

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/73550> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Juliastuti, N.

**Title:** Commons people: managing music and culture in contemporary Yogyakarta

**Issue Date:** 2019-05-21

CHAPTER 4

ARCHIVING CONDITION

When digital files become the norm of how music circulates and operates, it does not mean the start of the intangible to prevail over the tangible. Instead, it might be more productive to read it as the start of another level of tangibility. The emergence of collectors who collect a range of analogue and digital technologies demonstrates the growing appeal for tangible things. Bijsterveld and van Dijk use terms like ‘obsolete’, ‘nostalgia’, and ‘technostalgia’ to frame the revival of old sound technology—notably vinyl and cassettes (2009: 123-169). But these terms—obsolete, nostalgia, and technostalgia—do not feel entirely proper to capture the spirit of a new generation of vinyl and cassettes collectors in Indonesia.

Throughout my interactions with collectors that I talked with during my research, listening to and playing vinyl or cassettes was part of their new and current musical experiences. It was not necessarily a part of the music consumption of their families or peer environment from the past. This was the case for the collectors who were brought up with listening to MP3 files on their laptops. Encounters with vinyl and cassettes exposed them to a newly discovered corporeal experience that I will explain below.

For some collectors, cassettes or vinyl were neither old nor new technologies. They have always been an important part of their listening culture. For them, cassettes and vinyl generates listening experience that is incomparable with streaming MP3 on their computers or mobile phones. To elucidate how vinyl reigns, Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) state that vinyl is regarded as the ‘king format’.<sup>40</sup> Tactility serves as an important element to contribute to the growing currency of vinyl as an iconic format. Bartmanski and Woodward (2015) explain the making of vinyl as a cultural icon through immersion and entanglement processes. Vinyl is often connected with its related material ecologies. It invites further engagements, and constructs the interpretation of the users through how they feel about the vinyl. In this chapter, I use some of the perception expressed in the rise of vinyl studied by Bartmanski and Woodward to understand the popularity of cassette and vinyl in the local music scene. To listen to an outdated music technology is enjoyable because

40 Two chapters in the book, “Medium: Handling and Hearing” and “Thing: Qualities and Entanglements” are dedicated to exploring the many facets of imminent tactility and sound quality of vinyl (Bartmanski and Woodward, 2015: 35-99).

it provides “a whole range of tactile, haptic, visual, even olfactory experience” (Bartmanski and Woodward 2016: 6).

In Bartmanski and Woodward (2015), the iconic value of vinyl derives from the valuation process carried out by the prominent figures in music circulated in global scale—musicians, DJs, owners of respectful record labels. The collectors in my research are not usually regarded as the representation of music in national level. The scale of their music collection is small and limited. They are the ordinary music people. Being a music collector is a deliberate choice driven by an intention to fulfill the need for certain audio materials. It is the need which fulfills the curiosity of local music history. This is a factor which differentiates the collectors in this research from those in Bartmanski and Woodward's research.

An increase in the number of vinyl and cassette collectors worldwide was accompanied with the localization of Cassette Store Day and Record Store Day—a global ritual and celebration to symbolize the revival of ‘the king’ of music technologies. Record Store Day celebration in Indonesia marks the period where collecting is not a practice merely attached to certain fondness for records and cassettes, but is part of new music culture. The proponents of the campaign were mainly young people who had their own cassette and records shops, or mobile shops (*lapak*) for music related material. The owner of the shops might have an interest in participating in the Cassette Store Day or Record Store Day so that they can sell as many as cassettes and records possible. During the celebration day, there would be many locally owned vendors and independent retailers offering records and cassettes for sale.

Collectors often wait for Record Store Day in anticipation of obtaining a rare item. Record Store Day and Cassette Store Day provide the best opportunities for finding cassettes and records that are difficult to find, or they are days which can be utilized for assessing what is available. Many musicians have used the days to release their self-produced music in record or cassette form. To follow Harvey (2015), Record Store Day has been successful in branding music consumption as ‘an ethical decision.’ It becomes the most important day when musicians, fans, independent producers and music retailers, gather in one place. To purchase a cassette or vinyl during Record Store Day and Cassette Store Day is to make a contribution towards the production of indie music. In this case, the materiality of music takes a prominent position. Record Store Day and Cassette Store Day amplify materiality through collecting and buying

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

practices.

On Record Store Day in 2015 it felt like I followed the celebration in three different contexts at once.<sup>41</sup> It was Saturday when Record Store Day was celebrated—which happened to be the market day in Leiden. As I walked down Nieuwe Rijn, the street where the market activity is located in the city, with my family for our weekly shopping ritual, I saw a huge “Record Store Day” banner hung outside Velvet Music shop. A band played inside the shop. The shop was busier than usual. Many bands were scheduled to play in the shop to celebrate Record Store Day. We passed Plato, another music shop, located in a small alley nearby Francobolli Café. A band was also playing there. My phone kept vibrating—as all my social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) were busy notifying me of photos and news posted by friends or record shops owners, who celebrated Record Store Day in Jakarta or Jogja.

### STRATIFIED PRECARITY

According to Kaur (2015), while information goes digital and the ubiquitous use of paper is questioned, historians encounter a major problem of how to preserve the digital trails of the contemporary present. More precisely, such a problem lies in how historians “separate time or rather delineate the past in an age of acceleration” (Kaur 2015: 242-253).

The resources from where knowledge can be generated appear to be abundant, and sometimes appear in the form of excess, so we perceive them as something unfortunate, like a *banjir*, a flood. Thus there is the popular term, *banjir informasi*, a flood of information. Kaur’s essay also talks about

41 The initiator of Record Store Day 2015 in Jogja was Jogja Record Store Club - a music and merchandise collective. Two key persons of Jogja Record Store Club are Indra Menus of YK Booking (an initiative to provide support system for local and international band, which tours Jogja) and Arie Mindblasting of Mindblasting net label. I examined the practices of YK Booking and Mindblasting in chapter 2. The organizer of Record Store Day or Cassette Store Day may be different each year. I notice that both events in Jogja is organized by the same collective—Jogja Record Store Club—at least since 2015 until 2018. The location of the events would be different in each city, depending on the venue availability and the networking of the organizer with the venue owner. I had been to Cassette Store Day organized by DoggyHouse Records, an in-house record company owned by the famous band, Shaggy Dog. The event was located in the front yard of the band’s home base, in the vicinity of the southern square of the Sultan Palace. Since 2015, Record Store Day was located in Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta building. In 2018, the location was changed to Loop Station, a multipurpose building (market place, co-working space, performance space) owned by *Telkomsel* (an Indonesian telecommunication company) office branch in Jogja. In a different city, I had been to Cassette Store Day 2014 in Malang, which was located in Museum Musik Indonesia building. The location of Record Store Day or Cassette Store Day can also depend on the dynamics of the creative outlets in a city. The center of Record Store Day 2015 in Jakarta was on the third floor of Pasar Santa—part of a traditional market that was fully renovated and populated with start-ups—small shops, workshops, and restaurants.

## CHAPTER IV

the meaning of 'information overload' as 'more a signal of being overwhelmed' (2015: 244). At the same time however, an abundance of everything in the digital platforms, is always on a par with the possibilities of losing it (followed with other possibilities of recollecting and storing it again).

Elsewhere, Sterne (2009) states that the portable history of recordings and technology for storing sound, including their bigger capacities to save and store, are always followed by a "pattern of ephemera". Collecting and preserving things in the digital age is a deceptively easy task. When sound is stored in a technological apparatus, the hope is it would live forever, yet the fact is the durability of audio storage technology is fragile.

Each technology development comes with its own specific preservation problems. Old formats of technology are often regarded as being outdated. The sound and metadata contained in it would be forgotten soon. They would be lost without trace and sometimes without those who collect them would even realize their existence or remember how they were collected in the first place. This is what Sterne refers to as the "preservation paradox", a state that is situated in between 'permanence and ephemerality' (2009: 55-65). The fragile durability of audio storage technology is often accompanied by the lack of willful caring. What we have been experiencing is rather, "small moments of willful forgetting" (Sterne 2009: 57).

In his essay, Boon (2013) talks about the absence of a will to care when he accidentally deleted most of his music collection in his iTunes library. On reflection, he said it was largely caused by his 'casual indifference' – an attitude that has informed his digital collection practices (Boon 2013: 11). It does not derive from simple carelessness. On the contrary, it emerges from the confidence in the ongoing existence of all things digital. Since they appear and come in abundance, they are rarely treated as if they are vulnerable.

