3 Mobile phones: advertising, consumerism and class

Emma Baulch

One of the major challenges facing scholars seeking to investigate political and ideological developments in contemporary Indonesian public life is the coincidence of two significant phenomena with distinct historical roots: regime change in 1998, and changes to the media technologies by which public life is produced, circulated and sensed. For the most part, scholars of Indonesian politics have sought to negotiate this challenge by treating new media technologies as a neutral factor that has played no role in shaping political and ideological developments. Major studies of contemporary Indonesian politics sketch a continuum on which regime change in 1998 and decentralisation in 2001—but not technological developments—feature as major turning points shaping the contours of public life.

In this chapter, I develop an alternative historical framework for analysing the ideological implications of the spread of new media. I argue that we cannot hope to understand the role of technology by positioning the digital in a post-authoritarian frame—the predominant one for analysing political change in contemporary Indonesia. There is little doubt that post-authoritarianism is useful for studying the intricacies of the formal dimensions of Indonesian democracy in the twenty-first century, but it should not be accorded primacy in the study of digital change. When we hitch the study of digital Indonesia to an agenda that seeks to

* The author would like to thank the Australian Research Council for funding the project on which this paper is based: 'Mobile Indonesians: social differentiation and digital literacies in the 21st century'. Several paragraphs in this chapter will be published in *Cultural Politics* (Baulch, forthcoming).

understand emerging forms of political organisation by looking at society through the lens of elections, parties, social movements and states, we forgo the opportunity to use the lens of media technologies. In other words, we forgo the opportunity to understand political change through theories of media change.

This chapter draws on such theories to consider how changes in media technologies precipitate political change. It does so by focusing on an important part of digital Indonesia as we know it today: the mobile phone. The vernacular term for a mobile phone in Indonesia is 'HP'—short for 'hand phone'. In this chapter I discuss both the historical roots and the social and political implications of the rapid uptake of mobile phones in Indonesia over the last few years. I trace the rise in popularity of the HP to a set of post-Cold War media deregulation packages that opened up the telecommunications sector, and consider its place, not as a singularly revolutionary object, but as one that rode in the wake of cultural changes set in motion by the spread of other new media technologies, most notably advertising-funded television. I understand the HP, then, to inhabit a broader 'new technological paradigm' (Castells 2010) that was set in train by the economic reforms of the late 1980s—the social and cultural consequences of which unfolded over the next couple of decades—and that coincided with, and to some degree was shaped by, regime change in the late 1990s. I aim to examine the ideas about what it means to be digitally connected that emerge from this paradigm, and to analyse the nascent forms of social organisation it is generating.

A NEW TECHNOLOGICAL PARADIGM

Most people in Indonesia have a mobile phone, however basic. This only became true less than 10 years ago, when the number of people subscribing to a mobile service began to outstrip the number connected to a landline. Between 2000 and 2015, mobile phone subscriptions increased from 1.8 to 132.4 per 100 people. Over the same period, fixed-line connections increased from 3.2 to a mere 8.8 per 100 people.[1]

A number of developments have given rise to this astounding transformation of Indonesia's communication landscape. First, the costs associated with connecting to and using mobile networks fell dramatically because of increased competition between providers (Lee and Findlay 2005). As a result, cheap handsets began to appear on the market; the informal repair-and-recycle economy began to grow, making buying,

1 Based on International Telecommunication Union (ITU) data; see http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx.

maintaining and upgrading a phone more affordable for ordinary people; and mobile telephony became a more visible, audible and influential part of public life throughout the archipelago. Second, from the late 1980s the Indonesian government embarked on a series of reforms that transformed the telecommunications sector, including the liberalisation of licensing and the divestiture of state-owned enterprises. This decade of policy reform was essential to create the conditions of increased competition and falling costs that supported the uptake of the HP.

From 1964 to 1989, under Law No. 5/1964 on Telecommunications, two bodies were responsible for infrastructure and services: PN Telekomunikasi and ITT. PN Telekomunikasi, which became Perumtel in 1974 and PT Telkom in 1991, was responsible for domestic telephony services, while ITT, which became Indosat in 1980, was responsible for international telephony services. Network expansion was funded directly from the state budget and through loans from donor organisations such as the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia.

When the funding for network expansion began to dry up in the mid-1980s, the government was forced to consider other ways to fund telecommunications infrastructure. In 1989 it passed Law No. 3/1989 on Telecommunications, which allowed private operators to participate in the market for the first time (in partnership with state-owned enterprises). This led to a number of agreements between private investors and state-owned enterprises to supply basic telephony services. The 1989 law also liberalised the internet and paging markets, leading to public–private arrangements between Telkom and foreign companies such as France Cables et Radio, Telstra, Cable & Wireless Singapore and SingTel. The first 2G Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) licences were issued between 1994 and 1996 to Excelcomindo (now known as XL Axiata), Satelindo and Telkomsel, all of which were joint ventures between private investors and incumbents (Lee and Findlay 2005; Rasyid 2005; Latipulhayat 2010).

