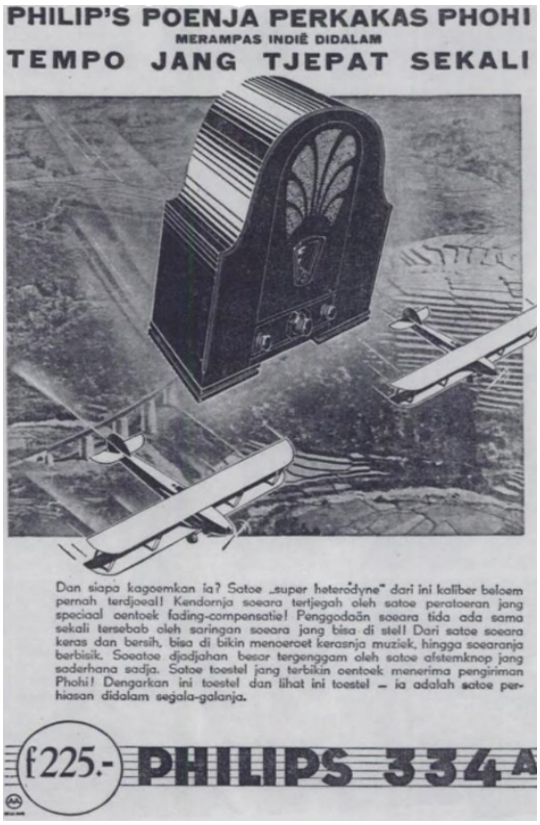
Up in the air:

Radio, identity and politics in the Dutch East Indies, 1927-1942



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Abstract

This thesis explores the relation between radio and identity politics in the Dutch East Indies (1927-1942). Although Indies radio in this early period is often dismissed as somewhat inconsequential or apolitical, this study argues that a better look at its cultural registers and the motives behind its development betray a significant relation between Indies radio stations and colonial identity politics. Whether it was the PHOHI, which was developed to strengthen Dutch identity and authority, the NIROM, which strongly segmented between eastern and western audiences, or the eastern stations, founded in reaction to the severe underrepresentation of eastern cultures, almost all stations were involved in the segmentation of Indies society. Although such segmentation might have affirmed the 'rule of colonial difference' and thereby strengthened colonial rule, this study argues that any such effect would have been weakened by the increasing number of audiences with hybrid identities, as these undermined the categories of colonial hierarchy. Meanwhile radio continued to catalyse the polarization of eastern and western identities, weakening the cohesion and stability of Indies society.

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ANETA	*Algemeen Nieuws- en Telegraaf-Agentschap* (Public News and Telegraph Agency)
CIRVO	Chinese en Inheemse Radio Luisteraars Vereniging (Chinese and Native Radio Listeners Association)
IPC	*Indië Programma Commissie* (Indies Program Commission)
KRO	*Katholieke Radio Omroep* (Catholic Radio Broadcasting Company)
MAVRO	*Mataraamse Vereniging voor Radio Omroep* (Mataram Association for Radio Broadcasting)
NCRV	*Nederlandse Christelijke Radio Vereniging* (Netherlands Christian Radio Organisation)
NIROM	*Nederlands Indische Radio Omroep Maatschappij* (Netherlands Indies Radio Broadcasting Organization)
NSB	*Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (National-Socialist Movement)
PHOHI	*Philips Omroep Holland-Indië* (Philips Broadcasting Organisation Netherlands Indies)
PPRK	*Perkikatan Perhimpoenan* Radio Ketimuran (Federation of Eastern Radio Societies)
SRI	*Siaran Radio Indonesia* (Broadcast Radio Indonesia)
SRV	*Solosche Radio Vereniging* (Solo Radio Association)
VARA	*Vereniging van Arbeiders Radio Amateurs* (Association of Workers Radio Amateurs)
VORL	*Vereniging voor Oosterse Radio Luisteraars* (Association for Eastern Radio Listeners)
VORO	*Vereniging voor Oosterse Radio Omroep* (Association for Eastern Radio Broadcasting)
VORS	*Vereniging Oostersche Radioluisteraars Soerabaja* (Association for Eastern Radio Listeners Surabaya)

Introduction

By the time radio made its way to the Dutch East Indies in the mid-1920's, the Dutch colony was in a state of considerable turmoil. It would be some fifteen more years before the Japanese would occupy the archipelago and on the surface things in the colony seemed relatively peaceful. But by 1927, the year in which the Philips Omroep Holland-Indië (PHOHI) would start its first broadcasts to the Indies, the colony was slowly starting to unravel at the seams.