Each technological shift requires, equal transformation in the way new forms of archives are being treated (Kaur 2015). In practice, however, this is the field that many people are still grappling with. The question around vulnerability also applies to the context of non-digital formats. Within the context of archival institutions in Indonesia, cassettes and records commonly cannot make their way to the collection of major archival institutions though they can be regarded as archives based on their certain historical meanings. Even when they were still in circulation, records and cassettes were not

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

adequately stored and cared for. Each technological shift is characterized by precarity.

Memories for lost cassettes and record or the ways to obtain them narrate the demise of certain bodily practices which signify the existence of a certain cassette or record. These include going to other cities to copy cassettes from a friend, spending hours in a friend's house who had a dual cassette recorder to copy cassettes, saving money for months to order certain albums via mail order are now extinct in lieu of browsing and downloading music materials from the Internet connected to personal computers at a study or bedroom. Downloading doesn't require any physical effort: just some clicks are enough to get things done. The search for cassette and record collection indicates the sharpening instinct for sensing scarcity that intertwines with a poignant sense of care. It broadens the horizons of calculating the meaning of obsolescence in the process.

Derrida (1995: 17) argues, "the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future." Derrida's statement indicates freedom in conceptualizing about the future. Further Derrida (1995: 18) asserts that an archive is like a 'pledge' which functions "like every pledge [gage], a token of the future." In my attempt to grasp how the technical structure of the archives informs the structure of what is being archived, I think about the people in this research who search the relevant music material from digital abundance and outdated technologies. This might be a point, which determines the meaning of a collector (who also thinks about commons at the same time). My research shows that one of the criteria for music common lies in the historical value contains in a certain music material.

From my conversations with collectors in Jogja, they suggested that their collecting practices are structured by at least two main considerations. First, collecting is motivated by the willingness to document the history of Indonesian music. The definition of Indonesian music here is quite simple; it covers the music oeuvre created by Indonesian musicians. While attempting to collect the musical past, collectors simultaneously try to conceptualize the future, and imagine what it would be like, when particular things are not included in a collection. This leads to the second aspect which structure collecting practices and what forms an essential matter I discuss in this chapter. In an attempt at conceptualizing the future, many collectors that I

## CHAPTER IV

spoke with, talked about their ideas of creating initiatives to host various music archives. But in many cases too, I met the collectors who did not have certain themes in collecting music. They would collect everything that deemed important – however, that ‘importance’ was framed.

Collecting practices in the changing digital environment seem to deal with different precarious points in the life of a thing. Forgetting and neglecting are parts of digital collecting practices. Precariousness informs the significant nature of the collection and indicates a sense of anxiety about losing something major. As Steedman points out, “an absence is not nothing, but is rather the space left by what has gone: how the emptiness indicates how once it was filled and animated” (2001: 11).

In this chapter, I aim to capture this sense of void, the undercurrents, and personal unrest, covered in the blanket of collecting and saving practices—all seem heading to the act of remembering. In Chapter 2, I described how the sense of precariousness around the lives of the digital matters leads to a sense of vulnerabilities among the musicians, which in turn serves as one of the impetuses to the development of net labels. Anxieties about ‘culture of documentation’ observed by Strassler (2010) in the context of visual and photography culture in Java is relevant to explain this. In the context of Mindblasting net label (see Chapter 2), this is translated into a working principle. The stories narrated in this chapter show the dwelling on the ‘culture of documentation’ that lies in the act of collecting. How would the idea of precariousness provide insights into the nature of collecting and the significance of emptiness? What kind of criteria is set to decide on whether something is considered important or unimportant, and thus is kept or neglected?

Cassettes takes a central stage in this chapter because it is the most common format found in the flea markets. Flea markets, and other places to sell secondhand goods, provide the important sites to search for collection material. This chapter provides insights into the life cycle of a cassette in the realm of collecting. This chapter uses the stories of cassette collectors and the infrastructure of collecting practices—secondhand cassette sellers and flea markets—to understand how valuation works in collecting practices. I focus on Yoyok, a visual artist and an avid cassette collector. In narrating Yoyok’s collecting practices, I describe the flea markets environment where the cassettes circulated and I examine various attempts at extending the life of a cassette through repair practices. The last part of the chapter is about a

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

collector and the efforts to negotiate the collection in the everyday life.

Yoyok's story narrates an expectation of building a useful collection for the familial environment.

#### TO COLLECT IS TO ERECT A BUILDING

Cassettes, records, and other things collected, are often referred in Indonesian as *dokumen*, a document. Collectors talk about collecting practices, especially their Indonesian music collection, as *pengarsipan*, *archiving*. My impression is that the word 'archive' and 'document' are largely used interchangeably in this context. To say that collection materials are archives means to equate collecting works with archiving works. Collecting is archiving.

To categorize cassettes and records as archival materials emphasizes their historical meaning. There are a relatively few archival institutions in Indonesia, let alone those that focus on music archives. The existing archival institutions are usually made up of paper-based collections – such as the HB Jassin library in Jakarta, and Jogja Library Center in Jogja. In the field of art, some alternative spaces in Jogja are also developing their own libraries. The library of the Indonesian Visual Art Archive is one such example. These libraries are varied in scale and size of the collection. But none of them take physical objects like cassettes, records, or ephemera as the collection focus.

I argue that to define a cassette or a record as an archive, as usually clearly stated by the collectors I met during my research, is to run against the mainstream imagination of paper as the dominant form of archives. It forms the basis of the problems faced by contemporary historians as discussed in Kaur's writing (2015). The archives feature an arbitrary historical meaning and they are not produced and authorized by the official institutions. Their importance is established through an act of purchase, which builds ties to many factors and their value emerges in an indefinite manner. For the moment, I hold on to the view that these cassettes are significant because they are in scattered state and thus need to be collected. Otherwise they would be gone and their archival importance, would be lost.

The condition where things are scattered or perceived to be scattered might be a thought that motivates a collector; their dispersal is something to be resolved through an act of compiling, in order to make them a coherent

## CHAPTER IV



whole. Many collectors tried to describe their collecting practices as *membangun koleksi*, developing or building a collection. The collectors are working to build something, a building called collection. To collect is to erect a building constructed from previously scattered material.

To refer to the creation of a collection as the development of a building takes us back to Benjamin (2007). In his noted essay, "Unpacking My Library", Benjamin (2007) describes the work of a book collector as the development of a dwelling. A book collection, and a dwelling at once, in Benjamin's sense, represents the history of acquisition. It is the acquisition of books; but it also serves as an encounter with chances of finding significant matters. The collecting projects discussed in Benjamin focus on the books that have become classics; they are the grandeur of arts and literature. In this chapter, I want to reflect on the secondhand cassette sellers and flea markets beyond their functions as spaces to obtain collection materials. Secondhand cassette sellers and flea markets provide rich imaginations to draw on. They serve as measurement tools used for measuring what is important in music. My research findings show that a collection is a result of a negotiation process between collectors with the closest people surround.

In the context of this research, it seems more apt to consider Mrazek's 'engineer' in seeing the works of the collectors. Like the engineers, who work to realize their dreams and plans in the conceptually designed buildings or infrastructure, the collectors also try to perform their vision in their collections. There is more to see beneath used-old-cassettes or records scattered in a flea market. In thinking about the kind of building that a collector is trying to build, I am also thinking about the other buildings in everyday landscape that stand out, not because of their careful design, but of their eclectic style. It is the eclecticism that derives from the practice of partial repair, *tambal sulam*, mend-and-sew.

Stolers's research into the archival attitude of the colonial governance in Dutch East Indies illustrates how paper offers a condition where a 'system of written accountability' governs the relation between the state and the people (2009: 29). Further in Stoler, such a system calls for elaborate infrastructure. The more elaborate the infrastructure that is entailed, the more it would be accountable to the public. Infrastructure conveys the official quality of an archive.

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

To collect is to establish a sense of ownership over a certain genre or kind of documents, and thus making them archives. Collecting embodies the 'making meaning process', as Pearce said (1998: 1-21), and stages the continuation of the lives of the collectors as well as the things being collected. It means to scale down the extent of bureaucracies, the elaborate infrastructure that entailed the 'system of written accountability' as Stoler said, and to set different criteria to decide on whether something an archive.