After the Asian financial crisis in 1997–98, Indonesia agreed to reform its telecommunications sector further as part of a recovery package proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF); in particular, the IMF wanted the Indonesian government to annul the exclusive rights granted to Telkom in the fixed-line sector and to relax restrictions on foreign investment. Around the same time, Indonesia signed up to the World Trade Organization's General Telecommunications Agreement, which committed the government to providing fair competition in the telecommunications sector under the supervision of an independent regulator, and to eliminating fixed-line exclusivity in the local, long-distance and international telephony markets according to a fixed timetable (Lee and Findlay 2005: 355).

In 1999, the Indonesian government promulgated a new telecommunications law, Law No. 36/1999 on Telecommunications. This law introduced two important changes. First, it did away with the need for private operators to collaborate with state-owned incumbents in providing basic services for fixed-line and mobile telephony. Second, it relaxed restrictions on foreign investment. Controversially, Singapore Technologies Telemedia bought a 42 per cent stake in Indosat in 2002, effectively turning it into a private (rather than state-owned) company. GSM licences were issued to IM3, Mobile-8 Telecom, Lippo Telecom and Bakrie Telecom in 2002 and 2003 (Lee and Findlay 2005; Latipulhayat 2010). The deregulation of the telecommunications sector gave rise to the current state of affairs in mobile telephony, in which six providers compete for a market of 353.7 million mobile phone users (Business Monitor International, cited in Fast Market Research 2016). Telkom subsidiary Telkomsel is the dominant player in this market, followed by Indosat and XL Axiata. Together, they enjoy an 84 per cent market share (Latipulhayat 2010; BMI 2015).

It is important to note this policy background here, because it highlights the absence of any inherent links between post-authoritarianism and the process of telecommunications reform. This suggests that the proliferation of the HP in the twenty-first century was not a product of post-authoritarian reform, but rather of the earlier reform of Indonesian capitalism precipitated by a host of deregulation measures after the end of the Cold War.

While the telecommunications industry was being deregulated in the 1990s, other developments were also afoot. The most significant of these, in terms of its cultural effects, was the deregulation of television. In 1988, the government issued a decree that ended its monopoly over television. This led to the establishment of five new private television stations between 1988 and 1995 (Sen and Hill 2000) and a further five between 2000 and 2002 (Hollander, d'Haenans and Bardoel 2009).

As a consequence, the share of television in the overall media consumption of Indonesians grew considerably in the 1990s and 2000s (Hendriyani et al. 2011, 2012, 2016). The commercial television stations also began to deliver new kinds of programs, especially news programs (Sen and Hill 2000; Hollander, d'Haenens and Bardoel 2009). With the growth in TV stations and TV audiences, the advertising industry grew at a staggering rate. Sen and Hill (2000: 115–16) have estimated that the number of television sets grew sixfold in the 1980s, and that advertising expenditure grew at a commensurate rate in the early 1990s.

Sen and Hill (2000) argue that the first wave of commercial television expansion did not signal a paradigm shift in a political or economic sense; as they point out, the Suharto family retained firm control of the

television industry. However, the deregulation of television did usher in important cultural shifts. The business model of the commercial stations relied on paid advertising, so viewers not only began to watch more television, they also began to watch more advertisements. As a result, consumerist ideology began to play a more prominent role in the formation of cultural tropes. In an earlier work (Baulch 2007), I have discussed how the new kinds of pop music programming on commercial television stations in the mid-1990s influenced notions of identity among young people, detaching them from the traditional one of the patriotic youth (*pemuda*) and moving them towards the more flexible, ephemeral narratives shaped by television.

Following Castells (2010: 5), I argue that the expansion of private television in the 1990s and 2000s laid the basis for a 'new technological paradigm' that encouraged consumerism and allowed the class distinctions established under the New Order to be articulated in new ways. Castells focuses on the 'informational economies' where post-Keynesian economics delivered economic stability and growth after the end of World War II, a category that obviously does not include Indonesia.[2] Nevertheless, by linking emerging social and cultural imaginings and modes of organisation to technological change, Castells' work opens a path for us to understand the HP as part of a broader scaffold of communication technologies, rather than as part of a post-authoritarian polity.

The beginnings of the new technological paradigm that is the setting for the HP can be traced to the late 1980s and the reforms set in train by falling oil prices and the end of the Cold War. Viewing the mobile phone in this context reveals a history in which regime change takes something of a back seat. The period preceding the reforms had been marked by the use of the press and state television to instil a strong sense of a society constituted by two social forces—the middle class and the masses.