For almost three centuries, Dutch authorities in the Indies had legitimized their rule in the Indies through what Partha Chatterjee has described as the "rule of colonial difference": the premise of a clear difference between colonizer and colonized, and the supposed superiority of western identity over eastern identities.[1] But this premise of a fixed and hierarchical set of identities was becoming harder and harder to maintain. By 1927 Indonesian nationalists had been fighting the idea of native inferiority for several decades and their argument was taking hold on larger parts of the native population. Simultaneously, a rising native middle class was steadily gaining access to higher education and many of the things that used to be the exclusive domain of Europeans. Further blurring the racial and cultural boundaries was an ever-growing group of Indo-Europeans or "Indo's", people of mixed Eurasian descent whose very existence questioned the division between colonizer and colonized. In fear of the encroachment of "colonials" on their position, the Dutch desperately tried to maintain the status quo, closing rank and forcefully separating themselves from native society in any way they could.[2] Following protests on Java and Sumatra in 1927, this process culminated in a "wave of fear" sweeping across the islands.[3]

Between groups of natives, Indo-Europeans, Chinese and others trying to carve out more influential positions inside Indies society and the Dutch community trying their hardest to keep them out, identity was becoming a heavily contested and politically charged issue. The final years leading up to the Second World War may have seemed calm on the surface, but a significant reconfiguration of colonial identities and the power relations between them was taking place inside the colony and it was beginning to take its toll.

This whole situation would have been quite literally "unimaginable" before the introduction of mass media in the Indies. After all, as Benedict Anderson argues in his highly influential *Imagined*

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[1] Partha Chatterjee, *The nation and its fragments: colonial and postcolonial histories* (New York: Princeton University Press 1993) 18.
[2] Francis Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas: colonial practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Singapore: Equinox 2008; 1st edition 1995) 17-29.
[3] Loe De Jong, *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de tweede wereldoorlog* 11 (Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij 1984) 311.

communities, the development of group identities requires a sense of shared experience.[4] Such shared experience inevitably becomes mediated for groups that operate on a larger level than the local as only media can make individuals aware of the distant other members of such groups and help them imagine a connection with these distant others. Accordingly, historians have attributed a crucial role to newspapers and other print media in the tensions brewing inside late colonial Indies society.[5] Yet somehow, not a single one of these studies has looked at the role of the brand new, but hugely promising medium of radio.

This thesis will try to answer the question to what extend broadcast radio functioned as a catalyst in the development of identity politics within colonial society during the late period of colonial rule (1927-1941). The long final decade before the Second World War was marked by an intensification of identity politics and polarization within society, primarily marked by increasingly pronounced ideas about Indonesian identity and the Dutch withdrawal from Indies society. This thesis will explore to what extent radio played a part in these developments. By doing so this thesis will attempt to place identity and its mediated development through radio within the context of the larger political and social developments of the period. For that purpose the study defines identity politics as all those processes of external and internal identity definition that affect the authority and agency of a group, whether these processes are conscious or not.[6] Borrowing several terms from Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, this assumes an approach to identity and identity categories within a relational setting, observing the construction of identity as a multifaceted negotiation between a group's self-understanding and a group's identity as represented or constructed by others.[7]

Few people deny the overall importance of mass media in colonial identity politics, and studies such as Brian Larkin's *Signal and Noise* and Alasdair Pinkerton's *Radio and the Raj* have

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[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso Editions 1983) 33-46.

[5] See, for instance: James M. Hagen, '"Read all about it": the press and the rise of national consciousness in early twentieth century Dutch East Indies society', *Anthropological Quarterly* 70:3 (1997) 107-126; Takashi Shiraishi, *An age in motion: popular radicalism in Java 1912-1926* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1990). Ahmat B. Adam, *The vernacular press and the emergence of modern Indonesian consciousness (1855-1913),* Studies on Southeast Asia 17 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1995); Susan Rodgers, 'Narrating the modern, colonial-era southern Batak journalism and novelistic fiction as overlapping literary form', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 163-4 (2007) 476-506.

[6] Although this is my own definition of identity politics, it borrows concepts of internal and external identity definitions from Richard Jenkins who places identity politics in the space between the internal establishment of "self" and external definition of "the other" where power and authority is established, see: Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London: Thousand Oaks 1997) 52-54.

