

Udayana School of Kajian Budaya Compared to the Spell of British Cultural Studies: Critical Discourses in Debate

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Abstract: This article attempts to look deeper into the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya compared to the spell of British Cultural Studies to understand both modes and critical discourses in debate. It hopes to widen the horizon on the plurality of cultural studies versions existing beyond Britain, the United States and Europe; specifically the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya in Bali and broadly in Indonesia. Hence, the authors conducted a literature search to compile relevant publications, interviewed Kajian Budaya lecturers and alumni, and employed critical interpretive analysis to the data. The study indicates formation of the British and the Udayana School variants were influenced by critical theory of the Frankfurt School and postmodernism ideas of French and American thinkers, which critiqued institutions of modernity, capitalist society, positivism in scientific inquiry, 'classical' enlightenment thought, and the culture industry. However, the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya exhibits distinctiveness in its study areas, approach and paradigm.

Keywords: British Cultural Studies; critical theory debate; Udayana School of Kajian Budaya

1. Introduction

In the early years of formation, cultural studies in various countries was often considered to be a fluctuating set of theories and practices rather than an academic discipline; perhaps because it did not have a unified subject matter, epistemological position, and method of analysis, nor a simple history of its 'founding'. It differed from the theoretical orientation and focus of scholarly traditions in the social sciences and humanities that preceded it,

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such as anthropology, sociology, semiotics and others which generally use a disciplinary approach (see Barker ([2000] 2005); Eco (1976); Hall (1992); Kellner (2001*b*); Sardar and Van Loon ([1994] 2003); Storey ([2003] 2007); Turner ([1990] 2003). However, since 1964, cultural studies in Europe has developed very dynamically with a variety of concerns, approaches, and paradigms; such that nowadays it is recognized as a new discipline and critical field in a number of countries, including in Indonesia and specifically at Udayana University, Bali.

Accounts of the early development of the field often look at the formation of British Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham from the 1960s to the 1980s. Some consider the strong influence of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School in Germany and approaches to postmodernism by French and American thinkers. Alongside the plurality of theoretical strands, as Chris Barker ([2000] 2005, p. 4) remarked, “cultural studies has always been a multi- or post-disciplinary field of enquiry”, drawing from subject areas such as cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics, literature, political science, history, and communication studies among others. Combinations of fields often reflect unique new variants of cultural studies in the defining, mapping, and addressing of increasingly complex questions about cultural phenomena in the world.

In terms of theoretical paradigms, the history of British Cultural Studies is not a series of shifts from structuralism through poststructuralism to postmodernism; but rather as Stuart Hall (1980, p. 72) clarified, “has attempted to *think forwards* from the best elements” in these enterprises. Research has tended to take a critical and emancipatory stance, employing a range of interdisciplinary qualitative methods and eclectic approaches such as critical ethnography, semiotics, deconstruction, critical discourse analysis, and the archaeology/genealogy of knowledge to investigate and gain a better understanding of complex cultural matters in the past and today.

In Indonesia, the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya was the first cultural studies program approved as a new discipline by the Directorate General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture; firstly for a master’s program in 1996 and subsequently adding a doctoral program in 2001. During a short span of time the program underwent a dynamic development process and increase in demand by many students from various universities in Indonesia and some from abroad. Similar to the development of British Cultural Studies, the early formation of the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya was very lively including criticism from lecturers and students regarding its focus or study areas and paradigm used in doctoral level research as some opponents perceived the curriculum to be inconsistent and diverging from British Cultural Studies. Yet, during its initiation by the now-late Professor I Gusti Ngurah Bagus (Photo 1),

the Udayana School was strongly influenced by critical theory of the Frankfurt School in Germany and postmodernism ideas of French and American thinkers, alongside theoretical frameworks of British Culture Studies.



Photo 1. Sketch of Prof. I Gusti Ngurah Bagus by alumnus Polenk Rediasa *circa* 2005; photo of professors Bagus, Emiliana Mariyah, and Wayan Geriya during a Kajian Budaya academic seminar late 1990s (Source: Kajian Budaya Doctoral Study Program photo collection).

This article attempts to look deeper into the development of the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya compared to the spell of British Cultural Studies to understand both modes and critical discourses in debate on paradigms and orientation toward study areas. An important question was how formation of the Udayana School was related to the Cultural Primary Scientific Pattern (*Pola Ilmiah Pokok Kebudayaan - PIP Kebudayaan*) of the university and how it differs from other programs. The results hope to widen the horizon on the plurality of cultural studies versions existing beyond Britain, the United States and Europe; specifically the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya in Bali and broadly in Indonesia where recent enrollment trends indicate a rapid increase.

