CONSUMPTION OF NON-LOCAL TV BROADCAST AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MIGRANTS' IDENTITY: A STUDY OF MIGRANTS RESPONDENTS IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This paper examines how TV broadcasts from external sources (foreign TV stations) strengthen the identity of migrants in Malaysia and the characteristics of the consumers of unlicensed TVRO/satellite television accessible broadcasts. It is based on a research project which investigated unlicensed TVRO access by Indonesian migrants in the state of Sabah, in the Eastern part of Malaysia. Indonesian migrants, N_{im}=240 representing 29% of total respondents are isolated from a total sample of N=822 respondents interviewed. These repondents did not identify themselves under any category of the major indigenous ethnic groups of these Eastern part of Malaysia but were identified by their inclination to TV programs in the Indonesian language or broadcasted by Indonesian satellite channels. This category of respondents was mostly located in the Interior Division of Sabah, and enjoyed programs transmitted via Indonesian satellite television channels mainly TPI, Indosiar, SCTV and GlobalTV. This paper examines the types of favoured programs, the reasons behind them doing so and the implications of their media consumption on sustaining their identities. Analysis of the questionnaire data is complimented by qualitative interviews of selected respondents. Respondents were interviewed about their transnational television use and the implications of it. This paper explores the effect of Indonesian transnational television effect on Indonesian migrants identity constructions and sustainability. It navigates perceptions about migrant respondents, identity constructions and integration into Malaysia's socio-economic realities. It will also attempt to examine how transnational televison impinges on integration, social life and sense of attachment to their homeland.

Keywords: transnational television, media consumption, migrant identity

1 INTRODUCTION

TVRO (Television Receive Only) or satellite television broadcast is presently manifested in Sabah as programs received through parabolic dishes. In Malaysia, licensed TVRO service is presently provided as a monopoly of Astro All Asia Networks (Astro) since 1996 . TVRO broadcasts are also receivable through dish and system unlicensed by the Malaysian Government licensing body, subsequently to be referred to as unlicensed TVRO in this article. But Sabah is said to be one of the possible states with the highest numbers of (illegal) TVRO users (Census-Patron, 2010). The two identified major factors that have contributed to this phenomenon are: geographical attributes (i.e. topography, proximity to neighbouring countries) and technological aspects (i.e. 'open sky', borderless world, easier and cheaper access to equipments, etc). This issue leads to two potential implications, viz.: (1) inability of government policies to reach the people; and (2) over exposure of non-local values, as well as cultures (i.e. which could threaten the national identity and patriotism in the long run. Hence, this study sets out to investigate the usage patterns of TVRO and to identify the motivation/drivers/factors of the usage patterns (Census-Patron, 2010). This study was carried out from March 23rd to 22nd April 2010.

Sabah, an east Malaysian state is located in the northern part of Borneo. It is home to migrant communities largely from neighbouring countries – Philippines and Indonesia. Their large presences have led to a debate from the public as well as political opposition parties, questioning the federal government's commitment in dealing with these communities, who felt that their existence have contributed to the rise of various security issues to the locals. Numerous studies on Filipino and Indonesian immigrants in Sabah, have largely focused on issues of security (Ramli Dollah *et al.,* 2003) and labour (Azizah, 2009; Kurus,

1998). On the other hand, there is very little studies done on migrants, media consumption and identity construction, specifically in the context of Sabah, and Malaysia as a whole. Thus, this leaves a huge gap in the whole study of migrant and diaspora, where media studies are concerned in Malaysia. Khattab (2010) highlighted this issue when arguing for the notion of "diaspora" to be used by local researchers when studying the Indians, Chinese and Malays in Peninsula Malaysia. However, this article would like to push her argument further by stating that such a notion was not even used in examining Filipino and Indonesian migrants. There is equally a lack of attention towards researching media consumption among Filipino and Indonesian migrants in Sabah by local media researchers. Such area of study is crucial because past studies on migrants and media use have shown the importance of their ethnic media in helping them adjust between their ethnic identity within their present host country (Sinclair *et al.,* 2000; Gillespie, 1995). But it is not known if the same can be said of either Indonesian or Filipino immigrants in Sabah even though Sabah is the most preferred state for these migrant groups. In the case of the findings of this study, information and communication technologies such as the satellite dish are found to be widely used by migrant communities that resides in the interior part of Sabah compared to local Sabahans. This raise the question of "what does it mean for these communities to use communication technologies in their daily lives?"

