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Don't Forget to Remember Me: An Audiovisual Archive of Everyday Life in Indonesia in the 21st Century

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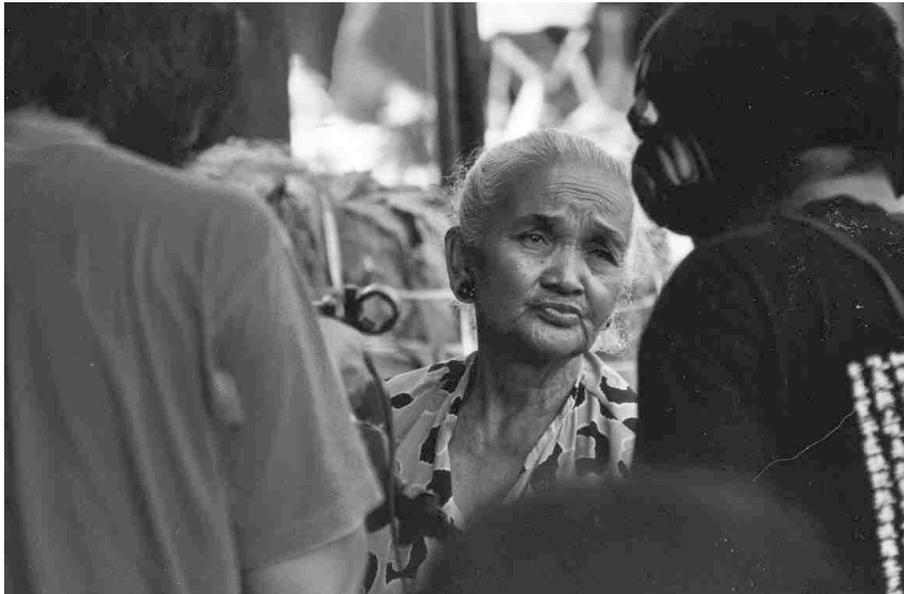
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**Don't Forget to Remember Me:
An Audiovisual Archive of Everyday Life in Indonesia in the
21st Century**

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People visiting shops in Pasar Baru in Jakarta; an intersection in Payakumbuh, West Sumatra; a street in the village of Kawal on the island of Bintan; a market in Bittuang in Tana Toraja, Sulawesi; a train station and a bus terminal in Surabaya; early morning gymnastics in Bittuang; a flag raising ceremony at a primary school in Sintang, West Kalimantan; a *jumatan* (Friday prayer) in Kawal; the production of kitchen utensils in Delanggu, Central Java; and interviews with a local politician in Payakumbuh, a sweeper in Jakarta, a traditional architect in Bittuang, and a schoolgirl in Sintang. What do these seemingly different items have in common? They are all examples of film recordings of (fragments of) everyday life in Indonesia. As such they form the substance of an audiovisual archive of everyday life in Indonesia in the 21st century, the making of which has recently been initiated by KITLV in cooperation with Off Stream Films in Jakarta.



[Photo: Woman in the market in Delanggu]

This ambitious project fits into a wider interest in both the history of everyday life and efforts among historians to emphasise the relevance of visual data. In 2004 the Sephis Program organised a workshop on 'Visual Sources as Alternative History' and in 2005 the Institute for Historical Studies of the University of Michigan initiated a program on 'History and the Visual' in order to explore the nature and role of visuality in historical understanding, and what it should mean in or add to our analytical matrix.¹ Such a turn towards visuality not only implies an interest in exploring new sets of visual data but also challenges us to conceptualise new analytical categories. There is, in other words, a shared awareness of the importance of visuality in history, especially in relationship with efforts to capture everyday life, but it is too early to formulate answers, if only because most of the questions have not been asked yet. Thus we explore a field where analytical categories and questions are still being formulated.

The search for a history of everyday life and the challenge to develop new sources and analytical approaches are also relevant for Indonesian historians. For decades official historiography followed government guidelines and was exclusively focused either on the unfolding of the nation under President Sukarno, or on a developmental narrative celebrating the achievements of the New Order state. This approach not only excluded further explorations in social history but also denied ordinary Indonesians a meaningful role in their own history. In our project the everyday life of (mostly) ordinary Indonesians is central. In that respect it is a modest attempt to bring Indonesians back into their own history.

Three conditions – political, financial and paradigmatic – facilitated our project. The first was the change of regime that took place after President Suharto stepped down in May 1998, which signalled the demise of the centralised authoritarian state with its strong and often violent security apparatus. Although large chunks of the New Order state are still very much alive, democratisation, freedom of press and regional autonomy opened the door for our project, as they made visual recordings of everyday life possible. Second, we can rely on a steady flow of funds, which is crucial for the continuity of our project. Most academic funding agencies subsidise only projects which are usually restricted to a 2-4 year period. These projects are organised around theoretically informed research questions and aim to achieve innovative results and to contribute to current academic debates. Our project is very different, as it primarily aims to collect data and runs beyond any regular academic time frame. However, a lucky coincidence was that from 2002 onwards KITLV is to receive funding from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences to conduct research on modern Indonesia. Part of this money is earmarked for our project, which is classified as 'data generating research'. Third, there has been over the last decades a shift in terms of subject, perspectives and approaches within historical research, away from the grand narratives about 'the nation', institutions (like class or labour unions), moral topics (like revolution, social movements, or modernisation), or statistical seriality, towards smaller and less articulated themes in the border areas between history and anthropology, where single narratives are replaced by a plurality of voices. This shift from big processes to small personal experiences is accompanied by a focus on the history of everyday life. Although the distinction between grand narratives and everyday life is paralleled by the distinctions between state institutions and ordinary

¹ 'Visual South: Using Visual Sources as Alternative History' (2005).