The main task of the engineering works in collecting is concerned with how things are ordered and reordered. According to Stewart, time in a collection is "not something to be restored to an origin; rather, all time is made simultaneous or synchronous within the collection's world" (2007: 151). The process of ordering and re-ordering changes the linear logic of time. Along with this, history is replaced with classification (Stewart 2007). A collection is at once a historical project, albeit as Stewart reminds, a 'self-enclosed' one. A collector is an engineer who orders and re-orders time. Collecting is a site to practice an independent historical project.

### OFFLINE AND ONLINE CIRCULATION

At first glance, the main loci of the music collectors is a non-digital orbit; an area that strikes contrast to the digital orbit. The musical objects sought circulated in different secondhand places. Collecting indicates attempts at extending the life cycle of storage technologies and music contained in them. Used or secondhand, the main character of collection material, suggest the career of the outdated apparatus, superseded by more recent technological development that keep on changing.

Archiving presents a practice and a goal that needs tremendous effort to achieve. Its locality is an environment, which brings various natural elements to impact on the state of the things collected. A tropical climate is susceptible to humidity, dust, dirt, termites, fungi, and other predicted natural beings and condition. All are threats to the integrity of the collected materials. Certain skills and techniques are needed in order to survive the natural challenge. Digitization has been perceived as the most powerful answer to it. It has also been perceived as a solution to resolve space problem—a classic issue ever hampered archiving process.

For example, Irama Nusantara is a website dedicated to creating digital

## CHAPTER IV

archives of Indonesian music from the early independence era (<http://iramanusantara.org/>). The founder, David Tarigan, is an artist, a producer, and a music culture aficionado. Before founding Irama Nusantara, he was best known for his activities in Aksara Records—a Jakarta-based prominent recording company for indie music. The seed for Irama Nusantara had already been planted with an initiative to develop the short-lived Indonesia Jumawa—an archival attempt of Indonesian music—back in 1998. During research, I also visited Museum Musik Indonesia in Malang, East Java. Museum Musik Nusantara (<http://museummusikindonesia.org/>) is embedded in Malang in terms that the museum attempts to provide contribution to the local music festivals in addition to the museum's collecting activities. While Irama Nusantara emphasizes the website as the center of archiving activities, Museum Musik Indonesia seems to emphasize the physicality of their existence. The documentation activities of the museum appears in the forms of an office, vinyl, cassettes, CDs, arranged in the shelves, music festival posters on the walls, and a photocopy machine that is available to provide copy service of the old music magazine collection. Digitization performs the main mode of archiving.

In the context of Museum Musik Indonesia, digitization is envisaged to be the main documentation tool. Their archives are vinyl and cassettes collected from different resources. The website is designed to be the main window from which the public is allowed to access the digitized material. It serves as an important website for those who want to listen to the past sound of Indonesian music. Many arts and culture organizations with archiving focuses that have been growing in the first decade of 2000s perceive digitization as the pinnacle of the archiving efforts. It is a backup, which provides a secure feeling.

To follow the activities of Irama Nusantara and Museum Musik Indonesia might spark an inspiration of what to collect. But to possess a real thing is more important for a music collector. Among other places that the collectors like to visit is a flea market. Going to secondhand places is considered a journey, an adventurous one, which possibly leads to a discovery. A certain thing found during the visit is precious and might lead a collector to become well-respected among other collectors. Collectors who keep information about the places secret are not unusual. The more hidden the place is the better as it might mean precious gems are hidden there. The collectors usually describe the process as 'hunting', or *berburu* in Indonesian. It is also often expressed in English, as if to emphasize the familiarity and unfamiliarity felt in the joy of

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

finding something in the hunting grounds.

But wandering through hidden places does not necessarily remain a hidden fact in the digital age. The advent of social media has made everyday life a new source of performatives. Sweat and effort during the travel to secondhand places, any findings from unexpected sources, are things to show the world. What follows from the previously unknown places is their increasing visibility in different online mediums. Posting photos of hunting activities in certain markets, some obscure places in a city is the new rituals of many collectors.

The accumulation of the archives, combined with archive hunting activities and postings, has made the Internet an ever-evolving reliable knowledge source. It brings people with different intentions and needs to flock around different archive-based platforms and forums to access them. In a short time, platforms for knowledge exchange transform into platforms for business.

Social media is used to promote the selling of things. Shops occupy a dual online and offline presence through which they sell their secondhand goods. The majority of small record shops at Pasar Santa for example have various online platforms in which they conduct business daily, often 24/7. Negotiations between the seller and the buyers may commence virtually, then continued with real transaction offline in the shops. The circulation of cassettes, records, and other vintage matters, to follow Novak (2015: 220), do not remain offline, but are “fed back into digital circulation”, and may return to offline circulation again.

### COLLECTORS' MAP

Collectors' homes are at once museums where their collection is stored and displayed. Their collection maps not only the ways to obtain them, but also the willingness to allocate time and effort to undertake the search. It maps the logic of collecting; further it shows attempts to make archives. A map of labor, which record physical and non-physical labor exerted.

If a museum is an institution that is bounded by the politics of definition, to refer a home a museum is to engage in the debate on the politics of museum. Compared to the museums built by the state to serve the multipurpose agendas, a home-museum might be considered an informal kind of museum. Personal matters control the chronicles displayed in a home museum as

## CHAPTER IV

opposed to the strict administrative procedures.

Amidst the constant hot and humid weather in the city, it always felt cool and quiet in Yoyok's house. The area in which he lives is also calm and green. He himself has a couple of rose bushes growing in his front yard. There were two big cupboards in the living room—all were full with his cassettes collection. Secondhand books and magazines, comic books, and other small things found in a secondhand market, were arranged side by side with the cassettes in the cupboards.

Yoyok is a visual artist, who is affiliated with Taring Padi, an artist collective that works towards empowerment and social justice through art. In this chapter, I do not explore in detail the relation between Yoyok's engagement with Taring Padi with his collecting practices. His collecting practices have also informed his artistic practices.

I saw some boxes containing cassettes piled on top of one of the cupboards. Sunlight entered through the windows and the door that were kept open during the day. The room looked neat, although it allowed in unexpected elements. As we had our conversation, it often involved him pulling out boxes of cassettes and plastic folders where he stored cassette sleeves. These boxes were stored throughout his house – in shelves or under his bed and in various rooms. He took them out in order to further enrich his stories. The objects themselves would also shape the direction of the conversation.

Yoyok's collection consists mainly of cassettes. He has also collected a wide range of cassette sleeves. Yoyok does not collect records - not because they are too difficult to find. But because he does not have a turntable and has never owned one. As such, records have never been a part of his listening experience.

Thompson (1979) writes that things which are found in secondhand shops, often fall under the category of 'rubbish' or are perceived as such. The category has "zero expected life-span and zero value" (1979: 36). Thompson, however, does not equate 'rubbish' with something being valueless. First, the collapsing of the value applied to secondhand things turns out to be not a static condition. Value can fall, but can also be recreated. Second, the displacement in category assignment depends on the value gradient. Contributive to the value gradient, still following Thompson, is a hierarchical

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

logic which governs an arrangement (1979: 116-117). The collectors imagine the lives of things in the past and their future with their interference, while witnessing their present state before their eyes. In purchasing secondhand things, they intervene in their course of lives, and take part in creating new life episodes. Collectors are expert buyers; they can see what others cannot see in things.

Secondhand markets are commonly referred to as *klithikan* in Javanese. *Klithikan* derives from the word *klithik*, which can mean small, to point out to the small size of a plethora of things available for sale. It might also describe the insignificance of things. A morpheme, 'an', added at the end of *klithik* emphasizes the availability of small things in a large number.

*Klithik* relates closely to the word *kletih*. *Kletih* refers to a practice of searching something precious that required a set of sensibilities to find it. In a sense, it is related to foraging. Since the scope of the searching field where such a practice takes place is wide.

Being in a secondhand market evokes a sense of being overwhelmed feeling. Each *kletih* practice commences with a deliberate conscious feeling that everything has to be looked at with great anticipation. It is closely connected to rummaging because it is not always conducted in a systematic or orderly way. Although one feels certain about what to look for while rummaging, there is a state of readiness that there might be other things that could be get in the process. Roaming over the sea of *klithikan* in a *klithikan* market might bring about the feeling of being lost. But it might also lead to a good find. When in a flea market, it is important to always be ready or to anticipate the finding of something special.