From the data was data gathered under the Census Patron research project referred to in this paper, it was found that about 90% of the respondents can safely be assumed to be migrants of Indonesian origin. Only 3 respondents (1.1%) indicated having links with the Philipiens and her national language, Tagalog. This article sets out to explain the background of the study that had been conducted before moving to past studies of migrants and media consumption. From there, it will present the findings of this study before theorizing it with the concept of 'home'. I argued that their wide use of satellite dish, albeit, illegal, is part of their strategy to adjust to living in Sabah. By inhabiting in two homes, one being imagined while the other is real, Indonesian migrant communities have found a way to settle down in Sabah, but on the other hand, poses a grave longstanding issue of mass influx of foreigners, documented and undocumented, to the Sabah state and the people. This paper hopes to draw out the characteristics of the users and usage of unlicensed TVRO service amongst the communities of Indonesian origin in Sabah.

2 MIGRANTS AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION - OVERVIEW OF PAST STUDIES

Wei-Na and David (1994) investigated how immigrant consumers change their media consumption when they move across cultural boundaries and whether media exposure relates to consumers' acculturation of the new social norms. A total of 938 respondents from four sample groups including Hong Kong residents, long-time and new Hong Kong immigrants to Canada and English-speaking Caucasian Canadians responded to a predesigned questionnaire. It was found that while the immigrant groups did not increase their total media consumption, their consumption across different media types followed both assimilation and ethnic affirmation models. This acculturation process seemed to be affected by immigrants' original media consumption behaviour and language ability. Media exposure was found to relate significantly to immigrants' acculturation of the new social norms after influences due to personal characteristics were removed.

Michael *et al.* (1998) had examined consumption as a function of two ethnicity indicators. Ethnic origin, a reflective indicator, was not subject to the volition of a person and was hardly changed by continuous contact with the mainstream group. On the other hand, media usage was partly determined by the extent and duration of one's contacts with the mainstream group, and was therefore considered as a formative indicator. Using a sample of French- and English-Canadians drawn from the Toronto area, this study provided preliminary evidence showing that ethnic origin, media usage, and other ethnicity indicators varied in terms of the extent to which they were amenable to acculturative pressure. A new typology of consumption was also introduced based on the distinction between ethnic origin as a reflective indicator and media usage as a formative indicator.

In his study, Jeffrees (2000) had found that ethnicity continues to be a political and social force on the national and international scenes. After a discussion of the literature on ethnicity and communication, this article had tracked a panel representing 13 different White ethnic groups in a metropolitan area. Data were collected every 4 years, beginning in 1976 and continuing through 1992. In 1976, 13 ethnic groups were surveyed, and 11 groups were tracked in subsequent surveys. Although each wave collected data was unique to that period, all surveys included items tapping ethnic identification, ethnic behaviours, ethnic media use, and mainstream media use. Using a variety of analytic techniques, the author found evidence that ethnic media use led to stronger ethnic identification across time, suggesting that ethnic media could help to sustain ethnic identification in a multicultural context.

Georgiou (2001) had discussed media consumption in relation to ethnic identity construction using the Cypriot Community Centre in North London as an ethnographic case study. Her study attempted to investigate how the ethnic identities, initially constructed in the domestic, were challenged and reaffirmed in

the public, in processes of constructing group identities and community belongings. Georgiou's community centre study focussed on how ethnicity was being reconfirmed and redefined in the co-existence of Greek Cypriots with Turkish Cypriots as well as where ethnic media consumption became a public and a communal experience.

