

CHAPTER VIII

Radio komunitas and the imagination of community

In Indonesia, community radio (*radio komunitas*) developed as a 'Third Way' (Howell and Pearce 2001:65-8) alternative to government and commercial radio.¹ After an intense struggle, community radio activists and practitioners found legal acceptance of their activities in Indonesia's Broadcasting Law of 2002.² An important goal of community radio in Indonesia and elsewhere is to enhance people's self-awareness and their sense of belonging to a community.

The capability to create a sense of community is not the exclusive property of community radio and other 'community' media. Every type of medium, including government and commercial media, creates communal links between people through the process of communication. Nevertheless, by distinguishing itself from other media that do not explicitly designate the aspect of community, community radio embodies specific visions of communications and society, thereby confirming Benedict Anderson's (1991:6) phrase that 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined'.

Community radio is known as radio 'for, about and by the people', which indicates that the listeners bear responsibility for ownership, management and production (Fraser and Estrada 2001:6; Gazali 2002e:74). In that sense, community radio goes one step further than conventional media institutions in resisting the possible refeudalization of society by the government or the unbridled promotion of consumerism by commercial ventures. The scope of community stations is small though, usually restricted to a village or one or several neighbourhoods in a town or city. This means that community radio cannot claim to represent society 'as a whole' and may serve and be domi-

¹ This chapter is partly based on my article 'Radio komunitas di Indonesia; "new Brechtian theater" di era Reformasi?' (Jurriëns 2003).

² The first Indonesian Broadcasting Law of 1997 only included governmental and commercial broadcasting organizations.

nated by the specific interests of a local community or part thereof. On the other hand, community radio has the potential to provide a voice for people and special interest groups that have been excluded from the mainstream media.

This chapter will discuss two types of Indonesian community radio: one based on socio-geographical principles, and the other representing the interests of tertiary education students. I will compare the way in which these two forms of community radio create communal feelings with Walter Benjamin's theory of the mass media and Bertolt Brecht's ideas on theatre and radio. Benjamin and Brecht were linked to the Frankfurter Schule of which Habermas is considered to be a late representative, and have influenced the ideas and practices of Indonesian community radio practitioners both directly and indirectly.

Accessibility, participation, self-awareness

Community radio developed against the specific historical and cultural backgrounds of different countries. Especially in many former European colonies in Africa and Asia, including Indonesia, it was difficult for people to establish community stations, as they were confronted with the colonial legacy of broadcasting systems that did not leave much room for activities outside of government control (Fraser and Estrada 2001:6-7).

The roots of the concept can be traced back to the activities of groups of miners in Bolivia and Colombia during the late 1940s, which used small-scale radio in order to unite themselves and strive for improvement of their working conditions. In Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, illegal radio stations that fought governmental broadcasting monopolies developed the current notion of 'radio for, about and by the people'. In Africa, community radio was introduced as a medium for democracy after the fall of the South African Apartheid regime. In Asia, international donor organizations such as UNESCO and, to a lesser extent, national broadcasting institutions have been involved in the promotion of community radio (Fraser and Estrada 2001:6).

According to the 2001 UNESCO *Community radio handbook*, community radio attempts to 'turn the audience into protagonists, by involving them in every aspect of management and programme production, and by providing them with programmes that help them with the development and social progress of their community' (Fraser and Estrada 2001:15). I will take this definition as a starting point, as UNESCO had great impact on the development of community radio in Indonesia. Since 2001, the Indonesian translation of the handbook (*Buku panduan radio komunitas*) has been presented at seminars and been used by local radio practitioners.

The central themes of UNESCO's concept of community radio are accessibility and participation. 'Accessibility' here means that all community members should have equal opportunity to receive broadcasts, while 'participation' implies that every listener should have the chance to be actively involved in management and production. The community as a whole bears responsibility for the ownership, management and funding of their radio station. The community is also supposed to safeguard the editorial independence and credibility of the station, and represent the diverse interests of different sections in society, including minorities and marginal groups (Fraser and Estrada 2001:16-7).

According to UNESCO, the main functions of community radio are to: 1. Represent and support local culture and identity, 2. Create on-air debate and opinion, 3. Offer a variety of programmes, 4. Support democracy and open dialogue, 5. Stimulate development and social change, 6. Promote civil society, 7. Represent the idea of good governance, 8. Stimulate civil participation through information provision and innovation, 9. Provide the voiceless with a voice, 10. Function as a community telephone service, 11. Contribute to the diversity of ownership in broadcasting, and 12. Train and educate new broadcasters (Fraser and Estrada 2001:18-22).

UNESCO's paradigm on community radio establishes specific links between communications and community-building. It emphasizes that communication is an essential tool for people to participate in the development of their society. Community radio stimulates active participation of community members by providing them with forums for debate, analysis and the exchange of ideas and opinions. Such forums can generate communal points of view and result in collective action. UNESCO also points out that development 'cannot function when it is based on individual perceptions. What is needed is a collective perception of the local reality and thoughts about choices to improve it' (Fraser and Estrada 2001:19-20).