The technological paradigm that is the subject of this chapter emerged after the end of the Cold War and featured the expansion of, first, commercial television advertising and, slightly later, digital technologies. During this period, the notion of consumer sovereignty began to play an increasingly influential role in how Indonesians saw themselves. The

---

2 For Indonesians, the decades from the end of World War II to the mid-1970s were a period of upheaval. Stability and economic growth were not delivered until the 1970s, a period of economic decline and restructuring in much of the Global North. The oil price rises that sparked rampant inflation and reform in the United States were a windfall to an Indonesian authoritarian state overseeing the consolidation, rather than fragmentation, of class formations. The Indonesian case provides a perspective on the processes and nature of changes leading up to the development of a digitally equipped capitalism that is distinct from that to be gained through a focus on the Global North.

sense of the middle class as exclusively secular and Western began to dissolve as a Muslim fashion and consumer culture developed, and as various forms of East Asian pop culture were enthusiastically consumed by urban middle-class youth. Conspicuous consumption and wealth became increasingly accepted features of the public culture, but more aggressively celebratory articulations of lower class-ness also emerged during this period (Heryanto 2009; Weintraub 2011).

Below, I explore how the HP both shapes and is shaped by the new technological paradigm, largely by focusing on changes and continuities in the articulation of class distinctions. I consider whether the acute user sensitivities associated with mobile phones afford the lower classes the opportunity to contest and manipulate this consumerist ideology, or only cause them to be enveloped by it (Dean 2014; Hinson 2014).

I address these questions from two angles. First, I consider the powerful understandings of what it means to be digitally networked that have emerged from the major centres of media production. By analysing the ads that telecommunications companies make for television, I hope to draw out some of the cultural implications of the concurrent expansion of televisual and telecommunications networks in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The telcos rely on television advertising to render their products and services into commodity form—that is, to make them marketable and desirable. This reliance pricks at the myth of the disruptive capacity of the digital, given that advertising-funded television (despite being relatively new) addresses audiences in ways that reinforce longstanding class distinctions. Second, I consider whether and how the HP has enhanced people's capacity to manipulate such powerful ideas about what it means to be digitally connected. On the one hand, consumerism has reinforced longstanding class distinctions, but on the other, it has given rise to new forms of civic engagement organised around notions of ethical consumption. Although not limited to the lower classes, these new forms of associational life have pried open opportunities for the articulation of an aggressive lower-class cultural politics.

ASPECTS OF THE INDONESIAN ADVERTISING MARKET

When the HP phenomenon began to gather momentum in the early twenty-first century, it did so in an environment in which advertising-funded television had only just become an important part of many Indonesians' everyday lives. Therefore, it rode in the wake of a rapidly evolving and dynamic media environment that was already precipitating the rise of a new consumerism. In this context, the advertisements

made by telecommunications companies for television forcefully shaped dominant understandings of what it meant to be connected to a digital network.

Before examining some of these ads, I would like to flag a couple of features of the Indonesian market. First, unlike in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, where spending on digital ads is fast eclipsing spending on TV ads, in Indonesia, most advertising expenditure goes to television (about 55 per cent, compared with 28 per cent in Australia). Between 2008 and 2015, Indonesia's expenditure on television advertising increased more than fourfold, from $1,603 million to $6,508 million. In 2015, the TV spend was eight times more than the digital media spend ($809 million).[3] By comparison, advertising expenditure on digital media in Australia rose from $1.8 billion in 2008 to $4.8 billion in 2015, while ad spending on television remained steady over the same period, at around $3.5 billion.[4] The telecommunications sector is Indonesia's fifth-biggest spender on television advertisements, after personal care, food and beverages, the public sector and the pharmaceutical industry, and is on a par with the auto industry.[5]

The second feature of note concerns the size and nature of the Indonesian market for telecommunications products. Although the mobile phone market is huge, the majority of the market is made up of prepaid subscribers, almost all of whom use their phones to make voice calls or send text messages. On average, these subscribers spend only two or three dollars each per month to maintain their connections to their networks. There is intense competition between the dominant telcos—especially Telkomsel, Indosat and XL Axiata—to capture this market of SMSers and voice callers, because even though their monthly outlays may be tiny, their numbers are enormous (BMI 2015).

Although Indonesians spend more than twice as much time per day looking at their mobile devices as they spend watching television, expenditure on TV ads makes sense in view of low smartphone penetration (about 23 per cent), the predominance of 2G (rather than more advanced) mobile networks, and the fact that 97 per cent of the population watches television at least once each month.[6] In short, the telcos rely

---

3 See https://www.statista.com/statistics/386393/advertising-expenditures-by-medium-indonesia/, accessed 11 November 2016.

4 See http://www.statista.com/statistics/386360/advertising-expenditures-by-medium-australia/, accessed 3 October 2016.

5 See https://www.statista.com/statistics/466397/ad-spend-industry-indonesia/, accessed 12 November 2016.

6 See http://redwing-asia.com/market-data/market-data-media/, accessed 21 September 2016.

on television to reach a market largely made up of SMSers and voice callers. Television therefore remains central to the imagining of a digitally networked nation.

I focus on the ads produced by four providers: As, Simpati, Mentari and XL Axiata. As and Simpati are both subsidiaries of the partly state-owned Telkomsel group and have a combined market share of around 46 per cent; Mentari is owned by the partly state-owned Indosat group and has a market share of 21 per cent; and XL Axiata is a privately owned company with a market share of around 16 per cent. I conceive of telco ads as texts that imbue telecommunications products and services with social meaning by turning them into commodities that are capable of being marketed to a consuming public.

