accessing the interviewees, particularly the members of the stand-up UGM, I worked with a research assistant who has enthusiasm for stand-up comedy and is also part of the community.

Furthermore, this research only focuses on Pandji Pragiwaksono. Hence the finding cannot be generalised to represent the comedians' positionality as a whole nor the stand-up comedy in Indonesia. In addition, since the designated audience were all stand-up enthusiasts, I cannot have testimony from people from similar backgrounds but only casually follow or watch stand-up comedy shows.

## Chapter 3 The experience of realising the power of stand-up comedy

*What do a government and a stand-up comedian have in common?  
They have power to make us laugh*

In this chapter, I will focus on the potential power of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics—the power as a capability to facilitate the process of knowing-being. In this research, I understand knowing-being as a subjective process of development, following Motta (2016, 2018) from a feminist decolonial perspective. The chapter begins with a critical explanation of the potential power of stand-up comedy as a space for pedagogical learning by examining interactions between the comedian, the audience, and the narrative.

The chapter then further acknowledges that the performance has a promising role in embracing the diversity of knowledge and avoiding single-story, particularly towards cosmopolitan groups—the majority of stand-up comedy audiences. For analytical purpose, the definition of cosmopolitan was loosening up as a privileged group who has opportunity to access, experience and take advantage of the networked-life of global worlds as a way of life that constitutes their identity, nourishment, production, memory, fear, and pleasure (Beck, 2002: 29-30). Therefore, in practice I limit my participants (the designated audience in this research) to well-educated, young people as part of the cosmopolitan. The chapter concludes with remarks on the opportunities opened by stand-up comedy in Indonesia. It addresses the third sub-question in describing what stand-up comedy can do and how it can influence contemporary Indonesian politics.

During the fieldwork, I conducted group interviews with 16 stand-up enthusiasts in four different sessions. After starting the discussion by watching the stand-up screening about human rights from *Juru Bicara* tour, I encouraged them to share their impressions. In general, the audience has their favourite parts and share a specific testimony in receiving the performance.

### 3.1 Overview of the stand-up comedy as an interactional event: the comedian, the audience, and the narrative

There were four selected bits in Pandji's 15 minutes video performance dealing with human rights issues of contemporary relevance in Indonesia. As I told earlier in the introduction, the first one was about *Aksi Kamisan* (a weekly silent protest conducted every Thursday/*Kamis*). Even though Pandji threw a 'read-only' *WhatsApp* chat metaphor-punchline to describe the bitterness of Sumarsih's struggle, one of the interviewees, Audience 1 (Male, 22 y.o., English Literature vocational student), realised that the show was not merely about nurturing leisure. He stated, "*I chose Aksi Kamisan as my favourite part not because it was funny, but because through the video, I found out that probably not all people know about this protest, the way Pandji delivered the story was relatively smooth.*" (Audience 1, 14 August 2021, Minute 57.18). He was the only audience who selected *Aksi Kamisan* as his favourite. In the interview, he learned that humour was like a combo package for entertainment and new knowledge. Another discussant, Audience 8 (Male, 21 y.o., Communication Science undergraduate student), resonated with this view that the role of comedy is a medium for knowledge production. He mentioned, "*I barely knew about Aksi Kamisan from Pandji. In my opinion, he tried to bring awareness about some essential yet ignored issues through his tour.*" (Audience 8, 16 August 2021, Minute 03.45).

Both interviewees indicate that stand-up comedy brought new information, particularly about people's struggles against human rights violations in Indonesia. This event gives a chance for the social and political phenomenon (i.e. resistance movement) to be exposed to the surface, particularly towards a privileged audience. At this point, stand-up comedy appears not only as an entertainment platform but also as an insightful event for knowledge production and social issues promotion.

**Picture 4 Sumarsih at Aksi Kamisan (Thursday Movement)**



The second bit was about communism<sup>4</sup>. In the Indonesian context, there are unwritten restriction to hold public discussions about communist ideology. The authority is ridiculously afraid that such forums would be against *Pancasila* values (national norms) and may persuade people to revive the PKI again, which had been prohibited since 56 years ago, after the 1965 coup.

Pandji started the premise by sharing data from an Indonesian NGO that claims there were 500.000 to 1.000.000 extrajudicial killings towards civilians involved in the PKI. Pandji claimed that the coup was a mistake but killing people without due process of law was also a mistake. Pandji discussed that between the years 1965-1966, the government, members of society, and the mass organisation was working together to combat the communists. *“They hunt them!”* Pandji emphasised *“Hunt like they were animals”*. Pandji added, *“There was a chaotic situation where people could quickly point other people as part of the PKI just because they did not like them”*. Pandji inserted a punchline, *“Well, if today was around 1965, and you thought my comedy was terrible, you may talk to the Army and say that Pandji was not funny, probably he might be part of the communist— then I would die the day after”*.

Pandji stated that the 1965 mass killings were the oldest and most significant human rights violations in Indonesian history. Pandji later threw additional punchline through a mockery method by sharing his experience with a guy from the Indonesian Army, who believed the communist had a chance to be reborn again through atheism. Since, back around 1965-1966, during the ‘communist hunting’, there was propaganda to encourage most Muslims to hate and join the Army to combat the communist by labelling them as atheists.

<sup>4</sup> The official story of communism/ist tragedy started at 30 September 1965, when six members of top-rank military generals were killed (Ricklefs, 2001: 339-341) and linked to PKI as an attempted coup. Following the tragedy, there were a massive killings targetting PKI members and affiliations between 1965-1966, the turmoil was also known as one of the darkest period in Indonesian history.

Unfortunately, the doctrine still exists today, particularly among the military groups or senior citizens in Indonesia who believes that communists were synonymous to atheist. Pandji said, “Geez! Communism is an outdated ideology. Even in China, you could find Starbucks and Apple Store, the symbol of capitalism”.

During the discussion, three interviewees picked this topic as their favourite. They had similar impression that the show was not funny but thoughtful by presenting the outdated and misleading propaganda that communists were atheists. However, these two ideologies were totally different. Below I quote one of the compelling testimonies from Audience 14 (Male, 20 y.o. Political and Governance Science undergraduate student):

*I like Pandji's narrative about the misconception of communism. The definition of communism/ist [as ideology] in our society is quite chaotic. When I was a kid, I thought both communists and atheists were interchangeable. In the new order, a person with a different perspective from the authority was also a communist. So, in my opinion, there is no wonder, that today many Indonesians still cannot distinguish nor define the meaning of communism or being a communist. However, Pandji could elaborate on both topics understandably. (Audience 14, 17 August 2021, Minute 06.35).*

The discussant beautifully elaborates on the two-sided stories of communism/ist in Indonesia by sharing his personal experience. The official narrative placed communism and atheism as dangerous ideologies for the Indonesian social order. In reality, victims of the 1965-1966 political turmoil also suffered due to the chaotic framework in understanding the concept. At this point, comedy is not only able to be a channel to new information but also highlight the diversity of a story.

Another discussant, Audience 12 (Male, 23 y.o., Electronical Engineering undergraduate student), who actively involved in the university student council, selected the communist topic as his favourite. He embraced the plurality of meaning by capturing the different angles from Pandji's narrative. He stated, “Probably many elderly or people with a lack of literacy thought atheist and communist have the same meaning, and Pandji tried to discuss that problem explicitly. Furthermore, it is also funny that the Army, as part of the authority, has such a perception.” (Audience 12, 17 August 2021, Minute 01.35).

While Audience 13 (Female, 19 y.o., Geodetic Engineering undergraduate student), the youngest and only female member of stand-up UGM, confessed that she got new information from the show. When I encouraged her to expand her reflection, she repeatedly emphasised about learning some further information and insightful knowledge. She said, “It was a meaningful performance! Well, even though sometimes it flops, the audience can find valuable [facts], and I barely knew that neo-communism [issue] does exist. We not only laugh but also learn something new.” (Audience 13, 17 August 2021, Minutes 33.42 and 56.28).