2. Literature Review

A precise definition of the term cultural studies has been difficult to formulate since the early 1960s up to today. However, cultural studies has come to be known as a field of enquiry dedicated to the study of the relations between cultural forms, processes, and institutions; signifying practices of representation, and the production of meaning in various contexts (including the relation to society and social change as stated by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham). This gave rise to

the interdisciplinary character of cultural studies and its eclectic approach to what Barker ([2000] 2005, p. 5) described as “a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice”. As mentioned above, the conceptual terrain of cultural studies research is truly multi-disciplinary for it draws from cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics, literature, political science, history, and communication studies among other sources. While some people assume that every project involves ‘popular’ culture; actually, cultural studies helped legitimize the study of artifacts of popular and non-western culture in critical scholarship on the specific ways any cultural practice is produced and constructs identities and social formations and the ways in which it constantly changes over time.

Turning to the ideas of Raymond Williams in his 1976 book (expanded in 1983) *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Bennett et al., (2005) summarized that “cultural studies, as an interdisciplinary field of research and teaching, investigates how culture creates and transforms individual experiences, identities, everyday life, social relations and power”. Sardar and Van Loon ([1994] 2003, p. 9), similarly define cultural studies as borrowing various approaches “to examine its subject matter in terms of cultural practices and the relation to power”. Given such characteristics as noted above, Barker ([2000] 2005, pp. 4–5) reflected that:

It remains difficult to pin down the boundaries of cultural studies as a coherent, unified, academic discipline with clear-cut substantive topics, concepts, and methods that differentiate it from other disciplines. Cultural studies has always been a multi- or post-disciplinary field of enquiry which blurs the boundaries between itself and other ‘subjects’. Yet cultural studies cannot be said to be anything. It is not physics, it is not sociology, and it is not linguistics, though it draws upon these subject areas.

Stuart Hall (1992, pp. 278, 291) also insisted on respecting the plurality of theoretical positions while contesting them, because “there is something ‘at stake’ ... about the manners of genuinely dialogically critical engagement” in cultural studies. That being examining cultural practices from the perspective of linkages with issues of power and cultural politics along with the need for change in representations of class, gender, and race and even age, disability, nationality, ethnicity, and so forth. In this light, cultural studies research places ‘conjunctures’ as an esprit, which Hall (1980, p. 128) spoke to in his 1973 essay “Encoding/decoding”:

Traditionally, mass-communications research has conceptualized the process of communication in terms of a circulation circuit or loop. This

model has been criticized for its linearity – sender/message/receiver – for its concentration on the level of message exchange and for the absence of a structured conception of the different moments as a complex structure of relations. But it is also possible (and useful) to think of this process in terms of a structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction. This would be to think of the process as a ‘complex structure in dominance’, sustained through the articulation of connected practices, each of which, however, retains its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own forms, and conditions of existence.

Quoting *Culture: A Reformer’s Science* by Tony Bennett (1998), Chris Barker ([2000] 2005, pp. 6–7) outlines four main concerns of cultural studies as examining: 1) “the relations of culture and power”; 2) “all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life, and habitual forms of conduct”; 3) forms of power including gender, race, colonialism, and so forth and “to explore the connections between these forms of power and to develop ways of thinking about culture and power that can be utilized by agents in the pursuit of change”; and 4) that “the prime institutional sites for cultural studies are those of higher education ... Nevertheless, it tries to forge connections outside of the academy with social and political movements, workers in cultural institutions, and cultural management”.

In a review of the epistemological genealogy and influential theories within cultural studies, Piliang and Jaelani (2018) ascertained that in the early phase modes of analysis tended to borrow from structuralist anthropology, linguistics, semiotics, and sociology. Concerns were predominantly on deep structures of language, systems of relations, a synchronic view, and signs and cultural codes. Later phases drew on critical, poststructuralist, and postmodern theories and frequently deployed methods of deconstruction. Scholars became increasingly concerned with the ways that cultural forms served to enable the struggle and resistance against social domination; and specifying any oppositional, subversive, or emancipatory movements (see, for instance, Lubis, 2015; Morley, 2015; Piliang, 2005; Sarup, [1993] 2003; Walton, 2012).