The ads I have selected mainly use celebrity endorsements, representations of social media and representations of SMSing and voice calling to address consumers.[7] My analysis of the content of these ads indicates that they contain mixed messages about the digitally networked consuming public and the novelty of digital technology. On the one hand, the ads using celebrity endorsers give a sense of a nation that is in flux and contested, suggesting that the new telecommunications products can be associated with new ways of being. On the other hand, the depictions of particular products—SMS and social media—restore old ways of being. Social media, used only by the web-connected, smartphone-owning few, is shown as increasing users' social capital, whereas SMS and voice calling, functions used primarily by the non-smartphone-owning, non-web-connected many, are depicted in ways that reinstate elitist notions of the masses as unruly crowds. Therefore, the ads propose that the new telecommunications infrastructure can be associated with a limited kind of change, in which the cultural ascendance of the middle class is retained.

DEPICTIONS OF SOCIETY THROUGH THE PRISM OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING

The use of celebrities to endorse telecommunications products and services began around 2012. The well-known faces associated with major brands included Agnes Monica, a Chinese Indonesian singer and actor (contracted to Simpati); the pop band Noah and its lead singer Ariel, who had just been released from prison after spending three years in jail for distributing pornographic material (XL Axiata); Anggun, a 'lady rocker'

7 All ads discussed in this chapter were retrieved from YouTube. Gde Putra and Roro Sawita undertook the research for this section of the article, published in Sawita, Putra and Baulch (2014).

who had achieved success in Europe in the 1990s and was rebooting her Indonesian career in the 2000s (Mentari); and Sule, a low-brow comedian who had risen to fame through his appearances on the prime-time slapstick show *Opera Van Java* (As). This cohort of celebrities intimates a national body politic that is fragile, contested, in motion and full of hybridity; it works to associate a digitally networked nation with change and novelty.

Simpati began to consistently showcase strong, independent women from around 2011—presumably as a metaphor for the network's strong signal—and placing Monica at the forefront of the brand drove this association home. Monica has attained fame despite her marginal status on several fronts—she is Christian, Chinese and single. One of the ads shows her celebrating her independence and confidence; dressed in a tight-fitting gym outfit, she commands a group of male dancers to 'speak their minds'.

XL Axiata's strategy has been to target school-age social media users by promoting cheap data packages. The company's contract with Noah, especially Ariel, has reinforced the brand as one designed for middle-class, social-media-savvy youth. In 2010, Ariel was sentenced to three and a half years in jail for distributing recordings of himself having sex with fellow celebrities. His story is entwined with the power and allure of social media: the video-recordings for which he was jailed were circulated widely on social media and could be viewed on YouTube. Ariel was convicted shortly after the parliament had passed a highly controversial bill that sought to eradicate pornography from the public sphere by regulating the way people, especially women, appeared in public. Ariel was charged under that law (Law No. 44/2008 on Pornography), and the high level of public support for him at the time was widely considered to be closely linked to the public opposition to the new law.

For Mentari, the contract with Anggun was part of a new branding strategy aimed at breaking into the high end of the market, especially the market for smartphones. Prior to 2012, the Mentari and As brands had not been well differentiated—both had targeted the lower end of the market comprising mainly SMS and voice calls. By contracting Sule, who plays on his persona as a villager with a thick provincial accent, As signalled its intention to remain associated with the lower end of the market.

Unlike Ariel, Anggun and Sule are not contentious figures, but they both could be called hybrid ones. Anggun has spent much of her adult life living in France and is married to a French national. Sule, meanwhile, is a nationally famous comedian who lives in Jakarta—not (or no longer) the uncouth villager he portrays in his comedy routines. The As campaign in which he stars also features other hybrid figures; in one of the ads, Sule

appears alongside Eurasian actor Rianti Cartwright and the effeminate Smash boy band (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv-tNCin2h8).

Although celebrity endorsers commonly evince hybridity, contestation and flux, that does not mean that the more stable, longstanding distinctions between social classes become indiscernible. On the one hand, the telecommunications networks are keen to associate their brands with people who stretch the boundaries of the nation, but on the other, those people also have socio-economic characteristics that suggest the endurance of class distinctions and their attendant high–low dimensions. Moreover, class-based distinctions are used to match celebrities with particular segments of the HP market, thereby reinforcing the portrayal of the digitally networked nation as a sharply hierarchical society. Thus Sule, the uncouth villager, is assigned responsibility for representing the market for SMS and voice calls, while Monica and Ariel, the sophisticated urban dwellers, are responsible for representing the market for smartphone-owning data users.

Similarly, an XL Axiata ad featuring Ariel shows how the telecommunications networks can function as an avenue for social capital and mobility (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWWdkeZWSRU). In the ad, the car in which Ariel and his band members are travelling breaks down on a country road. A mechanic fixes the car and offers to forgo payment if Ariel agrees to pose with a group of onlooking fans. When the mechanic uploads the photo to Facebook, a bar appears on his screen showing a huge and rapidly increasing number of 'likes'.