The students have a different interpretation of the same communist narrative. Audience 14 indicated that his engagement with the narrative was influenced by his educational background as a political science student. While Audience 12 learned about the societal problem from his involvement in the student council. On the contrary, Audience 13, who studied engineering and was not involved in any student movement activities, stated that she barely knew about the revival of neo-communism terminology from the show. From this experience, I would argue that educational/organisational background is one of the essential elements that influence the process of knowing. Their testimony reflects a complex interconnection that disrupts the former regime construction about the misconception of communist/communism in Indonesia.

The third comedy narrative was about the difficulties of being gay in Indonesia. Pandji compared that in the United States, you have the freedom to identify yourself as part of the LGBT.

*If you are gay and living here in Indonesia, I would say that you are a brave man. Imagine you live in a country that cannot accept your identity. When I visited the USA, I met an Indonesian who openly declared that he was gay. I felt happy for them when he said, 'my boyfriend is here to pick me up!'. While in Indonesia, you need to have two identities; your public identity as part of heterosexual community and your true identity as gay that you keep for yourself. It is like a batman though, you are Bruce Wayne during the day and [mimicking feminine gesture] the Batman during the dark.*

Pandji continued the speech, “*The raid of gay Indonesia conducted by the police in partnership with the conservative muslim organisation known as FPI, both the police and FPI collaborating, like a Youtuber*”. Pandji hilariously questioned the methodology used to identify gays and stated that the authority was doing a useless job. The only discussant, Audience 6 (Male, 28 y.o., Higher Education Management post-graduate student), who picks the gay topic as his favourite, shared testimony:

*It was so funny! Sweeping people in the apartment, while apartment, a private residence is a personal space. First, we don't even know their sexual preference. Second, actually, the society [majority heterosexual people] has no issue with gay [people]* (Audience 6, 15 August 2021, Minute 18.04).

The discussant later explained his thought about the LGBT issue, “*Well, I do not have further reflection about homosexuality [after watching the show], I do not find the narrative special.*” (Audience 6, 15 August 2021, Minute 20.26). At the same time, the discussant gave a hint that comedy was just comedy, period.

From my point of view, the feminine gesture mockery in this bit is problematic because Pandji behaviour and narrative signalling a misogynistic and offensive behaviour towards the LGBT community. The joke could be a double-edged sword, as Gencarella (2013) argued, belittling the vulnerable only to provoke audience response. However, I asked Pandji in the interview, and he clarified that he tried his best to take sides with his LGBT friends. He stated that the controversial bit should be understood as a set-up building to give context towards the argument that you cannot judge sexual preference based only on the subject of a feminine gesture, music taste, or other stereotypes (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 31.05). Even though Pandji has a proper reason in using the LGBT mockery gesture to criticise the authority policy, but my uneasy feeling is also a confirmation of the underside of stand-up comedy as ambiguous event, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Lastly, the fourth bit was about several human rights violations around the 1998 riots. This story was the most favourite bit among the discussants. Pandji started the bit by telling the audience about his peculiar experience in front of around 800 Trisakti University students. Trisakti University is known as the *Reform Hero Campus* to commemorate the Trisakti shootings at the student protest demanding Soeharto's resignation on 12 May 1998, killing four of its students. For the ice breaking, Pandji, who was invited as a speaker, was surprised when jokingly asked, “*Who missed the new order and Soeharto?*” According to Pandji, around 80 per cent of students raised their hands that irritated him. “*Seriously you missed Soeharto? Do you know that your seniors sacrifice their life to end the authoritarian regime? What is with the longing for the Soeharto period? How old were you in 1998?*”, Pandji said that one student yelled at him that he was three years old during the transition period. The statement became a bridge for the first punchline, “*What did you miss from Soeharto as a toddler? Your mother breastmilk?*”

After a coda for laughing, Pandji later continued his story by telling the audience about the 1998 movement, particularly the reasons beyond students demands and the chaotic protest situation at Trisakti University. “*The protest ran smoothly in the beginning until someone provoked the students and yelled: 'your dick!' It was not clear who, but the swearing was coming from the police sides. How dare you shout such a word to the short-temper students who went angry even when you call them 'weirdo!'*”. Lastly, Pandji closed the presentation by throwing a final punchline, referring to a

photo he found on the internet recording an epic moment around the critical time during the riots.

*Suppose you are googling using the keyword 'Trisakti Tragedy'. In that case, you will find a picture where there was an unconscious student in the foreground. She was lying down. There were also policies in the background. But in between, there was a street vendor who undoubtedly sold bottled tea. He had no fear of the chaotic situation, the student's life and death. He was chillingly smoking his cigarette while hiding near his cart. That is our national character! We don't care about the war, riot, earthquake. When we need money, we get to work. That is us!*

**Picture 5 The unconscious woman, the polices, and the street vendor at the 1998 riots**



Eleven interviewees agreed that the 1998 bits were the best. Pandji delivered three continuous punchlines and invited audiences to go deeper to learn the story about violations during transition to democracy. Most interviewees were mostly affected by the final punchline. However, these people have different experiences in understanding the story.

Below, I quoted some of their testimonies after watching *Juru Bicara* video. Audience 4 shared, “I found the narrative was funny. As a comedian, Pandji just wanted to entertain us. I felt Pandji wished to share his opinion, his insecurity. Even though he might have some message inside the comedy, but it was not his ultimate goal.” (Audience 4, 14 August 2021, Minute 50.41). Separately, Audience 10 said, “It was funny. His delivery was so good from the Aksi Kamisan protest. Next, human rights violations. Later, I thought Pandji would share something intensely about human rights issues, but I did not see it was coming. Instead, he acted out to the bottled tea, the punchline.” (Audience 10, 16 August 2021, Minute 51.10). While Audience 16 stated that Pandji just wanted to entertain us (Audience 16, 14 August 2021). From their testimonies, Audiences 4 (Male, 19 y.o., History undergraduate student), Audience 10 (Male, 21 y.o., Geophysics Engineering undergraduate student), and Audience 16 (Male, 20 y.o. Machine Engineering vocational student) similarly explained their engagement to the performance was limited as an entertainment platform.

On the other hand, there were also amateur stand-up comedians among the participants, Audience 2 (Male, 22 y.o., Statistics Study undergraduate student), Audience 3 (Male, 20 y.o., Geodetic Engineering undergraduate student), and Audience 5 (Male, 23 y.o., Electronic Engineering undergraduate student). Thus, during the interview session, they were more focused on technicalities reflection. For instance, Audience 2 who expressed, “It was so hilarious! How

come, in the middle of a chaotic war, you have the courage to peddle your product.” (Audience 2, 14 August 2021, Minute 53.25). Audience 2, as a former coordinator for Stand-up UGM, further explained, “I learned from Pandji how to craft a bit using multiple techniques and smoothly jump from one to another bit, which was incredible.” (Audience 2, 14 August 2021, Minute 54.36).

In addition, Audience 5, the winner of several national stand-up comedy competitions, testified, “Well, funny is funny. It is difficult to define what funny is.” (Audience 5, 15 August 2021, Minute 02.08). Audience 5, who also worked for Pandji’s Comika.id, noticed that Pandji’s has a storyteller persona, “Pandji has a strong point in crafting the narrative. He was born to be a storyteller.” (Audience 5, 15 August 2021, Minute 00.33).

While Audience 3, who appointed as the current coordinator for Stand-up UGM, emphasised the storyteller persona as having the capability to deliver a story in a conversational mechanism, “Pandji understood that as a comedian, his obligation is to provoke a laugh. Therefore he threw some punchline in between the narrative. After all, like in a conversation between two parties, we might get some meaningful information.” (Audience 3, 14 August 2021, Minute 01.01.45). He also appreciates Pandji’s performance, particularly in creating the incongruence as one of the stand-up comedy formulas, “I like how he delivers the last joke, and I can clearly visualise the peculiarity [in my head].” (Audience 3, 14 August 2021, Minute 05.18).