people, and written and oral sources, we should not overstate these distinctions because it is often precisely at the interfaces of these spheres that everyday life unfolds. Our project operates in this new area but it should not be located ‘outside’, ‘under’ or ‘beyond’ the grand narratives. When, for instance, we filmed a Monday morning flag raising ceremony at a primary school in Sintang, we not only recorded an aspect of everyday life that is ignored by historians, but also looked from a local perspective at the everyday manifestation of the nation-state. Everyday life and state institutions, in other words, do not belong to different domains. It is our intention to explore the everyday operations of ordinary people in state institutions as well as the way these institutions affect everyday life.²



[Still: Flag raising ceremony in Sintang]

The first large-scale effort to collect data on the everyday life of ordinary people started in 1937 in England when Charles Madge, Humphrey Jennings and Tom Harrison initiated their mass-observation projects (Crain 2006). They documented the coronation of King George VI in 1937 as it was seen through the eyes of a large group of ordinary people, and collected thousands of reports on people’s everyday lives and work, behaviour in the pub, and the experience of wartime at home. Most of these mass observations consisted of detailed written reports.

In France and Germany the history of everyday life was initiated by Henri Levevre and Alf Ludtke. Both historians advocated a subaltern approach to the lives of ordinary people and popular culture. In Indonesia Bambang Purwanto (2006) emphasised the importance of historical research on everyday life in Jakarta while using a variety of unconventional sources. In the 1950s Henri Levevre (1984, 1991) had already argued that capitalist culture should be analysed in its everyday manifestations which contained also a potential for change. In Germany Alf Ludtke (1995) launched the notion of

² See for instance Fitzpatrick (1999) on everyday life in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Alltagsgeschichte (everyday history) in the 1980s. With his colleagues he emphasised the importance of studying everyday life with a focus on the experience of work, family life, neighbourhood and school, in order to look ‘from the inside’ to the economic structures, political patterns and historical processes which determined people’s lives. This approach stresses the subjectivity of people’s experiences, which tends to get lost in histories of large structures and big processes. A focus on historical miniatures does not exclude people’s experiences from politics. Instead, it gives them a voice and demonstrates people’s ability to accommodate and obstruct authorities and to use unexpected opportunities. A search for everyday life will thus necessarily focus on the individual and the subjectivity of personal experience, while it also carries the possibility of unpredictability. It can show us that people are active agents who negotiate their lives within certain structural constraints (Adler, Adler and Fontana 1987: 228). On the other hand it can also reveal the way people suffer and lose their dignity and hope. We should therefore not make the mistake by replacing the ‘great men’ of the grand narratives with a romanticised cliché of smart and cunning ordinary people (Eckert and Jones 2002: 8).

Although we feel inspired by the writings of Levebvre and Ludtke, and our Indonesian colleagues from Off Stream use the slogan ‘voice of the voiceless’, our project is not restricted to such a subaltern approach and its concomitant ‘hidden transcripts of resistance’. Our aim is to record the ‘ordinary lives of people’ and not exclusively the ‘lives of ordinary people’. This is admittedly a difficult task, as it is easier to get access to poor people. Rich and powerful people have more to hide and tend to fence themselves off behind the walls of their air-conditioned compounds.

A similar interest in everyday life has also been developed within cultural studies. Ben Highmore (2002) published a reader in which a wide variety of approaches is presented. However the problem with this overview is that it contains an excess of abstract theory, as a result of which ‘the everyday’ becomes more and more problematic and less accessible.³ The practical consequences of these theoretical explorations are not elaborated, as the word ‘empirical’ does not appear once in the book. Moreover, the crucial connection between everyday life (which we prefer instead of ‘the everyday’) and its (audio) visual representations (instead of ‘the visual’), is only marginally touched upon. Barton (1982: 210) has in this respect rightly remarked that analysis is of course important in everyday life studies, but much of their strength lies in description. We would also like to emphasise the importance of documentation in order to grasp the paramount reality of everyday life, which consists of the relationships between objects in relationship practical acts. Later historians will need this sort of documentation in order to answer the question: ‘What was it like to live in the past?’ (Barton 1982: 221).

Our first experiences with the recording of everyday life were gained during a large oral history project on the closing years of Dutch colonial rule in the Netherlands Indies.⁴ Apart from life histories, recollections of aspects of everyday life – school, travel, work, leisure, food – form an interesting set of narratives about the daily reproduction of colonial relationships and in particular the experiences of racial distinctions. Because the majority of the people who were interviewed were Europeans

³ It would be interesting to analyse the aggressive nature of analytical language often used in cultural studies. Concepts are ‘interrogated’, ‘penetrated’, ‘thrown into crisis’, or at least ‘destabilised’.

⁴ See Steijlen (2002). For a collection of letters as a source of everyday life, see Schulte Nordholt (1999).

the experience of colonial domination by the colonised is not well represented in this archive, but the dominance of racial distinctions in the colony is clearly underlined.

The oral history project was conducted in the 1990s, which illustrates that historians are often too late. When we became interested in documenting the 1930s, most witnesses had already died. The same goes at present for our recent interest in the 1950s. Historians are, in other words, good at exploring, rescuing, and restoring archives but they should make more efforts to create archives as well. The successful effort in the 1990s to capture the remaining ‘memories of the East’ in our oral history archive made us realise how important information about everyday colonial life really is and that we have a responsibility to collect data when it is still possible. This is especially relevant in relation to the elusive nature of everyday life in contemporary Indonesia that unfolds now and has disappeared by tomorrow. It is in this field where we aim to find how big structures, patterns and processes manifest themselves in the everyday lives of ordinary Indonesians.