This means that this type of radio is supposed to create a sense of community not just because it engages people in collective communication – as would be the case in any type of mass media – but because it makes people aware of themselves as members of a social network. This awareness is also created in interactive programmes produced by commercial stations, such as Suara Surabaya's 'Kelana kota', Jakarta News FM's 'Features sang guru' or Global FM's 'Global terkini'. However, in community radio the opportunities for nurturing media awareness and Bakhtinian ideological becoming are extended beyond media interactivity in a purely discursive sense, as listeners are also offered a direct say in matters related to media ownership and management.

Aura and the everyday

In order to further analyse the idea and practice of community radio in Indonesia and elsewhere, I will use Richard Middleton's (1990) analysis of three modes of mass-mediated culture: the auratic, the everyday and the critical. According to Middleton (1990:98, 250), the 'auratic mode' stimulates the audience's imaginary identification with the media presentation and representation it is confronted with, and confirms its sense of identity, totality and continuity. The 'everyday mode' creates a convivial atmosphere, stimulates audience participation, and establishes links between the audience and society at large. The 'critical mode' fractures the audience's sense of totality and continuity, and arouses feelings of protest through shock-effects and internal contradictions in the media presentation and representation.

Although Middleton uses these three modes specifically to analyse the social role of pop music, his model can be extended to the analysis of other media, including community radio. Community radio, based on the ideas of participation and self-awareness, reflects Middleton's categories of the everyday and the critical, and undermines the auratic. This is not to deny the strength of the auratic mode in creating community, but to confirm that community radio creates communal feelings in a different way than aura-oriented media. I will focus on a category of 'auratic' media, so-called media events, in order to illustrate their difference with community radio. At the same time, I will argue that community radio does, paradoxically, produce 'nostalgia for aura'.

According to Dayan and Katz' (1992:4), media events include television broadcasts of such monumental events as the funeral of President Kennedy, the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, the Watergate hearings, the revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the Olympic Games. Media events are interruptions of routine, transmitted live, organized outside the media, pre-planned, and presented with reverence and ceremony. They are proclaimed historic, applaud the voluntary action of great personalities, celebrate reconciliation, electrify very large audiences and institute a norm of viewing by which audiences actively celebrate the event. In this way, media events 'integrate societies in a collective heartbeat and evoke a renewal of loyalty to the society and its legitimate authority' (Dayan and Katz 1992:5-9).

Contrary to community radio, media events achieve social integration primarily through their ceremonial or auratic character. Due to the pioneering work of Walter Benjamin, 'aura' has obtained special meaning in the context of the mass media. In his work *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* ('The work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility'), Benjamin (1977:11-3, 15) argues that the work of art used to derive its aura, or cult value, and authority from its authenticity and uniqueness. Authenticity

implied the work of art's history and original entrenchment in ritual tradition. Uniqueness referred to the work of art being distant from and inaccessible to the audience in contemporary society (Benjamin 1977:12).

The possibility of technical reproduction deprived the work of art of its aura, as it replaced authenticity and uniqueness with instantaneousness and seriality (Benjamin 1977:15-6). Reproduction also created immediacy by disentangling the work of art from its original environment and relocating it in the world of the recipient. Figuratively, it moved the work of art from the ritual realm of tradition to the secular realm of politics (Benjamin 1977:13, 18). Although Benjamin deplored the work of art's loss of aura, at the same time he was positive about its increased accessibility (Middleton 1990:64).

While the contextual circumstances in which television or other mass media are received differ from the contextual circumstances of the live events that are represented, this does not mean that the mass media would not be able to produce their own type of ceremoniality. For instance, people often dress up, prepare special food and invite friends in anticipation of watching a media event on television (Dayan and Katz 1992:9, 13), thereby turning the living room or any other location where the event is watched into a ceremonial place with the auratic features of authenticity and uniqueness. Thus the question of whether media events are manifestations of 'true' or 'false' aura (Middleton 1990:66) should be subordinated to the recognition of the specific performative qualities of the events (Auslander 1999:44). As Dayan and Katz (1992:78) rightly argue

the televising of public occasions must meet the challenge not only of representing the event, but of offering the viewer a functional equivalent of the festive experience. By superimposing its own performance on the performance as organized, by displaying its reactions to the reaction of the spectators, by proposing to compensate viewers for the direct participation of which they are deprived, television becomes the primary performer in the enactment of public ceremonies. Such performances by television must not be considered mere 'alterations' or 'additions' to the original. Rather, they should be perceived as qualitative transformations of the very nature of public events. (Dayan and Katz 1992:78.)