Interestingly, Pandji, as a professional comedian, resonated the same spirit with Audience 2, Audience 3 and Audience 5, the amateur comedians. In the discussion, Pandji explained:

*If I should answer the question [about persona], I am more comfortable being called a storyteller because the format [of the narrative] is storytelling. Even my initial motivation to produce a stand-up comedy is because I want to share some stories... So, if I should categorise [my persona], I am probably a storyteller even though I have no idea whether this self-proclamation is reliable as a persona.* (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 07.40).

In the end, the elaboration from the audiences, which has a background as stand-up comedians and Pandji, the performer of *Juru Bicara* show, revealed the primary function of stand-up comedy as an entertainment platform, to provoke laughter and pleasure. From this approach, stand-up comedy is reflected from its mainstream dimensions such as jokes delivery method, comedy plot development, and comedian persona instead of the meaning beyond the stage act. This interpretation supports the role of the audience as a meaning maker, who has the autonomy to generate narrative from their subjectivity, in this case from a stand-up comedian approach.

There was also a different interpretation in understanding the 1998 Tragedy topic. Audience 9 (Male, 21 y.o. Pharmacy undergraduate student) found the show was a way to narrate an alternative story from Pandji’s perspective. He interpreted “The street vendor jokes were sarcasm to our reality. To some extent, there is truthfulness in the story. I believe Pandji and the audience could also feel that [truth].” (Audience 9, 16 August 2021, Minute 11.36). At the same time, Audience 15 (Male, 20 y.o., Political and Governance Science undergraduate student) reflected, “The Tri-sakti bit was an irony. As a toddler, what did you miss from the new order? You did not even have vivid experience about the authoritarian regime. Overall, I recognised that this platform was a medium to remember important historical events, for instance, the 1965 and the 1998 tragedies. As an Indonesian, I would say that our situation is not okay.” (Audience 15, 15 August 2021).

Similar to the previous analysis in the communism topic, Audience 9 was also actively involved in the student council as a Former President at the Faculty level. Therefore, even though, as a pharmacy student, he does not formally learn the social-political subject in the class, I indicated that his capabilities to interpret the story were influenced by his extra campus

activities. While Audience 15, who studied politics as a formal subject in the university, critically associated the jokes to the current situation.

### 3.2 Acknowledgement of the diversity of knowledge

I would highlight three points from the audience experience's in enjoying stand-up comedy. *Firstly*, comedy is a medium for knowledge production, to gain new insight and information from a different perspective other than the authority who narrate the official story. Furthermore, Henderson (1993) emphasised the classic function of comedy as a medium to contest power by acknowledging current social phenomena. In the showcase, the comedian presents entertaining jokes and stories related to human rights injustices in particular. Therefore, in this space, the comedian provides a way to the process of knowing by publicly opening a conversation on complicated, sensitive, taboo, controversial topics in a casual way. At the same time, through this pedagogical learning, the audience has the possibility to recognise and realise that the problems do exist. Although, we cannot expect the audience have a similar solid interpretation to the message behind the narrative as they connect to the jokes differently.

*Secondly*, comedy is a medium to promote social issues, particularly to the privileged cosmopolitan groups. According to Pandji, most of his audience's age (particularly in the Juru Bicara Tour) was 18 to 30 years old. Haris Azhar, former Director of Kontras, wisely stated, "We thank Pandji, we have five or six cases captured by Pandji for free [as stand-up comedy topics]. It was good exposure. Otherwise, we need to pay someone to work specifically in this field." (Azhar, 31 August 2021, Minute 16.22). In addition, Haris stated that Pandji's stand-up audience mostly came from the privileged cosmopolitan background like urban-based society, middle class, open-minded, and well-educated.

When I decided to talk to Haris, he mentioned that collaboration was part of a non-legal strategy to expand awareness about social problems towards specific groups. According to Haris, using popular culture/art as a platform of repertoire is quite common in social action. Stand-up comedy is being chosen as a medium because of its popularity in the cosmopolitan group. Haris explained that Pandji is not the first artist who works closely with Kontras in delivering a humanity message. Previously Kontras also worked with singers, writers, and actresses to reach specific segments in society. Furthermore, Haris emphasised that the collaboration did not need any direct response from Pandji's audience because he was aware that Pandji's central role as a comedian was to entertain, not mobilise the audience, "For me, it was like a social investment. Thus, I did not expect an immediate result." (Azhar, 31 August 2021, Minute 55.09).

*Thirdly*, in order to contest the power, the comedian uses the stage to challenge the authority narratives. In the interview, Pandji mentioned:

*Juru Bicara was departed from my longing to produce a special stand-up comedy event after three years of hiatus. At the same time, one of my friends shared his problem about the difficulties in promoting sex education and asked my willingness to discuss the issues. Around that time, I was also invited by an alliance from Trisakti University who is actively advocating justice for Trisakti shootings. During the casual talk after participating in an event, they requested my support to discuss the Trisakti issue using the stand-up comedy platform. After several considerations, I started to sketch the stand-up concept based on this situation. I will be their representative [Juru Bicara] to discuss the issues. Later on, I met Kontras and the others for material shopping. Finally, the concept of the Juru Bicara show became clearer. (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 03.00).*

Although, in my opinion, *Juru Bicara* was dedicated to representing the voice of minority groups, Pandji has a different point of view to this premise and carefully shared his view:

*I know some people thought I probably had a secret mission behind the comedy show. Some people found it hard to believe that I just wanted to make people laugh, to do a [stand-up] comedy. I don't have a noble goal to educate the nation, to raise awareness about the current political situation. No! I never had that [motivation]. At the same time, I prefer to discuss complicated topics like social-political issues just because my circles were working around the fields. So, I [regularly] heard and observed such [cases] (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 05.15).*

Interestingly, Pandji worked closely with Kontras during the creative process, a national social justice organisation focusing on human rights advocacy. Initially, I thought that the partnership between a comedian and social justice activists was unusual. I assumed that Pandji was talked to Haris to avoid the 'double-edged sword' since he will work around sensitive topics. I was surprised because, according to Pandji, the collaboration started when Haris Azhar asked him personally to talk about human rights issues in his stand-up comedy. Pandji later came to Kontras office, met Haris and human rights activists in Kontras to conduct a brainstorming session. Through the conversation, although Pandji refused the label of "deliver noble agenda" around his comedy work, it was clear that Pandji standpoint was to disrupt the authority narratives by delivering stories from the experiences of social justice activists who work closely around marginal issues.

At this point, stand-up comedy is a medium to acknowledge the diversity of knowledge, particularly the alternative story about the margins. Chimamanda Adichie (2009), in her TedTalk, argued that challenging the official narratives is vital to avoid a single-story perspective in understanding the social-historical-political phenomena. When Pandji discussed communism, he emphasised that both sides were in a difficult situation during the political uncertainty after the 1965 coup. Hence judging communists as bad guys because of the authority propaganda is not absolutely correct. As addressed by Adichie, in this case, the single-story about communism ended up in a dangerous implication where incomplete narratives led to stereotyping and violence. Therefore, exposure to the diversity of knowledge is essential to challenge the official story, embrace the incomplete knowledge, and bring back the dignity of the oppressed groups.

### 3.3. Summary

In conclusion, I want to highlight that stand-up comedy is a promising medium for experiential learning. The audience has autonomy as a co-producer for meaning-making from the interactional event. Although the comedian never aims to encourage audience awareness of current social issues, from the performance, as a pedagogical space, stand-up comedy opens the possibility to generate new information, promote social justice, and provide alternative stories from different perspectives. Therefore, this platform is important for two reasons: *firstly*, to challenge the dominant discourse that only the powerful who has a credential to craft the collective story about a nation, historical wounds, a vulnerable group, people struggle, or current social-political phenomena. This platform helps to amplify perspective of the powerless and spread their stories to the cosmopolitan group, that has never been sufficiently exposed to stories of the oppressed before. *Secondly*, acknowledging the diversity of knowledges as a process of knowing is crucial to avoid the dangerous single-story that rendered any colonial disease ranging from discrimination, stereotype, or erasure of information that led to inequality and injustice. Even though I should also note that some audiences perceived stand-up comedy as a recreational event or are more interested in technicalities development

instead of decoding the message—and it is still totally understandable because, on the surface, that is the aim of stand-up comedy.