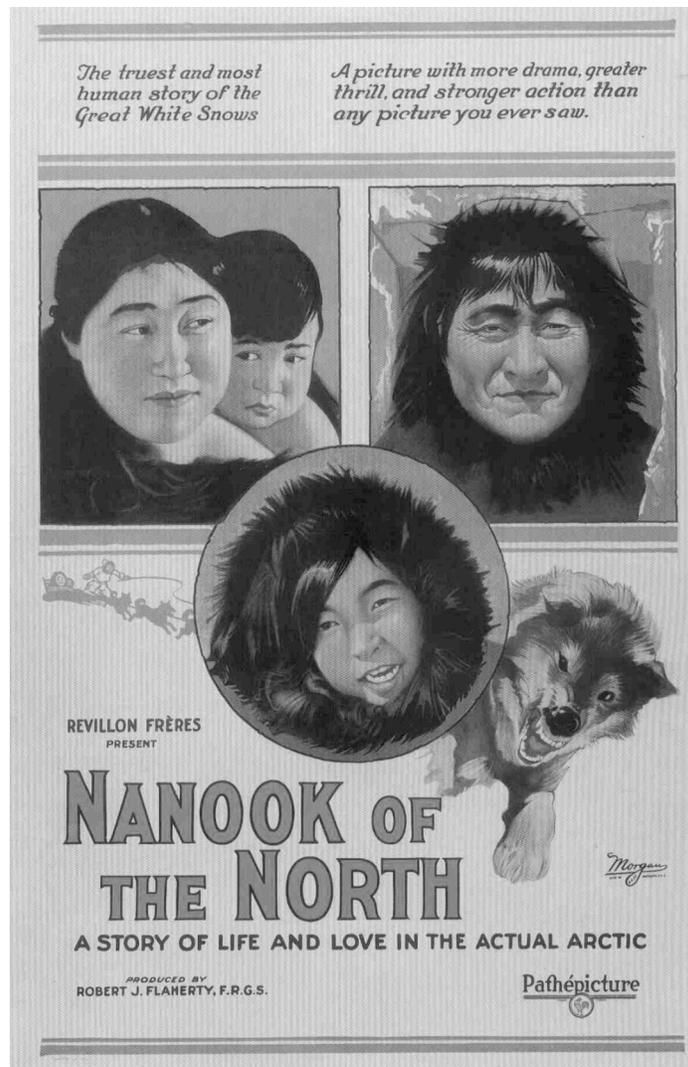
Such an archive of everyday life in contemporary Indonesia is, in our view, by definition audio-visual. And here we come across another problem that historians have to solve: the fact that they are, so to speak, glued to the written text. This is also true for those who are involved in cultural studies and tend to see the world as an ensemble of texts. Audio-visual representations of everyday life are not meant to serve as nice illustrations to a written text. On the contrary, it is our ambition to create an archive of images and sounds, on the basis of which new perspectives can be opened and different narratives explored. An approach such as this requires special methodologies and challenges us to conceptualise new analytical categories.

Filmmaking, Agency and the Absence of Plot

Although our project is historical in its goals, it is anthropological in its methodology. Therefore we will look briefly at a few aspects of visual anthropology. There are roughly speaking five broad genres in visual anthropology. The first concerns the study of media (film, television etc.), in which the visual representation is the focus of analysis.⁵ This rapidly expanding field overlaps to a large extent with cultural studies but is not central to our project.

The second genre covers a wide field of recordings within the context of specific research projects. In this context certain rituals, performances or interviews are recorded. Such recordings serve as an illustration to a written text but can also be made into a documentary film. Classic examples include *Nanook of the North* by Flaherty (1922) and *Bewogen Koper* by Van der Keuken (1993), while on another level the recordings by Van Zanten on Saluang (Van Zanten 2002) and the Randai Theater (Van Zanten and Barendregt 2000) should be mentioned. The quality of the examples mentioned here differs considerably.

⁵ See for instance Sen (1994), Hill and Sen (2000), and Loven (2003).



[Poster: Nanook of the North]

The films by Van Zanten are interesting but they are made by non-professional filmmakers, whereas *Bewogen Koper* (on brass music and musicians) is made by a professional filmmaker and based on anthropological research by visual anthropologist Boonzaajer-Flaes. Margaret Mead wrote that visual anthropologists should not necessarily be professional filmmakers:

We do not demand that a field ethnologist write with the skills of a novelist or a poet, although we do indeed accord disproportionate attention to those who do. It is equally inappropriate to demand that filmed behaviour have the earmarks of a work of art. We can be grateful when it does, and we cherish those rare combinations of artistic ability and scientific fidelity that have given us great ethnographic films. (Mead 1975: 5)

Contrary to Margaret Mead we think that film making is a profession and therefore we decided to cooperate with professional film makers in our project.⁶ An excellent example of cooperation between an anthropologist and professional filmmakers is the project by Linda Connor and Patsy and Timothy Asch (1986) on Jero Tapekan, a Balinese healer. Together they produced four films and a book with written documentation on context, background information and the filming and editing processes.

Another topic that has been debated concerns the question of whether the camera can be seen as a neutral observer or as an actor actively participating in the locations where the film is made. In our project, we use both the seemingly neutral observation from a fixed camera position and the active involvement of the camera in social interaction.

Looking at our recordings made from a fixed position; it seems at first sight as if our project follows the very first experiments of pioneer film makers like the Lumiere brothers.