Given the *zeitgeist* (spirit of the era), the development of cultural studies can thus be viewed in terms of two intellectual strands: modern and postmodern (see Barker, [2000] 2005; Piliang and Jaelani, 2018; Agger, [2013] 2016; McGuigan, 1992). In the ‘modern cultural studies’ phase, issues taken up included industrialization, subcultures, popular culture, mass culture

produced by the culture industry, mass communication and the media, forces of commodification, oppressive social structures, hegemonic ideologies, power inequities, subversion, resistance, and so on. In the subsequent ‘postmodern cultural studies’ phase, questions raised shifted to, for instance, the genesis of subjective forms, investigation of change, sign-production, recognition of cultural differences, production and consumption of symbolic forms, language-games, positionality of knowledge and interpretation, structures of desire, discourse of the unconscious, libido drive, heterogeneity of practices, cultural ‘schizophrenia’, the nomadic subject, simulacrum, hyperreality, genealogy of knowledge and the operations of power, articulation of local knowledges and various discourses of identity such as class, gender, race, age, ethnicity, and sexuality. This second phase indicates some of the ways in which cultural studies was influenced by French poststructuralists Derrida ([1967a] 1978; [1967b] 1997), Foucault ([1966] 1994); ([1969]1972); ([1975] 1979); (1980), and the later Barthes (1967; 1972); and postmodernists Baudrillard, Lyotard, Kristeva, Deleuze, and Guattari among others.

The influence of postmodern theoretical positions, which in part critiqued structuralism and Marxism, has been significant; especially from Foucault and Baudrillard. Foucault, as a major contributor to poststructuralism which is often viewed as a precursor to postmodern social theory, analysed linkages between knowledge and power in a ‘disciplinary society’. This term, in his work *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1979), is used to discuss disciplinary institutions such as prisons, asylums, barracks, factories, and schools in articulating how practices and discourses of discipline are a mechanism of power regulating the behaviour of individuals and ‘normalizing’ subjects throughout the entire social order. Writers such as Agger ([2013] 2016, p. 282) note combined aspects of French postmodern theory and German critical theory in works of Baudrillard such as *Simulacra and Simulation* ([1981] 1994) and *America* ([1986] 1988). Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, to examine the rise of ‘hyperreality’ and ‘simulacra’ through the flow of images in contemporary media such as television, film, and the internet; helped lay the basis for incorporating social and cultural criticism in postmodern cultural studies. By reformulating ideologies of the postmodern regarding the interrelatedness of power and knowledge and the collapsing of the real and the unreal, both Foucault and Baudrillard made important contributions for the critical potential of cultural studies in analysing discourses, practices, and cultural representations.

Jim McGuigan, in his book *Cultural Populism* (1992, pp. 5, 171–172), argued that cultural studies cannot simply focus on hermeneutic or interpretative modes in a narrow sense without accounting for the “material conditions of a culture and hence the complex dialectics of liberation and control”. To reverse the

paradigm crisis of what he called “an uncritical populist drift in contemporary cultural studies”, McGuigan recommended “reopening dialogue between hegemony theory and political economy”. Without that, cultural studies will be politically ineffective at the explanatory level; thus, placing it in the prevailing exploitative and oppressive structures of power. McGuigan (1992, pp. 40–41) asserted:

In my view, the separation of contemporary cultural studies from the political economy of culture has been one of the most disabling features of the field of study. The core problematic was virtually premised on a terror of economic reductionism. In consequence, the economic aspects of media institutions and the broader economic dynamics of consumer culture were rarely investigated, simply bracketed off, thereby severely undermining the explanatory and, in effect, critical capacities of cultural studies.

In a critique on McGuigan’s claim, John Storey (2003, pp. 227, 232) asked: “So what can political economy offer to cultural studies?” He then reviews ensuing debates and suggests that “the significant word here is ‘access’ (privileged over ‘use’ and ‘meaning’). This reveals the limitations of the approach: good on the economic dimensions but weak on the symbolic”. To avoid a “reductive distortion”, production and consumption need to be dialectically linked in cultural studies research.

This brief overview about the early definitions and main areas of concern was echoed in the broad characterization of cultural studies formulated by Bennett et al. (2005) and on the archived website of the university program in Cultural Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (c. 2011):

Cultural studies is an innovative interdisciplinary field of research and teaching that investigates the ways in which “culture” creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations, and power. Research and teaching in the field explores the relations between culture understood as human expressive and symbolic activities, and cultures understood as distinctive ways of life. Combining the strengths of the social sciences and the humanities, cultural studies draw on methods and theories from literary studies, sociology, communications studies, history, cultural anthropology, and economics. By working across the boundaries among these fields, cultural studies addresses new questions and problems of today’s world. Rather than seeking answers that will hold for all time, cultural studies develops flexible tools that adapt to this rapidly changing world.