## Chapter 4 The experience of realising the limitation of stand-up comedy

*A storyteller walks into a bar,  
The barman comes and adjusts the positionality*

According to Motta (2018), positionality in storytelling is important because of its implication in defining, processing, and responding to the process of knowing/knowledge. The first part pays particular attention to the ambiguity of the format and function of stand-up comedy as an entertainment and social justice promotion platform.

Next, the chapter discusses the dynamics of stand-up comedy by specifically paying attention to its positionality in delivering stories from the margins. Unfortunately, since stand-up comedy practices around the cosmopolitan elites, it sufficiently increases the risk of reproducing the symptom of altruistic gesture syndrome, one of the biggest fears in the development field. The syndrome to guiding, saving, and helping the vulnerable while at the same time rendering the false generosity that implicitly assumes the oppressed cannot initiate resistance, resilience and overcome marginality (Cammarota, 2011: 244-245).

The chapter, later, continues to address the third sub-question of this research, particularly in describing the limitations of stand-up comedy as the study aims to grasp a more balanced perspective about it. Lastly, it concludes with a brief reflection on realising the challenge of using popular medium as an alternative medium to promote epistemic justice in contemporary Indonesian politics.

### 4.1 Beyond the punchline: the ambiguity role of stand-up comedy

The ultimate goal of stand-up comedy as an entertainment platform is to fulfil joy through a laugh. In the interview, Pandji explicitly mentioned that he regrets dropping some narratives during the creative process just because he cannot find humorous material as a bridging. Pandji explained, “*In the end, [after the brainstorming session with Kontras], some topics cannot be performed. Honestly, I cannot find any comedy element to be inserted into the story.*” (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 19.03). Furthermore, when I encouraged Pandji to speak about his expectation from the audience in doing stand-up comedy in general, he emphasised, “*I never have any expectations, let’s watch Pandji, you will be wise, you will be a better person, open-minded or a liberal, I never have that intention. I just want to do a comedy performance.*” (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 47.30). Therefore, according to the comedian himself, promoting social justice and providing alternative knowledge was not the primary purpose of stand-up comedy. However, he never denied that by watching the show, some audiences might learn new things.

In the separate discussion, Haris was also aware that Pandji’s central role as a comedian was to create a fun experience by transforming tragedy into comedy. Harris argued:

*Sometimes, we cannot promote something [social-political issues] as it is. We need to find a [captivating] scenario...He [Pandji] is not a lawyer. He [Pandji] is an artist. That is how the artist works...if he does not transform the tragedy into comedy, he cannot perform [the narrative]. If he cannot perform, people cannot recognise the issues... Like academia, he uses the story as an example, inductive reasoning to build an argument... There should be someone working on that job. Some are working through*

*painting, some through stand-up comedy, some through song, some through sculpture. There are many mediums to expand the message, not only through a human rights violations report. (Aẓhar, 31 August 2021, Minutes 14.42 and 22.26).*

As the collaborator for *Juru Bicara* show, from the social justice advocate perspective, Haris believes stand-up comedy's power as a sophisticated art event to spread humanity messages.

From this finding in understanding the role of comedy function, I found that comedy is an open space for diverse interpretation. Since the core message is disguised between the punchline, not all audiences get the message. The comedian could grab the audience's attention through a memorable punchline like a peculiar street vendor who was persistently selling his bottled tea when talking about the 1998 riots. However, each audience might experience the whole narrative differently. Some audiences engaged only with the jokes but not the story, and some audiences focused on scrutinising the creative process, not the message—and *nothing is wrong with that*. Pandji, the comedian and Haris, the activist, who worked together throughout the special show, has their opinion about the power of stand-up comedy. Finally, borrowing the stand-up comedy stage to discuss social-political problems needs an open heart to embrace the complex spectrum of art as a semiotic system that allows the audience as a producer to generate indefinite subjective possibilities. I would stress that the ambiguous role of art makes pedagogical learning and the process of knowing challenging.

Haris, who recognise my insecurity about this limitation during the virtual discussion, calmly explained:

*It is ok, no worries!... [the show] will be a social capital, a social investment that does not need any direct response. Pandji is not an orator in the middle of madness masses ready to fire a building using propaganda. No, it is not like that! Even so, he patiently seeds a living memory towards the audience through an unforgettable moment [the stand-up comedy show], and oh, yes, I remember that one fine day. A specific impression that makes us recollect the memory. That is it! So, in my opinion, this memory will be helpful to trigger the middle class [audience] in a specific circumstance. Indeed, Pandji's primary duty is to entertain and seed the memory in the people's minds. That is how it works! (Aẓhar, 31 August 2021, Minute 50.09).*

Haris has positivity on making social investments through stand-up comedy, and I totally agree with his argument. The discussion with Haris about seeding a living memory through stand-up comedy is exposing the noble of collaborative work between comedian and social justice activist. This creative resistance is an attempt to make visible the alternative stories of the oppressed, as an epistemic struggle against the erasure of marginalised knowledge that does not fit to the official design (Vázquez, 2011: 33). However, by disguising the message inside the stand-up comedy punchline, nobody can be assured what kind of emotional memory saved inside the audience's minds—the ambience, the theatrical performance, or the meaningful message?

Despite the limitation in the meaning-making process, I highlighted two interesting points that should be appreciated in the collaboration between Pandji and Haris to promote human rights using the art platform. *First*, the partnership gathered public engagement in expanding the advocacy works using popular platform to speak social-political issues casually towards the cosmopolitan group. Pandji admitted, “*I am working with Kontras on many events that I often come to their discussions. Even Ibu Sumarsih invited me several times to join the protest. Well, you cannot say no when a mother-figure [Sumarsih] asks you, right! So, in total, I joined the rally about two or three times.*” (Pragiwaksono, 27 August, Minute 23.34). While Haris also have a personal testimony about Pandji:

*Pandji is open-minded... He has consciousness about human rights issues and many other things... I also invited him to several events in Kontras. He is entertaining, people like him... [Therefore] I*

*thank you [Pandji]. I do not have any expectations [on his performance] because I do not participate in the entertainment [as the comedian], but I am happy. He invited me and some survivors to the stand-up comedy tour press conference. I think he is a good one (Azhar, 31 August 2021 Minute 08.10 and 20.51)*

Both Haris and Pandji also support each other, even outside *Juru Bicara* show. The collaboration opens the door to much possible creative resistance through collaboration between artists and social justice activists for spreading awareness on social injustices as experienced by marginalised groups.

*Secondly*, in the context of contemporary Indonesian politics, where sensitive topics are challenging to be discussed publicly, the collaboration successfully works to encounter the situation. In the interview, Haris remembered that after *Juru Bicara* world tour press conference and the news was covered in many mainstream media, Haris received a phone call from a government official, as quoted:

*They invited Pandji and me for a meeting. However, the intonation was like, 'how come Pandji is doing a world tour spreading the news about human rights violations in Indonesia?' Then I told Pandji, 'Bro, somebody from the palace is looking for you'. While I also replied to him [the official] that I do not want to meet [the official]. I am not the comedian [who will perform]. Pandji is the comedian [you better call him directly]. (Azhar, 31 August 2021, Minute 26.14).*

From the statement, I found that Haris tried to save Pandji from the problematic situation. Both the comedian and the activist hand-in-hand to help each other to expand the stories. Pandji supports KontraS by spreading the issue, while KontraS supports Pandji with the material and protect him from the attempt to silence his stand-up comedy special tour.