The Lumiere brothers adopted a simple procedure: they chose a subject, which they thought, might be interesting to record, set up their camera in front of it, and went on shooting until the stock ran out. Any common event – *Baby at the Lunch Table*, *A Boat Leaving Harbour* – served their purpose, which was simply to record events in motion. They used the film camera as a recording instrument whose sole advantage over the still camera was that it could capture the element of movement. (Reisz and Millar 1968: 16)

In the 1950s this approach was continued in France in a more sophisticated way by the so-called *cinéma vérité* filmmakers, who decided to document reality by excluding any interference by the camera.⁷ The subjective agency of the camera had to be transformed into an objective observer. Some film makers who advocated this ‘observational style of shooting’ followed this principle to the extent that they refused to make interviews, considering them to be an intolerable form of interference (Young 1975: 66). In the United States the *cinéma vérité* found expression in the documentary film *Primary* by Robert Drew in the early 1960s. In an illuminating article Jeanne Hall (1991) demonstrated that there was a wide discrepancy between theory and practice. In theory, the film should only reflect the observations made by the camera, but in practice the editing process resulted in a highly constructed narrative.

One of the founding fathers of *cinéma vérité*, Jean Rouch, actually rejected the possibility of the purely observational style of recording. Instead, he eventually advocated an active cooperation with the people who were filmed in order to turn them from object into subject and to include their imagination as well. In this context he even introduced the term ‘ethno-fiction’. In Indonesia Hadi Purnomo, with his *Ciliwungku*,

⁶ See for instance the photos made by Walker Evans (1903-1975) of the lives of white share croppers in the Deep South of the United States during the Great Depression. What started as social photography (Agee and Evans 1941) turned in 2005 into an exposition in the University of Michigan Museum of Art where the photo exhibition revealed the aesthetics of poverty. Another example concerns our own series of ‘fixed’ recordings in various places in Indonesia which will be simultaneously be displayed in the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam (see below).

⁷ The term was originally coined by the Soviet film maker Dziga Vertov who advocated the *Kino Pravda* to uncover the hidden realities of social life (*Tempo* 13-19 December 2005).

Ciliwungmu (1983), a documentary on the river Ciliwung which runs through Jakarta, and recently Aryo Danusiri with *Lukas's Moment* (2005), on ethnic relationships in a fishing community in Papua, practise a genre that is somewhat similar to *cinéma vérité*. In this respect, *Tempo* magazine (13-19 December 2005) characterised the Jakarta Film Festival of December 2005 as a celebration of *cinéma vérité*.

Our project adopts a clear observational style of shooting which is also similar to the *cinéma vérité* approach. We realise the importance of agency on both sides of the camera: people as actors of their own life while the camera plays an active role as well. However, the people we film do not become co-authors. In this respect it is important to emphasise that even a seemingly neutral recording implies a series of decisions as a result of which many things and themes are excluded and remain invisible. This was particularly true for colonial photography (Gelman Taylor 1997) and film. In *Moeder Dao*, a poetic compilation of colonial documentaries from the period 1912-1933 by Vincent Monnikendam (1995), there are, for instance, no traces of colonial repression or nationalist resistance. In our project we also have to make decisions about what we film and why. In order to enhance the transparency of this process we keep a diary in which decisions – and, we admit, their erratic *ad hoc* nature – are exposed.

The third genre of films is a mixture of documentary and feature film in which a scenario structures the recording. Early examples of staged ethnological films include *In the Land of the Headhunters* (1914) based on a scenario by Edward Curtis and played by the Kwakiutl.⁸ In order to obtain a maximum of ‘authenticity’ certain scenes were recorded several times.

In the attempt to provide an ‘authoritative’ text of visual evidence, the anthropologists may have been less interested in narrative continuity than in preserving images of Kwakiutl culture, and yet they actually re-shot one spectacular death scene in which a dummy body is thrown off a cliff after a dramatic struggle. (Russell 1999:101)

Recently a series of films by Visi Anak Bangsa in Jakarta were made according to a similar procedure. *Putri Bintang Kejora* (2001), for instance, tells the story of a Papuan girl who leaves her home village and experiences a crisis. Based on anthropological research the story is dramatised while the main character is played by a local Papuan girl.⁹ Although Leonard Retel pretends that his films about everyday life in a Jakarta neighbourhood are the result of observational recordings, a closer look reveals many instances of staged recordings.¹⁰ The recordings in our project are made without a prefabricated script. We do not know in advance what will happen once we start filming and we do not repeat a recording in order to get a better result. Although this may suggest neutrality, we do realise that the very act of recording implies an intrusion in people’s lives.

⁸ In 1972 the film was restored by Bill Holm, George Quimby and David Gerth. Soundtracks of songs and dialogues by the Kwakiutl were added to the original silent movie. On request of the Kwakiutl the title was changed to ‘In the land of the War Canoes’ (<http://www.milestonefilms.com/pdf/Warcanoes.pdf>).

⁹ Personal communication Aryo Danusiri.

¹⁰ Retel (2002, 2004). The fast change of camera positions in certain dialogues as well as other scenes clearly suggests a script and staged recordings. Moreover, the editing of his second film clearly emphasises an anti Islam message.

The last two genres concern efforts to engage people to participate actively in the filming process either by reflecting on an earlier recording or by giving them a camera. One strategy is the recording of a viewing where people watch themselves and have the opportunity to reflect and comment on what they see. Nijland's research on a Tobelo marriage (1989) is an example of this strategy. Actually, the marriage is no longer the central topic of the film, as the focus shifts to people's comments and reflections on what they see. Also one of the films by Connor and Asch is reflective in nature as it records Jero Tapekan watching herself (Connor, Asch and Asch 1986).

The other strategy concerns the empowerment of people by giving them a camera, which authorises them to follow their own script. The Etnoreflika project in Yogyakarta is a clear example of this approach.¹¹ Street children are invited to film their own life after a couple of sessions during which technical aspects of filming are explained and a script has been written. However, it would be too naive to suppose that these children make a film which reflects the realities of their lives. Instead one can recognise how they have chosen a certain genre – for instance a television soap opera – which not only serves as a model for the script but also for the way emotions like anger or grief are expressed. In that respect we do not watch how children experience their life, but how they want to represent it. Despite this agenda of empowerment, the camera for the people approach is still framed in a set of powerful formats that prescribe dominant modes of representation.