[7] Cooper and Brubaker actually warn against the use of identity as an analytical tool due to its ambiguous definition. This study holds that a specific definition avoids that pitfall as long as clear parameters are given and will do so using their terminology. Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, 'Identity', in: Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge, history* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 2005) 59-90, passim.

already shown that radio was a part of these politics in the British colonies.[8] The lack of study regarding radio's role in Dutch East Indies identity politics therefore seems like an important omission, even more so if we consider the by-and-large illiterate local population of the Indies, its vast and difficult geographical composition of the Indonesian archipelago and its distance from Europe. Radio obviously showed immense promise in a region where newspapers could scarcely connect more than the inhabitants of a single city, let alone the entire archipelago. To be sure, Indies broadcasting was in many ways still in its infancy during the 1930's, but with more than 100.000 radio licenses dispensed at the end of 1940, compared to an estimated circulation of 135.000 Indies newspapers that same year, broadcasting was quickly growing into a significant medium.[9] So if media were such an important factor in the social transformation of late-colonial society, as most studies would suggest, it stands to reason that radio was part of the equation.

To find out what influence radio may have had on Indies identity politics the study will start with an overview of the development of the two largest broadcasting organizations operating in the Indies before the 1940's. This overview will help us assess the general nature of Indies broadcasting and point out in what manner radio became incorporated into colonial identity relations. By showing the parties and interests involved in the development of these stations and arguing how they affected the framework of Indies broadcasting as a whole, this chapter will show that identity politics undeniably became a part of Dutch East Indies radio even when its programme seemed quite tame on the surface. Chapter two and three will further investigate this relation by asking how identity politics influenced the medium's representations of identities and ask how colonial audiences identified with these representations.

If the first chapter intends to prove that people took measure of colonial identity politics in the production of Indies broadcasting, chapters two and three will ask if and how these politics actually influenced the representations given and the way these affected Indies audiences. Both will attempt to establish a characterization of the content of Indies broadcasts and discuss how a range of audiences might have identified with their programmes. Chapter two will focus on western radio in the Indies, explore its role in the establishment of Dutch identity and ask how this might have helped audiences gain more agency in their social and political position. Chapter three will attempt to make a similar characterization of what were considered eastern stations. Because eastern radio consisted of a much more diffuse range of stations, programmes and identifications this final chapter

[8] Brian Larkin, *Signal and noise: media, infrastructure and urban culture in Nigeria* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2008) pp. 48-72; Alasdair Pinkerton, 'Radio and the Raj: broadcasting in British India (1920-1940)', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18:2 (2008) 167-191, passim.
[9] René Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep: overheidsbeleid en ontwikkeling 1923-1942* (Hilversum: Verloren 1998) 16-17; *Indisch Verslag 1941: Statistisch jaaroverzicht voor Nederlandsch-Indië over het jaar 1940-1941* 2 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij 1941).

takes a slightly different approach however. By focusing on the eastern radio's musical programming the chapter will attempt to establish a general idea of the cultural content and identities represented on the various eastern stations and discuss how these representations factored into the identity politics and relations of a selection of relevant audiences and producers. If the divide between east and west in these later chapters sounds arbitrary, it actually represents a division that was strongly upheld within Indies radio programming, can help us distinguish between the directions in which several groups were moving along the developing spectrum of colonial identities and makes it clearer to see how these developments may have affected their political position within society.

By linking media to identity and power relations, this paper borrows a lot of ideas from the field of media and cultural studies, specifically the school of British cultural studies. Seeking "to analyse hegemonic, or ruling, social and cultural forces of domination and to locate counterhegemonic forces of resistance and contestation" within media this field has helped frame many of the questions within this study.[10] Cultural studies is a somewhat activist field or study with political goals of social transformation clearly on the agenda, but it also laid the groundwork for most current studies of the relation between media and identity. Importantly, cultural studies champions the notion that media, through its power to define identities, establishes power relations. One might in fact argue that the very notion of identity politics exists only through this process of mediated "defining". This notion is the lynchpin under the main question of this study, which essentially deals with the way radio functioned in the reconfiguration of power relations through media. In studying such processes, a cultural studies approach reminds us to constantly and critically assess how identity is established and for what purpose. A cultural studies approach further suggests that researchers view media not only from the standpoint of its creator, as this disempowers audiences, but make a clear separation between the identity representations and audience identifications it produces.[11]

In terms of source material, any study on Indies radio is immediately hampered by the medium's transient nature on the one hand and the massive amount of content on the other. Literally tens of thousands of hours of radio programming were broadcast throughout the colony in the 1930's, yet only a very small part of that material was ever recorded and even less preserved, meaning we can at best establish a fragmented perspective.[12] To circumvent this problem Rebecca Scales suggests that researchers of radio look at the available material in another way, using written

[10] Douglas M. Kelner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, 'Adventures in media and cultural studies' in: Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kelner eds., *Media and cultural studies keyworks* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing 2006) IX-XXXVIII, XXIV.
[11] Stuart Hall et al. eds, *Culture, media and Language: working papers in Cultural studies* (Routledge: London & New York 2005) passim.
[12] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep,* 12-13.