This ad tells a story of mobility while reminding the viewer of the ever-present possibility of immobility, as represented by the broken-down car. As mentioned earlier, the majority of telecommunications users in Indonesia pre-pay for their connections, spending very small amounts (approximately $2–3 per month) (BMI 2015: 18). Therefore, many telco users face being disconnected from the network without warning if their credit runs out. The ad presents XL Axiata's affordable rates as a solution to this constant source of anxiety, while positioning social media as a crucial source of social capital needed to make it in consumer society. In the ad, the use of social media puts ordinary people on an upwardly mobile path towards celebrity.

In contrast to the portrayals of social media emphasising the emancipatory promise of social media platforms for ordinary people, the advertisements for the SMS and voice call market make no such promise. Most SMS ads use large banner text to alert viewers to bonuses and free SMS services, but a few use actors to situate their products in particular social settings. In doing so, they depict a realm that is quite distinct from that of the web-connected data users who star in the social media ads. Rather than linking the telcos' products to spectacular stories of upward mobil-

ity, the advertisements for the SMS and voice call market depict a realm of schoolyard micro-politics, the humdrum working lives of the lower classes or slapstick humour prioritising colour and movement over narrative.[8] A view of an acutely hierarchical tele-networked society emerges from this corpus of ads, in which web-connected users inhabit the teleconnected 'sublime', while SMSers and voice callers are relegated to the 'ridiculous'. We should not overstate the importance of social media in the Indonesian telecommunications landscape given that 75 per cent of telco users do not use social media, but nor should we underestimate its mythical force.

Telco ads constitute the 'undercoat' of the televisual canvas, but the HP affords telco users the ability to add their own 'topcoat'—that is, to manipulate the stereotypes proposed by the broadcast media. First, as Weiss (2014: 92) argues, social media spaces add a virtual (cyberspace) domain to the existing real-world topography, giving social media users the ability to alter the times and spaces in which they engage with the technology. Second, the HP gives people the capacity to edit images independently of the major centres of production, with little technical expertise or capital outlay. A growing body of work on selfies, for example, examines the extent to which people play with their own images to posit social alternatives (Senft and Baym 2015).

In the next section, I discuss the role the HP plays in emerging forms of associational life precipitated by the rise of consumerist ideology. Organisations such as the Hijabers Community and Indonesia Gardening (Indonesia Berkebun) focus on single issues such as food or the *hijab* while adhering to a moral code that positions them as separate from an imagined consumerist mainstream.[9] Many such organisations are decidedly urban and middle class, and employ Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. But new kinds of lower-class politics are also being articulated as variants of the emerging forms of associational life revolving around ethical consumption. The case I discuss next—that of the Balinese pop idol Nanoe Biroe and his fans—is one such variant.

---

8 For an example of each, see respectively https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owjY99TYLsk (produced by AS); https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSKKRER7SQA (produced by XL Axiata); and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv-tNCin2h8 (the XL Axiata ad featuring Ariel discussed earlier).

9 The Hijabers Community was established in Jakarta by a group of young Muslim women to discuss issues of interest to girls; see http://hijaberscommunity.blogspot.com.au/. Indonesia Berkebun is an urban farming movement dedicated to building environmental awareness and providing green spaces in the city; see http://indonesiaberkebun.org/about/.

A NEW ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE

In the early years of the twenty-first century, a strange new word erupted on the streets of Denpasar. The word, 'Baduda' (from *baduda* meaning 'dung beetle'), refers to the fans of the Balinese pop singer Nanoe Biroe, who is best known for his songs about social issues, sung in low Balinese. The Baduda are easily recognised by the clothing and other paraphernalia they wear while riding their motorbikes around the city. Belonging and acting like a Baduda holds a special political potency. The group emerged in the context of a revival of ethnic Balinese-ness, in which the pure and the high were formally privileged. The name 'Baduda', by contrast, suggested a fondness for dirt, the low and the impure.

Nanoe Biroe's rise to fame can be understood in the context of two developments. The first was the privatisation of the television industry, which gave rise to new patterns of relationships between pop musicians and their audiences, and prompted a proliferation of fan cultures, of which the Baduda serve as a good example (Baulch 2013). The second development was the transformation of popular conceptions of the value of regional languages (*bahasa daerah*) as a consequence of the implementation of decentralisation in 2001. Once viewed as markers of backwardness, regional languages have become not only indicators of local authenticity and pride in the context of local elections, but also ways of accommodating and expressing notions of advancement and modernity within youth culture.

In the face of significant change on a number of fronts, the HP has become one of a mix of tools people use to to stake a place for themselves among the changes taking place around them. Put another way, in order to grasp what the HP 'does' to the televisual canvas, we need to acknowledge that it is just one component of a broader assemblage. In the case of the Baduda, this mix includes selfies and SMS, but also t-shirts and language play. For example, when I asked the Baduda what appealed to them about being a Nanoe Biroe fan, they consistently replied '*menyama*'—solidarity or togetherness. 'Menyama' is also the title song from Nanoe Biroe's seventh album, *Timpal Sujati* [True Friend]; it speaks, broadly speaking, to the importance of loving your neighbour, working hard, being faithful to your friends and showing empathy to the downtrodden. The appeal of *menyama* as a key word for the Baduda, then, points to the power of Biroe's lyrics, seen as encapsulating the fans' communal identities and moral aspirations.