According to Christiansen (2004), in the recent years, especially with the advent of Digital Broadcasting Satellite (DBS) technology, transnational media had become central in the consumption of news by immigrant populations. This had received some attention as a factor associated with the lack of integration into their new societies. The present article demonstrated that diaspora as an analytic term was indeed relevant for observations and empirical investigations of media practices among contemporary immigrants, leaving room for questions of multiple belonging with implications for everyday life. According to recent data, people with migrant experience tend to seek news very broadly. Extensive news media consumption, desire for more international news than found in the national television channels, and a critical stance towards the news from these channels, are also part of the picture. A diaspora perspective transforms the prospect presented by observers and journalists, worried about integration processes, and prompts considerations that immigrants are also emigrants.

Inaya Rakhmani (2007) studied identity construction and the role of identity in the activity of viewing television amongst Indonesian citizens living in an Indonesian community in a more developed foreign country. Her research used the methods of media ethnography, empirical description and analysis of cultures which includes extensive fieldwork in selected local setting. She found that her research result was not limited to how respondents read media but also how television is meaningful for them as means to remain attached to chosen types of identity.

Sharam Alghasi (2009) examined 20 Iranian-Norwegians and their diverse media consumption. He claimed that that the dynamics between media's hegemonic quality, expressed in their discursive representation of realities, and Iranian-Norwegians' subjective positions seem to have a vital impact on the processes of meaning construction and positioning that Iranian-Norwegians experience in Norwegian society. Analysis of the respondents' media preferences indicated that they were most often attracted by three characteristics linked to their status: being Iranian, immigrant and Muslim. These elements emerged as identity markers that Iranian-Norwegians focus on in their relationship to the media, and furthermore employ in their negotiation of identity and position in Norwegian society. They often expressed an anomaly between their understanding of themselves, who they are and where they belong, and the discursive representation of them in the media. This had resulted in an attitude of resistance, in the shape of the subjective constructions of the respondents, and which seemed to propel them in different directions.

In their study, Tae-Il Yoon *et al.* (2011) used Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus to examine media consumption, motive for consumption and reading strategy of Asian women immigrants in South Korea. The interview data from this study revealed that the total sum of media consumption among Asian immigrant informants tends to increase after immigration and that their media consumption can be regarded as omnivorous in style. Acquiring the host cultural capital and maintaining the home cultural capital are the major drives for their media use, resulting in three motives: the need for adaptation, the need for ethnic affirmation, and the need for relaxation. In response to the multicultural representation of the host media, the immigrant informants employed various reading strategies, such as empathetic reading, critical reading, distantiated reading, and avoidance of reading. The findings were discussed in light of the dialectic of habitus, the possibilities of multicultural capital, and the necessity for media education.

Consumption of ethnic media by migrant diaspora audience can also be to recreate their 'home' into their present home in the new home country. New media have made it easier for migrants to make connections to their homeland as was found by Burrell & Anderson (2008) among Ghanaians in the United Kingdom. The creation of home-page such as the 'Indian-American' web, for instance, had allowed the various imaginings of 'home' and 'homeland' on their homepage (Mallapragada, 2006). While migrant communities' consumption of the media, oscillates between ethnic and local media, this paper argued that the creation of 'home' through their media consumption helps migrant communities settles down well in their host country.

While acknowledging that it is a widely debated concept in the study of migrants and diaspora, Haryati Abdul Karim *et al.* (2014) uses the theoritical framework of "home" in trying to make sense of immigrants' media their consumption pattern. Ahmed (1999) opposed the idea of examining "home" as associated to fixity and purity. In fact, one must acknowledged that the creation of "home" is contingent of the place where one inhabits. She argued that the meaning of "home" should be understood as "*sentimentalized* as a space of belonging"."The question of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being at home is here a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*". (Ahmed, 1999:341).

In other words, the meaning of 'home' is subjective and contingent from one individual to another. Leung's study (2003) on Chinese diaspora in Germany highlighted this point. She conclude that "home" is

not necessarily bounded and fixed to a particular location, geographically rather it is socially-construct (Leung, 2003).