Dayan and Katz (1992:19) mention several factors that prevent media events from becoming mere tools for political manipulation and propaganda. They argue that broadcasters, as long as they are not directly controlled by the establishment, can refuse a government proposal to mount an event. The event will not succeed either if the audience shows its disapproval. Moreover, people normally view the media event in a context – at home, with friends – that is unlikely to translate aroused emotion directly into political action. Audiences also produce oppositional readings of media events, thereby reducing the manipulative potential of these events.

Nevertheless, the festive character of media events, as well as its entrenchment in the world of politics, could indeed evoke unpleasant associations with the mass rallies of fascism or the staged events of communist regimes, and lead to a Benjaminian fear of 'the aestheticization of politics' (1977:42) or a Habermasian fear of the refeudalization of the public sphere. Partly subscribing to these fears, I believe that media expressions with a strong auratic appeal such as media events, ask for a stricter check on hegemonic abuse than media expressions dominated by the everyday or critical modes, such as the majority of programmes on Indonesian community radio.

Community radio in Central Java

As mentioned before, in general two types of community radio can be found in Indonesia: community radio based on socio-geographical principles and campus radio. 'Socio-geographical' community radio is for, about and by people whose mutual social relationships are determined by the fact that they live in the same geographical or administrative area or share the same professional background. The managers, producers and target audiences of campus radio are university students or students from other tertiary educational institutions. In spite of their limited cover areas and small communities, both types of community radio – as concepts as well as practices – are not strictly local affairs, as they have precedents in other countries and entertain links with national and international organizations. For instance, many Indonesian community stations receive educational or financial support from international organizations such as UNESCO and The Ford Foundation.³

I will focus on community radio in Central Java, the region with the highest proliferation of community stations in Indonesia. In Central Java, socio-geographical community stations and campus stations each stress different aspects of community radio. Socio-geographical community stations conceive radio primarily as a medium to improve local society and focus on accessibility to and participation of the listeners. They use cheap and simple communication technologies and broadcast messages that can be easily understood by everyone in the community. During broadcasts, hosts and listeners share experiences about their work, family, and other aspects of

³ UNESCO organized an influential seminar on community radio in Jakarta and Yogyakarta in September 2001 and, in the same period, also distributed the earlier mentioned handbook on community radio (Fraser and Estrada 2001) to Indonesian radio practitioners nationwide. Since 2000, The Ford Foundation has financially supported community radio projects of the Indonesian NGO Combine Resource Institution (CRI).

See <http://www.combine.or.id/projects.html> (accessed 2-8-2002).

daily life. In terms of Benjamin and Middleton, this type of community radio has a 'low' auratic mode and a 'high' everyday mode. Campus stations in Central Java, particularly Yogyakarta, also discuss daily life, that is, the life of students. The students self-consciously present their stations as alternatives to commercial radio and public radio and actively explore the idea of community radio and its position in Indonesian media history. I argue that their interests also include 'nostalgia for aura' and a romanticizing of campus life.

Two socio-geographical community stations that were represented during the UNESCO community radio seminar in Yogyakarta, September 2001, were *Angkringan* ('The Food-Vendor's Place', a food stall where people come to eat and talk with each other) and *Suara Petani Klaten* ('The Voice of the Farmers from Klaten'). *Angkringan* was founded in 2000 by the inhabitants of the *Timbulharjo* village. Before they founded the radio station, the *Timbulharjo* people already had a community magazine, also called *Angkringan*. The community used the magazine and the radio station not only to have easier access to information, but also to represent, organize and mobilize itself. According to the people involved, the new communication media helped the community to reintegrate and have stricter control over the policies and activities of the village government (Akhmad Nasir 2001:1-2).

The radio station did not replace the magazine, but was supposed to compensate for some of its disadvantages. The two main disadvantages were that people had to spend money in order to purchase the magazine, and be literate in order to understand it. The *Angkringan* radio programmes, on the other hand, were on air for free, had an oral character and could report about events and respond to people's reactions more frequently and efficiently than the print medium (Akhmad Nasir 2001:2-3). In other words, the radio station provided the inhabitants of *Timbulharjo* with broader access to information and enabled them to participate actively in radio management and programme production. According to the *Angkringan* people, this type of participation enhanced the villagers' feeling of togetherness and sense of community.

Radio *Angkringan* broadcasts daily from 6 p.m. until midnight. This evening schedule enables farmers, students and others to listen and contribute to programmes after returning home from their daily activities. Programmes include *campursari* and *dangdut* popular music,⁴ news and talk shows. The news programmes contain information from the *Angkringan* magazine, local newspapers, the Internet, television and other radio stations. The radio station covers its operational costs by broadcasting commercials for local products and selling coupons for requesting songs and sending on-air greetings.