Cultural life is not only concerned with symbolic communication, it also the domain in which we set collective tasks for ourselves and begin to grapple with them as changing communities. Cultural studies are devoted to understanding the processes through which societies and the diverse groups within them come to terms with history, community life, and the challenges of the future.

Referring again to the ideas of Stuart Hall, as Barker ([2000] 2005, p. 5) mentions, “Hence, cultural studies is a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice. Here, knowledge is never a neutral or objective phenomenon, but rather a matter of positionality, that is, of the place from which one speaks, to whom, and for what purposes”. So, cultural studies, as a critical cultural theory and practice movement, subverts the *nowness–pastness* and *centre–periphery* models and attempts to critically examine biased ideologies “imposed by economic and socio-cultural elites” while attending to the voices of marginalized people who have thus far been unrecognized or invisible in conventional sociological discourses (Agger, 1992*b*, p. 248; [2013] 2016; Best and Kellner, [1991] 2003; Kellner, 2002). It is not surprising that cultural studies continually adopts multiple theoretical discourses and research methods from a number of other fields and disciplines. Like the Frankfurt School, the Birmingham CCCS was not obsessed with creating merely adequate theories. Rather, early formations of cultural studies disrupted the exclusivity of academic boundaries by pursuing a transdisciplinary self-reflexive approach that linked cutting-edge theories and practices with the aim of specifying forces of domination and oppression while sharpening responses to social struggles and movements (Kumbara, 2018, pp. 41–42).

Cultural studies also employed praxis paradigms to foster participatory, emancipatory, and progressive social change. As mentioned above, scholars have drawn from a range of interdisciplinary qualitative research methods and eclectic approaches such as critical ethnography, interpretive and critical discourse analysis as well as Foucault’s archaeology/genealogy of knowledge. By combining these methods, the disclosure of phenomena, ideologies and hidden meanings within social practices can be transparent.

3. Methods

To explore this research topic, the authors conducted a literature search to compile relevant publications and interviewed Udayana School of Kajian Budaya lecturers and alumni. To facilitate a sense of the time period during which a work emerged or to indicate the year of a published translation, the

original year of a publication is placed in square brackets within in-text citation (e.g. Thompson ([1990] 2015)).

The data was probed by employing critical interpretive analysis commonly used in cultural studies or critical ethnography (for supporting methodological writings refer to Geertz (1973); Madison (2012); Miles and Huberman ([1984] 1992); Thomas (1993); Thompson ([1990] 2015); see also Cavallaro (2001); Fairclough (1992; 1995); Jorgensen and Phillips ([2002] 2010, pp. 60–61); Kumbara (2023). In particular, the authors drew from critical ethnography, which, as Jim Thomas (1993, p.2) describes, is “a type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge, and action. It expands our horizons for choice and widens our experiential capacity to see, hear and feel”. Madison (2012, p. 1 quoting Thomas, 1993) explains that “critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose” that goes beyond learning about the “meanings of interaction in a specific context” to describing these meanings in light of the broader power structure.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 *Early phases of British Cultural Studies*

The first phase of the cultural studies project emerged in England in the late 1950s influenced by academic and praxis ideas in the work of scholars Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall. The second phase is by and large attributed to the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in 1963/64, led at the time by Hoggart and Stuart Hall, to develop “a variety of critical approaches for the analysis, interpretation, and criticism of cultural artifacts” (Kellner, 2001*b*, p. 140; see also Agger, 1992*a*; 2013; Best and Kellner, [1991] 2003; Storey, 1993). As part of a larger theoretical movement, British cultural studies researchers questioned the distinction between high culture and low culture, criticized popular culture as capitalist mass culture, the structuralist idea of discovering meaning through fixed binary pairs, and orthodox Marxism.

Forms of British Culture Studies praxis work were used as tools for empowering the working classes in capitalist societies to oppose inequalities and to resist the onslaughts of mass culture produced by the culture industry. Through educating the working class, Williams and Hoggart aimed to render cultural studies as an instrument of progressive social change (Kellner, 2001*a*, pp. 395–396). It promoted the value of creative education to support career pathways and to identify and address skills gaps. Another focus was how all young people could access cultural and creative education, regardless of class background or where they resided. Participatory methods of the British version sought to emancipate certain social classes by self-reflexivity. Participatory refers to means

by which cultural studies research attended to how marginalized or silenced groups can have space to articulate their own voices, needs, and demands. Emancipatory refers to not only disclosing the hidden ideological dimensions in dominant narratives or discourses, but also a self-monitoring process and skills of self-awareness for articulating and countering cultural hegemony.

