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Pemberdayaan Perempuan melalui Pertanian dan Pekerjaan Rumah Tangga Perempuan Diaspora dalam Vlog Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman

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Masuk tanggal : 02-02-2025, revisi tanggal : 11-07-2025, diterima untuk diterbitkan tanggal : 30-07-2025

Abstract

This research examines a new form of epistolary performed by an Indonesian-German diasporic woman named Trisna Keller through her YouTube channel entitled "Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman". This research also aims to explore how gardening activities in the home garden, as part of domestic routine, can serve as a narrative strategy shaping identity and mediating cultural negotiations in the lives of Indonesian diaspora women. This research employs a narrative analysis method using an epistolary literary framework and postcolonial concepts to analyze phenomena displayed on social media. Trisna Keller's vlog in Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman is read as a form of epistolary in digital space that articulates personal experiences of memory, emotion, and cultural heritage through digital space. The exploration of nostalgia for tropical plant products combined with their adaptation to subtropical environments becomes a bridge between Indonesia and Germany. This research argues that Trisna Keller's performance in cultivating vegetables and fruits in Germany through the seeds she brought from Indonesia functions as a symbolic act of remembrance as well as a form of shifting Western colonial discourse. This becomes a form of politics that is implicit in shifting the historical form of colonialism towards the mechanism of botanical negotiation. While botanical negotiations once required serious scientific exploration, can now be simplified into domestic values and hobby-based practices expressed through social media.

Keywords: diasporic woman, epistolary, vlog, woman empowerment, YouTube

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bentuk baru dari epistolari yang dilakukan oleh seorang perempuan diaspora Indonesia-Jerman bernama Trisna Keller melalui vlog YouTube-nya yang berjudul "Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman". Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana kegiatan berkebun yang dilakukan di kebun rumah sebagai bagian dari rutinitas domestik dapat menjadi strategi naratif yang membentuk identitas dan menjadi perantara negosiasi

budaya melalui kehidupan diaspora perempuan Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis naratif dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja sastra epistoler dan konsep poskolonial untuk menganalisis fenomena yang ditampilkan di media sosial. Vlog Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman dibaca sebagai bentuk epistolari di ruang digital yang mengartikulasikan pengalaman pribadi tentang memori, emosi, dan warisan budaya melalui ruang digital. Penggalan nostalgia terhadap produk tanaman daerah tropis dipadukan dengan adaptasinya terhadap lingkungan subtropis menjadi jembatan antara Indonesia dan Jerman. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa performa Trisna Keller dalam budidaya sayuran dan buah-buahan di Jerman melalui benih tanaman yang dibawa dari Indonesia berfungsi sebagai tindakan simbolik untuk mengingat sekaligus bentuk pergeseran diskursus kolonial Barat. Hal ini menjadi sebuah bentuk politik yang implisit dalam pergeseran terhadap bentuk sejarah kolonialisme terhadap mekanisme negosiasi botani. Negosiasi botani awalnya memerlukan eksplorasi serius yang bersifat ilmiah, kini telah yang disederhanakan ke dalam nilai-nilai domestik dan praktik berbasis hobi yang dituangkan melalui media sosial.

Kata Kunci: epistolari, pemberdayaan perempuan, perempuan diaspora, vlog, YouTube

Introduction

This research examines the vlog as a form of digital epistolarity that enables diasporic women to construct narratives of identity through the performativity of everyday life. The primary object of this research is the YouTube channel Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman, owned by Trisna Keller, a woman from Papua who resides in Germany after marrying a German man. On this channel, Keller consistently produces content centered on domestic agricultural activities such as gardening, planting chili peppers, harvesting cabbage, and processing other garden produce. Through a playlist titled “*Panen Buah*” (Fruit Harvest), these activities are presented not merely as hobbies but as narrative and cultural strategies to negotiate her identity as an Indonesian woman living on European soil within a subtropical climate. The vlog reflects how domestic and agricultural spaces are politically utilized to evoke memories of the homeland, shape agency, and articulate diasporic presence through meaningful everyday labor. In this way, Keller’s vlog becomes a symbolic terrain in which diasporic experience, cultural values, and geographical relations are reconstructed within an intimate yet transnational visual and narrative format.

Diaspora becomes a compelling subject of inquiry because it plays a crucial role in the articulation of transnational identities. The presence of diasporic communities has become increasingly visible and accessible in the age of social media, where their usage continues to grow rapidly. Social media has transformed into a space for expression and identity articulation for diasporic communities, making it a vital tool for bridging the geographic, social, and cultural distances between their homeland and their new place (Ponzanesi, 2020). Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have emerged and offered users the ability to record, share, and archive everyday life through content that is both personal and publicly accessible (De Fina & Koh, 2024). The variety of features offered by social media also influences the way individuals choose to narrate their stories, whether through video, photos, or other formats. Consequently,

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this phenomenon has also shaped how Indonesian diasporic women, especially within transnational marriages and families abroad, engage with social media to share their stories with a wider public audience to access.

YouTube is one of the social media platforms that offers a wider range of features for storytelling, including videos, live streams, short videos, and photos. The video feature on YouTube has evolved into various formats that keep pace with contemporary trends, such as vlogs, podcasts, live streams, shorts, and in-real-life streams (IRL). The vlog has become a popular expressive medium, particularly utilized by diasporic communities (Suh, 2025a). A vlog, short for video blog, presents personal life narratives that are nevertheless publicly accessible (Christian, 2009). According to Globalisasi and Tambunan (2024) and Nguyen (2023) the vlog can serve as a medium that readily allows for the narration of experiences, memories, and emotions that represent cultural identity in diasporic life. For Indonesian diasporic women in transnational marriages, the vlog becomes a space for cross-border communication (Yusuf & Sudarmanti, 2021b), both with family members back home and with broader audiences who follow their lives. Furthermore, Ackermans (2015) explains that vlogs contain key elements similar to those of epistolary forms, which are immediacy, truthfulness, and episodic narration. Therefore, the vlog operates much like the epistolary form, using digital space as both its archive and medium of delivery.