⁴ Both genres are very popular in Central Java and often used in contemporary *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) performances, among others, see J. Mrázek 1999:46-70.

kombinasi

komunitas membangun jaringan informasi

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edisi

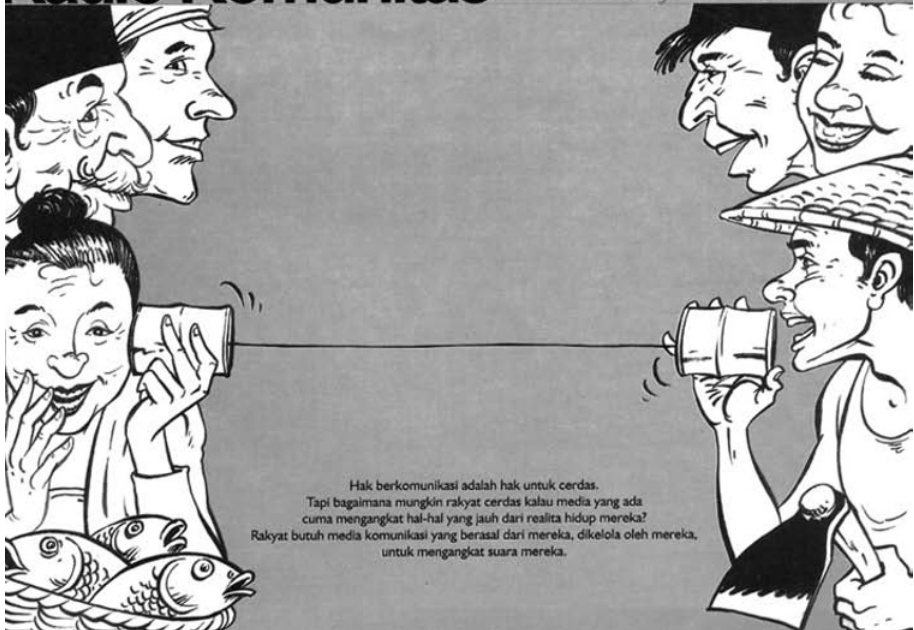
/ Mei 2002

>> Radio Abilawa : Menengahi Konflik Lewat Radio

>> Kiat menangkal SWEEPING

>> Balada Air dari Kalibaru

Radio Komunitas Bikin Rakyat Jadi Cerdas



A Combine Resource Institution journal (May 2002) promoting two-way communication and the slogan 'Community radio makes the people become clever'
(Radio komunitas bikin rakyat jadi cerdas)

In line with the predicament of community radio, Angkringan makes use of cheap and simple production and broadcasting equipment. The radio station's equipment includes a computer, tape recorder, antenna and microphone. Part of this equipment was borrowed from individual households in Timbulharjo. With money from ISAI, Radio Angkringan could replace its initial 15-watt transmitter with a 20-watt transmitter with a reach of four to five kilometers (Akhmad Nasir 2001:3-5).

Suara Petani Klaten was founded with the help of the local NGOs Insist and Combine Resource Institution (CRI) in the village of Klaten, early 2001. Like the people from Timbulharjo, the Klaten community first used a magazine and later a radio station for self-expression and self-representation. Unlike Angkringan, Suara Petani Klaten focuses exclusively on farmers.

Antonius M. Indrianto, one of the pioneers of Suara Petani Klaten, uses the slogan 'Sekali di udara, lebih banyak di lapangan!' ('On the air once, in the field more often!') in his writings and other activities related to the radio station.⁵ This slogan means that people need to be much 'in the field' and have in-depth knowledge of their village in order to be able to produce programmes capable of representing and mobilizing their fellow community members. Suara Petani Klaten broadcasts *campur sari* music, local art performances and information about farming, among others. Similar to Angkringan, the radio station covers its operational costs by selling coupons for requesting songs or sending on-air greetings. The listeners can also write comments and suggestions on these coupons, which function as indices of the radio station's popularity and viability (Antonius M. Indrianto 2001).

Campus radio in Yogyakarta

Campus radio focuses on students at universities and other educational institutions, although it may also involve people from the wider community. Similar to socio-geographical community radio, campus radio uses radio as a medium for social improvement. However, while the former's main concern is serving the public cause, the latter often also provides reflection upon radio's position in media theory and history, and its potential for Brechtian 'refunctioning' and 'alienation'.

The campus stations in Yogyakarta are all involved in Forum Radio Kampus Indonesia (FORAKI, Indonesian Campus Radio Forum), a communication network for campus radio. During regular meetings and e-mail dis-

⁵ This is a parody on Radio Republik Indonesia's (RRI) patriotic slogan: 'Sekali di udara, tetap di udara!' ('Once on the air, on the air forever!'), which traces RRI's origins back to the important role radio played in Indonesia's struggle for independence.

cussions, the forum members deal with topics related to community radio in general and campus radio in particular. They try to find answers to problems ranging from enhancing broadcasting skills to obtaining official frequencies.

