

EXPLORING AUDIOVISUAL DISSONANCE IN PRACTICE-BASED FILMMAKING: REPRESENTING DILEMMA IN *BENDERA PUTIH*

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ABSTRACT

Bendera Putih (2023), a short fiction film that strategically employs audiovisual dissonance to represent a profound dilemma, was produced in Yogyakarta as part of a community-based film initiative funded by the Yogyakarta City Cultural Service's Special Fund and was officially screened at the 2024 JAFF. Adopting a practice-based approach, this study investigates how the deliberate juxtaposition of visual and auditory elements crafts narrative ambiguity and intense emotional tension. Drawing on theories of cinematic dissonance, narrative disruption, and experiential learning, the article reflects on how asynchronous audio-visual pairings challenge audience expectations and provoke complex ethical and moral reflections. The socio-cultural context of the Yogyakarta community, known for upholding the value of "*guyub rukun*," critically informs the analysis of these creative decisions, illustrating how the local context shapes both the storytelling approach and the film's reception. The findings contribute to the discourse on alternative narratives in Southeast Asian independent cinema, underscoring the capacity of practice-based research to illuminate the affective and ethical dimensions of filmmaking.

Keywords: dissonance; *Bendera Putih*; juxtaposition; narrative; *guyub rukun*

ABSTRAK

Bendera Putih (2023), sebuah film fiksi pendek yang secara strategis memanfaatkan disonansi audiovisual untuk merepresentasikan dilema yang mendalam, diproduksi di Yogyakarta sebagai bagian dari inisiatif film berbasis komunitas yang didanai oleh Dana Khusus Dinas Kebudayaan Kota Yogyakarta, film ini resmi diputar di JAFF 2024. Dengan mengadopsi pendekatan berbasis praktik, studi ini menyelidiki bagaimana penjajaran elemen visual dan auditori yang disengaja menciptakan ambiguitas naratif dan ketegangan emosional yang intens. Mengacu pada teori disonansi sinematik, disruptsi naratif, dan pembelajaran eksperiensial, artikel ini merefleksikan bagaimana pasangan audio-visual yang asinkron menantang ekspektasi penonton dan memicu refleksi etika dan moral yang kompleks. Konteks sosial budaya masyarakat Yogyakarta, yang dikenal menjunjung tinggi nilai "*guyub rukun*", secara kritis menginformasikan analisis pilihan-pilihan kreatif ini, menunjukkan bagaimana konteks lokal

membentuk pendekatan penceritaan dan penerimaan film. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada wacana tentang narasi alternatif dalam sinema independen Asia Tenggara dan menggarisbawahi kapasitas penelitian berbasis praktik untuk menerangi dimensi afektif dan etis dalam pembuatan film.

Kata kunci: *Bendera Putih; disonansi; juktaposisi; naratif; guyup rukun*

1. Introduction

In contemporary short filmmaking, the exploration of narrative through the interplay between sound and image continues to expand the language of cinema. Among these explorations, audiovisual dissonance—deliberate incongruity between what is seen and what is heard—offers an expressive tool for filmmakers to evoke emotional depth, ambiguity, and psychological tension. This technique, often manifesting as juxtaposition, challenges traditional expectations of audiovisual coherence, inviting audiences to engage more actively in meaning-making.

This article examines *Bendera Putih* (2023), an Indonesian short fiction film that explores a personal dilemma through the strategic use of audiovisual juxtaposition during its post-production phase. The film was funded by the Department of Culture of Yogyakarta City through a competitive grant from the Dana Keistimewaan (Special Autonomy Fund), a regional cultural fund aimed at supporting artistic innovation. The project was later officially selected for screening at the 2024 Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival (JAFF), further validating its artistic merit within the Southeast Asian film circuit.

The narrative of *Bendera Putih* follows two characters grappling with emotionally charged decisions under social pressure, presenting a layered portrayal of inner conflict. While the storyline is structured linearly, its psychological complexity is deepened through the use of asynchronous audio and visual elements. In this way, juxtaposition becomes not only a stylistic device but also a narrative strategy that allows the film to articulate subjective tension while maintaining a coherent temporal flow.