The theoretical framework used in our research adapts the concept of epistolary writing. The epistolary form originally refers to a classical literary mode based on letter writing (Sellami & Alsaied, 2025). Today, this form has given rise to a new mode through vlogging activities in digital spaces (Li et al., 2025). The vlog itself can be seen as a public letter conveyed through an audiovisual format (Raisinghani & Kesur, 2024). By viewing the vlog as a new form of correspondence through the lens of the epistolary, we are able to interpret it as an intimate narrative directed toward a specific target audience. This epistolary framework relates to theories of diaspora representation and identity as proposed by Hall (1997) and Avtar Brah (2005) about representation as a process of meaning-making that constructs diasporic identity, and diaspora space as a site of intersection where memories, cultural practices, and transnational subjectivities are negotiated to deepen our analysis. In addition, we also draw on Anne McClintock's (1995) concept of domestic politics to examine how the domestic space is utilized as a site for articulating negotiation and identity construction.

The vlog, as one of YouTube's video formats, has been widely used by users to share their stories, including by members of the diaspora who wish to document their experiences abroad through various themes. According to Yusuf & Sudarmanti (Yusuf & Sudarmanti, 2021b), the number of Indonesian diasporic women sharing their lives through vlogs continues to rise. The vlogs of Indonesian women in the diaspora on YouTube channels are often dominated by cultural themes that highlight cultural differences. One particularly compelling vlog by an Indonesian woman in the diaspora is Keller's channel, *Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman*. Through gardening and farming practices, the *Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman* vlog can be read as a form of articulating cultural agency and a reminder of ecological relationships. In the Indonesian context, ecological practices and relations have long been integral to the

identity of tropical communities (Asrawijaya, 2024). This research focuses on the limited research regarding vlogs that feature domestic and agricultural activities, despite their historical, cultural, and political significance, particularly for diasporic communities from tropical regions, such as Indonesia. Agricultural activities in the domestic spaces of Germany are employed as symbolic strategies to sustain identity and reconfigure the relationship between the tropical homeland and the subtropical environment in which they now reside, through the vlog as a digital epistolary form.

The discourse of botanical negotiation refers to practices of adaptation, exchange, and experimentation across geographic boundaries in the context of plants and agriculture. Botanical negotiation takes place when plants from one geographic region are relocated and cultivated within a different ecological space (Leonard, 2024). According to Baber (2016), in the history of colonialism, the practice of botanical negotiation was carried out by European botanists who transported tropical seeds to European soil and vice versa, as part of projects grounded in science, power, and economic interests. One key figure in the history of botanical negotiation in Indonesia is Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn, a German-born naturalist and botanist who worked under the Dutch colonial administration in the nineteenth century. As noted by Sunjayadi (2024), Junghuhn is known for his role in classifying and cultivating various tropical plants across the Dutch East Indies. Junghuhn not only observed and documented Indonesia's tropical flora, but also conducted experiments in cultivating European plants in tropical lands. Moreover, O'Morchoe (2024) argues that botanical negotiations imply an exchange of values, power, and cultural meanings through the medium of plants. In this way, the practices of botanical negotiation demonstrate that, since the colonial era, the relationship between plants and geographic spaces has always been a political one.

However, in the current contemporary period, this practice has undergone a shift in meaning. Today, botanical negotiation is no longer carried out solely by the state or colonial institutions, but also by individuals living within global mobility (Rakotoarisoa et al., 2016). Plants can serve as markers of geography and identity, while also symbolizing cultural continuity (Nasution, 2023). By treating the processes of planting, nurturing, and harvesting as part of a narrative within digital space through her vlog, Keller is able to present a negotiation between the memory of tropical agriculture and the realities of the European subtropics. This is what makes her farming practices not merely domestic activities, but also cultural and political statements embedded with traces of history and human agency. In this way, botanical negotiation can now be understood as a cultural and political practice enacted by individuals in managing the relationship between their tropical origins and the new subtropical environments they inhabit.

The research on cultural negotiation performed by the Indonesian diaspora in YouTube vlogs has been widely studied, therefore there are several previous studies that serve as a basis in supporting the novelty of our research. Based on research conducted by Yusuf and Sudarmanti (2021a), Indonesian diaspora in transnational marriages create YouTube video content that represents a form of negotiation construction as an effort to negotiate their identity between their love for their homeland and acceptance of the local culture where they live. Other forms of negotiation can be formed through highly flexible and adaptive communication

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with the new environment and society (Indriani & Mulyana, 2021), not eliminating the normative values of their native country (Suh, 2025b), applying the religious values of their native country (Budiman, 2024), and participation in the national celebration of their native country that implemented in their current new country, and cuisine (Globalisasi & Tambunan, 2024). Our research contributes to the field by focusing on cultural negotiation through personal memory and the utilization of natural landscapes, allowing for the development of research examining the cultural negotiation carried out by the Indonesian diaspora through YouTube vlogs from a wider range of perspectives.