The last problem in particular has captured the attention of community radio practitioners. Radio stations only have a right to a permanent spot on the air when they have a legal status. However, it is almost impossible for community stations to find the money to register as a legal institution, unless they decide to become commercial. Some activists have argued that one frequency in the Indonesian radio spectrum should be reserved specifically for community radio. As they have a limited reach and do not easily interfere with each other's broadcasting area, community stations could use this frequency jointly (Akhmad Nasir 2001:6).

Swaragama is a campus station that decided to engage in commercial activities in order to obtain an official broadcasting license. Swaragama, an abbreviation for Swara Gadjah Mada ('The Voice of Gadjah Mada'), is the student's radio of the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Indonesia. Swaragama began its production and broadcasting activities in September 1999. Although it received official commercial status in February 2000, it has continued to present itself as a 'public' alternative to both government and profit-oriented radio. In order to attract an audience of educated youth, the radio station fosters an image of rebellion, solidarity and alternative organization, which is presented as the very traits of community radio.

It appears that two past radio categories in Indonesia, that is government radio and commercial broadcast radio, are still insufficient in fulfilling all the hopes and idealism of the public. This has been proven by the academic civil community movement and 'guerrilla' struggling for the presence of a third form of radio. The fact that radio clubs are often confronted with ups and downs because of limited resources, or because of the thickness of the bureaucratic wall, has actually enhanced their militancy in organizing their movement. Some people define this alternative category as social radio, campus radio, community radio, et cetera. Radio Swara Gadjah Mada is back again with its identity as 'campus-based radio', making use of the current corridor for developing a vision about radio that is based on the idealistic principles of education and democratization. (Swara Gadjah Mada 2001.)

Swaragama's anti-establishment messages – reflected in the use of words such as *pergerakan* ('movement'), *guerrilla* and *militansi* ('militancy') – seem to support a carefully constructed commercial image and to represent nostalgia for student activism rather than real struggle or ideals. Nevertheless, the quote also shows Swaragama's awareness of the character and possibilities of the medium of radio – including its potential for Brechtian refunctioning, as I will explain later – and the role and position of community radio in the

contemporary Indonesian media scene as well as Indonesian society at large. Community radio's guerrilla, as envisioned by Swaragama, also embodies a new type of patriotism, which is realized on a local grass-roots level, inspired by international examples, and partly meant to serve the national cause.

The Swara Gadjah Mada brochure (2001) mentions the following four traits of campus radio: 1. It is based on campus, 2. It is managed by students and staff, 3. Its target audience is students and staff, and 4. Its programmes and broadcasting style represent the ideas and activities of the campus community. The informational and educational programmes provided by campus radio are supposed to constitute an alternative to the entertainment of commercial radio and the government messages of state radio. According to the brochure, Indonesian campus radio constitutes a new form of public radio, which contributes to and is a product of social developments such as Reformasi, regional autonomy and the improvement of the Indonesian education system.

Swaragama's crew consists of current and former students of the Gadjah Mada University and some other Yogyakarta universities. The radio station received funding for equipment from Gadjah Mada University, while it covers its operational costs by selling air time to advertisers. Swaragama also organizes off-air activities, such as music concerts and basketball games.

The station has daily broadcasts from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Its programmes focus on topics such as education, music, politics, religion and student life. Examples are 'Kampus kita' ('Our campus', about the life at Yogyakarta universities), 'Parwi' (an abbreviation for Parliament watch Indonesia, about local politics in Yogyakarta and Central Java), 'Mutiara iman' ('The pearls of faith', about Islam), 'Warung agape' ('Food stall for God's love', about Christianity), 'Indo prima' ('Indonesia first-class', containing entertainment), 'Jogyakarya' ('Yogya works', promoting music bands from Yogyakarta), 'Bahana persada' ('The sound of the homeland', about Indonesian music), 'Evening drive' (containing Western music), 'Hits of yesterday' (containing so-called 'oldies'), 'Alternasound' (containing alternative music) and 'Smaradahana' ('The fire of [the God of] love',⁶ containing Western and Indonesian love songs).

Both on and off air, Swaragama pays much attention to pop music. This puts Swaragama's anti-establishment messages into a different perspective and confirms that the station is very similar to regular commercial radio in terms of organizational structure and programme content. Two examples of Yogyakarta campus stations that have not applied for commercial status are Saraswati and Masdha. Although their non-commercial status has caused

⁶ This is the name of an Old Javanese *kakawin* (poem) and also another name for the Javanese metre Asmarandana.

them serious financial and organizational problems, it has also provided them with a more genuine community character.