Set in the cultural landscape of Yogyakarta—renowned for its values of *guyub rukun* (collective harmony and tolerance)—the film reflects how personal dilemmas emerge in spaces where communal expectations and individual

conscience collide. The story ultimately resolves the characters' dilemmas by emphasizing tolerance, the relinquishing of personal ego, and the prioritization of communal harmony—values deeply rooted in Yogyakarta's cultural identity. While ambiguity and emotional tension are sustained throughout the narrative, the film concludes with a gesture toward reconciliation and social cohesion.

From a methodological standpoint, this research adopts a practice-based approach and is grounded in the direct involvement of the authors: one as the director, and the other as the post-production producer. The producer's role extended beyond technical supervision; it involved facilitating the director's creative vision through critical dialogue, narrative shaping, and experimentation with audiovisual juxtaposition. Film production is a collaborative work process that involves many workers, so a good collaborative and communication workflow is needed to achieve excellence in every frame (Utami & Arifianto, 2019). This collaborative dynamic during post-production proved crucial in translating abstract narrative intentions into cinematic form.

By focusing on the creative decision-making process in post-production, this article contributes to the growing field of practice-based film research. It situates the film within contemporary discourses of narrative strategy, cultural specificity, and the aesthetics of dissonance, offering insight into how filmmakers harness creative tension as a narrative force.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Practice-Based Filmmaking and Creative Research

Practice-based filmmaking has emerged as a legitimate research methodology in the creative arts, where the act of creation itself becomes a mode of inquiry and knowledge production (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Smith & Dean, 2009). In this approach, the filmmaker not only creates a film but also systematically reflects on the creative choices and processes, often revealing embedded cultural and philosophical meanings (Nelson, 2013). Batty (2021) emphasizes that directing and screenwriting practices, particularly in short fiction formats, can serve as critical research tools. Strategies in the experimental film studio space become a bridge of expression and a means of conveying messages (Pauhrizi et al., 2024). In *Bendera*

Putih, the conceptual exploration of audiovisual dissonance became integral to the production process, allowing the filmmaker to reflect on the formal and thematic implications of dissonance as an expressive and narrative tool.

2.2. Audiovisual Dissonance in Film Form

Audiovisual dissonance refers to the intentional mismatch between auditory and visual elements in film, creating a contrast that challenges the audience's expectations and enhances emotional or thematic depth. This technique is widely used to evoke specific psychological responses, subvert visual dominance, and explore complex narratives. The intentional misalignment or contrast between sound and image, a technique that provokes cognitive tension and interpretative depth (Chion, 2019). Rather than using sound to reinforce visual meaning, dissonance introduces a rupture in conventional audiovisual harmony, inviting viewers to engage with the film on a more reflective level. Audiovisual dissonance is a powerful tool for inducing psychological effects. It can create mental shock by contrasting the expected harmony between audio and visual, forcing viewers to reinterpret the scene. This technique is often used to highlight themes of oppression or subversion, as seen in films where sound challenges the visual narrative's dominance (Loeb, 2011). Audiovisual dissonance in film refers to the use of background music that contrasts with the emotional tone of a scene, creating a psychological effect on the audience (Um, 2020). In the context of film production, this concept is used by creating the incongruity between visual and audio, which creates tension, ambiguity, or new interpretations.

The film *Requiem for a Dream* (Aronofsky, 2000) is a reference to previous film works that use dissonance to depict personal mental turmoil, while in *Bendera Putih*, this strategy is used to show social conflict and cultural tension. Unlike postmodern films that tend to distance the audience from emotion, *Bendera Putih* actually attracts empathy through the discomfort that arises from the incongruity of audio and visual. Audio from one character is juxtaposed with the visual presence of another, crafting a perceptual ambiguity that mirrors the central dilemma. This dissociation was developed through creative trial and error in post-production,

highlighting the role of audiovisual form as narrative device rather than mere stylistic choice.

2.3. Juxtaposition as Narrative Strategy

Juxtaposition has long served as a narrative strategy rooted in montage theory, especially as theorized by Eisenstein, who argued that the collision of images produces new meaning (Zimmer & Rogers, 2021). When applied beyond visual montage to include audio-visual elements, juxtaposition becomes a powerful device to create tension, irony, and ambiguity (Bordwell, 2020:330).