If we try to position our project within the anthropological genres of filmmaking mentioned here we acknowledge an affinity with the observational style of recording but we deny any claim to objectivity. Perhaps it is more important to identify three major differences. First, we do not concentrate on a particular subject like a ritual or a performance. On the contrary, everyday life by definition cannot be restricted to a limited number of topics. In that sense, it is an open-ended phenomenon. Secondly, our project is also open-ended in terms of time. Because we aim to build an archive, the systematic repetition of recordings should open up the possibility of making comparisons in order to measure change and continuity. Included in such comparisons are, for instance, the physical appearances of certain locations, the sociology of traffic, vernacular speech, dress codes, and various kinds of behaviour in schools, offices etc. Finally, and this is perhaps the most important distinction, our archive consists of original footage instead of final products. We do not film according to a particular script and do no edit in order to present a narrative with a specific plot.¹² Here we come across a problem that both historians and anthropologists face. As academic professionals they are prisoners of textual narratives which are driven towards a particular plot. 'Case studies' or quotes from documents are used to illustrate a point and to underpin an argument. An article or book is incomplete without a final paragraph or chapter in which the narrative reaches its denouement and the argument its conclusion. In our project we refuse to construct such narratives simply because one of the main characteristics of everyday life is that it lacks plot. Our kind of filming is basically open-ended, or 'plotless', like most of our everyday life experiences ('nothing much happened today'). Hence our recordings are narratives

¹¹ See for example *Bunga Trotaor* by Dian Farida (2002) and *Lampu merah kehidupanku* (2004).

¹² See also Vos (1991) who argues that the editing of a film kills the original recordings, which are more valuable as historical sources than the final edited product. The original recording is of course not the same as the recording of something 'authentic.'

without plot, representations of routine activities, a series of structured fragments of everyday life.

Around 1900 historians realised that film would become an important source for historical research while at the same time ethnographers emphasised the importance of creating collections of film material. Efforts in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 20th century as well as in Indonesia after the Revolution to establish a film archive materialised very slowly. It took even longer to acknowledge the relevance of creating a more encompassing visual archive. One century after the first pleas were voiced to reserve visual material we finally started our project. Meanwhile technological developments made an end to the limitations of the static camera and celluloid films. Smaller cameras facilitate more flexibility, but also better means to penetrate into people's lives. In our conclusion, we will briefly address some of the ethical implications of these new developments, but first we will introduce and describe our project.

‘Recording the Future’: Program, Procedures and *Permisi*

Instead of first developing a sophisticated theory, we decided to start our project with a high degree of theoretical innocence. We realise that such an ambitious project is also a learning process. We have formulated what we have in mind and base ourselves on a few clearly circumscribed methodological principles, which we will elaborate here.¹³

Ordinary people and people's ordinary life leave few traces. Our focus is on the ordinary life that is often taken for granted, like fish that don't talk about the water in which they swim. We are interested in the part of people's lives they tend to describe in terms like 'nothing happened' and 'I didn't do anything today'. Our aim is to record fragments of this everyday life in a systematic way in different locations in Indonesia over a long period of time.

Our strategy to capture everyday life in Indonesia consists of three related approaches: the recording of (1) localities (2) themes or topics and (3) individual interviews. These three approaches are connected because localities form the environment where particular individuals live and work, and where we will record aspects of their everyday lives. These recordings will be repeated every four years in order to create an 'historical layer cake'. These repetitive recordings are inspired by the Granada TV project *7UP* which started in 1964 and is concentrated on a peer group which is interviewed every seven years.¹⁴ When this longitudinal documentary started, a new, hand-held camera style of filming was introduced. In 2005 the seventh recording (49Up) was made and as a whole the series provides an interesting insight into British social history. In our project we decided to focus on places instead of people. People may drop out, disappear and they eventually die, whereas places stay where they are.

We started the first phase of our project in 2003. Each year recordings are made in two places over a period of ten days, which results in 20-25 hours of recordings. In four years we document eight places, after which we return to the first place.¹⁵ It is our

¹³ We have decided not to include footage of recordings mentioned in this paper on a separate website, because we want to protect the integrity of the people we filmed.

¹⁴ www.paulalmond.com/7up.htm; *The New York Times* (31 October 2004).

¹⁵ In the first phase we cooperate with local universities or regional administrations who give us letters of recommendation, while we are seeking to establish a long term partnership with LIPI.

ambition that this project should run for a century, which will result in an archive of 4000-5000 hours of recordings.

We selected eight places more or less at random throughout the Indonesian archipelago: Jakarta and Surabaya, big cities with different characters; Delanggu, an urbanising rural area in central Java; Payakumbuh, Sintang, and Ternate, small provincial towns in different ecological environments; in West Sumatra, West Kalimantan and East Indonesia respectively; Kawal, a small fishing community plus tourist resort on the island of Bintan close to Singapore; and Bittuang, a small up-hill market village in northern Tana Toraja in Sulawesi. This collection of places is not a statistical representation of 'Indonesia', but it opens different windows on everyday life in Indonesia, the city, the provincial and harbour town, and rural, uphill, coastal and river areas.