This perspective has similarities as well as differences with the critical social theory orientation of the Frankfurt School at the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research, known as the IFS) founded at University of Frankfurt in 1923, which was pioneered by intellectuals such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm (see Ritzer and Goodman, [2003] 2005). In brief, critical theory was a product of a group of German thinkers who had a “shared sense of disillusionment not only with capitalist society but also with Marxist orthodoxy of the time ... and concern with accounting for what they perceived to be an abortive form of socialism ... that seemed, against the predictions of orthodox Marxists, to have inhibited the onset of socialism in Germany and industrialized Western Europe more broadly” (see Edkins and Vaughn-Williams, [2009] 2010, p. 12). British Cultural Studies, besides sharing with the IFS a similar perspective and vision of change, was also strongly influenced by the ideas of the French poststructuralists Derrida, Foucault, and the later Barthes; and postmodernists Baudrillard, Lyotard, Kristeva, Deleuze, and Guattari on philosophy, science, cultural structures, and aesthetics.

Early on British Cultural Studies was an interdisciplinary project to examine concrete relations among cultural practices, social relations, structures of power, and context; while critiquing academic fragmentation and disciplinarity. The Frankfurt School focused on the intersections of social and economic organizations, ideology, and culture; while critiquing the culture industry and mass culture. As Kellner (2003, p. 169) remarked: both traditions insisted that “culture must be studied within the social, political, and economic systems through which it is produced and consumed. British Cultural Studies and the Frankfurt School were thus both founded as fundamentally transdisciplinary enterprises which resisted established academic divisions of labor, denied the autonomy of culture and the various disciplines, and thereby implicitly revolutionized university education”. Of course, this so-called ‘blurring’ of the boundaries between ‘subjects’ and criticism caused friction with academics who still advocated a mono-disciplinary orientation and the ideas of objectivity, neutrality and cultural autonomy. Particularly important to both the Birmingham and the Frankfurt group was critical analysis in terms of the intersections of culture and ideology and the notions of hegemony and domination (see Crehan, 2002; Gramsci, 1971). However, Storey (1993, p. 67)

noted that at the Birmingham CCCS “assumptions of culturalism” gave rise to “complex and often contradictory and conflictual relations with imports of French structuralism ... in turn bringing the two approaches into critical dialogue with developments in ‘Western Marxism’, especially the work of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. It is from this complex and critical mixture that the ‘dis-unified’ field of British cultural studies was born”. In this regard, Kellner (2003, p. 169; see also Kellner, 2001a; Kumbara, 2018, pp. 41-42) summarized that by:

... employing Gramsci’s model of hegemony and counterhegemony, cultural studies sought to analyse “hegemonic,” or ruling, social and cultural forces of domination and to seek “counterhegemonic” forces of resistance and struggle. The project was aimed at social transformation and attempted to specify forces of domination and resistance in order to aid the process of political struggle and emancipation from oppression and domination.

As the prospect of “radical change” in the economic order was in fact more complex than depicted in classical Marxist thought, the IFS sought to develop more sophisticated forms of analysis while upholding a Marxian commitment to radical social transformation and an inclusive space for other philosophical strands such as Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, as well as contemporary theorists such as Freud, Lukács, Weber, and more recently Jürgen Habermas (1975; 1987, see also Hardiman, 1993; 2009). In the volume *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (Edkins and Vaughan-Williams ([2009] 2010, pp. 8–9), Columba Peoples notes that:

Max Horkheimer, who assumed the directionship of the IFS in 1930, ... set out a programme for the institute which aimed at a radical reinterpretation of the relationship between philosophy and practice, the social and natural sciences, and human beings and nature, which he hoped would combine into a programme of social research highlighting the possibilities of radical transformation of society (Wiggershaus, 1994, pp. 36–40).

The task of Critical Theory, in Horkheimer’s view, was in large part to uncover and encourage those potentialities latent in society that could further this end (Horkheimer, 1972). Horkheimer illustrated this task through a critique of what he termed Traditional Theory, a form of theory which he associated particularly with scientific positivism and those forms of social science that tried to imitate the objectivity of the natural sciences. For Horkheimer, such pretensions to objectivity were always based on an illusory assumption of the theorist’s detachment

from the social world (or what Horkheimer terms as science's 'imaginary self-sufficiency') (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 242).