Separately, Pandji carefully admitted that throughout his career, he also had bad experiences with authority:

*It was interesting because it was not caused by Juru Bicara show. I was so worried at that time, and for me, it was the most extreme case ever. A minister sent me a legal notice [for his performance as a host in a tv programme]. After that, I found other cases were not that extreme anymore, probably because it [the legal notice] already set the highest bar, so I found other disputes were easier for me... Indeed that as an implication, I received many comments, I lost many jobs, but I did not feel terrified. (Pragimaksono, 27 August 2021, Minute 59.11).*

Pandji's story on intimidation as an occupational hazard implied that stand-up comedy is not safe to discuss sensitive issues even though the message was layered inside the narrative. Therefore, I would argue that the collaboration between the artist and the activist is needed to keep a smooth process of knowing. Even though by using the popular platform, the pedagogical learning process in decoding the humanitarian message become more challenging.

## **4.2 Beyond the process of knowing: positionality in storytelling**

In the context of this research, I would argue that both the comedian and the audience are part of the privileged group. At this point, Pandji confidently embraces his positionality as a prominent stand-up comedian who has the privilege of skill and network. He further elaborated:

*I want to say this, but do not get me wrong by saying I am arrogant. So, if someone asked whether stand-up comedy is a suitable medium to discuss human rights issues, I would say it depends. I would say that it is not merely about the medium but also the artist. Pandji has access to KontraS, a notable organisation for human rights advocacy. Pandji has experience in scripting human rights issues to*

*comedy. Pandji knows the boundary... Indeed, we recently received some [challenging] comments, but it is not coming [officially] from the President [Jokowi]. It is just their fans... I am not afraid to perform... I am still doing comedy... I am still joking about the President [Jokowi] (Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, Minutes 41.45, 59.11).*

From the audience side, Pandji defines that most of his audience are young and well-educated backgrounds, “*If we talked specifically about Juru Bicara show, most audiences were around 18 to 30 years old. If we add the audience [profile] from outside Indonesia [in the world tour], most of them were students.*” (Pragiwaksono, 27 August, Minute 36.56). Haris was also coming with a brief similar statement in profiling the backgrounds of Pandji’s audience, that they were (well) educated (Azhar, 31 August 2021, Minute 19.05). From this profile, I would say that the selection of stand-up UGM as designated audience to reflect *Juru Bicara* tour already following the pattern of the majority *Juru Bicara* audience back in 2016 in terms of age and educational backgrounds.

From the interview, I concluded that Pandji and Haris recognised audience’s positionality as a privileged cosmopolitan group. A dominant community who has supremacy and option to define themselves as universally accepted human beings in the context of Indonesian society. I am well aware that probably universal is a problematic terminology in the development field, and not precise enough to demonstrate the audience’s backgrounds. However, in this case, I would emphasise universal from the element of the beneficiary group, as argued by Butler (2004: 32) a happy human, usually married, or on the way to be, heterosexual, monogamous which then constitute their positionality in the social hierarchy. This audience is civilised people in the middle of a global and plural society (Beck, 2002: 35-36).

Both Pandji and Haris did his best in mainstreaming and bringing the issues to the surface. Pandji’s work is a baby step to initiate a social epistemic struggle. A collective work to bring visible of plurality alternative (knowledge) and counter the hegemony (Icaza & Vázquez, 2013: 685). However, I expected something extra from the performance, when I looked back at *Juru Bicara* show press release, as quoted below:

*For Kontras and Pandji, democracy is a space for anyone to listen and to be listened. Thus, it should be well-maintained, to promote the freedom to speech, the freedom to expresssion, and more importantly to foster solidarity, so all people have equal opportunity to access human rights protection... We do hope and believe that Pandji, through his stand-up comedy performance is one of our collaborative partner to restore the practice of freedom to expression...Therefore through Juru Bicara tour, Pandji will situate himself as a spokesperson to speak about human rights issues...as a spokesperson to speak on behalf the marginalised group, discriminated group, including the victims of human rights violences...(Kontras, 2016).*

However, instead of mutual relations between people inside the event (comedian and audience) and people inside the narrative (the marginalised subject) to foster solidarity, I reflected that in *Juru Bicara* show, the comedian positioned himself more as a ‘knowledge bearer’, a terminology I borrowed from Motta (2018: 134), who spoke as an external liberated knower to bring information about the oppressed to privileged audience. At this point, Pandji and the audience were not occupying a marginalised positionality in the process of knowing, as they failed to recognise the hierarchical complexity beyond the process.

According to Paulo Freire, as argued by Cammarota (2011: 244), the comedian and audience’s privileged positionality to some extent implies false generosity, a symptom rendered by the powerful to help the powerless. I would define ‘help’ in this research, as the altruistic gesture of knowledge bearer to help in expanding the subaltern voice to the surface. For example, in his show, Pandji talked about the struggling of being a member of a LGBT community in Indonesia from heterosexual gaze.

Hence, after the show, Audience 7 (Male, 20 y.o. Animal Science undergraduate student) reflected, “*I learned new things from Indonesian histories, like human rights violence or Aksi Kamisan. I barely knew the information before Pandji’s stand-up comedy.*” (Audience 7, 16 August 2021, Minute 54.35). In addition, Audience 11 (Male, 20 y.o., Agriculture Engineering undergraduate student) took the show for granted. He did not feel any further reflection after watching the show, although he agreed that the show brought new info that he did not know before, “*I enjoyed the show. Still, I could not draw any reflection...though personally, I got further information from Pandji’s performance, for instance, Aksi Kamisan.*” (Audience 11, 16 August 2021 Minute 50.15). Therefore, when Pandji speaks as a cosmopolitan to the cosmopolitan audience, the showcase turns into an enlightenment session for the superior. Both parties were unaware of this situation, but the space forming a saving action that not only reproduces alternative knowledge about the minority but also the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Freire argues that this is indicated by an emphasis on the altruistic action to ‘saving’ instead of ‘transforming’ the vulnerable (Cammarota, 2011: 244). The ambiguous format of stand-up comedy as entertainment platform, limited the pedagogical learning process to foster emancipatory solidarity. In this case, only to ‘saving’ by exposing the marginalised stories, but not ‘transforming’ to address the oppressed system collectively—at least not until the privilege finds a perfect momentum that triggered them to recollect the memory and act together in solidarity, as mentioned by Haris. This idleness of privileges illustrate the unconsciousness that creates a polarised gap in the community, between people who stands inside and outside the acceptable circle.

Furthermore, speaking human rights issues using the format of stand-up comedy is challenging, if aiming a direct action of mutual solidarity. Based on the reflection session with the audience who can generate the meaning beyond the punchline, stand-up comedy is a practice of development to nurture sympathy and empathy between the cosmopolitan and the margins. At this point, it is significant to acknowledge the power of stand-up comedy as an experiential learning space. However, at the same time, the performance is not capable in deprivileging their status as the allies, a collaborative alliance between the privileged and the marginalised to resist against oppressive system (Cammarota, 2011: 244). A collaboration that acknowledge both positionalities, hence, enable the critical pedagogy by explore and connect the rational thinking with the body feelings through dialogue with marginalised voices to foster solidarity for liberation (Hall, 2021: 88, 93). Instead, it trapped them on the complexity of altruistic gesture.

Unfortunately, stand-up comedy is an insider event from the privileged comedian for the privileged audience, who was unable to recognise their status as the privileged. Thus, the whole performance unintentionally isolated them in an echo-chamber environment, a bubble where they only encounter the information they already agree with (Dubois & Blank, 2018: 729-730). In this case, I will adjust the echo-chamber definition to expose new information shared from the privilege bias where they only listen to the voice from the dominant positionality and not the oppressed.

Therefore, in the storytelling approach, Motta stressed the importance of positionality (Motta, 2018: 134) to rewrite/retell the story of the powerless as a dignified human being. It is indeed that Pandji reframed the story of the oppressed by acknowledging the alternative stories. However, storytelling is not just about intentionality to facilitate the process of knowing by presenting the diversity of information and multiple versions of stories. The storytelling should also facilitate the process of being and becoming that constitutes solidarity with those occupying marginalised communities. However, since the ambiguous format of stand-up comedy for pedagogical learning, I also conclude that stand-up comedy is unable to facilitate the process of knowing-being. Therefore, it is difficult to constitute a collective solidarity

commitment as part of epistemic struggle that advances social movement only by speaking or listening through stand-up comedy event.