Based on the background and issues which we previously outlined, this study seeks to answer the question of how the vlog, as a new form of epistolarity in the Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman's YouTube channel, constructs agricultural experience in building a politically charged cultural narrative. Through this research, we also aim to explore how the vlog, as a documentation of everyday life, holds significant potential for re-narrating the relationship between diasporic women and their new geographic spaces. Using a cultural studies approach and the epistolary framework, this study is designed to demonstrate that agricultural activity within the vlog can be understood as a complex narrative strategy. This strategy reflects the efforts of diasporic women to affirm their identity by preserving cultural products from their homeland while reconfiguring symbolic discourse in relation to dominant norms embedded in the domestic space of Germany.

Methods

In this research, we employ a qualitative approach that focuses on the interpretation of meaning and narrative representation as expressed through YouTube vlogs. The primary data is drawn from the Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman YouTube channel managed by Keller. We use purposive sampling for collecting data from Keller's vlogs. The main method used is transcript extraction from selected YouTube vlogs. The method of transcript extraction from selected videos will be used to explore how agricultural activities function as cultural and political narratives in communication. The videos analyzed are directly curated by Keller in a playlist that centers on gardening and plant harvesting activities.

The data we collected from the YouTube channel Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman (<https://www.youtube.com/@KeluargaBahagiaDiJerman>) for this research analysis consists of four videos. We took these four videos from a YouTube playlist titled "*Panen Buah*" with a total video duration of 45 minutes and 25 seconds. The data was from August 22, 2024, to November 2, 2024, with criteria that we had determined, such as: the vlog explicitly shows gardening activities, there is a narrative that explicitly explains the mechanics of gardening and how to obtain plant seeds from their place of origin to a new location, to show the phenomena of negotiation that occur.

Commented [A1]: Specify sampling frame (channel URL, playlist names, inclusion/exclusion rules), time window (e.g., Jan–Jun 2025), and n of videos and total minutes analyzed.

We focus on the analytical stage on two main aspects of communication, narrative and visual, following the transcription of the selected videos. Narrative analysis is used to examine storytelling style and verbal expressions that reflect Keller's personal and emotional experiences. Meanwhile, visual analysis is employed to highlight the representation of domestic and agricultural activities within the physical space of the garden, which is located in front of Keller's house in Germany. This visual analysis also explores visual elements that generate meanings beyond the everyday activity. In this context, agricultural activities are not framed as primary labor, but rather as forms of leisure and cultural memory that carry traces of tropical recollection as well as modes of agency in navigating the domestic norms of German life.

We limited our research to agricultural content on the YouTube channel of the Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman. The content analyzed was limited to videos that explicitly showed gardening, planting, and harvesting activities after Keller in the "*Panen Buah*" or Fruit Harvest playlist. This limitation is imposed to maintain the focus of the analysis on agriculture as a domestic activity interpreted within the framework of epistolary practices and the articulation of diaspora identity. This study does not examine other aspects of the vlog, such as Keller's social life in Germany, religious practices, parenting styles, or interracial relationships that may also be featured on the channel. Thus, this study aims to explore specifically how agricultural narratives can be interpreted as cultural and political strategies in constructing empowerment as an Indonesian diaspora woman in the digital space.

Result and Discussion

Vlog as a Digital Epistolary Practice

This study finds that the Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman vlog reconfigures the epistolary tradition into a digital, audio-visual form. Through its three main characteristics, immediacy, truthfulness, and serialization, the vlog constructs a narrative structure that evokes emotional closeness, personal confession, and a sense of communicative continuity resembling traditional letter writing. The choice of language, tone of speech, and patterns of interaction between the vlogger and the audience suggest that the vlog functions not merely as visual documentation, but also as a communicative channel that fosters intimacy and social relations within the digital sphere. These findings suggest that the epistolary practice has undergone a formal expansion through visual-performative media, which in turn shapes new forms of correspondence across cultural and geographical boundaries.

A vlog can be considered a form of digital epistolary because it contains three elements similar to traditional epistolary letter writing, namely immediacy, truthfulness, and serialization (Ackermans, 2015). Immediacy in vlogs is made possible through narrative structures constructed via camera techniques. The use of camera techniques creates the impression that the vlogger is speaking directly to the audience (Aran et al., 2014). Similar to a letter addressed to a specific recipient, a vlog also establishes a personal and direct connection with its viewers. This mechanism forms an illusion of presence and emotional involvement. It signifies a shift from text to visual and from writing to performance, without abandoning the

core characteristics of epistolary as a medium of personal communication. In the context of the vlog as a new form of epistolary, immediacy refers to a sense of closeness or direct connection between the vlogger and the viewer. This is achieved through a narrative structure that is personal in nature and seemingly directed straight at the audience, thus creating the illusion of two-way communication, even though it is technically one-sided.