In his 1937 theoretical manifesto for the Frankfurt School, "Traditional and Critical Theory", Horkheimer (1972) argued that if such philosophical presuppositions of 'traditional scientific theory' are applied to social, political, and cultural realities, it functions as an ideology and a guardian of the ruling economic powers in the perpetuation of the *status quo*. Broadly speaking, 'traditional theory' within the social sciences appears as a form of ideological domination in three ways. First, 'traditional theory' is nonhistorical and claims to be based on universal truths and "suprasocial" detached knowledge, thus overlooking the concrete activities of society. Second, by assuming that a theory is value-neutral and apolitical, it keeps silent about the conditions of human subjects in a community; which in effect justifies the situation without question and conserves that "existing state of affairs". Third, 'traditional theory' collects so-called facts, develops hypotheses inductively, and validates a theory in view of an explanatory goal; and thereby does not consider the practical implications of forms of social praxis in light of a transformational aim. Thus, 'traditional theory' lacks faith in the possibility of emancipatory social change and has instead strengthened the authority of the *status quo*.

In these and other ways, the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School was one of the most important influences on theoretical and practical developments within cultural studies. While also influenced by approaches to postmodernism by French and American intellectuals, British Cultural Studies developed cultural praxis strategies to actualize its vision of social change such as carrying out educational and empowerment trainings for marginalized workers and subaltern groups in urban areas of England.

4.2 Formation of the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya*

The Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* at Udayana University in Denpasar, initiated by the now-late Professor Dr. I Gusti Ngurah Bagus, is recognized as the first cultural studies program in Indonesia. The Faculty of Letters and Culture (now known as the Faculty of Humanities) began offering a Master's Program in *Kajian Budaya* in 1996 and a Doctoral Program in 2001. The term 'Program Studi *Kajian Budaya*' for its designation clearly distinguishes it from other cultural studies programs. However, from the very beginning of its development a dynamic critical debate and controversy emerged among students and lecturers regarding the difference between cultural studies and the study of culture (commonly identified with anthropology), the theoretical orientation of the Udayana School, and also its study areas. One question was

whether the paradigm of form, function and meaning as applied in the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya is critical along the lines of British Cultural Studies. Doctoral program alumnus Fadlillah (class of 2002) claimed that it has a critical orientation; yet, Kajian Budaya lecturers Mudana and Wijaya stated that most of the students' final doctoral dissertations were still very structuralist tending toward the anthropological.

A genealogical account to further explore how and why the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya came about in this Balinese setting in comparison to British Cultural Studies would be interesting; particularly as Ngurah Bagus did not have a formal background in the cultural studies 'traditions'. In 1953 Ngurah Bagus earned an undergraduate degree in Eastern Literature at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta and in 1959 a master's degree in Indonesian Literature from Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta. He then continued his studies in the General Linguistics and Austronesian Languages department at Leiden University in the Netherlands. As Darma Putra (2003) remarked: in what appeared to be an 'about-face', Ngurah Bagus earned a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Universitas Indonesia in 1979. Ultimately, Ngurah Bagus is known as a professor of anthropology with a specialization in literature and linguistics, which bolstered his stature as a critical and multi-disciplinary intellectual. In appreciation of his being a veritable encyclopedia of Balinese culture, visiting scholars from abroad fondly called Ngurah Bagus 'the father of Balinese Studies'. He often expressed criticisms about the effects of tourism on Balinese culture, government policies, and Hindu religious practices, such that in some circles he was seen as opposed to 'mainstream' academic approaches.

Ngurah Bagus first encountered cultural studies while studying at Leiden University. Thereafter, he kept an eye on the development of the field and critical theory trends in England, Europe, and America; which eventually coloured the paradigm for the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya. Ngurah Bagus's chief and distinctive contribution was to examine cultural matters by analysing *bentuk* (signifier, form), *fungsi* (function, interaction), and *makna* (significance, meaning) known as the BFM formula and its relevance to the Cultural Primary Scientific Pattern of the university. In 2003, just two years following the doctoral program launch, Prof. Bagus suddenly passed away. Thus, time was too brief for him to formulate in detail how the scientific theoretical basis of the BFM formula would be operationalized; which caused this discourse to become a topic of critical debate in the learning process.

In the Daily Newspaper *KOMPAS*, Fadlillah (2003) asserted that the form, function, meaning approach was no longer merely a conventional 'categorization scheme' in the study of culture, rather Ngurah Bagus and his colleagues "brought it forth as an epistemology, ontology, and axiology

paradigm” of the Balinese School of Cultural Studies leaning toward structural-functionalism. Wijaya (2016) noted that, in the early years, analysis of ‘form, function, meaning’ was prevalent in the final theses of both master’s and doctoral degree candidates. Students from various provinces of Indonesia enrolled at Udayana University were also encouraged to utilize this paradigm to investigate local cultural forms in their respective regions. Most focused on diverse forms of artistic activity and religious ritual traditions; some also looked at the impacts of tourism development. But, in terms of analysis, there was less attention to the power, political, and economic issues that have particularly characterized British Cultural Studies.