Li and Sun (2022) find that audiovisual juxtaposition in Asian short films can articulate emotional alienation and internal conflict more effectively than direct exposition. Likewise, Juxtaposition is essential for constructing narrative structure and guiding viewers' comprehension of events. Films are parsed into subscenes and events based on visual and narrative cues, such as changes in location, time, or action. Studies have shown that viewers exhibit high agreement in identifying event boundaries, even when these boundaries are subtle (Cutting, 2019). The use of cuts and scene transitions also influences how viewers segment and recall events. For instance, cuts placed at breakpoints in activities enhance recall accuracy, while cuts at non breakpoints can disrupt the flow and reduce comprehension (Schwan et al., 2000). These findings underscore the importance of juxtaposition in creating a coherent narrative structure.

In *Bendera Putih*, juxtaposition operates across space and subjectivity. Audio and visual elements do not simply describe or illustrate the same moment but contrast distinct perspectives and emotions. This technique aligns with the film's objective of representing indecision and complexity without moral resolution, enhancing the film's affective and interpretive depth.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a practice-based research approach, which positions creative practice both as the subject and method of inquiry (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). The focus is on the post-production phase of the short fiction film *Bendera Putih*, where the interplay between visual imagery and asynchronous audio was

meticulously constructed to express internal dilemma. The film went through four stages of production and continued with the distribution process to the exhibition, namely the development stage, pre-production, production, and post-production. The journey of the film from the discovery of the idea to becoming a finished film but this article specifically highlights the post-production process as the core location of creative intervention.

The two authors of this article played direct roles in the film's creation: one as the director, responsible for conceptual and narrative vision, and the other as the post-production producer, responsible for facilitating the director's vision through the shaping of audio-visual structure. This dynamic enabled a collaborative process that blended aesthetic deliberation with technical execution.

Post-production involved deliberate juxtaposition strategies, where sound and image were edited in ways that intentionally avoided synchronicity. For instance, dialogue from one character is heard over a visual sequence that focuses on another character, creating emotional dissonance and reflective space for the audience. The editing process was iterative, involving multiple rounds of feedback and reflection between the director and post-production producer to achieve the desired affective tone.

The methodology aligns with existing models of creative practice research (Nelson, 2013; Smith & Dean, 2009), particularly the 'critical reflective practitioner' model. Throughout post-production, both creators maintained reflective journals, annotated cuts, and dialogic notes that documented creative decisions. These materials formed the empirical basis for this article's analysis.

Data analysis was carried out through narrative and audio-visual discourse analysis. Sequences were examined not only for content, but also for the spatial, emotional, and psychological associations created through asynchronous layering. Key scenes were selected for close reading to illustrate how the dilemma is rendered not just through story, but through cinematic form.

This methodology not only illuminates the decision-making in creative practice but also offers insight into how local values such as *guyub rukun* are interpreted and reimagined within narrative and aesthetic forms.

4. Discussion

4.1. Film Description

The artwork discussed in this article is a short fiction film titled *Bendera Putih*. The 13-minute film was directed by Budi Dwi Arifianto, known as Budi Tobon. Citra Dewi Utami, as the first writer, acted as a post-production producer in the film's production team. *Bendera Putih* presents the issue of how conflict in society can be triggered by differences in views influenced by political stigma. The film's setting is Yogyakarta in 2016. At that time, there were a lot of shootings of suspected terrorists in Indonesia. The government claims to have uncovered 170 cases of terrorism. Many bodies of suspected terrorists were sent back to their families and many were rejected by local residents and triggered conflicts between residents. These conditions were the background to the idea of making the film *Bendera Putih*. The duration of the story takes place overnight on August 16. The celebration of Independence Day or better known as the night of *tirakatan*, is an annual event for the people of Yogyakarta in every RT (community association). The *tirakatan* night was chosen as a symbol of the harmonious community. The residents worked together to prepare the celebration as lively as possible. The story opens with a prayer together to mark the start of the *tirakatan* night entertainment stage event featuring a *dangdut* singer named Azizah. At the same time, across the location, a police group arrived carrying an ambulance carrying the body of a suspected terrorist who was Mrs. Darmi's son. The first sequence was visualized using juxtaposition techniques. This situation triggered the story to move towards the crisis stage. The residents became divided, some wanted the *dangdut* stage event to continue, others gave their sympathy to Mrs. Darmi who was grieving. The critical point is visualized using the concept of audio-visual dissonance, which is discussed further in the article. Until at the climax, Azizah threw away the microphone, this scene became a marker for the peak of the story that led to the resolution, namely the return of residents to being tolerant of other residents. This is the message that is intended to be conveyed through the film *Bendera Putih*, tolerance will lead to harmony even though it is not easy to achieve in the context of a multicultural society such as in Yogyakarta.