Like Biroe's songs, the t-shirts sold at U-Rock, the official Nanoe Biroe merchandise outlet, use low Balinese inflected with the rough Denpasar dialect to express a valorisation of the common people and a disdain for conspicuous shows of wealth. The messages printed on them include

'*Lacur sugih patuh gen yen meju mengkep*' [Whether you are poor or rich, your shit stinks just the same], '*Ajum ci*' [You're so up yourself], '*Med cang kene*' [I'm so bored] and '*Pang cang kene*' [Leave me alone].

The Baduda fans I interviewed listed t-shirt wearing (over buying CDs or attending concerts) as the most important way of participating in Nanoe Biroe fandom. The importance of t-shirts can be partly understood in the context of Biroe's art school background and his talent for composing eye-catching designs. But it also reflects a broader desire to use ordinary objects as anchors for the new moral codes emerging in contemporary, consumerist Indonesia.

When I asked the Baduda how they realised the key virtue of *menyama* to connect with other fans, they referred me to two types of gathering that allowed them to express their moral aspirations as Baduda. Both shed light on the vital role the HP plays in marking the Baduda's ethical code as something that is both contemporary and a product of the lower classes.

The first of these gatherings was a regular Saturday night get-together of the kind that has been a common part of Indonesian pop culture consumption for decades. However, the Baduda version, which fans refer to as a '*seminar*' (from *semeton minum arak*, or 'palm wine drinking community'), reveals a shifts in the usual ritual, suggested by the presence of women. I want to suggest that the feminisation of such gatherings results from the spatial complexity brought about by the introduction of mobile phones to such gatherings. The use of smartphones by female Baduda (Badudawati) opens these traditionally masculine gatherings to alternative modes of performance, particularly by women.

Conventionally, the Saturday night gatherings would showcase the talents of those with musical or rhetorical abilities, relegating others to a kind of onlooker status, referred to as *bengong*, or 'staring emptily into space'. Since the popularisation of smartphones, though, this has become a thing of the past; the onlookers (mainly women) at such gatherings are no longer silent and disengaged, but busy and preoccupied with their phones. When I asked the women what they were doing with their phones, they said they were issuing shout-outs to people who were not in attendance, or uploading photos of the gathering to Facebook. This suggests that the smartphone has altered the power dynamics of the Saturday night gathering by providing those on the periphery with a new social function: bridging the gap between the online and offline Baduda spaces, between presence and absence at a Baduda gathering.

The Badudawati's Facebook posts about their adventures at these gatherings indicate that the smartphone has increased the spatial and temporal complexity of the Saturday night *seminar*, opened it to various modes of performance and enabled those on the margins to create

an alternative social space while still being present at the 'boys' party'. Indeed, when I hooked up with some of these women on Facebook, I discovered that they took their careers as Badudawati very seriously, adopting the word 'Baduda' or a Nanoe Biroe album title as their profile names, and clearly taking pride in their visibility as Baduda. A young woman called Gektu Sukma, for example, consistently appeared in the Baduda 'uniform' of a backward-facing baseball cap and black t-shirt. The fact that young women like Gektu link Facebook use to their presence at a *seminar* highlights the significance and degree of agency inferred by the selfies they post on their Facebook feeds. The Badudawati may be marginal to this core Baduda ritual, but on Facebook they appear front and centre, often wearing t-shirts bearing the word *'seminar'*, as if to reclaim this event as a feminine one. In one post, Putu Tomboyz leads a phalanx of Badudawati dressed in Nanoe Biroe designs, among which her own *seminar* t-shirt stands out. On Facebook, these women cannot be overlooked or silenced. They demand attention.

The second event fans referred me to when I asked them how they realised *menyama* was a concert that took place on 13 August 2012 on a stage erected on the filthy Badung river that runs through Denpasar. In later press interviews, Biroe said that the concert was a bid to focus authorities' attention on the need to clean up the river, but it was also clearly a publicity stunt to earn him a fourth listing in the Indonesian Museum of Records—this time for the first concert performed on a river. Previous listings were earned for having the longest (extendable) album cover, singing for 80 hours straight and signing the most CD covers ever signed (TrashstockBali 2015).

The fans I interviewed described the concert as a seminal experience for them in their careers as Baduda, saying that being in the river, getting wet and splashing around had changed them in fundamental ways. When asked how they came to know about the concert, they said they had received an SMS from Nanoe Biroe's management team telling them when and where it would take place. Biroe's store manager and brother, Man Danoe, later confirmed to me that this highly successful event had indeed been promoted entirely by SMS. He described how U-Rock staff diligently record customers' mobile phone numbers at the time of purchase, then transfer those numbers to a database. The database is then used to SMS consumers about sales promotions, or to invite them to spectacular events that may transform them as Baduda.