First, we look at Keller's video as an attempt to identify the practices of immediacy that exist in digital epistolary. In the two videos titled *Panen Sayur Kol Perdana Tahun 2024 di Kebunku* dan *Akhirnya Bisa Panen Cabe Rawit di Kebunku di Jerman*, which we will refer to hereafter as *Sayur Kol* and *Cabe Rawit*, Keller introduces her videos with a direct greeting to the audience:

"Ya halo teman-teman apa kabar kalian semua? Kembali lagi bersama saya, Kakak Ina di sini." (Keller, *Sayur Kol*: 00.00.11 – 00.00.16) (Narration 1)

"Selamat sore teman-teman, apa kabar kalian semua? Kembali lagi bersama saya, Kakak Ina di sini." (Keller, *Cabe Rawit*: 00.00.18 – 00.00.22) (Narration 2)

Keller concludes her vlogs with a warm sign-off and words of gratitude addressed to the viewers. The following are the narrations she delivers:

"Terima kasih sudah nonton... Kita ketemu lagi di next video. Saya mau masak dulu. Bye-bye!" (Keller, *Sayur Kol*: 00.08.40 – 00.08.41) (Narration 3)

"Terima kasih buat kalian yang sudah nonton video ini. Semoga kalian suka dengan videonya, kita ketemu lagi di next video, dadah!" (Keller, *Cabe Rawit*: 00.13.51 – 00.13.54) (Narration 4)

Narration 1 and Narration 2 adopt a communicative style typically used with someone familiar, almost resembling a salutation in a personal letter or a journal addressed to a specific reader. Keller communicates with her viewers in Indonesian using an informal tone that suggests her target audience is Indonesian, sharing cultural values with her. She also uses the second-person plural pronoun "kalian" and refers to herself using the nickname "Kakak Ina". These pronouns reinforce the sense of intimacy and personal tone characteristic of epistolary writing. Furthermore, the greetings and closings in Narration 3 and Narration 4 function as rituals of intimacy that create a repetitive communication pattern. These types of narration reinforce the epistolary structure within the vlog, as viewers are assumed to be regular recipients or correspondents within the personal life of the vlogger.

The second is the element of truthfulness, which we also found in Keller's vlog. The element of truthfulness or authenticity is typically associated with genres of personal writing such as journals, autobiographies, or personal letters. This element draws on the subjectivity and reflective voice of the author as the narrative center. In vlogs, truthfulness is not determined by factual objectivity, but rather by the intention to convey the vlogger's experience as seemingly authentic and transparent.

In the *Sayur Kol*, Keller conveys her personal emotions through the following narrations:

"Sebenarnya videonya mau saya buang saja... Tapi sayang karena ini video panen sayur kol pertama... Jadi saya pikir ah saya upload saja sekalian dokumentasi juga kan buat kenang-kenangan." (Keller, *Sayur Kol*: 00.00.46- 00.01.02) (Narration 5)

"Saya mohon maaf ya kalian harus menonton dengan voice-over yang tidak sinkron dengan apa yang saya ucapkan... Tapi ya itulah pokoknya saya senang sekali karena hari ini tuh saya bisa panen tiga sayur kol." (Keller, Sayur Kol: 00.06.04 – 00.06.16) (Narration 6)

"Hari ini saya mau panen saya punya cabe untuk pertama kali di depan kamera. Karena sejujurnya sebelum saya berangkat ke Belanda itu saya sudah panen cabai yang sudah merah-merah oke. Tapi kalian tahu? Entah kenapa saya tidak tahu apa yang saya pikirkan saya tidak sengaja menghapus video itu." (Keller, Cabe Rawit: 00.00.30 – 00.00.45) (Narration 7)

Truthfulness in the vlog implies a demand for authenticity that aligns with the conventions of personal journal writing. The vlogger is expected to convey their daily life honestly and without fabrication. This expectation produces a kind of public intimacy that becomes the basis of the viewer–vlogger relationship. Through the element of truthfulness, the vlog becomes a form of writing about human life, allowing personal narratives to serve as a vehicle for articulating experience and identity authentically. Narration 5 demonstrates a personal reflection and emotional decision from Keller as the creator of the vlog. She does not upload her videos merely for their content but because they hold personal meaning for her. This narration is a form of authorial confession, revealing a vulnerability in the production process of the text. This element of honesty within the vlog is a stylistic choice often found in letter or journal writing. Moreover, Narration 6 and Narration 7 seem to dissolve the distance between the content creator and the audience. Keller, as the vlogger, strengthens the impression that what she presents is honest and uncontrived. She does not attempt to conceal imperfections but rather emphasizes technical errors as part of the vlog-making process. These technical flaws, which she openly shares with the public, instead render her vlog more humanistic.

Lastly, serialization is as the last element that characterizes digital epistolary. Through the *Sayur Kol* and *Cabe Rawit* videos, Keller positions both vlogs as part of an ongoing documentation of her agricultural activities. Keller provides a narration such as:

"Hari ini saya mau panen, saya punya cabe untuk pertama kali di depan kamera..." (Keller, Cabe Rawit: 00.00.30 – 00.00.33) (Narration 8)

In addition, Keller consistently ends her videos by expressing a hopeful message to her audience about meeting again in the next video, as in:

"Terima kasih sudah nonton... Kita ketemu lagi di next video. Saya mau masak dulu. Bye-bye! (Keller, Sayur Kol: 00.08.40 – 00.08.41) (Narration 9)

"Semoga kalian suka dengan videonya. Kita ketemu lagi di next video, dadah." (Keller, Cabe Rawit: 00.13.52 – 00.13.54) (Narration 10)

The element of serialization in epistolary forms refers to a pattern of communication that unfolds gradually and continuously, much like the serial writing of letters or journals over time (Sellami & Alsaied, 2025). Serialization strengthens the emotional connection and sense of continuity between the vlogger and the audience. The regular uploading of videos creates a narrative rhythm that resembles ongoing letter correspondence. Through serialization, the vlogger can cultivate a

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sense of long-term involvement from the audience. Furthermore, the continuity inherent in vlogging can build a stronger sense of closeness over time. The cultivation of intimacy through this serialized element deepens the immediacy of the experience and accentuates the personal relationship that the vlogger constructs with their viewers. The temporal effect of serialization reinforces the sense of immediacy and truthfulness in the narrative, as the audience is invited to grow alongside a continually unfolding story. As seen in Narrative 8, the activity of harvesting chili peppers in the vlog is not a one-time recording but part of a documentary serial built to be updated, much like the page-by-page writing of a journal.