4.2. Post-Production as a Collaborative Ethical Space

The post-production stage marks the fourth phase in the film production process. The director leads the creative direction. The post-production producer facilitates the workflow. The editor, sound designer, and colorist contribute their expertise in shaping the final film. The team works together to process the recorded images and sounds. They transform raw footage into a coherent and emotionally engaging story. In *Bendera Putih*, the team completed this stage within the planned timeline. The editor starts by assembling a rough cut based on the script. The director then reviews the cut and provides feedback. Together, they finalize the version known as the picture lock. While the editing progresses, the sound designer works in a separate space. They prepare all necessary audio elements, including scoring, sound effects, and ambient layers. Each component supports the mood and meaning of the film. This coordinated process ensures that image and sound merge seamlessly. The result is not only technically refined but also emotionally resonant.

The director emphasized that the team worked meticulously on every transition. They were aware that each cut carried emotional weight. The use of audiovisual dissonance was intentional, so precision became essential. It could not be left alone. Each had to be united in feeling. Editing was done like sewing a wound: it had to be precise, it had to be felt but not make it worse. He further added, specifically the section between *dangdut tirakatan* and the funeral home, we made seven versions. We tested each version in an open discussion space with the director and editor. We always asked, is this scene honest? Does it hurt or open up empathy? That is our ethical standard.

Open dialogue and tiered revisions are an important part of the production team's approach in maintaining the sensitivity and integrity of the story. One tendency that emerged from the film's post-production process is a very open collaborative work model. There is no dominance of one creative voice—all ideas go through joint testing. The function of post-production is not only to perfect, but also to reinterpret what has been recorded. Editor, sound designer, and colorist are also involved in narrative discussions, not just technical ones.

The producer emphasized that post-production in *Bendera Putih* is not just a technical process, but also an ethical and emotional process. The team treated the

post-production process as an ethical space. They did not only assemble images and sounds but also paid attention to how social representations appeared. Ensuring that no group is disadvantaged or misrepresented in the film's narrative. This is seen in the decision not to emphasize the label "terrorist" visually or verbally, and to allow ambiguity as a form of respect for human complexity.

The aesthetic tendency that emerges is the courage to maintain a measured dissonance. Not to shock, but to provoke an inner response. The team carefully crafted the dissonance. They ensured it would not turn into meaningless noise. Instead, they shaped it to echo the main character's inner conflict. The dissonance also reflected the judgmental tone of the surrounding society. As a result, the audience could emotionally connect with the experience.

4.3. Constructing Dilemma Through Juxtaposed Narratives

Juxtaposition is the main narrative strategy that allows the presentation of opposing perspectives simultaneously in one linear narrative. The placement of contrasting audio and visual elements explicitly shows the tension and dilemma experienced by the characters. This strategy invites the audience to actively interpret the complexity of the dilemma, while maintaining a coherent storyline. In *Bendera Putih*, the director used juxtaposition as more than just a visual style. He treated it as a rhetorical tool. This technique helped express the many interpretations that arise within a divided society. It revealed how social realities clash and coexist in tension.

The most striking visual evidence of juxtaposition is seen in two settings that are shown in parallel: the *dangdut* stage atmosphere of the night of *tirakatan* (Setting 1) and the house of mourning of the suspected terrorist (Setting 2). The vibrant stage, bathed in dynamic lighting, captures Azizah, the singer, captivating a jubilant crowd of residents with her performance, a spectacle of communal joy. Yet, just across the way, a starkly contrasting scene unfolds. Within the hushed confines of a dimly lit home, Mrs. Darmi sits in poignant solitude, awaiting the somber return of her son's body—a suspected terrorist. Two residents, with solemn steps, carry the elongated form of a coffin into the grieving sanctuary, underscoring the weight of her private sorrow against the public gaiety. The ambient sound of *dangdut* music accompanied by the crowd's cheers dominate the scene. In this

scene, the narrative construction that is built is that the condition of celebrating the night of *tirakatan* in a lively manner is the right of the residents. The contrast between the joint celebration on the *tirakatan* stage and the silent personal grief in the house across the way illustrates a complex clash of values. The film deliberately places these two incongruous atmospheres side by side to voice a dilemma that is often invisible. The organization of a funeral ceremony for a citizen, which is usually a shared responsibility, is changed by political stigma that has an impact on the division of the community. The community treats the death of Mrs. Darmi's child differently, who is a local resident but is suspected of being a terrorist. The film uses juxtaposition not only through visuals. It also applies the technique through mismatched audio and image. This inconsistency invites the audience to listen more closely. It urges them to notice the unspoken 'voices' that emerge from each social space.