The procedures for filming these locations are bound to strict rules, in order to facilitate comparisons over time. In each place we chose two locations, or 'fixed points' – a crossroads, a street, a square, or a market, in short: public spaces – where we make shootings from 5.30-6.00 in the morning (at sunrise), 8.00-8.30, 11.30-11.00, 13.00-13.30, 15.30-16.00, 17.30-18.00 (sunset); 20.00-20.30 and 22.30-23.00. These recordings enable us to observe for instance the behaviour of traffic and, more in general, the way people use public spaces. What struck us in particular is the large number of people who hang around in many places. Careful observation of crossroads and other public spaces reveals the extent to which these locations are inhabited by a multitude of people whose main activity, so it seems, consists of 'hanging around'.



[Still: Recording of fixed point in Jakarta]



[Photo: Recording of a fixed point in Kawal]

A second way to document these public spaces is inspired by footage made in 1912 by Col. J Lamster. He put a camera on the front of his car and drove around the streets of Bandung. This enables us to see a town, a street etc from the perspective of a driver or passenger. In our project we decided to adopt a similar approach and film from the top of a car. When we were stuck in a traffic jam in Jakarta the recording was not stopped – we continued to film the back of the bus in front of us because that is how millions of Indonesians experience a traffic jam. Where it was relevant, as in West Kalimantan, we also made a long recording during a trip on the Kapuas river.



[Stills: Bandung 1912 by J. Lamster]



[Photo: Recording from top of a car in Payakumbuh]



[Photo: Recording on the Kapuas river in Sintang]

A third device to cover a location is a long walk of 3-4 hours while we keep the camera rolling. Before the walk is made, the trajectory has been explored and mapped. During the walk the two filmmakers decide where they stop to talk with people. Usually the first question is about what a person is doing, and then we see where the conversation ends. This strategy results in a variety of roadside interviews, recordings of food stalls, children on their way to school, chats with women, and occasionally an opportunity to enter a house. What happens depends very much on improvisation. It is important that the camera not only frames a person's head (what we call 'talking heads') but also records

what a person is doing (his/her hands) and the contexts in which s/he operates. In general, work is an important entry point of people's everyday life.



[Still: Sweeper in front of Megawati's residence in Jakarta]



[Still: Politician in Payakumbuh]



[Still: Loading a truck in Sintang]

All three shootings – from fixed points, from a car and while walking – are strategies towards a coherent approach to everyday life. The walking route as the most in-depth recording of the location is contextualised and framed by respectively the car (and boat) trip and the fixed shootings.

In order to determine the exact locations of the fixed points, and the exact courses of the trips by car and the walks, we make use of a GPS device. This should enable us to determine the location for the next recording after four years. What if a road is interrupted or a fixed point no longer accessible because of recent building activities? Problems like these have to be solved on the spot and based on the principle that one must try to stay as close as possible to the original locations and trajectories.

In order to connect the locations we document with a wider context, every morning we film the headlines of available newspapers and add some local news as well. As a result, we catch some glimpses of national events and world news – such as the Iraq War in 2003 – and local issues such as, for instance, local elections in 2005. What is printed in newspapers is not necessarily the talk of the day. Very few people actually talked about the Iraq War in 2003 and in 2005 local newspapers were more interested in local politics than most people we met. The presidential elections of 2004 were, in contrast, a hotly debated subject. More often, however, one of the recurring topics in most interviews concerned the costs of everyday life. In many instances prices of food and other expenses, salaries and other sources of income formed the key subjects of conversation.



[Photo: Recording of newspaper headlines]

A second strategy in approaching everyday life is the recording of a variety of themes and topics. Some of these belong to the category of obvious aspects of everyday public life: a traffic jam, a school class, the Sunday service in church, the *jumatan*, or Friday prayer, in the mosque, a bus terminal, a railway station, a warung, a market. We are familiar with all of them, but we tend to ignore them in terms of documentation, as a result of which they tend to slip away from our memory as soon as circumstances change.

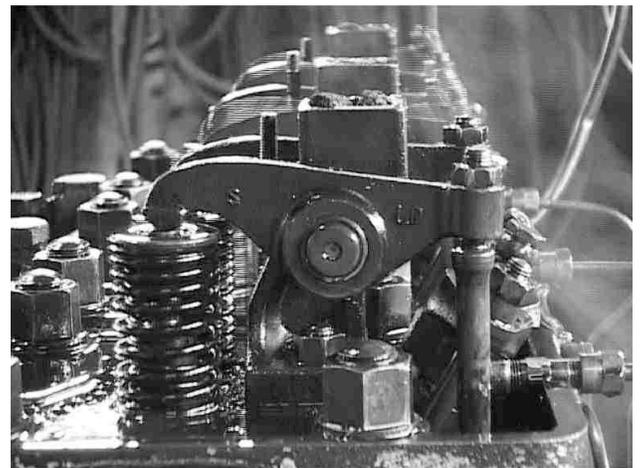


[Still: *Jumatan* in Kawal]

Related to these topics are recordings of various kinds of work: producers of kitchen utensils and peasants in Central Java, a small krupuk factory in West Sumatra, and an ice factory in Bintan. We also visited the offices of the *camat* and the police in Kawal and schools in West Sumatra. But we also have film of people watching television, or building a traditional house in Bittuang, a small karaoke bar and traditional weaving in Sintang, a shop with household equipment, and kids with their guitar singing in front of their house in Jakarta. The examples mentioned here illustrate that there is no rigid system in the topics we record, because everyday life consists of a large number of different activities in a variety of contexts. In general, we try to cover the fields of work, social life in the public sphere, leisure, religion and aspects of indoor private life. As the project develops over time, we will revisit places that have been recorded in order to trace changes in offices, schools, work, leisure and houses, while it is also possible to add new topics and to include new themes. In this respect the project offers room for a great deal of flexibility within a well-structured frame.