Becoming a collector is a process that is informed by numerous factors. A collector may search the collection material high and low and acquire a different collection-making map in the process. The corporeality of collecting practices is emphasized. Different manners in developing a collection contribute to the distinctness of a map. It defines how a collector's map is imagined.

Yoyok's collection-making map represents his knowledge of two types of secondhand markets. The first group typifies *pasar bekas*, or secondhand market, in the regular market organization. The most famous in this group in Yogyakarta are Pasar Klithikan Pakuncen and Pasar Senthir. Pasar Senthir is

## CHAPTER IV

a gathering of temporary stalls selling all kinds of used stuff in a large car park situated between Pasar Beringharjo, the main market in the city, and Fort Vredenburg Museum. During the day, the market is a regular car park, and it transforms into Pasar Senthir at night. Pasar Pakuncen is a four-storey building especially made for a market. It houses small permanent booths selling used things. The majority of vendors in the market were relocated from their previous location—the sidewalks of Jalan Mangkubumi—in 2008.<sup>42</sup>

The second group of markets in Yoyok's map typifies a more traditional form of market called '*pasar pasaran*'. The regularity of these markets is established by the Javanese market cycle or *pasaran*—Legi, Pahing, Pon, Wage, and Kliwon. The markets are named after the Javanese days on which they are held. The choice of the locations is based on certain places to symbolize the meaning of each day according to Javanese principles. In short, it means they are good locations for commerce.

The locations of some *pasar pasaran* in Jogja are situated nearby or attached to the regular markets in the area. Following the five days *pasaran* cycle, the sellers can go to one *pasar pasaran* to another and conduct their business. A wide variety of things can be found in the markets. Secondhand sellers constitute a large portion of the sellers in there. This is a factor, which makes them particularly interesting for collectors of old things.

Pasar Legi takes place in two locations—Gamping and Kotagede. Pasar Pahing takes place at the front of Pasar Sleman. Pasar Pon is located in a large open space on the opposite of regular Pasar Godean. Pasar Kliwon takes place in two locations—on the narrow street situated right at the back of Masjid Agung Bantul, in the south, and in Cebongan in the north of Yogyakarta.

Another popular place to visit for possible cassette and record findings is an antique and curio shop. In addition to visiting specific geographical places, collectors would also look forward to particular moments or occasions. They were moments where intentional discarding acts occurred. For example, a moment where cassettes or records were disposed of a radio station is worth a visit. Such a moment, however, does not occur often. The information

<sup>42</sup> Taking the relocation process as a case study, Sheri L. Gibbins in her article "Unnamed Interests and Informal Leaders: A Street Vendor Relocation in Yogyakarta City" explained how the government plan of relocating the street vendors brought up a long and heated conflict between Pethikbumi (Paguyuban Pedagang Klithikan Mangkubumi) and the city government.

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

about such occasions is usually circulated by word of mouth or through SMS messages. It is a kind of information that only an experienced collector can access.

Secondhand sellers equally valued the discarding moments. Other secondhand sellers, who scavenge for goods, wander the streets from one area to another area supply stall and shop owners with secondhand goods. The main reason of the important position of these scavengers was because they provided things at a cheap price. Though they occurred at unpredictable times, cassette and record sellers relied on discarding moments that were layered with parting of the ways.

Potential suppliers of music related goods for collectors also include: a family member who no longer wanted to keep cassettes, records, or their players, inherited by the other family members who recently passed away, or a fresh university graduate who decided to leave Jogja and go back to his or her hometown for good, thus leaving all unnecessary cassette collection behind, or an avid collector who decided to retire from collecting practice. Such moments were called *bongkaran*, or decluttering moments. On many occasions, they gave away their possessions, or rather their burden, to the sellers.

The scope of a collection-making map might go beyond the city that a collector currently lives in. The collectors that I met in Jogja were well equipped with basic knowledge of where to go to find collection material when in other cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Solo, Semarang, Surabaya, or Malang. They knew who to visit and when the relevant markets were open.

If time and money enabled him to travel, Yoyok knew he had to go to Blok M Square or Jalan Surabaya in Jakarta, to Pasar Comboran in Malang, or to Pasar Manahan in Solo, if he were to enrich his collection. Simultaneously he broadened the vocabulary of places to represent in his map with some distant places outside of already widely circulated knowledge.

## OF DUST AND DIRT

Attempts to discuss caring, or any effort to care, seems to inescapably touch upon the discussion about neglect. Caring and neglect are paradoxes contained in the course of the fate of a thing. Collectors are presumed to be

## CHAPTER IV



those who care and pay attention to things. Accounts of caring and neglect, perhaps it might sound contradictory, can begin with a story of dust. When layers of dirt and dust are lying on the surface of something, it tells that it has been forgotten or has not been taken care of properly enough. But dust can also be a sign of care, too. It invites us to ask how far one would go to care and protect something, and how the depth of the willingness to care can be measured. Can it, roughly speaking, be indicated through how clean something is, or the absence of layers of dust?

I spent a day following Yoyok to three places which he regularly visited to find cassettes and other things for his collection. Acong, Kunci's librarian, who recently developed a fondness for cassettes, joined us. In order to go there, we needed to be aware of the relevant places for collecting throughout the city of Yogyakarta. We needed to have a shared knowledge of the 'collector's map' in our minds. The tactility and tangibility of things, in amongst other factors, have an effect on how a decision to collect is made. As if to fit the postulated plot of obsolete technologies in an obsolete place, Yoyok still used an old Nokia mobile phone. It was such an out dated gesture, given the common preference for the latest technologies amongst Jogja's artists and musicians. Once I asked him what he would do when he feel the need to find something on the Internet. "It is easy. I can just go to a *warnet* or borrow my wife's fancy mobile phone," said he.

We visited three places that day. All were dusty places. The first stop was the warehouse of Pak Nur, who is a collector of used goods. His job involved reselling bric-a-brac and knick-knacks, bought from scavengers, to other people. Among the miscellaneous items kept in his warehouse were cassettes, vinyl records, and other relevant things for Yoyok. The second stop was Pak Tarjo's shophouse. He used to have a permanent booth to sell secondhand cassettes in Pasar Kuncen. Two years ago he sold the booth and discarded secondhand cassettes seller profession altogether. But, he still kept the cassettes at his place. The living room and tiny space outside of the house turned into a showroom to display other goods for sale. The cassettes did not bring much profit to the family. He turned to other stuff and activities that he deemed to be more profitable: there were two big barrels of gasoline and an equipment to fix a flat tire. In the living room was a glass shelf with small items for sale such as cotton buds and *kayu putih* (tea tree) oil.

The third stop, the dustiest place of all, was Pak Iteng's house. It was located in a remote village at the southern part of the city. Pak Iteng was a

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

secondhand cassette seller. If not opening his booth in Pasar Kliwon in Bantul, or running some errands for all sorts of jobs, he would be at his house. We went to Pasar Kliwon earlier, only to find that Pak Iteng was not in his usual spot. After 20 minutes ride on our motorbikes, we arrived at his house. Had I travelled alone, I would surely not have been able to find it.

Shelves, in different size and form, were in the living room and on the veranda of Pak Iteng's house. The shelves were crammed with cassettes and portable cassette players. The cassettes, the players, and the shelves were all dusty. The floor was also dusty. Pak Iteng seemed to fully understand that dust and dirt were two elements that just did not go well together with things like cassettes. He knew that they would damage the cassettes and other technologies. When we started to make ourselves comfortable and to start conversing with each other while browsing around the shelves, he took up the broom and started sweeping the floor. While sweeping, he mumbled, "Oh the dust...no matter how often we sweep the floor, it always comes back again."

It was heard like an apology for the contradictions in his house—the dust and the cassettes. Out of politeness, we thanked him for making the floor clean for us. There was a large shelf in the living room, similar to the one in the veranda. Behind it was another large shelf attached to the wall. There was almost no room in between the two shelves. It left the cassettes in the second shelf squeezed up against the wall. To pull a cassette out of the shelf was a hard work.