### 4.3. Summary

In conclusion, I want to highlight that, speaking about the marginalised issues using a popular platform like a stand-up comedy is challenging, if aiming to foster solidarity. *First*, the format of stand-up comedy as a recreational event led to difficulties in decoding the humanity message that layered beyond the art performance. *Second*, the intimacy between the comedian and audience in the event is unconsciously applied and constructed from the dominant gaze that distinguish unequal relationship between them as privileged and marginalised (Beardsell, 2000: 8). Hence, from the storytelling approach, this limitation cannot facilitate the radical openness to emancipatory possibilities of the margins as part of the process of knowing-being (Motta, 20018: 128). The role of stand-up comedy as entertainment on the one side and social justice promotion platform on the other side create an ambiguity among the audience. *Whether I should take the show for granted or I should interpret the bidden message?*

Moreover, even though the audience manages to reflect valuable meaning beyond the narrative, they are still trapped in a false generosity complexity. It happened because the privileged failed to recognise the complexity of hierarchical relationship (Escobar, 1992: 37). As implication, the stand-up comedy performance unable to frame the narrative from the margins positionality. In the end, I would emphasise that the problem of the altruistic syndrome is not only happening in *Juru Bicara* show or stand-up comedy in general. The complexity also exists in popular platforms like film, music, and book, as illustrated by Cammarotta (2018) and in many developments works in the third world. The acknowledgement of this limitation is part of a reflection in doing the research project to understand the role of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics in a balanced way.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

In this final chapter, I conclude my reflective journey in understanding the role of stand-up comedy in contemporary Indonesian politics from Motta's (2018) storytelling approach. I chose to use a reflective journey instead of finding a solid, definitive answer to the central research question: *By focusing on the comedian and audience experience, what are the opportunities and limitations of the stand-up comedy role in contemporary Indonesian politics?*

In this research, I have tried to provide a thoughtful finding in acknowledging the power of stand-up comedy as a promising interactional platform between the comedian and the audience to casually discuss marginal people's stories, embrace the multiplicity of knowledge, and promote epistemic justice (Chapter 3). During fieldwork, I recognised each audience experienced the reflection towards comedy in various ways. Some audience perceived the comedy only as a taken for granted entertainment event—as the primary purpose of stand-up comedy for recreational pleasure. At the same time, the other audience acknowledges the role of comedy to amplify the voice of the oppressed group that is layered within incongruence punchline. Therefore, in a positive sense, stand-up comedy is a safe medium to develop the practice of knowing as a subjective experience, particularly for a specific cosmopolitan segment in society.

However, like visually represented in the 'double face' logo of *Juru Bicara* tour, it is important to understand stand-up comedy for epistemic justice in more balanced way. For instance, because of the ambiguous role of stand-up comedy, I would also admit the risk and challenge of stand-up comedy as a pedagogical learning medium to promote the process of knowing-being (Chapter 4). Indeed, the audience still has the possibility to get the message meaningfully beyond the memorable punchline. However, since the event cannot avoid the dominant gaze of because of unconscious positionality as a privileged group, the audience cannot recognise the marginalised story as 'our' collective wounds—but instead 'their' wounds and implied the unequal relationship between them the powerful and powerless. Following Motta's approach, Pandji's positionality as an external knowledge bearer in the storytelling process is not able to facilitate the process of being in a collective emancipatory solidarity. It is not Pandji's fault nor his intention to position themselves as superior on the stage.

Unfortunately, this later situates the audience at the crossroads like Källstig and Death (2020: 15) argumentation towards Noah's stand-up comedy, that the ambivalent narratives left the audience unsure what to pity, admire, mock or emulate. In the *Juru Bicara* case, audience is left unsure of what to do after the curtain closed. As a result, unfortunately, stand-up comedy was unable to advance the process of knowing-being for collective remembering, recreating, and reweaving experiences around marginal problems in contemporary Indonesia (Motta, 2016: 44).

In addition, as I encountered many questions, doubts, thoughts, and challenges throughout the research, I also offer a future research agenda based on my personal contemplation. Initially, I planned to work on Pandji's latest special tour titled "*Komoidoumenoi*" from Athenian glossary popularised by the ancient Greek comedian Aristophanes. Pandji mentioned on his promotional page that Aristophanes has a catalogue of mockery list *Komodouimenoï* to help him develop a comedy plot on the stage. Following the spirit of Aristophanes, Pandji said that the selection of *Komoidoumenoi* as a major theme is founded on the hypothesis that stand-up comedy aims to make dominant people uncomfortable with status quo (Nabila, 2020). However, Pandji decided to postpone the show due to the pandemic, and I needed to

make major adjustments in the research design. Using the *Juru Bicara* tour material, a stand-up comedy performance from 2016, I brought the narrative into the 2021 context and worked virtually with a designated audience. At this point, I have a lot of curiosity, that could be used for future research agenda. For instance, *what if I have the opportunity to access the actual audience who is willing to voluntarily pay to attend the Komoidoumenoi? What is the Komoidoumenoi narrative all about? What is the difference between Pandji's stand-up comedy show in 2016 and 2021, and whether Pandji managed to embrace his positionality this time?*

I learned that positionality is one key element in understanding the opportunities and limitations of stand-up comedy from a storytelling approach. Therefore as a stand-up comedy enthusiast, I also wonder *what it will be if I have a chance to work with different audiences from more heterogeneous backgrounds, i.e. social justice activists, LGBT members, do they have different interpretation? To what extent the male domination in stand-up comedy contributes to reproduce the dominant gaze in narrating marginalised story? Whether the privileged could embrace the positionality as allies through stand-up comedy in the process of knowing-being and how? Whether there is another critical element other than positionality that contributes to the process of knowing-being?*

Finally, as the journey reaches the end, I would say that personally, I am so grateful! I am so grateful that the reflective journey brought me to understand the uncomfortable feelings from ten years ago when I was watching Pandji for the first time. The same uncomfortable feeling that came again after *Juru Bicara* show in 2016. Back then, I did not have the capability to interpret the feeling yet embrace my positionality as a liminal subject. Although at that time, my emotional instinct as a human being had a different intuition and sent an uncomfortable feeling as a body signal—*yes, my body was amazing but I trapped in the rational thinking behavior instead of embedded body feeling!*

As time goes by, following Motta's approach, I managed to revisit my personal milestones to ten years ago as a meaningful journey through this research. I learned that personally, I am also exposed to the complexity of privileged group positionality. I used to tirelessly travel back and forth between my hometown and the capital city of Indonesia to meet my family. A while ago, as part of my occupational responsibility, I met many human rights survivors, listened to their stories, and felt powerful on the one day, yet powerless on the other day. At the weekend, I have leisure time to access the recreational event. In between, I fell in love, married, have a baby, and settled. Later on, I have the opportunity to continue my study at ISS. Shortly after, when I finally started the research project, I got a chance to unlearn my adulthood journey and embrace my positionality—*who am I?* I reflected that as a privilege, from the perspective of decolonial feminist, I have been subalternised through a complex process of racialisation, colonialisation, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexuality (Lugones, 2010: 747). Therefore, I am humbled and thankful when the research process brought me back to a transformative journey. As my rational thinking embodied with the body feeling, I finally understand the meaning of the uncomfortable feeling from 10 years ago. *It was me going through a process of knowing but not the process of being (becoming) in emancipatory solidarity with the oppressed. It was me at the crossroads, confused what should I do from my privilege positionality? Should I pity them as vulnerable, or should I be proud of them as dignified human beings?*

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# Appendix 1 Consent Form (Template and Translation)

9/29/21, 10:58 PM Formulir persetujuan untuk terlibat sebagai partisipan

## Formulir persetujuan untuk terlibat sebagai partisipan (template)

Halo! Perkenalkan nama saya Wening Hapsari Marifatullah. Saat ini saya sedang menyusun tesis penelitian dengan judul Eksplorasi Fungsi Pertunjukan Komedi Tunggal dalam Konteks Politik Indonesia Kontemporer sebagai syarat kelulusan dalam Program Pascasarjana Strata Dua Jurusan Development Studies, Human Rights, Feminist, and Conflict Studies: Social Justice Perspective di International Institute for Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam yang disponsori oleh sponsor Orange Knowledge Program. Secara umum riset ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran fungsi stand-up comedy sebagai kanal alternatif dalam menyampaikan kegelisahan publik maupun fenomena sosial.