Setting 1	Setting 2
Tirakatan Dangdut Stage	Funeral Home of Suspected Terrorist
	

Figure 1. Two contrasting scenes facing each other, the lively celebration of Independence Day, facing the house of mourning of the suspected terrorist shrouded in mourning.

From these findings, it appears that juxtaposition is used not only to show differences in atmosphere, but also to raise the inner tension of the characters and their surroundings. Azizah experiences a dual pressure. Social norms demand that she perform as a symbol of collective joy. At the same time, she recognizes the grief of Mrs. Darmi as deeply human. This tension reveals the moral complexity

she must navigate. Her position reflects the conflict between public role and private conscience. Mrs. Darmi's emotional depth stems from her backstory. Her long-lost son has returned as someone who was labeled as an enemy of the state. This condition has exacerbated her sadness. The duration of the story in the film runs throughout the celebration of the night of the *tirakatan*. By placing both scenes simultaneously, the film creates emotional tension. It allows the audience to sense the conflict without direct explanation. This technique avoids explicit dialogue. Instead, it relies on contrast and implication. The result is a narrative that feels subtle, yet emotionally powerful.

Furthermore, juxtaposition in this film creates layers of meaning that are not linear, but associative. The audience is not guided to feel sad or happy directly, but is invited to explore the conflicting emotional relationships such as how joy can feel tragic when juxtaposed with silent sadness. This finding supports the core idea of practice-based research. It shows that asynchronous juxtaposition works as a cinematic technique. The technique stimulates both empathy and critical reflection. In *Bendera Putih*, this approach helps the audience engage with layered social tensions. It becomes especially effective in a multicultural setting like Yogyakarta. Here, emotional nuance and social meaning often coexist beneath the surface.

4.4. Audiovisual Dissonance: A Strategy for Deepening Emotional Impact

Audiovisual dissonance in *Bendera Putih* does not break the story's linear structure. Instead, it adds emotional and psychological depth. The contrast between sound and image enhances the viewer's interpretive engagement. This sound-image mismatch sharpens the characters' inner worlds. For Azizah, it reveals her emotional struggle without relying on dialogue. The audience reads her conflict through tone, timing, and contrast. This technique is important in maintaining narrative continuity while inserting layers of meaning that disturb the audience's empathy.

Concrete evidence is seen in the sequence of scenes at critical points in the story shown in the table 1. The visual shows Azizah singing on a *dangdut* stage, while simultaneously the audio that is heard is Mrs. Darmi's voice reading the Yasin surah full of sorrow: "*Yā Sīn wal-Qur'ān il-ḥakīm ...*" with the atmosphere of

"Roomtone silent House of mourning". Furthermore, when the visual shows Mrs. Darmi at the funeral home, Azizah's soft voice singing "*Joget bareng-bareng rame-rame ...*" and the ironic *dangdut* accompaniment score dominates. This shows a deliberate exchange of sound and image in the editing process to produce a psychological effect that is both disturbing and touching. The keyboard synthesizer scoring accompaniment is maintained as a background to maintain the continuity of the celebratory atmosphere, even though emotionally the narrative is at a point of crisis.

Tabel 1. Audiovisual dissonance scene

Video	Audio	Scoring
	Dialogue: Mrs. Darmi: (sadly reading the surah) "yâ sîn wal-qur'ânîl-ḥakîm..." Atmosphere: Silent roomtone Funeral home	Synthesizer keyboard
	Dialogue: Azizah: (singing softly) Dancing together... together in a crowd... Atmosphere: The rhythm of dangdut music	
	Dialogue: Mrs. Darmi: (sadly reading the verse) "innaka lâminal-mursalîn..." Atmosphere: Silent roomtone	

	The funeral home	
	Dialogue: Azizah: (singing softly) Feel free to think about installments.. Atmosphere: The rhythm of dangdut music accompaniment	

The analysis indicates the film effectively employs juxtaposition to convey its central dilemma. This method places emotionally opposing audio and visual components in proximity. For example, a scene combines visual excitement with a sad soundtrack. The inequality presented depicts the character's inner struggle. The application of such juxtaposition induces cognitive dissonance among viewers. It encourages contemplation of the character's predicament. Importantly, this reflection occurs without interrupting the narrative's linear flow.