A cassette with an interesting illustration caught my eyes. The image was of a woman with long-flowing hair and the color of the cover was a striking red, orange, and blue. I managed to free it from the shelf. The album title was *Nhac Tre 2* - a Vietnamese album. I wiped the dust and grime from its plastic case. I had to wipe it a couple of times with a wet tissue before it was clean. I saw the handwriting on the back of the cover: *For Widi & Wido: With kisses and love, from Dad in Vietnam, 17/6/74.*

Like dust that sticks to the case of a cassette, the handwriting too stubbornly demonstrates the intersections of people, place, time and the struggle for showing care. The cassette had traveled far: from Vietnam to Indonesia, and somehow ended up on the shelf at Pak Iteng's house. It was the trace of the love of a father who showed his love for his children. I decided to buy it from Pak Iteng.

## CHAPTER IV

## ORDER AND DISORDER

From the side of a potential buyer of things, display is an essential aspect to guide whether something should be acquired or not. The politics of display performed by a seller commonly aimed to attract either those who have intention to shop or the window shoppers. Pak Iteng was a seller first and foremost. Nonetheless, he did not seem to care about the display aspect of his shop. As a shop, except for piles of cassettes scattered here and there and that people did come to browse interesting things to take home, Pak Iteng's did not bear any other common design feature of a typical shop.

Apart from being dusty and only occasionally roughly cleaned, the cassettes here were organized at random. It was far from neat and tidy. There were no signs to help guide potential customers. Though the great number of cassettes that he owned was easily recognizable. The shelves, and his house, remained an obscure locus of searching. There was no clear way to learn about the genre of music, names of artists, titles of albums and other information, except to look into the depth of the piles and start searching. Pak Iteng did not have an ability to memorize the cassettes, nor did he have a written record to help him remember where individual cassettes were.

The symptom of disorderliness emerged in events where he could not fully remember the cassettes stored at the house. He could only remember them only partially. Likewise, he could not remember fully things that were missing either. For example, Pak Iteng gave an account of Sanggar Cerita cassettes. Acong showed him five Sanggar Cerita cassettes bought from Pak Nur. It seemed to make him realize about Sanggar Cerita cassettes he used to have. "I used to have many Sanggar Cerita cassettes too, you know". But he failed to remember everything about them. "No, I can't remember their titles."

There is something in the way Yoyok arranged cassettes that continuously amazed me. Perhaps it is the feeling that Walter Benjamin defined as "the magical side of the collector" (Benjamin, 2007: 61). The amazement felt somewhat obscure. It stemmed from the insistence on applying a sense of order amidst the disorderliness. Arranging might be the first thing that needed to do to make sense of the cassettes.

Cassettes at Pak Iteng's were literally scattered around the living room and veranda, and could possible lead one to feel overwhelmed. Yoyok looked calm. According to Yoyok, to walk around the rooms and look at everything

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

displayed without any system would only lead to a panic feeling, because of too much excitement, and too less valuable finds.

The key, Yoyok says, is to focus on a small part of the collection. A collector must perform an ability to navigate the content of the room, to curate them in his or her mind. Yoyok sat quietly in front of a large paper box and plastic bags. The first thing he did was to organize the cassettes in the box. Finished doing it, he moved on to the plastic bags. Inside them were *kaset bodhol*, 'naked cassettes' – i.e. those without their sleeves and plastic cases.

Through its entire lifespan, a cassette often becomes separated from its case and sleeve as it moves between owners or is circulated amongst friends. After circulating in different places and ending up in a secondhand shop, *kaset bodhol* usually possess a lower bargaining position compared to other cassettes still in their cases with the original covers. This explains why they are not usually displayed openly, and exposed only on request. It is only the most fervent of cassette enthusiasts - such as Yoyok - who make such requests.

Watching Yoyok dig into the bag, unload what was inside it, and arrange the cassettes neatly, was like seeing him set out for unexpected treasure. Further, seeing piles of *kaset bodhol* in front of him elicited curiosities as well as anticipation. He seemed certain that hidden in the seemingly unworthy things were precious gems.

After finishing exploring the bags of naked cassettes, he moved on to another heap of cassettes, and started the curation process again. The collected cassettes were piled up before him. The more time he spent, the higher the pile of cassettes became.

But, the piling up of cassettes was not always followed up with the purchase. This was a screening process to produce categories such as *disenangi* (the favorites) and *ragu-ragu* (possible, doubtful). If Yoyok did not order the cassettes into his categories, he would not be able to assess their value. The first category refers to cassettes that he liked. The later were the cassettes that he was not sure about. What qualities are important in deciding which cassettes are worthy of being included in his collection? I explore this in the next section.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE WORK OF VALUATION

The next site was at Pak Tarjo's place. Pak Tarjo seemed to treat his cassettes lightly. This observation comes from how the cassettes were stored, and the other casual or careless he treated them. Something that might have to do with the fact that he was not officially a secondhand cassette seller anymore, thus he did not see cassettes as commodity.

Yoyok once bought 654 cassettes from Pak Tarjo. Although this is a large number of cassettes, Pak Tarjo still had many others in his house. The cassettes were stored in Aqua water boxes, and kept under the chairs and bed.

As we unpacked the boxes, sorted out the cassettes into different categories, Pak Tarjo asked Yoyok—"Are you here because you intend to go to my place, or you happened to be somewhere around here and decided to stop by?" He repeated the same question several times as if he wanted to make sure that Yoyok did come to his place for cassettes. And if he did, he wanted to know why.

Yoyok said that he just aimed to buy around 15 cassettes this time, because he did not have much money left in his pocket, Pak Tarjo insisted on him to bring as many cassettes that he intended to buy. When Yoyok replied that he did not even pay in full the amount of money for 654 that he bought previously, Pak Tarjo said that he did not need to worry about it. "Just give me anything that is available in your pocket," he continued. Only the price of a cassette was slightly higher than that of a cassette Yoyok bought earlier—it was 5,000Rp each, whereas previously it was priced at 3,000Rp each.

One thing that made Pak Tarjo and Pak Iteng favorite places for cassette shopping was because they sold cassette at a cheap price. A cassette was sold for around 3,000Rp – 5,000Rp, whereas in other places it was sold at 10,000Rp (for an Indonesian cassette) and 25,000Rp (for a *Barat*, western cassette). The price could go lower than that if a customer went to their owner's houses—instead of going to their shops in the markets. The lower price given is compensating for the travel cost to the sellers' houses.

On the other hand, the common practice is to add *retribution*, or tax, and a booth rent fees to the price. A secondhand things collector is usually cost-conscious. To get the real bargain is everything, moreover if it is considered a

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

valuable one. To the advantage of Yoyok, Pak Tarjo and Pak Iteng might not realize the real value attached to their cassettes, and thus the cheap price.

It is useful to compare this pricing to the cassette pricing in the Indonesian market observed by Jeremy Wallach in Jakarta in 2000. The cassette price list in Wallach's research is as follows: "Western cassette: 20,000Rp (at the time approximately \$2.50US), Pop Indonesia 16,000Rp to 18,000Rp (\$2.00 - \$2.25), Dangdut 12,000Rp to 14,000Rp (\$1.50 to \$1.75), Regional music (Musik Daerah) 10,000Rp to 13,000Rp (\$1.25 to \$1.63), Underground (independently produced and distributed) 10,000Rp – 17,000Rp (\$1.25 to \$2.13)" (Wallach 2002: 86). The price of the secondhand cassette might go down half or more from the original price. The price of a Western cassette in a secondhand place in Jogja seems to not change much from Wallach's list made more than a decade ago. My research indicates that the valuation of the secondhand cassette fluctuates—depending on many factors.

The knowledge level of a secondhand cassette seller functions as a mode of selling. Knowledge of music genres and artists helps determining the price of a cassette – as in the case of Pak Untung. Yoyok had never bought a cassette from him, but he knew his name from other collector friends.

Over the years, Pak Untung managed to make himself a master of his cassette stock. This is reflected through his comments or remarks about the cassette choices his customers make. Pak Untung knew what cassettes that many collectors would search for, the names of important record companies which released this and that album, the year when a certain album first released, or which edition of a certain album considered rare. On numerous occasions it appeared in the conversations with people who came to his place—especially with those who went there frequently, regarded more as guests, than simply customers. When he saw me observing a *Keroncong* cassette, a genre I am not very fond of, but the cassette had a quite an eye-catching cover design, he immediately said that it was a pirated cassette. He told me that the cover had been Photoshopped and thus looked like the original cover. He continued by saying that some people intentionally looked for pirated cassettes - perhaps for their personal *dokumen*.