[Still: Police office in Kawal]



[Still: Ice factory in Kawal]



[Still: People watching television in Bittuang]

It is important to underline that these recordings require a special type of filming. Instead of the usual documentary mode of filming in which several recordings are made and the best of them is cut into the final version of the film during the editing process, we make single and extremely long shootings which form the archival material. The recordings of fixed points consist of pieces of 30 minutes, while the recordings of rides are only interrupted when a tape has to be replaced.

There should be room for improvisation as well. When we were filming in Pasar Baru in Jakarta, a local strongman approached us and advised us to accept his protection. We decided to pay him, but interviewed him as well. Eventually he became an assistant and carried our equipment. Another moment of improvisation occurred in Bittuang. Lexy Rambadeta was filming children playing in front of the house where we stayed when people started to scream and cry in the neighbour's house. He recorded people running towards that house and followed them inside where a group of people assembled to pray and sing around an old man who was lying on the ground, apparently dying. This was a unique opportunity to record a sudden moment of anxiety in everyday life. But like many other narratives this small crisis ended without a plot because the man did not die. Finally, a karaoke club right next to our hotel rooms in Payakumbuh, kept a few of us awake till late into the night. So, we decided to visit the club and were lucky to record a man who sang 'Don't forget to remember me'. Then we realised we had recorded the title song for our project.



[Still: Mance in Jakarta]



[Still: Karaoke in Payakumbuh]

Finally the third approach consists of interviews with individual persons. We have occasional interviews with people we meet during our walks, like a candidate for a local council in Payakumbuh who starts to talk about his *pencak silat* activities; a ‘timer’ at a crossroads in Delanggu who collects money from minibus drivers which he has to share with the police; a *camat* in Kawal, who confesses that his ideal was to become a bureaucrat; and a protestant pastor and a traditional carpenter in Tana Toraja who tell about their work. Apart from these meetings, everywhere we film we arrange one in-depth interview with a young person within the private setting of his/her house. We film the interior of the house, the bedroom, the kitchen, and starting from their present environment and interests we move the conversation gradually towards the future. What do these young people expect to achieve, what are their hopes and ideals? We chose this

approach because we think that current concerns are best illustrated when they are projected into the future. Besides, it is interesting for future visitors to our archive to listen to historical fantasies about the future.

These interviews are also interesting confrontations between a Jakarta-based interviewer and people with a particular regional experience. The young secondary school teacher who was interviewed in Bittuang, for instance, showed a clear preference for the New Order which had offered her family economic stability, whereas the interviewer was shocked by her lack of interest in human rights issues. The young man, who was interviewed in Payakumbuh, was less outspoken. He was a graduate from the local university and was not sure what he would do next. Actually, he was rather inarticulate and confused about a lot of issues. Usually people like him would never be interviewed, but in a sense he represents a much larger group of young people who try to make sense of their lives as they unfold around them.

A key rule in our project is that the language we use is Indonesian. Seen in historical perspective we expect to register interesting developments and changes in the use of everyday Indonesian. In general, nothing is at the same time more normal *and* elusive than the everyday vernacular, which is rarely recorded *and* archived. In Indonesia the national language is often used as a second language. Nevertheless, we decided to use Indonesian as the language of our project in order to avoid complicated moments of translation, while it also enables us to trace developments over time in the national language within particular localities¹⁶

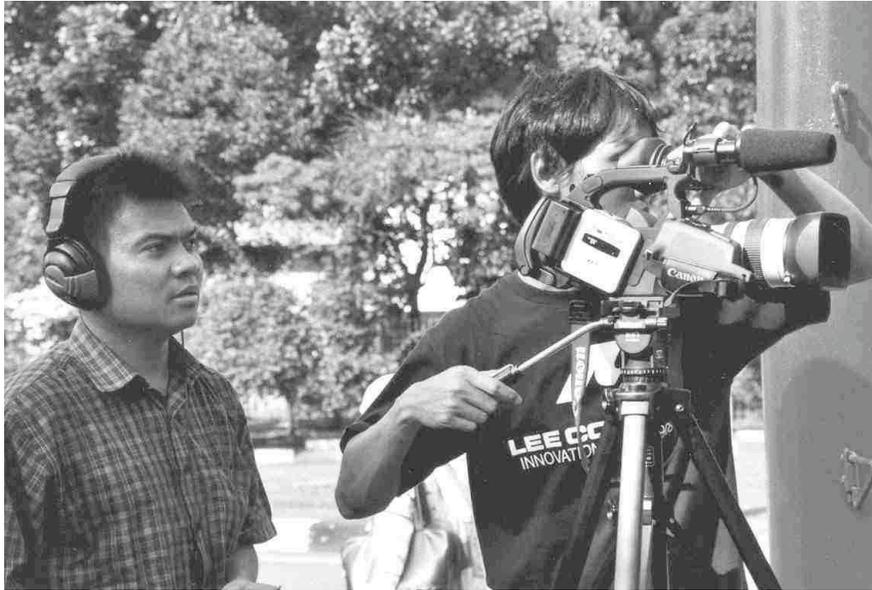
Taken together the recordings made from fixed points, during detailed documented drives and walks, in combination with particular themes and topics to which in depth interviews are added, provide the building blocks for a valuable archive of everyday life in (not 'of') Indonesia in the 21st century, which can help researchers to recognise abstract structures and big processes in the daily lives of ordinary people.

It is essential to work with a small crew of not more than five or six persons. At the moment two persons from KITLV Leiden, who are in charge of production, logistics and archiving, and two persons from Off Stream in Jakarta, who make the recordings form the core team, while in each place a local assistant and a driver make up the crew. A local assistant can introduce us to people and should be able to find quick solutions to sudden problems. Since this project requires intense cooperation for 3 to 4 weeks every year, an optimal level of social chemistry is a crucial precondition for success. Professionalism, mutual respect and a good sense of humour form the necessary ingredients.