The audiovisual dissonance technique represents a narrative choice, not merely an aesthetic decision. It illustrates the complexity of the character's dilemma, particularly in the case of Azizah, who continues to sing due to social expectations, despite feeling deep empathy for Mrs. Darmi, a grieving mother standing before her child's coffin. From the stage, Azizah witnesses this sorrow directly. However, the sound and atmosphere within the scene are intentionally exchanged, creating a dissonant effect. This deliberate manipulation reveals a tension between social obligation and suppressed humanity. The audio editing, therefore, becomes a symbolic device that emphasizes the emotional distance between the character's internal reality and the external social demands.

Structurally, this strategy works by borrowing the approach of "externalizing emotions through incongruity", namely conveying internal conflict through an external medium, namely the exchanged visual and audio compositions. Dissonance does not only occur once, but repeatedly in moments of crisis, showing

a consistent and planned aesthetic pattern. This technique allows the audience to experience feelings of discomfort, while encouraging them to question greater social justice: why can the sound of celebration overpower the sound of sadness? Why should personal cries be drowned out by collective noise? In this way, *Bendera Putih* not only tells a story, but also forms a reflective viewing experience, inviting the audience to explore the moral side of tolerance and social judgment in a diverse society.

4.5. Reflections on Ethical and Aesthetic Choices in Post-Production

The director and post-production producer felt that the creative process was challenging, especially in balancing artistic experimentation with the need for a clear and linear narrative. The cultural context of Yogyakarta, known for its values of *guyub rukun* (harmony and togetherness), greatly influenced the way we depicted the dilemma without causing polarization. Intensive dialogue and iteration within the team greatly helped in managing the tension to keep it cohesive. The post-production stage became a contemplative space where all visual and audio decisions were rearranged for the sake of unity of feeling and meaning. The role of post-production was expanded into the area of curating feelings, which processed the complexity of the social reality of Yogyakarta society into a coherent narrative structure but still left room for contemplation for the audience. The post-production producer played a role in facilitating the collaboration between the director and editor to not only compose the visuals and audio, but also the moments that provide depth of meaning from the realization of the director's vision.

The director is well aware that juxtaposing *dangdut tirakatan* with the atmosphere of a funeral home can cause controversy. But that is precisely where his artistic honesty lies—our society lives in such clashes every day. The challenge for him was how to convey the dilemma without putting anyone in a corner. We want the audience to reflect, not judge.

Meanwhile, the post-production producer calculated the duration for the audio editing to be longer than the video editing. The effort to create ‘measured irregularity’—technically the sound must contrast, but emotionally it must not damage the continuity of the story. We iterated up to 12 versions before the final.

The production team's reflections show that conveying the dilemma in *Bendera Putih* is not just an aesthetic exploration, but also an ethical and social decision. The emphasis on local cultural sensitivity and social dynamics in Yogyakarta is a balancing act in designing a narrative strategy that is not only impressive cinematically, but also has a social impact. The creative process was carried out with care to maintain equality of perspective and avoid dichotomies that simplify the problem.

An important finding from this process is the importance of collaboration between creative roles in maintaining a balance between personal vision and social sensitivity. Complex narrative dilemmas cannot be solved with a single cinematic approach—a cross-functional discussion is needed, from screenwriting, artistic direction, visual design, sound design to post-production.

The emerging tendency is that the production team adopts a reflective and iterative working model. Every visual or audio decision that 'deviates' from convention is always discussed based on its potential cultural impact. There is no single decision; all are collective and go through a taste-testing process through repeated internal screenings.

This strategy reflects the situated authorship approach, where creators realize that their work is born in a certain social context, not in a vacuum. This can be seen from the way the production team uses visual and sound narratives not as artistic goals alone, but as a way to reflect the reality of people's lives that are often full of contradictions. In this context, *Bendera Putih* can be read as a subtle yet evocative social reflection, not only through the story it tells, but also through the way the story is constructed.

4.6. Interpreting Dissonance: Bridging Local Contexts and Universal Themes

This study demonstrates that juxtaposition and audiovisual dissonance strategies in *Bendera Putih* enrich narrative aesthetics. These techniques also deepen the representation of complex dilemmas. The filmmakers processed these techniques by considering the local cultural context and implementing them collaboratively during post-production.