This sparked criticism, suspicion, and even accusations by several academics and lecturers (such as Wijaya; Mudana, and Widja) that the *Kajian Budaya* program of Udayana University was still simply the study of culture and not engaging in cultural studies. Doctoral program alumnus Titis Srimuda Pitana of Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, stated that the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* is not a cultural study program akin to the Birmingham School version. However, as Fadlillah (2003) commented, “the *Kajian Budaya* paradigm of Ngurah Bagus deconstructed the field of cultural studies at its philosophical roots”. Indeed, the ‘form, function, meaning’ model of the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* is aligned with “an axiom of cultural studies that a text is anything that generates meaning through signifying practices” (see Barker, [2000] 2005, p. 490; Geertz, 1973).

Ngurah Bagus endeavoured to foster an interdisciplinary spirit of *Kajian Budaya* shaped by his academic training in the fields of literature, linguistics, and anthropology together with perspectives of faculty from a range of other disciplines. One could say that the ‘spell’ of British Cultural Studies and interests of the Birmingham CCCS influenced the development of the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* in that its courses involved training in a variety of critical tools and postmodern theories as a foothold to practice cultural analysis. The academic backgrounds of the lecturers and students were also quite diverse, but, few had prior exposure to the intellectual terrain of cultural studies. Consequently, in the initial years, students often remained stuck in structuralist, functionalist, and conventional semiotic thought and thus unable to engage in the critical, emancipatory, and participatory aims of cultural studies. Likewise, their research topics tended to focus on the arts, traditions, religion, and tourism; rather than on marginalized peoples such as the LGBT community, poor people, indigenous communities, representation, discourses on identity such as race and ethnicity, hegemonic practices, mass media and the culture industry. Data on dissertation titles of *Kajian Budaya* graduates up to 2009 and for 2012–2017 is compared in Table 1 based on field domains of research topics.

Table 1. Kajian Budaya Dissertation Titles: Field Domains of Research Topics

No	Topic/Title up to 2009	Absolute	%	Topic/Title for 2012–2017	Absolute	%
1	Art	26	22,8	Ritual & Tradition	8	15,7
2	Gender	14	12,3	Representation	5	9,8
3	Local politics	11	9,6	Deconstruction	4	7,8
4	Environment	11	9,6	Marginalization	3	5,9
5	Religion	10	8,8	Commodification	3	5,9
6	Ethnicity	8	7,0	Power relation & hegemony	4	7,8
7	Tourism	7	6,1	Resistance	2	3,9
8	Conflict	5	4,4	Symbolic violence & conflict	4	7,8
9	Education	4	3,5	Discourse analysis	2	3,9
10	Other	11	9,6	Other	16	31,3
	Total	114	100%	Total	51	100%

Source: Data from Universitas Udayana (2021) Kajian Budaya Doctoral Study Program Report.

In the dissertation topics of Kajian Budaya graduates up to 2009, the most dominant field is the arts, next is gender, followed by local politics and the environment, religion, ethnicity, tourism, conflict and education, and other. The choice of topic is usually characteristic of each doctoral candidate's field or discipline and their 'home-base' institution. The theoretical orientation of the form, function, meaning (BFM) formula still appears dominant. Yet, the results of these studies have frequently become an important resource about the wealth of cultural diversity in Indonesia; some informing policy for integrating or mainstreaming laws on the protection of indigenous peoples and local culture. In addition, community service programs carried out by the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya are aligned with the vision of the Cultural Primary Scientific Pattern of the university, which aims to foster and preserve Balinese cultural traditions, the arts and environment. In a subsequent period, after implementation of the new curriculum, the choice of dissertation topics of 2012–2017 graduates is quite diverse and shifted toward contemporary phenomena.

Responding to the critical discourses in debate during the forming of the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya, lecturer I Gede Mudana (pers. comm., 2021), emphasized that the research fields and theoretical approaches of graduate students gravitated to the 'study of culture' model; not pure cultural studies. He felt that the Udayana School still resembled the formative phase of cultural studies in Europe. Widja (2017, p. 30) noted that the form, function, meaning (BFM) formula applied in the Udayana School should not be trapped by a positivist or conventional interpretive paradigm built upon presumed objective 'truth', mutually agreed values, or a single meaning. One of the University of London intellectuals closely involved in the development of the Udayana

School, anthropologist Mark Hobart (2017; 2022), has stated that the program had slipped back into ethnographic and semiotic studies; however the field of Kajian Budaya must remain consistent with the truly critical spirit laid down by ‘The Founding Father’ Prof. Ngurah Bagus.