Having accepted that there may be multiple meaning of "home" for different people at a different location, one particular tool for the creation of a "home" is the media. This paper draws from the work of Morley (2000) of 'home' in his insightful work called *Home Territories. Media, Mobility and Identity.* Here, he points out that there is often less attention paid to the notion of 'home' when one talked about exile, diaspora, migrancy and even "normadology".
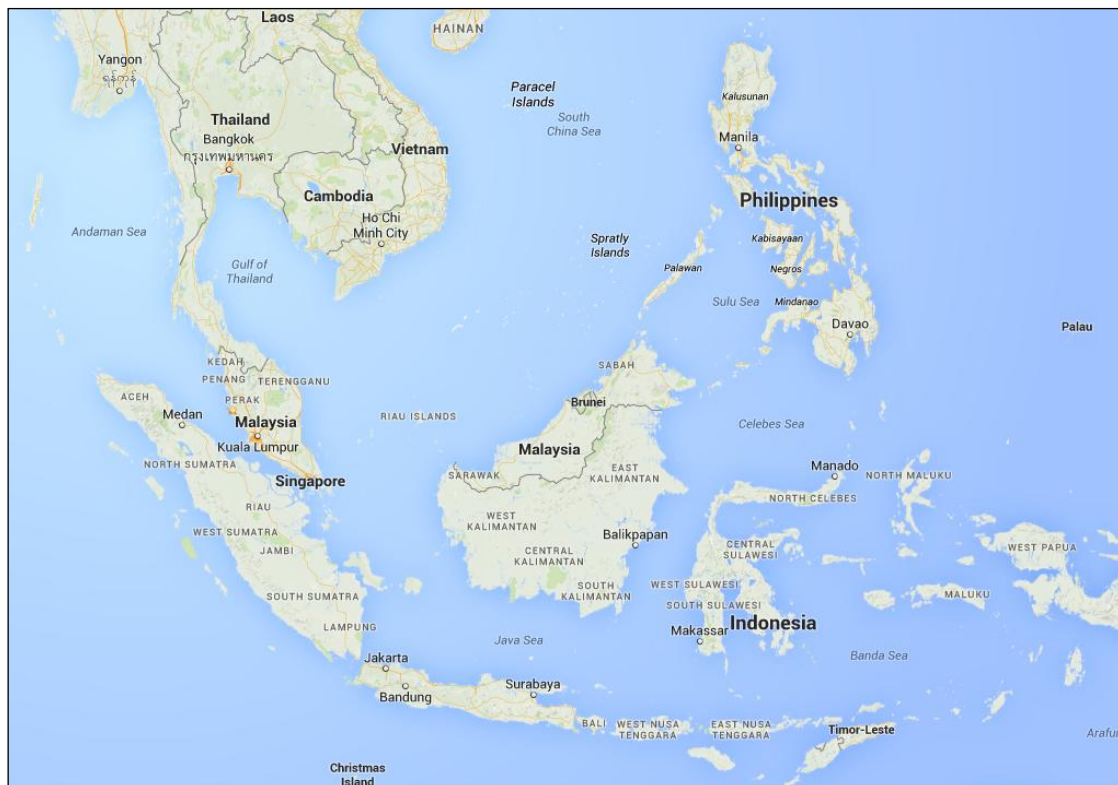
"Certainly, traditional ideas of home, homeland and nation have been destabilized, both by new patterns of physical mobility and migration and by new communication technologies which routinely transgress the symbolic boundaries around both the private household and the nation state," (Morley, 2000 : 3).