Saraswati is the campus station of Yogyakarta's arts academy Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI, Indonesian Institute of Arts). It was founded in 1998 and named after ISI's patroness Saraswati, Hindu goddess of wisdom and literacy. The station has daily broadcasts from 4 to 12 p.m., including drama, music (jazz, rock, classical music), discussions on music and ethnomusicology, art courses, discussions of art works by ISI students, an art events calendar, tips for students living at boarding-houses, information about different Indonesian ethnic groups, and religion.⁷

The Saraswati crew and listeners consist of ISI students and people living in the campus neighbourhood. The listeners and the ISI directorate provide the station with funding. The students who work at Saraswati follow broadcasting courses at the communications departments of Yogyakarta universities and also receive in-house training from the AJI Yogyakarta branch. Other inspiration sources for programme production are community radio in the Philippines and the Internet radio of the University of California, Los Angeles.⁸

One of Saraswati's ideals is to develop art and stimulate creativity and critical thinking. According to Dani, one of the crew members, commercial radio turns people into consumers, hedonists and passive followers, while government or public radio only provides superficial news and information.⁹ He believes there is a need for information on art and culture in Indonesia, as these fields were obliterated during the New Order. In Middleton's terms, Saraswati aims to develop programmes with a high 'critical' mode, and to contribute to alternative media structures and information flows in Indonesia.

Masdha is the campus station of the catholic Sanata Dharma University. It had broadcasts for three years during the early 1990s, but was forced to stop its activities due to license requirements and government criticism on some of its programme content. In 1998, immediately after the fall of Suharto, the station was on air again.

Masdha receives funding from the Sanata Dharma directorate and training, broadcasting facilities and programme material from national and international NGOs and media organizations. The crew follows training courses organized by KBR 68H, Internews Indonesia, BBC Indonesia, AJI Yogyakarta, RRI Yogyakarta and Unisi, amongst others. For Masdha as well as other campus stations, it is difficult to maintain continuity in production and broadcasting, as their crews normally change with every new generation of students.¹⁰

⁷ Dani, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 29-8-2001.

⁸ Dani, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 29-8-2001.

⁹ Dani, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 29-8-2001.

¹⁰ Yuga, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 3-9-2001.

Masdha has daily broadcasts from 5 until 2 a.m. (21 hours). Its programmes contain music, news, education and religion. News and education programmes are relayed from Internews Indonesia, KBR 68H and Radio Nederland, and religious programmes from Christian radio stations such as Santec (Germany), Veritas (Philippines) and Radio Vatican (Vatican City). Masdha attempts to treat young people as 'active subjects' rather than 'passive objects' by making information accessible to them and encouraging their participation in media communications and other social activities. The station deliberately presents its programmes in a non-formal language that can be easily understood by youth, and also regularly organizes broadcasting courses for high-school students.¹¹

Grassroots theatre, Brecht; Umfunktionierung and Verfremdung

Contemporary Indonesian community stations such as Angkringan, Suara Petani Klaten, Saraswati and Masdha can be seen as the legal successors of the small-scale *radio liar* (literally: 'wild radio') or unlicensed private radio stations of the early New Order period (Sen 2003:582; Lindsay 1997:111-2). *Radio liar* included stations run by the 1966 student movement 'that challenged the official news on RRI and also broadcast Western popular music that had been discouraged nationally and banned from RRI broadcasts during the Old Order' (Lindsay 1997:112). There are also continuities and similarities between the community radio since the late 1990s and the so-called 'grassroots' theatre of the 1970s and 1980s. The theatre and radio initiatives have involved many of the same actors, and both been partly modelled on the People Power-movement in the Philippines and Bertolt Brecht's ideas on theatre and radio.

While initially using Brecht's ideas intuitively as a framework for understanding Indonesian community radio (Jurriëns 2003), it was after reading Michael Bodden's (1993) work on grassroots theatre in Indonesia and the Philippines that I realized that there are solid links between radio and theatre, and between Brecht and Indonesia. One of the Indonesian theatre groups discussed by Bodden is Arena, which was founded in 1964 and became affiliated to the Centre for the Production of Educational Catechism Media, Yogyakarta, in 1971. Through workshops, books and personal correspondence, Arena was directly influenced by Philippine grassroots theatre, the revolutionary Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, the Canadian cultural activist Ross Kidd and the Brazilian theatre activist and playwright Augusto Boal. Boal's own ideas were partly based on and complementary to Brecht's vision

¹¹ Yuga, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 3-9-2001.

on theatre and society (Bodden 1993:279-80, 308-9). Inspired by these different sources, Arena developed its own version of grassroots theatre during the 1980s.

Arena's first artistic leader was Fred Wibowo, who would later become the managing director of the audio-visual studio of Pusat Pengembangan Masyarakat (PUSKAT, Centre for Societal Development), the successor of the Centre for the Production of Educational Catechism Media. In Wibowo's view, grassroots theatre had to be a *pesta rakyat* ('people's festival') along the following, partly Brechtian, principles: 1. The story has its roots in local social conditions, 2. The script is created and arranged by the community members, 3. The performance has a straightforward structure, 4. There are no barriers between performers and audience, 5. The play is not aimed at catharsis, and 6. The play is aimed at creating dialogue between people who live under similar social conditions (Bodden 1993:317-9).