The Narration 9 and Narration 10 emphasize the structure of seriality within the vlog. The constructed element of seriality creates a sustained emotional attachment with the viewers. This reinforces the vlog's position as a serialized form of epistolary expression, where the narrative does not conclude within a single video but instead follows a pattern of continuity. This continuous pattern generates the illusion that the vlogger and their intended audience are granted space within a close relationship. It mimics the way letter writers await replies or the next encounter with their correspondents. Thus, the epistolary concept in vlogging not only highlights the technical form of delivery but also touches on the ways in which personal narratives are built, shared, and consumed through contemporary social media. The vlog becomes an articulatory space that fuses privacy and publicity; performance and intimacy; as well as continuity and fragmentation. This articulatory space affirms its position as a new form of letter writing in the digital era.

It can be implied that Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman's vlog functions as a digital correspondence space that conveys a diasporic narrative connected to a specific audience. The Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman vlog establishes its primary target audience within the Indonesian community. This can be seen from the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the main language of communication in the vlog. The choice of language demonstrates that Keller consciously positions herself within a communicative network that transcends geographical boundaries, connecting with the community from which she originates. She narrates her life in Germany not as a means of distancing herself from her cultural roots but as a way of remaining connected and sharing experiences as part of the Indonesian diasporic community.

Empowering Diasporic Woman through Domestic Agriculture

This vlog also demonstrates how domestic practices, particularly gardening and cooking, can serve as a medium for diasporic woman to negotiate cultural identity to empower herself. Keller, as a Papuan woman living in the domestic space of Europe, narrates her everyday experiences of gardening and cooking not merely as household chores, but as acts that reactivate memory, cultural values, and a sense of homeland. These findings suggest that the kitchen and garden are transformed into articulative spaces that enable the expression of diasporic identity in active and performative ways. In this context, the diasporic woman does not appear as a passive subject or one fully assimilated, but rather as an agent who redefines the meaning of home through domestic labor made visible in digital form. This

representation also reveals the interrelation between personal narratives and the dynamics of global cultural politics.

We use the vlog content titled *Panen Daun Singkong KW di Kebun Langsung Bikin Gulai*, which we will hereafter refer to as *Daun Singkong KW*, and *Panen Aneka Sayuran di Kebunku Buat Makan Siang*, which we will refer to as *Makan Siang*. Through her vlogs, Keller not only documents gardening as a part of her daily routine but also turns it into a narrative strategy that represents memories and values from her cultural roots by narrating:

“Menurut saya masih lebih nikmat tinggal di kampung gitu makanya saya bersyukur... Orang-orang tegang-tegang itu biasanya di kota-kota kita di kampung ini kayak damai, tenang, aman gitu teman-teman.” (Keller, Daun Singkong KW: 00.04.03 – 00.00.04.23) (Narration 11)



Picture 1: Trisna Keller Cooking in the Kitchen
(Source: Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman’s YouTube)

The *Makan Siang* video, Keller provides the following narration:

“Waktu kecil tinggal di Indonesia tuh saya kayak cuma pernah lihat kentang yang kuning atau yang putih itu tuh ini dapat yang lumayan besar tapi kalau yang merah kayak gini tuh biasanya cuma ubi. Yang saya lihat warnanya kayak begini (merah) ya ubi manis itu ya, kalau kentang saya kayaknya pertama kali lihat yang begini di Jerman deh. Terus yang sayur kol ungu juga saya pertama kali lihat itu di Jerman.” (Keller, Makan Siang: 00.09.48 – 00.10.11) (Narration 12)



Picture 2: Trisna Keller Harvesting Vegetables to Cook
(Source: Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman’s YouTube)

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The Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman vlog also represents a shift in the function of agricultural and domestic practices from the private sphere into a performance within the digital public. This illustrates how practices that were once considered trivial or merely part of household labor are now transformed into political narrative acts that open up spaces for negotiating diasporic identity. The vlog highlights the lived experiences of women from non-Western regions who are often marginalized in dominant discourses. In this way, the vlog plays a significant role in democratizing the representation of Indonesian diasporic women in digital spaces. Furthermore, the vlog acts as a form of symbolic resistance against Western hegemonic narratives through the performativity of diasporic women situated within Western domestic spaces.

In her performance as an Indonesian diasporic woman married to a German man and living in rural Germany, Keller presents a form of identity representation through domestic agricultural practice. Referring to Hall (1990), who posits that cultural identity is never fixed but always in a process of becoming, Keller embodies a dynamic form of cultural representation through her agricultural labor. In line with Anand (2009), who explains that diasporic identity is constantly articulated and negotiated through interactions with space, history, and power relations, we can identify those values within Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman as a narrative strategy that articulates memory, values, and cultural origin through the vlogger's storytelling.