What is critical in Morley's argument is here is that there is a need to pay special attention to the role of communication technologies in recreating and mediating a new meaning of 'home' for migrants as it deterritorialised the classic meaning of 'home' as a space physically. The construction of 'home' is pivotal in helping migrant communities cope with the challenges in moving to a new country. More importantly, what does this new 'home' mean in the long run for the state.
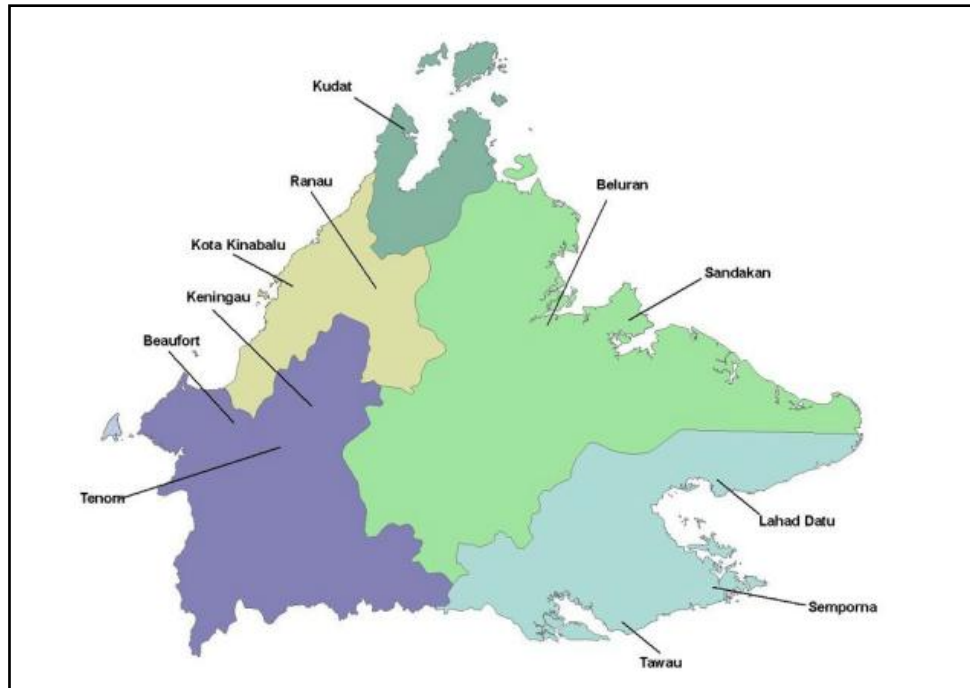
3 METHODOLOGY

The research employs a combination of techniques to elicit data. Field observations, interviews and the administration of questionnaires were undertaken in locations representing all the administrative divisions of the state of Sabah. These locations are in the West Coast (Zon A), the Interior (Zone B), Sandakan (Zone C) and Tawau (Zone D). A total of 804 respondents were sampled according to the guide attributed to Krejcie & Morgan (1970) to represent the population and socio-demographic make-up of the users of unlicensed TVRO system in Sabah.

Map of Countries Neighbouring Malaysia

Source: https://www.google.com/maps/@5.5418316,111.3539882,5z

Map of Sabah and sampling locations of the *Census-Patron* (2010) research project

Source: Report of the *Census-Patron* (2010) research project

This paper wishes to present only findings based on the 'Others' (Lain-lain) respondents of this research. There are about 266 or 33.1 percent of the 'Others' who are non-Malaysians found in this study.

The fact that the number of 'Others' (*Lain-lain*) is rather large in Sabah is not surprising. According to the Housing and Population Census 2010, there are 889,779 non-Malaysians living in Sabah. Out of that number, 483,195 are found in the rural areas. Although there are other foreign nationals in the state, Indonesians and Filipinos are the main foreigners in Sabah (Kurus, 1998). Indonesians are said to be constituting about 93 percent of migrant workers (Kanapathy, 2006). However, this study found that only 3 respondents (1.1%) indicated having links with the Philipiens and her national language, Tagalog. Hence, it is assumed that 'Others' mainly refers to Indonesian migrants found in the Interior Division of Sabah. But what is important here is that it is the 'Others' group that are the largest user of unlicensed TVRO.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Respondents' Background