Sehubungan dengan riset terkait komedi tunggal (stand-up comedy) tersebut, saya mengucapkan terima kasih atas kesediaan teman-teman di Komunitas Stand-Up Comedy UGM untuk terlibat berpartisipasi sebagai penonton daring dalam pertunjukan komedi virtual Juru Bicara Tur yang pernah diselenggarakan oleh Pandji Pragiwaksono tahun 2016. Kegiatan pertunjukan daring akan dilaksanakan secara berkelompok (4-5 orang) pada pertengahan bulan Agustus yang dimulai dengan menonton 4 potongan komedi terkait dengan Hak Asasi Manusia dengan durasi sekitar 15 menit dan diikuti sesi tanya jawab seputar impresi dan testimoni kawan-kawan setelah menonton video tersebut sekitar 45-60 menit.

Informasi personal

Informasi personal berisi identitas teman-teman sebagai partisipan. Informasi ini diperlukan untuk identifikasi profil partisipan yang akan terlibat dalam penelitian ini dan tidak akan digunakan untuk kepentingan apapun diluar riset. Seluruh informasi personal yang diberikan akan dijaga kerahasiaan dan keamanannya.

Nama \*

Jenis kelamin \*

laki-laki

Perempuan

Memilih tidak menjawab

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/17e-LP-NkfnaHWhHIZlyCKUgV4GYbjz2uo0ODIx/FA/edit?ts=610cce70#responses> 16/85

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Formulir persetujuan untuk terlibat sebagai partisipan

Angkatan \*

.....

Jurusan \*

.....

Fakultas \*

.....

Asal daerah (Kota/Kab) \*

.....

#### Formulir persetujuan partisipasi

Formulir ini merupakan lembar persetujuan untuk terlibat sebagai partisipan yang berisi hak dan tanggung jawab teman-teman dalam seluruh proses penelitian. Utamanya untuk memberi perlindungan terhadap privasi dan keamanan partisipan, peneliti, asisten peneliti, dan data temuan lapangan. Teman-teman diberikan opsi untuk memilih format partisipasi sesuai preferensi tanpa paksaan dan tekanan dari pihak manapun. Apabila teman-teman membutuhkan poin tambahan yang perlu diakomodasi untuk meningkatkan kenyamanan dalam proses penelitian, atau apabila di kemudian hari teman-teman merasa kesulitan atau kurang nyaman untuk melanjutkan kegiatan ini, jangan sungkan untuk mengontak saya (Wening) melalui surel [REDACTED] atau pesan whatsapp [REDACTED]

#### Pernyataan persetujuan

Dengan mengumpulkan formulir ini teman-teman telah memberikan persetujuan untuk melanjutkan atau tidak melanjutkan partisipasi dalam penelitian ini, sesuai dengan opsi jawaban yang telah dipilih. Terima kasih. Viva la komtung!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/17e-LP-NkfnaHWhIZlyCKUgV4GYbjz2uo0ODixlFA/edit?ts=610cce70#responses>

17/85

## Participant Consent Form (Translation)

Hello! My name is Wening Hapsari Marifatullah. I am currently doing my field research to understand the role of stand-up comedy in the context of contemporary Indonesian politics. This project is part of the requirement for obtaining the degree of MA in the Development Studies program, Majoring Human Rights, Feminist, and Conflict Studies: Social Justice Perspective at the International Institute for Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. In doing the MA program, I was sponsored by Orange Knowledge Program. In general, this research aims to explore the role of stand-up comedy as an alternative medium to open a conversation on public issues and current social and political phenomena.

Following the data collection process, I would like to thank the stand-up comedy UGM community member for the willingness to participate in this research as a designated audience at the Juru Bicara (spokesperson) virtual show. The live show initially was performed by Pandji Pragiwaksono (the comedian) in 2016. Meanwhile, the virtual will be held online in a small group (consisting of 4 to 5 people) in mid-August 2021. In the beginning, I will invite the designated audience to watch four selected clips around human rights topics from the Juru Bicara show (duration about 15 minutes). The session later followed with Q and A to reflect and discuss the impression and testimony after watching the show (duration about 45 to 60 minutes).

### Personal Information

This information is limited to research screening only, particularly for data analysis based on audience profile. Hence, it won't be used for any other interest outside this project. All shared personal data information will be organised under privacy and security considerations.

Name \*

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Sex \*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Year of Study \*

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Major \*

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Faculty \*

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City of Origin (Town/District) \*

Lampung Timur

### Participant Consent Form

All participants in this research have specific rights and responsibilities, as explained in the consent form, particularly to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, the researcher, the research assistant, and data findings. Please feel free to choose the format of participation by ticking the provided options (anonymous identification options, recording options, screen capture/ recording options, date to participate options) based on your own preference without influence or pressure from anyone. If by any chance you need additional requirements to improve your comfortability during the participation, or if in the near future you decide not to continue the participation, please do not hesitate to contact me via email [REDACTED] or WhatsApp [REDACTED]

### Consent statement

By submitting this form, you agree to continue or not continue (tick one) and participate in this research. Thank you! Long live Stand-up Comedy!

Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, I prefer not to publish the participants informed consent forms.

## Appendix 2 Fieldwork Documentation



Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, I prefer not to publish the interview process with the audience(s)

## Appendix 3 Interview Guide

### Panduan wawancara untuk Pandji Pragiwaksono

Interview guide for Pandji Pragiwaksono (the Comedian)

1. Apa makna Tur Juru Bicara bagi Pandji Pragiwaksono?  
*What is the meaning of Juru Bicara Tour for Pandji Pragiwaksono?*
2. Apa yang memotivasi Pandji Pragiwaksono untuk memproduksi Tur Juru Bicara pada 2016?  
*Back in 2016, what motivated you to produce the Juru Bicara Tour?*
3. Dari sekian banyak isu HAM di Indonesia, mengapa tertarik untuk mengulik bit terkait Aksi Kamisan, Komunisme, Atheisme, LGBT, dan Tragedi 1998 ?  
*There are many different human rights challenges in Indonesia, and you selected four bits: Thursday Movement, Communism, Atheist, LGBT, Tragedy 1998. Any specific reason?*
4. Bagaimana proses kreatif dibalik Tur Juru Bicara, termasuk yang digunakan untuk menyusun materi terkait HAM?  
*Could you share the creative process behind the Juru Bicara Tour, including on human rights topics?*
5. Bagaimana menghindari kesalahpahaman dalam pembahasan topik-topik sensitif di Juru Bicara termasuk materi terkait HAM?  
*How do you avoid the subject of Juru Bicara topic as an exploitation performance?*
6. Apa tanggapan yang pernah didapat dari penonton terkait Tur Juru Bicara?  
*What did your audience say about the Juru Bicara Tour?*
7. Apa ada kutipan/testimoni yang paling diingat dari penonton?  
*Could you share the most memorable testimony from your audience?*
8. Kalau boleh memetakan, siapa mayoritas penonton Tur Juru Bicara?  
*How would you describe you audience/followers? Who are they?*
9. Apa sih pesan-pesan yang pada umumnya coba disampaikan dalam stand-up comedy oleh seorang Pandji Pragiwaksono?  
*What kind of messages stand-up comedy delivers in Indonesia?*
10. Mengapa stand-up comedy menjadi medium yang relevan untuk menyampaikan pesan tersebut?  
*Why do you think stand-up comedy is a suitable medium to deliver those messages?*
11. Apakah menurut Pandji topik HAM di Tur Juru Bicara relevan untuk menggambarkan situasi politik Indonesia saat ini? Mengapa ya atau mengapa tidak?  
*How do you think the human rights topics are (still) relevant to represent contemporary Indonesian politics? Why yes and why no*
12. Apakah Pandji merasa aman menampilkan Tur Juru Bicara pada tahun 2016? Mengapa beranggapan demikian?  
*Was it safe to perform the show back in 2016? What made you think that?*
13. Apakah Pandji masih merasa aman untuk membawakan materi Tur Juru Bicara atau materi sejenis pada tahun 2021? Mengapa ya atau mengapa tidak?  
*Do you think is it still safe to present a similar show today in 2021? Why yes and why no?*
14. Apakah pernah merasa terancam atau mengalami penyensoran karena topik stand-up comedy termasuk topik terkait HAM?  
*Have you ever felt threatened or been censored due to the topics of your stand-up comedy?*
15. Apakah topik terkait HAM tersebut dapat disampaikan secara terbuka misalnya pada diskusi, seminar, pemutaran film, bedah buku? Mengapa ya atau mengapa tidak?  
*Do you think that you would be able to speak about the topics you touch upon outside the stand-up comedy field, for example, on the discussion, seminar, movie screening/literary festival in Indonesia? Why yes and why no?*