The representation of Indonesian women through agricultural roles appears in Keller's performativity within her vlog. Historically and traditionally, Indonesia is a tropical region with agrarian culture as its primary livelihood (Abduh, 2023). Women have long held the role of both conceptualizers and executors in agricultural activity (Muhaimin et al., 2023). This role is not limited to physical spaces such as fields or gardens but has been deeply internalized through local knowledge; inherited practices; and cultural values that position women as custodians of food security and guardians of local biodiversity (Florence Yulisinta et al., 2024). Hence, women's involvement in agriculture cannot be separated from their roles as cultural agents who bridge the work of production with that of reproduction. Culturally, Indonesian women are situated as actors who actively shape agrarian landscapes through social relations, ecological knowledge, and survival strategies (Arintyas, 2024). In the vlog *Makan Siang*, Keller is shown harvesting various vegetables such as cabbage, carrots, and red potatoes that she has grown herself. Although the cooking process is not explicitly depicted through visual scenes, Keller's title narration makes it clear that the produce will be used to prepare lunch. This reveals a continuity between food production and domestic consumption.

In the vlog *Daun Singkong KW*, Keller refers to kale as "fake cassava leaves", suggesting a form of adaptation by linking a subtropical product to memories of her place of origin, Papua-Indonesia. The domestic space can be a source of strength in constructing identity (Hooks, 1990), and even serve to assert one's presence in digital space (Astagini & Sarwono, 2022). Feminine values situated in the domestic realm can become a source of empowerment and self-definition for women (Rezeanu, 2015). In this sense, we can interpret the kitchen and garden surrounding Keller's home as empowered spaces through which her

existence is affirmed. Additionally, the domestic sphere is not viewed here as a symbol of women's confinement but as a political site where agency and cultural memory can be cultivated and transmitted. In the *Daun Singkong KW* vlog, Keller is shown cooking kale into a *gulai* dish for her husband. This activity is not merely a service within a domestic relationship, but also an act of cultural remembrance being reproduced in a new environment.

Through the expression in Narration 11, Keller constructs an alternative narrative of diasporic life that is often portrayed solely from the perspective of integration into European values. Through gardening and cooking, Keller creates a personal attachment to the notion of home based on her own subjectivity, infused with political intent through her agency. Narration 12 reveals Keller's personal memory as an Indonesian, recalling that she was only familiar with yellow potatoes and sweet potatoes, and is now confronted with new varieties of vegetables in Germany. This memory underscores how agricultural practices are not merely recreational activities or household chores, but also serve as a medium for connecting the past with the present, as well as memories of tropical spaces with new experiences in subtropical ones.

The agricultural memory conveyed by Keller through her personal narrative in the vlog becomes a form of memory that mediates the experience of migration and cultural estrangement. In the context of diaspora, such a narrative serves as a mechanism for maintaining the continuity of identity amidst spatial and cultural dislocation. Keller is not merely sharing information about vegetable types; she activates cultural memory by recalling her homeland and the kinds of plants commonly found in Indonesia as a foundation for re-establishing a sense of connection to her original identity. Through routine agricultural activities, Keller is able to record a personal, politicized transformation, where domestic and agricultural experiences become instruments of cultural articulation and a reconfiguration of the meaning of home itself.

The narrations that Keller conveys demonstrate that gardening is not a neutral practice or merely a recreational hobby. In her vlog, this activity becomes part of an effort to reconstruct space and meaning regarding home and homeland within a new land or place. This concept resonates with Bell Hooks (1990) idea of *homeplace*, which posits that domestic spaces, including kitchens and gardens, serve as arenas of resistance and empowerment for women of color. The garden across from Keller's house, and the vlog as a medium for documenting it, become micro-spaces for resisting dominant narratives that portray diasporic women as passive or solely focused on integrating into Western culture.

The agricultural activities in a private and suburban German setting also illustrate how Keller identity as an Indonesian woman is not easily forgotten within cross-cultural relations. She is able to bring agrarian values from the tropics to the subtropics, from Indonesia to Germany, and literally plant them in new soil. This act is a form of diasporic expression through domestic activities that hold symbolic value. In her vlog, it is evident how Keller's agricultural labor represents a form of female agency. As such, women are not positioned as subjects rendered passive by domestic space, but rather as actors who inhabit, shape, and even imbue that space with meaning through cultural narratives grounded in their own lived experiences.

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Thus, Keller's vlog does more than merely document agricultural practices, it also records multilayered cultural narratives that are rich with political meaning.

Keller's domestic agricultural activity becomes a means of articulating a hybrid diasporic identity. As Hall (1990) explains, diasporic identity is a cultural construct shaped by history, separation, and collective memory. The gardening and cooking practices shown by Keller are acts of performativity that merge aspects of history, separation, and collective memory within a digital space, thus making them accessible to a wider public. Her representation as an Indonesian diasporic woman who gardens and cooks is not merely a domestic act, but also a symbolic assertion of her existence and cultural heritage. In this way, Keller constructs a counter-narrative in her own way within a space often dominated by European domestic narratives.

Botanical Negotiation as Postcolonial Domestic Practice

Another finding that emerges is that the gardening practices in this vlog present a new form of botanical negotiation no longer situated within a colonial framework, but instead mediated by diasporic experience. The acts of bringing, planting, and nurturing tropical seedlings in a subtropical environment are not carried out as a scientific exploration project, but rather as deeply personal gestures imbued with ecological and historical meaning. These findings suggest that Keller enacts a micro-level ecological relationship rooted in household life and affective bonds. Through this practice, the diasporic body and the homeland are brought back into contact through the cultivation of plants. This process signals a shift from the production of botanical knowledge once dominated by colonial institutions to a cultural preservation practice grounded in the lived experiences of migrants. In other words, botanical negotiation in the domestic sphere functions as a meeting point of knowledge, identity, and symbolic resistance to global ecological hegemony.