Table 1. Distribution of Gender for 'Others' TVRO Users According to Locations

Division/Zone	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
INTERIOR	119 (44.7%)	109 (41.0%)	228 (85.7%)
WEST COAST	10 (3.8%)	10 (3.8%)	20 (7.5%)
KUDAT	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.8%)
TAWAU	4 (1.5%)	4 (1.5%)	8 (3%)
SANDAKAN	4 (1.5%)	4 (1.5%)	8 (3%)
Total	138 (51.9%)	128 (48.1%)	266 (100%)

Table 2. Favourite Language of 'Others'

Ethnic/Category	Favourite Language					Total
	Malay	Indonesia	Tagalog	Mandarin	English	
Others	14 (5.3%)	240 (90.6%)	3 (1.1%)	1 (0.4%)	7 (2.6%)	265 (100%)

Table 3. Favourite Country of 'Others'

Ethnic/Category	Favourite Country					Total
	Malaysia	Indonesia	Filipina	China	Others	
Others	15 (5.6%)	239 (89.8%)	3 (1.1%)	1 (0.4%)	8 (3%)	266 (100%)

An examination of the tables above gives a strong indication that the 240 respondents favouring TV programs in the Indonesian language and from Indonesia are those whose parentage originated or are recent immigrants from Indonesia . This is in stark contrast to Malay-language programmes where it is reported that only about 14 (5.3 percent) claimed to have liked those programmes. In terms of favourite programmes based on country, only 15 (5.6 percent) said they liked Malaysian programmes.

4.2 Respondents' Choice of Satellite TV Channels and Contents

Table 4. Breakdown of Top 5 Favourite Channels of 'Others'

Channel	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice
TPI	81	36	14	4
Indosiar	44	59	32	12
SCTV	33	16	19	4
MetroTV	12	3	11	3
GlobalTV	14	19	9	4
Total	184	133	85	27
Percent (N=266)	69%	50%	32%	10.1%

In terms of satellite television channels, it is found that five top channels were overwhelmingly Indonesian. TPI or *Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia* or is now known as *Media Nusantara Citra Televisi* (MNCT) in 2010 is evidently the respondents' first choice followed by Indosiar and *Surya Citra Televisi* (SCTV).

Table 5. Viewing Patterns of Malaysian Local Channels via TVRO by 'Others'

Programs	No.of Respondents Chosen Favourite Local Program (Respondents (n=266)			
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	
News	99 (37.2%)	12 (4.5 %)	3 (1.1%)	
Drama	19 (7.1 %)	16 (6 %)	-	
TV1	12 (4.5 %)	1 (0.4 %)	-	**158 (59.5%)**
Sports	4 (1.5%)	13 (4.9%)	2 (0.8%)	
TV2	3 (1.1%)	3 (1.1%)	1 (0.4%)	
TV3	1 (0.4%)	1(0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	
Upin-Ipin	2 (0.8%)	1 (0.4%)	-	

From the above tables it appears that while local Malaysian news are widely viewed by the respondents followed by Malaysian drama, non-news items namely Indonesian dramas and films are sourced from their "home" channels as shown in Table 7.

This could mean that local Malaysian news probably served as a tool for them to keep abreast of what is happening in their host country but culturally speaking, their cultural identity remained firmly rooted as 'Indonesian'.

Table 6. Type of Programmes Consumed by 'Others' (Indonesian) via TVRO

Category	No. of Respondents	% (n=266)
Entertainment		
Drama	168	63.1
Film	144	54.1
Reality TV	130	48.9
Sports	124	46.6
Comedy	113	42.5
Animation	87	32.7
Talkshow	30	11.3
Education		
Documentary	127	47.7
Religion	97	36.5
Educational TV	46	17.3
Science	43	16.2
Forum	31	11.7
Information		
News	214	80.5
Health	78	29.3
Tourism	72	27
Culture	61	22.9
Business	16	6
"Sexual" Need	13	4.9

In terms of type of programmes that 'Others' watched via unlicensed TVRO broadcast are largely in the entertainment category such as 'drama', 'film' and its 'Reality TV' shows as indicated in Table 7. In the Education category, about 47.7 percent or 127 respondents tuned in to their documentary programmes. Although unlicensed TVRO are less regulated if compared with government-approved satellite TV programs, only 4.9% of the respondents declared tuning in to the unregulated broadcast for programs that meet their "sexual" needs. This implies that most respondents are inclined to use TVRO as their source of information of various forms.