sources such as letters, programme guides and other media where reactions to radio were expressed, and shape an image of what radio was through these secondary registrations.[13] This is not an easy task and that is perhaps one of the reasons why research on Indies radio has been limited so far. After all, it often implies working with whatever fragmented sources that are available and it requires researchers to read 'between the lines'. Nevertheless, Scales' approach suits the purpose of this study quite well because it allows the study to look at the way people processed and experienced radio, rather than just what they heard. Beyond that, it allows us to expand our focus to the contextual aspects of radio that a cultural studies approach often forgets, such as the material experience of radio and the political and legislative debates it incited.

Following Scales, this thesis will use a mixed range of primary sources covering a plethora of subjects: incorporating bits and pieces from programme guides, audience letters, and newspapers. Programme guides can give an overview of the actual content on the radio, whereas audience letters tell us a bit more about the experience of listening to the radio. Archives of censorship boards perform a similar role and help expand on the specific content of radio as they represent some of the few sources that provide word-for-word descriptions of sections of radio programming. The minutes of committees concerning various radio-related problems help establish more detailed accounts of specific events and topics for specific case studies.[14] Throughout the study, these and various other sources will be combined to construe an idea of what Indies radio was and how it was experienced and appropriated by its audience. An important limitation is that this study leans heavily on sources in Dutch and English. Where Malay sources have been used, the study relies on translations by other researchers.

Although research on Indies radio is scarce, a few well-researched studies have helped structure this study, laying the foundations for its insights and providing relevant sources of information for further inquiry. Rene Witte's *De Indische radio-omroep* remains one of the few published monographs available on Indies radio and it provides a valuable entry-point to the subject. Ethnomusicologist Philip Yampolsky's PhD. dissertation *Music and media in the Dutch East Indies* and Franki Notosudirdjo's *Music, politics and the problems of national identity in the Indies* also supply us with a wealth of information.[15] Being the only monographs that deal with radio extensively, this study leans quite heavily on these three sources, but wherever possible their arguments have been

[13] Rebecca Scales, 'Mettisages on the airwaves: toward a cultural history of broadcasting in French colonial Algeria, 1930-1936', *Media History* 19:3 (2013) 305-321, 306.
[14] The Volksraad was an Indies advisory council established in an effort to democratize colonial rule, as it gave advise on most topics of rule its minutes deal with almost any topic that became of political importance.
[15] Philip Yampolsky, *Music and media in the Dutch East Indies: Gramophone records and radio in the late colonial era, 1903-1942* (Unpublished dissertation: Washington 2013); Franki Notosudirdjo, *Music, Politics and the problems of national identity in Indonesia* (2001).

corroborated with primary and secondary material. Other studies that are used include the 1992 issue of the International institute of Social History (IISG) *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis,* A special which focuses on the role of media in the Dutch Indies and contains several articles linking radio with politics, censorship and nationalism, and Vincent Kuitenbrouwer's "Radio as a tool of empire", which explores radio's geopolitical function and links it to "being Dutch" in the Indies.[16] On the more cultural and social aspects of radio, Rudolf Mrazek's "Let us become radio-mechanics", incorporated as a chapter in his intriguing book *Engineers of Happiness,* is of particular interest. Mrazek searches for a modern Indonesian identity specifically by looking at the way people thought about and related to radio and similar novelties, providing us with a range of interesting sources and perspectives.[17] Beyond these radio and music related studies the thesis will make use of a range of studies that touch on Indonesian nationalism, colonial modernity, the introduction of technology in colonial settings and the colonial press, topics that are closely related to the one at hand and provide valuable insights for its research. [18]

Media can have far-flung, unexpected and often subtle influences on identity politics meaning it is impossible to treat the influence of Indies radio it in its entirety here. For the sake of simplicity this thesis will limit itself to identity relations specifically in terms of the west-east dichotomy that was present on most Indies stations. This will help the study paint a clearer picture of the relation between radio and the gradual deterioration of identity relations inside the colony, but it also leaves out certain subjects that need to be mentioned. For one, because most stations spoke predominantly to and about their own audiences, the representations discussed in this study are mostly images of the 'self' and not of the 'other'. As such, the study doesn't really deal with depictions of eastern audiences on Dutch broadcasts or with the depictions of western audiences on eastern broadcasts. Focusing on the east-west dichotomy of the radio also largely ignores questions regarding the positions of Chinese audiences within the eastern audience group. Finally, the focus of this study implies that it doesn't concern itself with identities that were entirely left out of the radio program, or ask why they were left out in the first place.