In our project we use professional mini DV cameras. In 2003 we used a Canon XL-1s camera, while in 2004 and 2005 we used a Sony dsr pd-170p. We use Sony or Panasonic 60 minute minidv tapes, which we do not record until the final stage because the quality of the sound track is less good at the end of the tape. For sound recording we used a Canon camera microphone and a Sennheiser external mike, MKE-300, in 2003. Because we were not satisfied with the external mike in 2004 we used a Sennheiser MKH-70 microphone with a windshield together with the microphone that goes with the Sony dsr pd-170p. In 2005 we changed to a wireless external microphone in combination

¹⁶ Note that the everyday vernacular of the colonial regime, a language of command and fear, has already disappeared, while it has become extremely difficult to uncover traces of the language of post revolutionary nationalism from the 1950s.

with the Sony we already used in 2004. Because we wanted to improve stability in the shootings during the walks, in Payakumbuh 2004 we experimented with a glidecam 4000. This device did not fulfil our expectations, so we abandoned it from the second location in 2004 on the island of Bintan. In two instances in 2003 we used extra cameras. Once was to record people walking on the street in Pasar Baru while we interviewed some of them who passed the camera. For this purpose, we used a mini dv DCR TRV-15 E (PAL) - 1 ccd. The second event was when we used a mini dv Sony DCR VX-1000 E (PAL) - 3 ccd for an extra route by car at dusk when the other camera was used at a fixed point (the car passed the fixed camera while both were operating).



[Photo: Lexy and Andre]

During the recordings a diary is kept in which we explain our decisions about locations, trajectories, themes, topics and persons, and also the context in which certain recordings were made. For instance when we recorded the interview with the protestant pastor in Bittuang the church elders tried to take over the staging of the meeting. We refused to face a crowd and insisted on recording the interview in a separate room. In Sintang we decided to incorporate in our project the Dutch Catholic priest who was our host, since he played a central role in a topic/theme we wanted to record. Themes and general ideas about the interviews and locations are always discussed with the crew before we start shooting and every day we evaluate the content of the shootings and interviews. A separate check of the quality of the recordings (visual and sound) is also done on a daily basis.

Cataloguing is crucial in order to keep the fast growing amount of recordings (40-50 hours per year) accessible. We make loggings of the recordings based on place, date, image, sound, and theme/topic. It is, once more, important to emphasise that we do not edit our recordings; they are what they are.

The archive is still under construction. Eventually it will consist of the recordings, a catalogue, a diary, and digital photos, which provide some additional contextual

information. We plan to design an interactive archive in which visitors in search of a particular topic can make links to related recordings while they also can leave notes and comments. The original tapes are stored and recordings are transferred to DVD. In order to protect the integrity of the people we film and interview recordings can only be used by others with permission from the KITLV. A catalogue of all the recordings will be available on the internet. Separately we keep a small archive with objects and texts, which were collected during the recordings, and also, for the sake of history, a set of interviews was held with the ‘first crew’ about the design and start of the project.

The archive contains an ongoing flow of recordings of everyday life in the eight places we have selected throughout Indonesia. How it will be used is very difficult to predict, and it may already contain answers to questions we are not yet aware of. However two ‘by products’ can already be mentioned. In the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam a wall of 16 flat screens, showing simultaneous recordings of fixed points, and monitors with a selection of other footages will be installed. Another plan is to make a documentary in 2007 based on the first cycle of about 200 hours of recordings, which will give an impression of ‘a day in the life of Indonesia at the beginning of the 21st century’.

To conclude, a few words may be added about the ethical aspects of our project. On the whole we have experienced a remarkable willingness of people to cooperate. Often people asked what we were doing and why, and we answered that we were filming everyday life in order to make an archive. That was usually sufficient. Very few people explicitly refused to be interviewed – something which we immediately respect – and most people adjusted easily to the presence of a camera. Nevertheless, the camera does ‘penetrate’ into their lives. This may be less disturbing as long as we make recordings in public places, but we are careful about sensitive situations and information. Although we do not film people who refuse to cooperate, we only ask permission beforehand when we want to enter people’s houses. It is in this respect not easy to establish a clear border between public and private domains. The private life of poor people takes place to a large extent in public space, whereas certain public spaces like upper middle class neighbourhoods and expensive shopping malls are largely privatised. We should add here that we have not yet filmed many rich people, who have more to hide and are possibly less willing to cooperate. Moreover, the right to refuse, which has taken root in Western civic culture, was not strongly developed under Suharto’s New Order.¹⁷

The problem of ethics will never be solved because filming implies social interaction, which is recorded one-sidedly. As Young writes concerning Jean Rouch’s famous film *Chronique d’un été*:

In it, the visible wall between the filmmaker and his subject collapsed. We see it falling in the scene with the garage mechanic as he explains how he fiddles his books to make ends meet. He is quite matter of the fact about it, unconcerned that he is being recorded. Behind him stands his wife, trying to shush him. But she smiles too, embarrassed, because they are also being photographed. The microphone takes away a man’s words, but the camera takes away his soul.

¹⁷ Based on current rules regarding the protection of privacy it would be impossible to conduct this project in the United States, while we have serious doubts whether people in the Netherlands would be willing to cooperate.

Clearly such an important procedure should not be concealed. It is an old-fashioned notion that the camera should not be looked at since the effect of the camera pointing at the people can often be measured by watching the way they deal with it. (Young 1975:78)

Ethical issues will change over time and will therefore remain a topic of ongoing concern, just as the whole project should be managed based on ongoing adjustments to new situations, experiences and possibilities within the fixed framework we have established. In the end we hope to create a dynamic and innovative archive which will help to remember the sort of information which we easily tend to forget, but which constitutes the everyday experiences of ordinary Indonesians.

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