Prior to selling cassettes, Pak Untung and his wife were scavengers. They scavenged from the garbage, for any odds and ends and for material that could be recycled. Pasar Beringharjo was an important point for collecting valuable trash. It expanded their knowledge of the geography of the market

## CHAPTER IV

and people who work and live there. They made friends with and built camaraderie among the market people. They decided to become cassette sellers after observing the works of businesses performed there. It was deemed more profitable than traveling around scavenging and gleaning.

Pak Untung started his new career with a series of preliminary learning sessions from his new environment. He picked up everything, which led him to the kind of cassettes that people usually search for. The most desired cassettes are those which can be re-sold. The cassettes can be categorized into tiers—rare, unusual, important, and other new tiers to be invented as the cassette business career progresses. The Internet was an essential source to guide Pak Untung in better understanding what made a desirable cassette. Another source in his early career was Rolling Stone Indonesia magazine, which regularly released a list of the best Indonesian albums or musicians. He did not intend to search for all musicians listed in the magazine for his shop. He just needed to know about which musicians and which album were popular, relevant or praised. Different cultural authorities—a senior cassette seller, the Google search engine, and leading music magazine—informed Pak Untung's knowledge. They operated within different fields to define the value of their power. The power lent Pak Untung a reputation as a knowledgeable cassette seller.

Pak Untung owned a kiosk that was located in a narrow alley next to Pasar Beringharjo in the centre of Yogyakarta. It was neither a kiosk nor a booth, since the space he occupied to sell cassettes was only a doorstep (*emper*) of a shop. He used to say *ngemper*, occupying an *emper*, in order to define his selling activities. His was a moving kiosk since he regularly moved from one doorstep of a shop to another. Initially, I thought he just used two kiosks, or two *emper*. But, I would later find out that he had access to three kiosk doorsteps.

He did not operate these kiosks at the same time, but one at a time. He would be available in one doorstep every Friday, and the other one on every Sunday, during the day. Both shops were shops selling plastic household products, owned by two siblings. The brother closed his shop every Friday, while the younger brother closed his every Sunday: meaning that Pak Untung could use their shop doorsteps. He did not pay the retribution money to them, 300Rp each day, but to a city government officer who came to the market every day.

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

On other days of the week, around midday, he could be found on the third floor of the market. The atmosphere of the floor was quiet and calm—compared to the hustle and bustle downstairs. There were many half-abandoned kiosks there, and used by sellers and buskers as spaces for napping. Pak Untung used one of them to store his cassettes, other goods, and to have a rest with his family.

Every night, Pak Untung would drag his boxes of cassettes to Pasar Senthir—unless it was raining, leading to many vendors deciding not to open their stalls. He did this all by himself despite having only one arm. He would be at Pasar Senthir until around 10 p.m., before slowly making his way back home. Or rather it was another temporary place he called his ‘home’, since it was a pavement, another doorstep of a shop that seemed to be always closed. The life of Pak Untung’s family revolves around the market, periphery spaces that were occupied and made available to depending on negotiation (with the shopkeepers, market administrators, and different *preman*, or local gangsters who regulate the ways the people inhabit the market).

Pak Tarjo intended to sell as many cassettes as possible, at the lowest price. It seemed that his goal was to get rid of all the cassettes in order to free up same space in his house. At the same time, he still wanted to profit from them, even if just a little. Pak Tarjo’s wife helped persuading Yoyok to buy more cassettes. “Here take this box too if you want.” It marks the edge of his cassette business: a dormant level of turnover of cassette stock, and the decrease in the economic value of his cassettes. The growing interest in cassettes did not always mean an increase in profit on the side of the secondhand cassette sellers.

Stocking, on the other hand, is one of the main activities of a more active seller. Although Pak Untung frequently met with cassettes that did not really suit his taste, he took them on nonetheless. Otherwise, he would not have enough stock. The need for stock sometimes leads to competition among the traders of secondhand goods. Each secondhand seller must be able to look for alternative ways for stocking up their shop. In other words, they constantly struggled against scarcity. This is a condition where a supply security cannot be assured. Pak Untung told me about a waste collector (scavenger) from Pati (Central Java) who recently grew to become his steady supplier.

While depending on various discarding moments to get his cassette supply (a student who wanted to go back to Ternate for good brought all his

## CHAPTER IV



cassettes to Pak Untung for sale), the moments where people usually go back home were important as they were the time where they spent some money to buy cassettes in their leisure time (for example, the Idul Fitri time where many people go back to Jogja to visit families). He noted certain moments where some people, or 'person' as he usually called them in English, discarded some of their valuable stuff or provide opportunities for him to get them. "The Independence Day can be a special day where I often got interesting stuff. I got Soekarno's speech cassette on that day just a few months ago."

In my observation on Pak Iteng earlier, a large number of his cassettes were poorly kept and dirty. They were in messy and disorganized piles. The ways Pak Untung kept his cassettes reveal another meaning of *banyak*, plentiful, that is skewed and moved away from its literal meaning. Pak Untung could not tell the exact number of his cassettes. Whenever I asked him about it, he said that they were *banyak*.

To continue the description of *banyak*, he explained that they were kept in many places—in a place where he and his family lived, in front of the space where he *ngemper* (occupy a doorstep) every Friday and Sunday, and on the third floor where he usually was during the days. When I visited him on the third floor of the market, I asked whether the cassettes kept here were all the cassettes he had. He answered, "No. I still have a sack of cassettes. I put it in front of the plastic shop downstairs." I asked him further about whether he was not afraid of the possibility of it being stolen. He said, "It's all right. Everyone here knows that the sack belongs to me. No one would dare to steal it." The meaning of being plenty is constructed from the relation between the cassettes and the space. Pak Iteng performs his versatility – and that of the cassettes - through his ability to survive no matter the difficulties he faces.

Pak Iteng and I often discussed the overvaluation of cassettes. I saw how this topic also often came up in a conversation between his guests and him. The conversation was a means to interpret one's knowledge capacity.

Guest: You would not believe this, I just read on the Internet about a man who aimed to sell a Soekarno stamp at 100,000,000Rp!  
That is just ridiculous!

Pak Untung: Ah yes, that attitude! It is the same with this friend of

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

mine who wanted to sell an Iron Maiden cassette at 100,000Rp.

Guest : Which Iron Maiden cassette? If it were a rare one, it is understandable.

Pak Untung : No! I think it is just an ordinary Iron Maiden. I have the cassette too. So I thought, wah, how lucky the person who would buy it from my place. Because it can be get for only at 25,000Rp.

According to Pak Untung, an increase in the number of cassette collector and competition amongst them enticed the cassette sellers to sell the cassettes at the overpriced rate. Unfortunately for many people, the new cassette collector in particular, were not equipped with the sufficient knowledge to use as the basis for their bargaining position. To the advantage of the sellers, these collectors could not see which cassettes were truly rare and which ones were just ordinary.

As the conversation continued, I could see how Pak Untung asserted his position as a knowledgeable and reasonable secondhand cassette seller. He sold only the good stuff, and more importantly he never created a specific scheme that was favorable only to him.

When there was no customer at his shop, I often saw Pak Untung sitting quietly on a little chair, with both eyes glued to a cassette on his hands. He tried to repair it, fixing the damaged tapes or replacing the missing pressure pad of the cassette, with very simple tools. On many occasions, I saw him rewinding a broken cassette with a ballpoint pen. He would then try to put it on a cassette player, and check the sound quality. After finished repairing one cassette, he would pick up another cassette and see if there was something that needed to be fixed. As a secondhand cassette seller, the main part of his job is to demonstrate efforts to bargain with the obsolescence of the format. In this light, a secondhand cassette seller and collector can be perceived as the instances of 'negotiated endurance' (Rosner & Ames, 2014: 9). They intend to extend the life of a cassette. In the following sections, I explore an attempt at extending the life of a cassette, or other obsolete format technologies, when encountered with the necessities of negotiating it with the domestic lives.

## CHAPTER IV

ON *OPERASI* AND REPAIR

Acong, the librarian from Kunci and a long-standing friend of mine, did not have a particular expectation when he joined Yoyok and me in visiting the places where Yoyok usually went for cassettes. But, in the end he came out of Pak Nur's place with a box of some 200 cassettes. Acong liked being in a place like Pak Nur's or Pak Iteng's because they were the places where he could, in his words, 'swim in it [their respective collections]'. What he liked the most was that Pak Nur let him bring the cassettes and pay for them later when he had money. He had to pay 200,000Rp for all of them (1,000Rp for each).