Juxtaposition in *Bendera Putih* presents two opposing worlds: the lively *dangdut tirakatan* celebration and the somber funeral home atmosphere. This technique creates a non-homogeneous reality, consistent with Eisenstein's (1949) montage theory, where visual contrast generates new meaning through image conflict. Meanwhile, audiovisual dissonance involves exchanging sound and image backgrounds. For instance, *dangdut* sounds accompany visuals of the funeral home. This practice, widely discussed in contemporary cinema studies (Chion, 1994), produces an "emotional displacement" effect that represents the character's inner conflict.

Requiem for a Dream (Aronofsky, 2000) employed a similar dissonant strategy to depict personal mental turmoil. However, *Bendera Putih* adapted this into a local short film context, utilizing a more linear approach rooted in Javanese culture. Aronofsky focused on rapid changes to show dynamic mental shifts. In contrast, *Bendera Putih* emphasizes everyday life and social dilemmas pertinent to the urban suburban community. This differentiates its approach from Western cinema, which often highlights personal alienation, as seen in *Her* (Jonze, 2013) where internal character dissonance emerges through dialogue and soundscape.

These juxtaposition and dissonance strategies are not merely aesthetic choices; they are methods for expressing social ambiguity. In cultures valuing harmonious togetherness (*guyub rukun*), conflict expressions require implicit and symbolic conveyance. *Bendera Putih* successfully creates a narrative space that allows the audience to grasp the characters' inner pressure without verbal explanation.

Testimony from the production team highlights the importance of collaborative processes and cultural sensitivity in crafting a bold yet communicative narrative. They addressed the challenge of combining experimental elements with a linear plot through discussion and trial and error, recognizing local audience expectations regarding genre and story form. This aligns with Hanan's (2017) finding that Southeast Asian cinema develops through mediating global formalism and local values.

These findings encourage Indonesian short filmmakers to experiment with narrative forms and cinematic techniques. However, they must consider audience

context and the intended message. Further exploration is necessary to understand how techniques like audio disjunction or dramaturgical juxtaposition can function as subtle yet effective social critique, especially when addressing sensitive issues such as death, stigma, or marginalization.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms audiovisual dissonance as an effective narrative device. Strategic juxtaposition represents complex dilemmas within linear film narratives. *Bendera Putih* as an example. Its deliberate audio-visual contrasts externalize character conflicts. This enhances the film's emotional and psychological depth. It also invites active audience engagement and interpretation.

The creative process, particularly post-production, underscored balancing artistic experimentation with coherent storytelling. Yogyakarta's cultural context, marked by *guyub rukun*, significantly shaped the film's non-polarizing dilemma portrayal. This approach subtly reflects inherent complexities within a harmonious society, rather than solely celebrating unity.

Overall, this research advances practice-based filmmaking. It demonstrates how dissonance and juxtaposition deepen the narrative's complexity and enhance the viewer's experience of the short film. It offers an empathetic experience within the context of Indonesian society.

The technique of dissonance in *Bendera Putih* offers a new narrative model for Indonesian short films. This challenges conventional coherence. This fosters empathy and critical engagement without explicit exposition. It also enables filmmakers to explore sensitive social issues, like poverty, environmental concerns, or historical grievances, with nuanced depth.

This study initiates further research on audience reception and strategy applicability across diverse cultural contexts. It also encourages Indonesian filmmakers toward formal experimentation. *Bendera Putih* demonstrates how local narratives can resonate universally. Its 'measured irregularity' inspires future cinematic works to explore human experience and societal dynamics with artistic integrity and social conscience. This approach aims to cultivate a more reflective

and critically aware Indonesian film landscape. It allows innovative and empathetically resonant forms to explore difficult truths.

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ARTISTIC : International Journal of Creation and Innovation

Publisher:
Program Pascasarjana
Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta

Available online at:
<https://jurnal.isi-ska.ac.id/index.php/artistic>

How to Cite:
Utami, C. D., & Arifianto, B. D. (2025). Exploring Audiovisual Dissonance in Practice-Based Filmmaking: Representing Dilemma in *Bendera Putih*. *ARTISTIC : International Journal of Creation and Innovation*, 6(2), 123-141, DOI: 10.33153/artistic.v6i2.7222