This mode of addressing consumers is not unique to Bali or to Nanoe Biroe, but what makes it significant for a study of the Baduda as a group with a distinct social identity are the particular meanings attributed to SMS in Indonesia, and, by extension, how the use of SMS positions people on the social hierarchy. When I asked Man Danoe why the manage-

ment team preferred SMS over, say, Twitter or WhatsApp, he replied that Twitter was 'too confusing' and that SMS was simpler, more direct and easier to use. I contend that this sort of affinity for one media form, and antipathy towards others, is shaped not by the technical capacities of each application, but rather by the cultural discourses that surround them—discourses that have been accentuated by the advent of the smartphone.

In contemporary Indonesia, the SMS is infused with a decidedly low-class flavour—it occupies the realm of the rough, the vulgar, the direct. Thajib (2011) writes about how the lower classes use SMS to code their speech, causing the urban elites to relegate them, and the medium, to the realm of the uncivilised. SMS is a consistent theme in the lower-class genre of popular songs known as *dangdut*. Readers of the *Bali Post* send text messages to the editor for publication in a special section titled 'SMS', using the rough, critical tones reminiscent of Nanoe Biroe's speech. However, as Biroe's adept use of SMS to reach a lower-class public demonstrates, the medium does not just disempower people by tagging them with a low social status; it can also throw up resources for the production of counterpublics—a sociality that 'maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one' (Warner 2002: 119).

CONCLUSION: MOBILE PHONES, CONSUMERISM AND CLASS

In Asian contexts, the increasingly visible presence of multinational corporations, in the form of media content, new technologies or food, has advanced 'projects of middle-class advancement and social distancing' (Doron 2012: 566; see also Liechty 2003; Mazzarella 2003; Wang 2008). Doron pays particular attention to how the perpetuation of class divisions lies at the heart of the global proliferation of digital technologies. He contends that, 'even when equipped with the liberating technology of mobile phones, and enhanced access to information, the underprivileged remain excluded and are alienated from spaces where the "wizardry of consumer seduction" is exercised' (Doron 2012: 566). He demonstrates this by showing how class distinctions are articulated through distinct mobile phone care-and-repair economies in India. The Nokia repair centres offer customers respite from the heat and dust of the Indian street. People queue in an orderly fashion, are served by a receptionist, watch television as they wait and provide feedback in the form of emojis when they leave. Beyond their cool, clean exteriors, however, such centres provide no more certainty of successful repair than their street-side counterparts—the *mistrii*s. Doron describes the street-side repair shops in which

the *mistrii*s labour as 'places of disorder where the plans of global capitalist enterprises are fragmented and adapted to suit the needs of tens of millions of Indians' (Doron 2012: 566). Although disorderly, the street-side repair shops also operate according to rules and regulations that privilege certain kinds of customers over others. Having a personal connection with a *mistrii*s can smooth the process and deliver speedier service (Doron 2012: 572).

Doron's article draws attention to the complexity of the digital cultures that have emerged from the expansion of consumer capitalism across the region. I have tried to evoke this complexity in the course of this chapter. The rapid spread of digital technologies has cultural and political implications that refuse to sit sweetly on a continuum of technological advancement stretching from enslavement to emancipation. They become subsumed by other processes that sometimes produce change and at other times ensure that old ways of doing things are upheld. My analysis of telco ads for television provides a good example of the dynamics of change and continuity associated with the development of the new telecommunications infrastructure. On the one hand, the networks assign meanings to their products that associate them with novelty and freedom, but on the other, they reiterate old, class-based distinctions by assigning a higher cultural status to some technologies than others.

But it is not just the confusing overlaps between continuity and change that make Indonesian digital cultures so complex. As I argued earlier, in the Indonesian case, the contextual terrain that subsumes and shapes the HP is especially perilous. This terrain was formed not only by the expansion of consumer capitalism, but also by a series of major political reforms, including both democratisation and decentralisation. The latter precipitated important shifts in attitudes towards regional languages that expanded the repertoire of linguistic resources for articulating modernity/ies.

The Baduda provide a good opportunity to understand how the HP is connected to these processes. As argued above, consumer capitalism has done more than just reinforce pre-existing class divisions in Indonesia; it has also generated new kinds of organisational life oriented primarily towards *ethical* modes of consumption. Decentralisation, in turn, has thrown up new linguistic resources for articulating these modes of ethical consumption. Nanoe Biroe and the Baduda reveal how these developments intersect; through the use of low Balinese they have created a consumerist identity ('consumerist', because buying t-shirts sits at the centre of it) that is both ethical and a form of counterpublicity—counter, that is, to dominant representations of Balinese-ness. As well as perpetuating class divisions, digitally equipped consumer capitalism throws up resources for the aggressive rearticulation of class distinctions, through

the tactical use of digital technologies associated with the lower classes. The mobile phone has done much to open this lower-class counterculture to women. Through the HP, the marginalised are able to appropriate consumerism, and in doing so 'contest and reconfigure some of the premises of consumer capitalism, thereby transforming the social life of the technology' (Doron 2012: 564). The Badudawati use Facebook and selfies to emphasise their presence at key Baduda rituals. The dominant discourse about the HP may privilege middle-class uses, but the widespread availability of the mobile phone also gives rise to uses that the representatives of global capital neither foresaw nor intended.