In *Sayur Kol*, Keller expresses her gratitude for having a relatively spacious plot of land in Germany, which allows her to grow a variety of vegetables, including those native to Indonesia. She explicitly states this through the following narration:

"...Termasuk sayuran Indonesia juga bibit-bibit yang kita bawa dari Indonesia dan saya bisa menikmati semuanya di Jerman... Saya punya kangkung, bayam, buncis, kacang panjang, terong, cabe, tomat." (Keller, Sayur Kol: 00:06:28–00:06:47) (Narration 13)

In *Cabe Rawit*, Keller once again emphasizes the importance of tropical seedlings brought to Germany through the following narration:

"Astaga ini nyata kah... Ini bibit dari Indonesia... Ini bibitnya waktu Anel datang ke Jerman pertama kali dia bawakan." (Keller, Cabe Rawit: 00:07:20–00:07:35) (Narration 14)

The overall result of this research demonstrates that the vlog *Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman* serves as an articulative space for the experience of Indonesian female diaspora by integrating personal, domestic, and ecological narratives within the digital realm. The vlog reconfigures the epistolary form through audiovisual media by creating emotional proximity, narrative authenticity, and serialized

interaction similar to traditional letter writing. At the same time, Keller's portrayal of gardening and cooking highlights how domestic space becomes a site of identity performance, where cultural memory, agrarian values, and female agency are enacted. These practices not only maintain cultural ties to the homeland but also construct counter-narratives against dominant diaspora discourses centered on Western integration. Furthermore, the cultivation of tropical seeds in a temperate zone reflects a postcolonial botanical negotiation that is symbolic and personal, shifting from colonial scientific agendas to diasporic acts of ecological memory. Through these ecological and affective relations, the vlog positions the domestic sphere as a medium for rearticulating notions of home, identity, and cultural continuity by female diaspora subjects from the global South.

Furthermore, within the historical development of botany, the practice of transferring and planting flora from one geographic region to another is by no means new. During the colonial era, botanical negotiations were carried out through mechanisms of scientific expeditions and colonial political interventions backed by imperial powers (Wardhani, 2023). One of the key figures in botanical history in the Dutch East Indies was Friedrich Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn (Angerler, 2012). Junghuhn was a German-born botanist and naturalist who held Dutch citizenship and worked for the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies. He was known not only as a botanist but also as a colonial agent who extended Dutch influence in Java through scientific knowledge (Setiawan & Sabana, 2015). He became a colonial agent in agricultural affairs, a botanist who wielded considerable influence within governmental structures, also often referred to as a floracrat figure.

Junghuhn conducted botanical negotiations in the form of agrarian missions driven by the political interests of the Dutch East Indies as part of a large-scale colonial agrarian project. One of Junghuhn's expeditions involved conducting massive ecological experiments for the planting of quinine (*Cinchona sp.*) to treat malaria (Wasis & Sandra, 2020). This plant was imported from South America and cultivated in the highlands of Java due to its supposedly suitable climate (Wasis & Sandra, 2020). Junghuhn had to carry out a series of experiments involving soil types, elevation, humidity, and weather, while also taking into account local agricultural practices and issues related to indigenous labor. This agrarian project became one of the causes of the emergence of forced labor systems in the Dutch East Indies (Winarni et al., 2022). Colonial agricultural practices turned the geographic space of Java into a site for the domestication of various non-native flora. Such domestication involved specific configurations and mechanisms that allowed it to function within the floracrat order of the Dutch East Indies. The botanical negotiation mechanisms carried out by Junghuhn were both anthropocentric and ecological in nature. The anthropocentric aspect focused on command and power relations between the colonial government and local communities, while the ecological aspect dealt with the challenges faced by transplanted plants as they moved from one bioregion to another. Aside from quinine, similar practices in the Dutch East Indies during colonial times were applied to other tropical commodities such as tea, coffee, sugarcane, and cloves (Agustono & Nasution, 2018; Clarence-Smith, 2014; Firdaus et al., 2024; Siregar, 2024). This entire process reveals that botanical negotiation was a project that

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intertwined Western scientific knowledge, economic strategies, and political structures of domination within the colonial order.

In the postcolonial of today's digital era, botanical negotiation has undergone a transformation in both meaning and form. What was once a colonial and institutional process has now become more personal and rooted in the lived experiences of the diaspora. Through her YouTube vlog, Keller engages in what might be called a domestic-digital botanical negotiation. Keller participates in the process of bringing seeds from Indonesia and cultivating them in Germany. This shift in the meaning and form of botanical negotiation marks a new paradigm, from the systematic exploitation of plants for colonial power and commercial gain to a more personal and performative experiment mediated by social media.

Through her vlog, Keller is able to demonstrate how the cultivation of tropical plants in a subtropical environment unfolds. The experience of cultivating plants from different bioregions no longer requires grand expeditions or colonial state interventions. Instead, it can be carried out privately as part of domestic activity, on a small scale but rich with cultural significance because it is mediated through the diasporic experience.

The mechanism of botanical negotiation practiced by Keller also has two main dimensions: anthropocentric and ecological. In its anthropocentric dimension, we can see the relationship between Keller and her audience, who are mostly from Indonesia. Keller frequently shows her connections to her siblings in Indonesia through the exchange of plant seeds. On the other hand, the relationship between Keller and her plants reflects an ecological dimension. Essentially, Keller conducts small-scale cultivation experiments, observing plant growth, handling cold weather, and creating near-tropical conditions in a greenhouse setting.