The community radio adage 'for, about and by the people' demonstrates many of these principles. Wibowo, in his capacity as director of PUSKAT, was directly involved in the development of community radio and other community-based media projects.¹² PUSKAT's current priority – reflecting its own religious, catholic foundations – is to ease some of the religious tension in Indonesia and elsewhere in the world, and stimulate inter-religious understanding and dialogue through various media and activities.

At its impressive domain in the Sinduharjo village, north of Yogyakarta, PUSKAT has a fully equipped radio and television training studio, halls for seminars, conferences and religious services, and a camping site including ten cottages, a bungalow and a swimming pool (PUSKAT 2001b). The radio and television facilities are used for courses on television journalism, television scriptwriting, television and video production, *sinetron* (Indonesian soap opera) production, public radio management, and 'alternative' media, such as people's theatre, photography, cartoons and posters (PUSKAT 2001c). PUSKAT organizes special summer courses for children about television, photography and theatre (PUSKAT 2001a). It also offers facilities for alternative tourism around the themes of culture, religion and agriculture (PUSKAT 2001d). PUSKAT's own community radio station is called Balai Budaya Minomartani, which specifically focuses on children programmes and Javanese arts including *wayang kulit* and *gamelan*.¹³

The ideas and practices of PUSKAT and the Central Javanese community stations discussed are close to the ideal of the *Umfunktionierung* or 'refunctioning' of art and media communications as developed by Brecht and reworked

¹² Wibowo, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 31-8-2001.

¹³ Surowo Haryono, personal communication, Yogyakarta, 2-8-2002; see also Bodden 1993:314.

by Benjamin in the Europe of the 1930s.

An artist's contribution now, he [Benjamin] says, must be assessed by reference to his positioning within the process of production. Using the methods offered by the new technical media, he must become a self-aware participant in the total apparatus of production. He must work towards an *Umfunktionierung*, as Brecht called it – a transformation of the apparatus – which will result in new fusions and relationships between media, genres and techniques, new, more collective production processes, and a new, more participative role for audiences. Content – however radical – can always be appropriated by the existing cultural powers; for Benjamin, then, cultural politics must become more of a running guerilla war, in which any appropriate materials, tactics, techniques and relationships may be used. (Middleton 1990:66.)

Perhaps coincidentally, but probably not, some of the Indonesian community stations today have also defined themselves as 'guerilla radio'. These stations are able to contribute to a refunctioning of the process of mediation partly because of the invention of new technologies – including the Internet – and forms of media interconnectivity – between radio and the telephone, for instance – partly because of changed visions on the interrelations between culture, politics and society. It is not surprising that Brecht himself called his vision 'utopian', as both he and Benjamin wrote against the background of the growth of Stalinism and fascism, which used the mass media as tools to disseminate propaganda and control the masses. The development of community radio would have pleasantly surprised Brecht, as it meets his ideals of listeners having influence in radio ownership, management and programme production, and radio functioning as a truly interactive medium for creating ideological awareness through multi-faceted dialogue.

Radio is one-sided when it should be two- [sided]. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: Change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers. Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction. (Brecht 1993:15.)

The refunctioning of radio also implies another Brechtian concept that suits the analysis of Central Javanese community radio: *Verfremdung* or 'alienation'. *Verfremdung* is a Brechtian theatre concept that includes a critique of Aristotelian drama traditions. In Aristotelian drama, the audience is stimulated to identify with the characters represented by the actors. Through this process of identification with the story and its characters (in Brechtian terms:

Einfühlung), the audience can attain catharsis, or a ritual purification of their feelings of fear and compassion (Brecht 1978a:161). According to Brecht (1978b:163-4), however, such identification leads to passivity and compliance, as it draws the audience from the real world into the dream world of the arts. Therefore he proposes the technique of alienation, which disrupts the coherence and natural flow of a play, and stimulates the audience to historicize and evaluate the social legitimacy of the event represented as well as their community life (Brecht 1978c:167).

A similar type of *Verfremdung* applies to Central Javanese community radio. By entering the medium simultaneously or consecutively as listeners, producers or managers, the radio audience has the opportunity and power to present itself and its stories in an alienating context, different from face-to-face interaction. This new context, which possibly also stimulates the home audience to provide other reactions than in normal 'unmediated' discourse, consists of the flow of public, commercial and community media that introduces and connects the community to new paradigms for the representation of people, time and place. Through this process of alienation or recontextualization, the origins, structure and impact of shared stories that otherwise, in an unmediated context, would have been taken for granted as uncomplicated parts of an integrated social narrative, are placed in a new light that opens alternative perspectives for imagining one's community.

Nostalgia for aura

One may still wonder why a small community – such as the inhabitants of Timbulharjo or the ISI students – would need the electronic media for communication and the creation of a feeling of togetherness, when its members can and do easily interact with each other in unmediated ways. In other words, what is the attraction for people to witness themselves being represented in a medium such as community radio? Returning to Benjamin's argument about aura, I believe community radio is attractive because it satisfies a longing for intimacy and immediacy, and, paradoxically, also represents nostalgia for aura.