The majority of his chosen cassettes were Indonesian ones. Some of them were part of my listening experience, a declaration of my liking to listening to a radio when I was a teenager. Some of the artists I liked included Tito Sumarsono, K3S (Bagoes AA, Dian Pramana Poetra, Deddy Dhukun), Randi Anwar, Hedi Yunus, Itang Yunasz, Base Jam, Vina Panduwinata, Kahitna, Lidya & Imaniar, Yana Yulio, and Sophia Latjuba. That was how I regarded them valuable.

Memories do not play a key role in determining the way Acong valued his cassettes. He might not have heard their music as many of the artists were only popular while he was still very young. In his case, the value of these musicians derives not from personal encounters, but from a decision to listen to their cassettes—the medium where they were initially released.

I lent Acong some money so that he could buy a cassette player from Pak Iteng. He added that it would also be useful for Kunci as the cassette player at Kunci had long been broken. I agreed with his idea that we could use the cassettes to store audio recordings of our interviews and discussion sessions, just in case there was something wrong with the digital files we had uploaded to the Kunci website.

Acong put the cassettes in a box and put it under the bookshelf, next to his desk, at Kunci's library space. Books and cassettes—were the two main focuses of his arranging efforts. The first thing he did was to play the cassettes one at a time. He learned from Yoyok that playing the cassettes was an important step to do after buying them from a secondhand place. The cassettes playing session turned the studious mood of the library into a loud and mood. It was great to see such old cassettes being listened to again.

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

There were two anthropology students who worked as interns in the room. Wok, Dina, and me were also in the room. We made requests for him to play a cassette that we thought might be interesting.

The playing sessions help to understand the condition of a cassette. It reveals which cassettes are in a good condition, and which ones are damaged and stretched. On the basis of the sound condition, Acong diagnosed what the problems were. It was the starting point for planning the remedies for the cassettes. The sessions were useful to synchronize what is written on a sleeve with the sound contained in a cassette. Sometimes the sleeve did not match with the cassette inside the box.

There were two types of repairs to be made: the outside and the inside. The former aims to fix the damage that has occurred on the cassette body. The latter focuses on the internal side—the sound produced. Acong told me that good collectors were always supplied with various materials needed in order to perform a proper remedy.

The material consists of different parts of a cassette - such as the sleeves, plastic casings, reel, magnetic shield, tape guide, and screws. Certain cassettes, certain sounds, become fragments. They are carefully taken apart, so as to become useful in fixing other cassettes. Acong said that Yoyok was an example of a good collector because of his supply of material that could be used to fix damaged cassettes. It was also from him that Acong learned various techniques for repairing cassettes. He also learned other techniques from YouTube videos. For Acong, YouTube's videos on cassette repairing were a vital resource: "almost everything is on it", he said.

Some collectors referred to the act of repairing as *operasi*, or operation. Watching Acong trying to fix a cassette it was like watching a doctor performing a surgery in a hospital room. He sat down on a chair and put the broken cassette on a table. The light of the study lamp cast on his face and the cassette. He tried to replace the label of a cassette that looked old and torn, with another cassette's label that still looked relatively new. The cassette with an old-torn label was in a good condition, whereas the other cassette with a good-looking label was actually not in a good condition—thus it was useless to keep it.

He put some warm water on the damaged label for a few minutes, and carefully pulled it off with the hands. The same method was applied to

## CHAPTER IV

NURAINI JULIASTUTI

remove the good-looking label from the broken cassette. "I should remove it with tweezers. But I don't have them here," he said.

In the second phase of operation, Acong repaired a Shanti Haryono cassette, titled *Berikan Cintamu*, Give Me Your Love. He had never heard of her before. But he quite liked her voice, and found the music interesting. Unfortunately, the tape had become a tangled mess as he played it. His diagnosis was that the reel needed to be straightened up.

Further examination showed signs of fungi on the tape. He used a cotton bud to clean them. Instead of straightening up the reel, he replaced the reels by taking others from another cassette. Two cassettes, 'Qasidah Modern' and 'Non-stop Jaipong Jawa', became the source of spare parts. Acong didn't care too much for those cassettes and they could become collateral in the effort to fix the Shanti Haryono cassette. The attempt to replace the reels of Shanti Haryono's with that of Qasidah Modern's, however, failed. Somehow they did not match. But, there was more luck with using 'Non-stop Jaipong Jawa' cassette – even though Acong wrongly repositioned the sides of the tapes—what should be the Side 1 now the Side 2. "It is OK. I just need to be *telaten* (thorough)," he said.

An attempt to repair a cassette and bring back the sound to life involves repeated experiments and improvisation. It might be a laborious process - one which does not always follow with success. It indicates the scale of attempt at fulfilling the needs for 'something', the sound of music, a cultural product, something that can be referred to as proper knowledge. At once it brings a direct confrontation with limitations of what kind of things that can be obtained.

A few months later, I asked him about the cassettes. Acong said that he put them back in boxes and stored in a storeroom, along with his other belongings. He barely had time to collect more used cassettes, repair and listen to them anymore. When I said it was a pity these valuable cassettes were abandoned in boxes like that, he didn't agree with me. They were put in boxes because he cared about them. To care about cassettes, and presumably other old material, is challenging. Even if one acquires the skill for fixing cassette, a more pressing challenge in collecting and caring is space availability for storage and time.

### THE USEFULNESS OF COLLECTING IN THE FAMILIAL REALM

According to Susan Stewart, to position certain things in a collection is to refashion their use value, from extending the body to the environment, to “subsuming the environment to a scenario of the personal” (Stewart 2007: 162). Developing a classification system means to develop a personal articulation of knowledge about something. This is an example of a collection being, a ‘mode of knowledge’ (Stewart 2007) and an extension of the self. Collected things in the collectors’ world as captured in Stewart seem to be removed the furthest distance from their use value, and have made the ‘multivocal referentiality’ in determining the fetish urge of a collector. Stewart views a collector as an alienated self that is constituted of the consumption of goods. The kind of labor displayed in collecting is a “fantastic labor, which operates through the manipulation of abstraction rather than through concrete or material means” (Stewart 2007: 164).

The kind of collectors that Stewart imagines seems to be centered on the collectors who devote themselves to their collection. The degree of their loyalty to the devotion, to emphasis on the ‘fantastic labor’ employed in practicing it, is high, to the extent that it is often be seen as being disconnected from the environment, the real people. Though the imagery of the collector perhaps may fit with the general description of what to expect from one. Based on my research findings, such description turns out to be not the only one. Stewart’s image of a collector feels too limited.

In the context of the collectors observed above, the articulation of the thoughts regarding the collection is insufficient. A collector is also someone who manages to keep a balance between the display of the well-articulated thoughts and the usefulness of the collecting practices. So, what are the implications for our understanding of collecting?

Using the case of Yoyok, in this section I now show how the ability to perform the usefulness is seen as a means to validate the collecting practices. What are the kind of activities that he needs to do in order to show the functional roles of his cassette collecting? In other words, he could spend all hours at a secondhand cassettes shop all day, but what he should do to make it socially acceptable for his wife and daughter?

Collecting cassettes is an individual practice, but always a negotiated one. It needs to be made compatible with other aspects. Among the collectors, it

was common to greet each other with the following remarks—“Are you still fighting for the lives of your cassettes?” or “Are you still playing with cassettes?” They tell the fragility of cassettes as well as collecting. The willingness of a collector is put in question.

When a home is an environment of a collection, family views inform the collection's life condition and the sustainability of collecting. The majority of collectors that I met in Jogja are men, or husbands with wives and children. The views of the wives, followed with that of the children, often took center stage. Yoyok frequently mentioned about his collector friends who were forced to give up their passion for cassettes due to conflict with their wives.

Ordering is part and parcel of collecting. At the same time it might disrupt another order. To negate collecting, the wives usually reasoned with the husbands, and their hobbies, and used the following arguments. First, collecting cassettes is just a waste of money. Second, not only it is just a waste of money, it is also a waste of time. Implicit here is a thought that cassettes, the used ones in particular, are valueless. Third, to follow the argument, the wives would object to the practice based on the spatial condition of the house—that cassettes would take much space of the house.