### **Panduan wawancara untuk Penonton**

#### **Interview guide for the Audience**

1. Apakah teman-teman menikmati pertunjukan barusan?  
*Did you enjoy watching the show?*
2. Apakah teman-teman sudah pernah menonton potongan Juru Bicara ini sebelumnya? Jika pernah, apakah teman-teman memiliki pengalaman menonton yang berbeda?  
*Have you ever watched the show before? If yes, do you find any relevant difference now from your previous experience?*
3. Apa bit favorit teman-teman?  
*What is your favourite joke?*
4. Mengapa teman-teman menganggap bahwa bit yang menjadi pilihan janggal sehingga lucu? Boleh diceritakan bagian lucunya?  
*Could you tell me more about what you find funny and peculiar about the (chosen) topic and why? i.e. mockery, narratives, performance*
5. Bagaimana teman-teman menggambarkan situasi politik Indonesia saat ini, bisa dijelaskan?  
*How would you describe Indonesian politics, please expand on this?*
6. Apakah teman-teman pernah menyaksikan atau terlibat dalam situasi sulit terkait situasi politik Indonesia saat ini? Misalnya persekusi, memilih untuk tidak berdiskusi hal-hal sensitif, penyensoran politik?  
*Have you ever witnessing or involving in a difficult situation related to contemporary Indonesian politics? i.e. persecution, avoid discussing a sensitive topic, political censorship*
7. Apa tanggapan teman-teman terkait pendapat yang menganggap bahwa Juru Bicara Tur adalah acara politis?  
*What do you think about those who think the show is political?*
8. Apa refleksi teman-teman setelah menonton Juru Bicara Tur/bit favorit pilihan jika dikaitkan dengan konteks situasi politik Indonesia saat ini?  
*Could you tell me more whether you reflect anything from the show?*
9. Apakah menurut teman-teman topik HAM di Tur Juru Bicara relevan untuk menggambarkan situasi politik Indonesia saat ini? Mengapa ya atau mengapa tidak?  
*How do you think the human rights topics are (still) relevant to represent contemporary Indonesian politics? Why yes and why no*
10. Apakah topik-topik tersebut dapat dengan mudah disampaikan secara publik diluar stand-up comedy seperti diskusi, seminar, pemutaran film, festival literasi di Indonesia pada tahun 2016 maupun tahun 2021? mengapa ya dan tidak?  
*Do you think that you would be able to speak about the topics you touch upon outside the stand-up comedy field, for example, on the discussion, seminar, movie screening/literary festival in Indonesia? Why yes and why no?*

**Panduan wawancara untuk Haris Azhar, Pegiat Keadilan Sosial/HAM**  
Interview guide for Haris Azhar, Human Rights/Social Justice Activist

1. Apa yang memotivasi Bang Haris Azhar menggunakan medium stand-up comedy untuk membahas topik-topik terkait hak asasi manusia (LGBT, Aksi Kamisan, Komunis-Atheis, dan Peristiwa 1998)?  
*What motivates Haris Azhar to use stand-up comedy as the medium to discuss many different human rights challenges in Indonesia (Thursday Movement, Communism, Atheist, LGBT, Tragedy 1998)?*
2. Mengapa stand-up comedy menjadi medium yang relevan untuk menyampaikan pesan tersebut?  
*Why do you think stand-up comedy is a suitable medium to deliver those messages?*
3. Mengapa memilih Pandji Pragiwaksono sebagai rekan untuk menyampaikan topik-topik tersebut?  
*Why did you select Pandji Pragiwaksono as strategic partner amongst stand-up comedian?*
4. Bagaimana proses kreatif, kolaborasi dan curah pendapat isu antara Bang Haris, teman-teman di Kontras waktu itu dan Pandji Pragiwaksono?  
*Could you describe the creative process collaboration behind the Juru Bicara Tour?*
5. Bagaimana upaya Mas Haris menghindari kesalahpahaman dalam pembahasan topik-topik sensitif di Juru Bicara utamanya materi terkait HAM (tantangan untuk menerjemahkan isu-isu sensitif menjadi materi komedi)?
6. *How do you avoid the subject of Juru Bicara topic as an exploitation performance, particularly from human rights framework?*
7. Bagaimana pengalaman Haris Azhar menonton Tur Juru Bicara, apakah sesuai dengan ekspektasi?  
*Did the show meet your expectation?*
8. Apa pernah menerima tanggapan atau testimoni dari penonton Tur Juru Bicara terkait kolaborasi kreatif ini?  
*Could you share the most memorable testimony from the audience?*
9. Kalau boleh memetakan, siapa mayoritas penonton Tur Juru Bicara?  
*How would you describe you audience/followers? Who are them?*
10. Apa ada follow up dari Tur Juru Bicara yang diinisiasi oleh Mas Haris Azhar dan teman-teman?  
*Whether any follow up from the organization after the show?*
11. Bagaimana Mas Haris secara umum menggambarkan/merefleksikan situasi politik Indonesia saat ini utamanya terkait pemberian ruang untuk menyuarakan isu-isu sensitif?  
*How would you describe and reflect on Indonesian politics, particularly in providing the space to speak or discuss on sensitive and controversial subjects?*
12. Menurut pendapat Mas Haris, apakah topik-topik sensitif tersebut dapat dengan mudah disampaikan secara publik diluar stand-up comedy seperti diskusi, seminar, pemutaran film, festival literasi di Indonesia pada tahun 2016 maupun tahun 2021? mengapa ya dan tidak?  
*Do you think that you would be able to speak about the topics you touch upon outside the stand-up comedy field, for example, on the discussion, seminar, movie screening/literary festival in Indonesia? Why yes and why no?*

## Notes

Interview with the audience (Group 1), consist of 5 participants (Audience 1, Audience 2, Audience 3, Audience 4, Audience 16), 14 August 2021, via zoom, all recorded, except for Audience 16 as requested.

Interview with the audience (Group 2), consist of 3 participants (Audience 5, Audience 6, Audience 15), 15 August 2021, via zoom, all recorded, except for Audience 15 as requested.

Interview with the audience (Group 3), consist of 5 participants (Audience 7, Audience 8, Audience 9, Audience 10, Audience 11), 16 August 2021, via zoom, all recorded.

Interview with the audience (Group 4), consist of 3 participants (Audience 12, Audience 13, Audience 14), 17 August 2021, via zoom, all recorded.

Interview with the comedian, Pandji Pragiwaksono, 27 August 2021, via zoom, all recorded.

Interview with social justice activist (Founder and Executive Director for Lokataru Foundation—Human Rights and Law Office, and Former Director for Kontras—Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence), Haris Azhar, 31 August 2021, via zoom, all recorded.