Intimacy and immediacy are not unique to community media, but also part of the mass media's capacity to enhance the accessibility of an event. Modern camera, editing and montage techniques, including close-ups, even show details and present a totality of an event that could never be noticed by a 'live' witness (Benjamin 1977:34; Dayan and Katz 1992:95). Philip Auslander (1992:32) points out the irony that video screens and other media tools and techniques are often used during live performances in order to bring back the immediacy and intimacy from which 'liveness' used to derive its attractive-

ness and authority. Similarly, community radio can illuminate aspects of the lives of listeners that otherwise would have gone unnoticed, and renew the listeners' contact with their own community.

Although community radio with its immediacy and intimacy shatters the aura of the live event, the same medium also introduces 'nostalgic' feelings for auratic uniqueness and authenticity. This nostalgia for aura should be distinguished from the auratic or ceremonial qualities of media events. While community radio shows nostalgia for the 'here and now' of a live performance or local social conditions, media events produce a different type of aura underlining the 'here and now' of a media performance.

The ceremoniality of media events resides in the 'rare realization of the full potential of electronic media technology' (Dayan and Katz 1992:15) and the use of advanced recording, editing and broadcasting techniques. Community radio is 'nostalgic for aura' rather than 'auratic', as it neither recreates the aura of the live performance nor produces the ceremoniality of media events. Its nostalgia or longing for authenticity and uniqueness is ideologically rooted in the use of cheap and uncomplicated media technology. By presenting itself as a very basic medium, community radio attempts to distinguish itself from its competitors in the field, that is, public and commercial media. This relation between community radio on the one hand and public and commercial media on the other is comparable to the relation between rock and pop music.

The ideological distinction between rock and pop is precisely the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic, the sincere and the cynical, the genuinely popular and the slickly commercial, the potentially resistant and the necessarily co-opted, art and entertainment (Auslander 1999:69).

Community radio's nostalgia mirrors rock music's claims to uniqueness and authenticity, as they are both ideological constructs that require legitimization by a live event (Auslander 1999:69, 83). Auslander (1999:84) argues that this quest for legitimacy is not unproblematic.

[In] rock's ideology of authenticity, a mass-produced recording must be authenticated through the presence of a unique object, a live performance. To leave the question at that would be to forget, however, that in rock, the live performance is a recreation of the recording, which is, in fact, the original performance. Rock ideology is in perfect accord with Benjamin in stipulating that because the original artifact is mass-produced, its presence does not imply its authenticity. But it does not follow for rock ideology as it does for Benjamin that this recognition entails relinquishing the idea of authenticity. (Auslander 1999:84.)

When authenticity has gone, what is left is nostalgia for aura. Similar to the devotees of rock, the listeners of community radio ask for a form of legitimization, and expect the community radio content to meet the realities of social

life. However, since life is just as mediatized as a regular rock concert, there are no theoretical grounds to consider community radio to be more authentic or unique than public or commercial media. The previous chapters showed that late- and post-Suharto commercial radio has been a refreshing alternative to New Order propaganda, while RRI has expressed the intention to reform itself from a government medium into a medium serving the public interest. Similar to community radio, both commercial and public radio often produce programmes with an interactive character and sometimes pay attention to small and marginalized groups in society. This makes the distinction between public, commercial and community radio far less rigid than my earlier summary of the UNESCO paradigm may have suggested.

Still, there are reasons to believe that community radio is more suitable than the other two types of radio for representing and analysing the interaction between real life and the media. Community radio confirms this not only by offering programmes and off-air activities about the media and other social issues, but also by enabling listeners to participate in different stages of the mediation process. The medium has a democratic right to exist in Indonesia, as it enables smaller groups in society to express themselves, and it also contributes to the diversity of the local media scene in terms of production, management and ownership. If people are free to communicate using any medium they want, why would community radio have to be excluded from other media such as unmediated conversation, print publications, the telephone and the Internet? Moreover, why would radio communication be the prerogative of government and business only?

Opponents of community radio have argued that the medium may be abused for promoting chauvinistic ideals or inciting violence against others. This argument is often made by people attempting to protect their commercial or political interests in private and public radio. While the danger of media abuse is always lurking – as Brecht, Benjamin, Habermas and others rightfully argue – this danger is not restricted to community radio, but also concerns commercial and public media. If there were community stations representing ideals that are indeed too narrow or aggressive to be accepted by other groups in society, this could still not be a reason to prohibit the medium as such. Rather, it should be an incentive for practitioners, politicians and legislators to take into serious consideration the recommendations made by groups such as Depok School, Indonesia Media Law and Policy Centre and Komunitas Televisi Publik Indonesia, which all pleaded for the media to be supervised by truly independent bodies.