REFERENCES

Baulch, E. (2007) 'Cosmopatriotism in Indonesian pop music imagings', in E. Jurriëns and J. de Kloet (eds) *Cosmopatriots: On Distant Belongings and Close Encounters*, Rodopi, Amsterdam: 177–204.

Baulch, E. (2013) 'Longing band play at Beautiful Hope', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(3): 289–302.

Baulch, E. (forthcoming) 'The everyman and the dung beetle: new media infrastructures for lower class cultural politics', *Cultural Politics*, 13(2).

BMI (Business Monitor International) (2015) 'Indonesia telecommunications report Q4 2015', London.

Castells, M. (2010) *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, UK, and Malden, MA.

Dean (2014) 'Communicative capitalism and class struggle', *Spheres: Journal for Digital Cultures*, 1(November). Available at http://spheres-journal.org/communicative-capitalism-and-class-struggle/.

Doron, A. (2012) 'Consumption, technology and adaptation: care and repair economies of mobile phones in North India', *Pacific Affairs*, 85(3): 563–85.

Fast Market Research (2016) 'Indonesia telecommunications report Q1 2017', 3 November. Available at http://www.fastmr.com/prod/1233189_indonesia_telecommunications.aspx?afid=301. Accessed 20 January 2017.

Hendriyani, E. Hollander, L. d'Haenens and J.W.J. Beentjes (2011) 'Children's television in Indonesia', *Journal of Children and Media*, 5(1): 86–101. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254249701_Children's_Television_in_Indonesia.

Hendriyani, E. Hollander, L. d'Haenens and J.W.J. Beentjes (2012) 'Children's media use in Indonesia', *Asian Journal of Communication*, 22(3): 304–19.

Hendriyani, E. Hollander, L. d'Haenens and J.W.J. Beentjes (2016) 'Changes in cultural representations on Indonesian children's television from the 1980s to the 2000s', *Asian Journal of Communication*, 26(4): 371–86.

Heryanto, A. (ed.) (2009) *Pop Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-authoritarian Politics*, Routledge, London.

Hinson, T. (2014) 'On signs and subjectivity: a response to Jodi Dean', *Spheres: Journal for Digital Cultures*, 1(November). Available at http://spheres-journal.org/on-signs-and-subjectivity-a-response-to-jodi-dean/.

Hollander, E., L. d'Haenens and J. Bardoel (2009) 'Television performance in Indonesia: steering between civil society, state and market', *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19(1): 39–58.

Latipulhayat, A. (2010) 'State control and the privatisation of the Indonesian telecommunications industry: from ownership to regulation', *Journal of International Commercial Law and Technology*, 5(2): 58–72.

Lee, R.C., and C. Findlay (2005) 'Telecommunications reform in Indonesia: achievements and challenges', *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 41(3): 341–65.

Liechty, M. (2003) *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-class Culture in a New Consumer Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Mazzarella, W. (2003) *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalisation in Contemporary India*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Rasyid, A. (2005) 'Indonesia: liberalization at the crossroad, impact on sector performance, teledensity and productivity', MPRA Paper No. 2452, Munich Personal RePEc Archive (MPRA), Munich. Available at http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/2452/.

Sawita, R.., G. Putra and E. Baulch (2014) 'Citra perempuan Indonesia dalam iklan produk provider' [Images of Indonesian women in the advertisements of product providers], *Jurnal Perempuan*, 19(2). Available at http://eprints.qut.edu.au/78970/.

Sen, K., and D. Hill (2000) *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Senft, T., and N. Baym (2015) 'What does the selfie say? Investigating a global phenomenon', *International Journal of Communication*, 9(2015): 1,588–606.

Thajib, F. (2011) 'Bhs Sgktn di SMS' [SMS abbreviations], *Kultur Cell*, 7 January. Available at http://kulturcell.kunci.or.id/?p=361.

TrashStockBali (2015) 'Nanoe Biroe: menginspirasi, bukan menggurui' [Nanoe Biroe: inspires without patronising], *Bale Bengong*, 14 June. Available at http://balebengong.net/kabar-anyar/2015/06/14/nanoe-biroe-bukan-menggurui-tapi-menginspirasi-2.html. Accessed 3 March 2016.

Wang, J. (2008) *Brand New China: Advertising, Media and Commercial Culture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.

Warner, M. (2002) *Publics and Counterpublics*, Zone Books, New York.

Weintraub, A.N. (2011) *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, Routledge, London.

Weiss, M.L. (2014) 'New media, new activism: trends and trajectories in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia', *International Development Planning Review*, 36(1): 91–109.