Workshop held by the Kajian Budaya Study Program of Udayana University from 2007 to 2010, also took up critical discourses in debate related to the position of the Udayana School juxtaposed to the British version of cultural studies (Photo 2). Education and culture experts from Gadjah Mada, Ganesha, and Udayana universities presented issues and ideas to determine a format that would meet the expectations of all parties. This led to the formulation of a new curriculum used as a guide for teaching and supervising cultural studies research at Udayana. Since 2012, a shift in theoretical orientation from the BFM formula to critical thought in student learning gave rise to more varied field domains of research topics. Theses and dissertations from 2012 to 2017 were not only about the arts, gender, traditions and religion, tourism, and conflict, but also about popular culture, representation, deconstruction, marginalization, commodification, power relation and hegemony, resistance, symbolic violence, discourse analysis and others.



Photo 2. Seminar on “Theories and Methodology of Kajian Budaya in the Frame of Curriculum Improvement” (Source: Prodi Magister dan Doktor Kajian Budaya, Universitas Udayana, 2007).

According to Butler (2018), the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya developed by Ngurah Bagus is clearly unique and stems from the Cultural Primary Scientific Pattern of the university, which aims to take up forms of local genius aligned with the multicultural character of Indonesia and particularly in Bali. Specifically, Bagus (2001; reprinted in 2004, pp. 54–55) referred to the principle of *Tri Hita Karana* whereby human beings are seen as “active subjects who have relationships and concordances with their ecology (*palemahan*), with other people and communities (*pawongan*), and with their God (*parhyangan*). So that related studies do not halt at just their physical needs, rather, go further to the issues of meaning that adhere culture wherever that person is a sustainer of it”. Butler highlights that:

“while the field of cultural studies favors a contextual, interdisciplinary, and reflexive approach to regard cultural practices and their meanings in daily life, Kajian Budaya is distinctive in that it is also concerned with how the diversity of local knowledges and traditions in unity contribute to the quality of life and society’s prosperity”.

However, in addressing contemporary issues a challenge faced by the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya is to keep abreast of developments in other formations of culture studies in the world. The study conducted by the authors of this article shows a trend in recent student batches taking up contemporary issues, such as community resistance to development projects, marginalization of minority groups, popular culture, mass culture, media industry, replication of traditions as a simulacra, and so forth.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the authors submit that looking into the development of the Udayana School of Kajian Budaya compared to the spell of British Cultural Studies has offered some insights about similarities and differences in paradigms and orientation toward study areas to achieve their respective goals. British Cultural Studies of the Birmingham School, as an intellectual movement and a form of social justice praxis for progressive social change, was strongly influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School in Germany and the ideas of French and American poststructuralists and postmodernists. The cultural studies project had a mission to oppose the power of hegemonic practices as a means to rectify inequalities experienced by marginalized cultural groups. The British version developed a critical, progressive, interdisciplinary, and eclectic intellectual movement to foster individual and community self-reflexivity about various cultural distortions. By engaging in direct advocacy

work for marginalized groups, a model of cultural studies as a practical ethical movement was also established.

In Indonesia, the field of cultural studies was pioneered in 1996 by the *Kajian Budaya* program of Udayana University; firstly for a Master's program and adding a doctoral program in 2001, as a discipline that has enabled researchers to carry out critical studies on various socio-cultural phenomena and local traditions in diverse societies. Its development was indeed influenced by the theoretical tools and interests of British Cultural Studies. However, the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* exhibits distinctiveness in its study areas and its value-conscious axiology informed by the articulation of local knowledges with the objective of solving problems associated with the actual conditions faced by communities. In addition, the community service programs carried out by the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* are aligned with the Cultural Primary Scientific Pattern (*PIP Kebudayaan*) of the university, particularly for cultural preservation. Its initial orientation of the form, function, meaning (BFM) formula is clearly attributed to the central role of the founding director Prof. Ngurah Bagus. Critical discourses in debate arose due to concerns about a propensity toward structuralist theory. With the implementation of its new curriculum in 2012, the Udayana School of *Kajian Budaya* may well be into its second phase. Yet, studies to articulate the discourses of subcultures, cultural marginalization arising from dominant systems, participation and emancipation of local cultures in terms of issues related to democracy, freedom and welfare; and representations of class, gender, race and ethnicity; as well as studies on pop culture, the mass media and the culture industry, are still lacking and need serious attention in the future.

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