Through this mechanism, Keller indirectly reclaims the domestic space as a site of knowledge production and cultural preservation. The plants she grows are not merely objects of consumption, but symbols of connection across space and time between Indonesia and Germany. Therefore, Keller's agricultural vlog becomes an example of how botanical practices have entered postcolonial discourse today, precisely because they are carried out by subjects historically marginalized by the colonial system, specifically, women, members of the diaspora, and individuals from eastern Indonesia. In this narrative, it is implied that Keller is not merely transplanting seeds but also carrying cultural and symbolic values from her homeland into foreign soil. This represents a new ecological form of botanical negotiation, in which plants do more than survive, they become conduits of memory tied to a diaspora's identity.

Narration 14 reinforces the anthropocentric aspect, though no longer taking place between institutions and botanical scientists, but rather between a diasporic woman and her social network—specifically, Anel as the carrier of seeds. This process requires no laboratory or state funding, but becomes possible through kinship networks. When Keller states that the seeds were brought from Indonesia, there is an implied act of cultural translocation. Keller is not merely transporting plants; she is carrying the memories and values attached to them. This process reveals how plants become extensions of the diasporic body, continually longing for and re-creating a sense of home in a new place. These plants not only grow in

subtropical soil; they flourish as markers of identity, history, and collective memory.

Moreover, the botanical negotiation can be seen as a form of micro-scale ecological negotiation, in which a woman manifests an implicit form of resistance against dominant agricultural and consumption norms in Europe. Amidst the global homogenization of food products, Keller's activities reflect an effort to preserve biodiversity and cultural specificity, much of which originates from her homeland. This act represents an alternative claim over the domestic space as an autonomous ecological site, one in which a diasporic woman can forge new forms of relation between her place of origin and her current residence. More broadly, Keller's cultivation practice embraces a leisure-based and small-scale experimental model, shifting the narrative away from colonial-style mass production paradigms.

Her cultivation of plants brought from Indonesia serves both as a recreational activity and a means to negotiate her identity as an Indonesian woman now living in the subtropical West. This botanical negotiation may be understood as a micro-resistance to the colonial epistemic structure that historically positioned tropical agricultural knowledge as a Western research object. Through social media, Keller is able to reverse this positionality, bringing tropical planting practices into the Western world as part of her lived experience. This practice also illustrates how digital media technologies like YouTube can serve as egalitarian platforms for archiving and circulating transnational ecological and cultural exchanges.

Conclusion

This research shows that the Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman's vlogs are a form of digital epistolary that archives and shares the experiences of the diaspora in audio-visual format with intimate narration. By using Indonesian as the primary language of communication, this vlog is consciously aimed at building connections with the Indonesian community. This makes the vlog a form of transnational correspondence that not only conveys personal stories but also maintains a symbolic relationship between Keller as a diaspora individual and her community of origin. The vlog becomes an open space that negotiates the existence of the diaspora in an affective and political manner.

More profoundly, the domestic agricultural practices portrayed in Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman reveal that the domestic sphere is far from apolitical and does not render women as passive subjects. On the contrary, Keller's activities of gardening and cooking constitute hybrid cultural practices imbued with layered meanings. In the context of diaspora, domestic labor becomes a representation of cultural identity shaped through memory. Through her vlog, Keller reveals how the Indonesian female body continues to serve as a site to produce meaning and value. Keller is still able to represent her identity through the performances she enacts on social media, even while being physically distant from her homeland. The kitchen and the garden are not merely parts of the house; they become spaces of resistance, preservation, and rearticulation of culture.

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Keller's vlog can also be read as a form of micro-resistance to the colonial legacy embedded in the history of agriculture through the concept of botanical negotiation. During the colonial era, tropical plants were objects of exploration and commodification by colonial powers through scientific expeditions, such as those conducted by botanists like Junghuhn. However, in Keller's vlog, the act of planting tropical seeds in subtropical soil is carried out at a domestic and recreational scale. The diasporic woman becomes the central agent who transplants cultural memory through the home garden as a practice of positional reversal. YouTube, as a digital platform, amplifies this negotiation by rendering it a public practice visible across national boundaries, showing that today's technologies can serve as alternative media for ecological and cultural exchange on egalitarian terms. In this way, Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman is not merely a documentation of daily life, but a cultural project carrying political, ecological, and diasporic narratives of Indonesian womanhood in contemporary digital space.

Through social media, the Indonesian diaspora is no longer merely an object of geographic dislocation, Keller becomes an active cultural agent in negotiating her identity. Domestic spaces, once regarded as private and apolitical, are reconfigured as arenas for transnational and performative meaning-making, as demonstrated in the Keluarga Bahagia di Jerman vlog. Keller shows how the diasporic body becomes a meeting point between memory, culture, and technology, which can empower her as a woman and a diaspora. This reveals that in the digital era, the Indonesian diaspora is able to use social media not merely as a tool for documentation, but as an open letter that expresses cultural practice as a form of conscious choice in navigating negotiation and empowerment across cultural and geographic boundaries.

From this research, we hope that there will be new research that explores how diasporic communities utilize digital platforms not only to maintain cultural connections but also to reshape the meaning of domesticity in transnational settings. Comparative studies between different female-led diaspora vlogs, particularly from various postcolonial contexts, could reveal how domestic practices become tools of cultural survival and political articulation. Furthermore, examining audience reception and interaction in the comment sections of such vlogs would enrich our understanding of how digital epistolary fosters collective memory, emotional solidarity, and gendered diasporic networks. Lastly, interdisciplinary approaches that combine digital media studies, postcolonial concept, and ecofeminism may further deepen the analysis of how media technology, gender, and ecology intersect in the everyday and cultural life of diasporic women.

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