Table 7. Various Reasons for Watching Non-local TVRO Programs

Source of	Strongly Agree	Agree	Quite Agree	Total Agreeable	% of n=266
Family Values	144	73	30	**247**	**92.9**
International Issues	158	67	22	**247**	**92.9**
Entertainment	131	86	26	**243**	**91.4**
Foreign Programmes	160	56	20	**236**	**88.7**
Religion and Culture	117	95	19	**231**	**86.8**
Current Issues	139	74	17	**230**	**86.5**
National Issues	88	107	35	**230**	**86.5**
Documentary	118	84	27	**229**	**86.1**
Education and Information	96	93	23	**212**	**79.7**
Status	57	57	42	**156**	**58.6**

It is evident that the quality of content which range from 'family values', 'international issues' and 'entertainment' becomes a significant factor behind the reason for the consumption of 'Indonesian' programmes by the 'Others'. This indicates the strong-sense of physical dan cultural origin.

Interviews of selected respondents of Indonesian origin enquiring about how they feel when inhabiting two world of 'home' gave the following responses:

"I was born in Tanah Jawa, raised in a custom, values and norms of the Javanese people. Then I received formal education within the Indonesian philosophy…I came to Sabah because I want to find a new life with the knowledge of who I am. Eventhough I have lived here for so long, in fact my children were all born here, but my sense of identity is very much goes to my homeland (*tanah tumpah darah saya*)." (First male respondent – from East Jawa, came to Sabah since 1951, Kg Bulu Silau, Keningau, Red IC holder).

"There (Sulawesi) is my *tanah asal*, the district where I was born and raised, but when we migrate, of course we need to compromise, I migrate to earn a living…but it is different with my children, they were born here…their soul and everything is *here*. Its different,". (Second male respondent – from Sulawesi, has been in Sabah since 1948, Kg Bulu Silau, Keningau, Red IC holder).

Their answers demonstrates clearly the dual meaning of 'home'.

5 CONCLUSIONS

'Home' inhabits two world. Eventhough they have been here over a prolonged period in time, the availability and consumption of transnational media broadcasts have the capacity to render their heart and soul to remain rooted to Indonesia. But economically, 'Sabah' is home for them. Indonesia, is 'home' where they were born, grew up and identified culturally but Sabah is 'home' where they built their home now. Though far away from home, that 'home' is very alive in their living room through TVRO.

As Naficy once said (1999:6), "Home is anyplace; it is temporary and it is moveable; it can be built, rebuilt and carried in memory and by acts of imagination," while the 'Others' in this study are on a 'exile' for a better future in Sabah, their idea of 'home' is carried with them in their memories. And with the help of TVRO, their 'home' is rebuilt once again in another land. Echoing Ahmed (1999), the 'Others' built their imagined home while feeling at home in Sabah because 'home' to them is permeable, 'home' is where they feel at home and secure. It need not be a 'home' in the geographical sense in terms of space, location and territory. Hence, one can have multiple feelings and intepretations of 'home' which means, one can also have more than one 'home'. But how does this figure for the Sabahans as well as the state's vision for a developed Malaysia in 2020? Will they eventually be considered to be part of the *Bangsa Malaysia* as there are growing resentment by the local towards them? These are the contradictions and hostility by some Sabahans and what the state are up against particularly when foreigners are often linked to security and citizenship issues.

"Home" for the 'Others', need not necessarily be Indonesia, it can be Malaysia. After all, Indonesia as the other 'home' is not too far away from home because whenever they are overwhelmed by a sense of longing, they simply tune in to Indonesian channels via TVRO. Communication and information technologies, are found to have deterritorialised the meaning of 'home' and brought together two 'homes' – one in the past, the other in the present.

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