Yoyok's wife, Mbak Pon, however, seemed to be very supportive of his collecting hobby. She works as a seamstress. When she did not have an urgent request to finish her sewing work, or to run an errand for the family, she would make tea for us all and join the conversation between Yoyok and me in the living room. Unless she had urgent daily chores to do, she would stay there until I left the house. On one occasion, she helped me with making a list of *pasar pasaran* that Yoyok regularly visited, including the exact locations of these markets. These were indications of her encouragement of Yoyok's cassette collecting.

A collecting practice might be perceived as disrupting this order, if it upset the normal routine. Yoyok and Mbak Pon did not have regularly nine to five jobs. The sustainability of Yoyok's collecting practice was made possible partly because it successfully blended into their flexible time management. Collecting happened because he had time to do it.

When he was not hired to work on different jobs which required his expertise on screen printing, or creating his artworks, he juggled his time between organizing the daily chores with ordering his collection—arranging,

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

rearranging, and repairing the broken cassettes. Among other cassette collectors, Yoyok was considered quite an expert at repairing the broken cassettes. This made him very proud of his collection—they looked shiny and remain in good condition.

Yoyok took Sheila, their only daughter, to school every morning; depending on the schedules, either Yoyok or Mbak Pon, would pick her up from school in the afternoon. The daily routine formed the pattern of his visit to the markets. The time allocated to go to the markets was to use the slot of time available from the time Sheila was in school until her home time came.

Yoyok attempted to make his collecting practice to conform to the way his family functioned. Going to a secondhand market emerged as a possible form of family recreation. He introduced the secondhand market as a site to get valuable knowledge items for not only for him, but also for Mbak Pon and Sheila. The family sometimes would go together to Pasar Niten (in the south of Yogyakarta)—another secondhand market that opened only in the afternoon—and searched for their favorite things. According to Yoyok, Sheila had been enjoying reading various children magazines found in there, and sometimes urged the family to go to the market. So as to make collecting not a waste of money, he kept it within the family budget. He usually spent 10,000Rp per visit to a cassette seller.

To show the close links between collecting practices and his creative expression, Yoyok's artworks sometimes took inspiration from his collecting practice. He made a series of paintings, which were based on a certain song, album covers, used books and comics. His works represent an artistic articulation of his collection. These works would be put in the same room with the cassettes and other collections. The collectors might buy them. And if they did, it would mean a valuable income for his family. I bought a small painting by Yoyok which depicts a cassette seller sitting in front of his shop. The possibilities to generate income from the collection elevated the meaning of collecting into a kind of proper job, and helped adding on the productivity value of the practice.

Another branch of Yoyok's collecting practice is developing a *perpustakaan keluarga*, or family library, based on his collection. He did not express the idea just once, but several times during the time we met. It shows how he really liked it to happen and perceived it as a logical extension of his activities.

## CHAPTER IV



NURAINI JULIASTUTI

The collection in this library was divided into the following categories: *lawak*/comedy, *orkes melayu/dangdut*, rock, pop, pop jawa/Javanese pop, keroncong, children songs, *Sanggar Cerita*,<sup>43</sup> Indian pop, gamelan, Malaysian pop, religious music. The categories would be expanded in increments, and intuitively, depending on his future findings and taste.

Some parts of the collection represent what Yoyok once had in the past, the sound of the past or something that intrigued him. He grew up listening to rock and *lawak* on the radio. Somehow the collecting practices made him realize of their value even more. The other parts represent the taste of the other family members—his daughter liked Indian music, his wife liked listening to Siti Nurhaliza and other musicians from Malaysia as well as religious music. The family used *Sanggar Cerita* cassettes as important source for Sheila to learn some folk stories. The production of *Sanggar Cerita* cassettes, however, has long been discontinued. But they were part of Yoyok and Mbak Pon's childhood memories. Sheila also used *gamelan* cassettes in her Javanese dance lessons. If collecting is a way of developing a 'mode of knowledge', as Stewart asserted, Yoyok's idea of family library materialized his personal articulation of knowledge about Mbak Pon and Sheila. Collecting became a way of learning what his family liked to hear in the everyday. It has also become a productive way to connect Sheila to the soundscape of Yoyok and Mbak Pon's childhood.

## CONCLUSION

Collectors of obsolete technologies inhabit the idea that precariousness is an important element to inform digital environment. To live and work in such environment means to anticipate in an abundance of everything in the emergence of new digital platforms. Yet at the same time, it is always on par with the possibilities of losing everything. To collect cassettes, vinyl, and other superseded music artifacts, is to save them from further damage and neglect. It provides insights into the building up the sense of significance that is contained in the precarious storage of forms such as the cassette or vinyl.

To collect is to demonstrate a sense of caring towards things. In this chapter, the scope of things is not limited to cassettes only, but also the

43 *Sanggar Cerita* was a name of tales and folk tales series in the form of cassettes and radio programs produced by Sanggar Prathivi, Jakarta. Sanggar Prathivi was founded in Jakarta in 1974. Based on my personal memory, the production of cassettes and radio programs reached the peak in the 1980s to mid-1990s.

## COMMONS PEOPLE

### MANAGING MUSIC AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY YOGYAKARTA

cassette sleeves, cassette boxes, and spare parts that can be useful for cassette repair, and other things to find while searching for cassette collection—books, posters or a cassette player. In the context of collecting, to care is to buy, fix the possible damage, and maintain the physical quality of the cassette. It takes training, practice and a series of experiments to be qualified to repair and give proper treatment to the cassette collection.

The longer a collector dedicate time and labor to be a collector, the more skillful he or she is in sensing what is significant to collect. This also applies to those who make a living from being a secondhand cassette or record seller. The knowledge gap between a collector and a cassette seller exists. Such a gap is to be exploited for the advantage of a collector and a seller. A collector is basically happy to obtain much valuable stuff in reasonable price. A seller is happy to be able to sell a certain cassette at a high price, but it is also satisfying just to sell anything to a customer.

My observations in this chapter indicate that the parameters by which a cassette or record is regarded as important can be based on what other people have said about the values of certain musicians and bands. Personal aspects are also utilized to measure value. The definition of what is important thus can be very loose. The stories in this chapter narrate that to be a collector, or to be someone to work to support collecting practices, is to hone and develop one's intuition. To be a collector is to practice and to be curious enough about what might be hidden amongst the seemingly dusty and unassuming high piles of used cassettes.

A collector might have different agenda on what to collect. The basis for the collecting agenda can be built from a mixture of various impetuses—a longing for certain sound from the past, a certain pleasant or intriguing sound or a sound that characterizes the history of Indonesian music from a certain era. A description of Acong's repair practices suggests that repair skill is necessary in extending the life of a cassette. But such a skill is not the only element needed to ensure caring. Collecting practices needs to be accompanied with sufficient resources to maintain the sustainability of collecting itself.

While the collectors needed to constantly demonstrate efforts to bargain with the fragility of their collected items, I observed that they also encountered the necessities of negotiating their collecting practices with the people that they lived with in a domestic environment.

## CHAPTER IV

It opens up a condition to recognize that the base of collecting is to make it functional in daily life. I want to emphasize the role of Yoyok's wife, Mbak Pon, and his daughter, Sheila, as family members who have shown support and care to what Yoyok cares about—the cassettes. Compared to some of the collectors, Yoyok was fortunate. Mbak Pon, his wife, is always supportive of his collecting. He never said, however, explicitly that he was grateful for her support. She could have easily encouraged him to quit, given the amount of time and money he invested in collecting.

To build a family archive is part of Yoyok's negotiation to make his collecting habit acceptable for his wife and daughter. The family archive is his contribution to the family. In Yoyok's case, to be able to sustain his desires for cassettes is to remember what to give to the family in kind. I perceive the family library as Yoyok's response to the questions regarding the useful values of his collection. Within the context of personal collection, it is important for the practices to be accepted by an environment where it is situated. It is important to be able to come up with a real and practical plan with the cassette collection. Further I see the family library development as a manifestation of a gesture to say thank you to his family.

As a commons, the family music library is a result of shifting the collection focus from a personal project to a family project. Perhaps Yoyok's family music library can be regarded as a practice to create commons, or a precondition for creating a shared resource for public. Collecting is expected to be a useful activity. It informs the meaning of the collectors' home-grown archives. The worthiness of archives is subject to reconstruction, reconfiguration, and reassembling. If collecting is a kind of 'engineering' – as defined by Mrazek (2002) - the type of the building can be defined as an assemblage of various things that matter to the closest people in the collectors' lives. The conceptualization of the future as well as what to inherit derive from the negotiation process of the useful meaning of archives.