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[16] Bart Koetsenruijter ed., *Jaarboek Media Geschiedenis* 4 Nederlands Indië (1992); Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, 'Radio as a tool of empire. Intercontinental broadcasting from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies in the 1920s and 1930s', *Itinerario* 40-1 (2016) 83-103.

[17] Rudolf Mrazek, '"Let us become radio mechanics": technology and national identity in late-colonial Netherlands East Indies', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1997) 3-33; Rudolf Mrazek, *Engineers of happy land* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2002).

[18] Frances Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas: colonial practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*, (Jakarta & Kuala Lumpur: Equinox 2008); Ulbe Bosma, Angelie Sens and Gerard Termorshuizen eds. *Journalistiek in de tropen: de Indisch- en Indonesisch-Nederlandse pers, 1850-1958* (Amsterdam: Aksant 2005) 47-65; Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise*; Takashi Shiraishi, *An age in motion*; Daniel Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (New York: Oxford University Press 1981).

This thesis aims to highlight the existence of a relation between radio and identity politics in the Indies by showing some of its prime movers, and give us a general understanding of its dynamics by highlighting specific case studies. By doing so the study hopes to conclude to what extent radio played a role in the identity politics that were shaking up the unstable colony and to shine some light on the larger relation between radio and identity and the effects of media and culture on politics in the East Indies. Both radio and identity are complicated and many faceted subjects and their influence, as we will see, is often subtle, but by looking at the way Indies stations represented various identities, asking why they did so and discussing some of the ways Indies audiences reacted to these representations the study hopes to show that it is an intriguing subject that deserves further attention.

Chapter 1 – The politics of a developing broadcasting system

At first glance the early Indies radio seemed rather unassuming. As said in the introduction, many researchers have ignored the early period of Indies radio all together or suggested that it was of little political importance. Jennifer Lindsay, who has made thorough study of the Indonesian radio, goes as far as to suggest that Indies radio before 1942 was a-political.[19] Considering the almost complete domination of music and entertainment on colonial radio programmes one might even be inclined to agree. This chapter will argue however, that Indies radio was in fact heavily influenced by issues of politics. Focussing on the two dominant and western Indies radio stations, the PHOHI and NIROM, the chapter will show how the development of short-wave transmissions was followed by almost immediate attempts to appropriate them for political purposes. By exploring this appropriation the chapter will argue that Indies radio may have had a complicated relation to identity politics but was undeniably influenced by it.

To make its case, this chapter will focus on the origin and development of the two largest Western broadcasting stations, the PHOHI and NIROM, discussing how their development became intertwined with colonial identity politics and showing that their involvement inescapably pulled the other Indies stations into colonial identity politics as well. The PHOHI and NIROM were not the only broadcasting stations servicing the Indies and were in fact not even the first, as local radio clubs had been broadcasting within the colony since the early twenties. But with their increased reach the PHOHI and NIROM dwarfed many of the earlier clubs. The way these two stations established themselves would therefore lay down much of the physical and regulatory infrastructure that would define Indies radio, which in turn will help us understand how Indies radio functioned in its relation to identity politics within the colony.

The stakes of Indies broadcasting

In order to understand the circumstances that shaped Indies broadcasting, this study first needs to explain the situation in the Dutch Empire at the advent of broadcasting and discuss the lingering effects of the First World War on its colonial domains. Because the Netherlands largely evaded the onslaught in Europe, many consider the Dutch experience of the First World War as somewhat inconsequential. Recent studies have shown however that while the Dutch counted few actual casualties, they were nonetheless affected by the war.[20] For the Dutch overseas territories, the war

[19] Jennifer Lindsay, 'Making Waves', *Indonesia* (1997) 105-123, 110.
[20] See: Hans Binneveld, et al. eds., *Leven naast de catastrofe. Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Hilversum: Verloren 2001); Paul Moeyes, *Buiten schot. Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog 1914-1918* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers 2001); Wim Klinkert, Samuël Kruizinga and Paul Moeyes, *Nederland Neutraal. De Eerste Wereldoorlog 1914-1918* (Amsterdam: Boom 2014).

presented itself primarily in the form of British naval blockades and a diminishing colonial trade, resulting in an economic crisis. The experience obviously pales in comparison to what was happening in Europe, but the economic downturn left a significant impact on colonial society and heralded a decade-long period of unrest in which the nationalist movement became ever more vocal about their cause. Eventually, this unrest led the colonial governor of the Indies, J.P. Graaf van Limburg Stirum, to grant the local population more influence, seeing no other option than to give them a seat in the newly established *Volksraad* (people's council).[21] Although the *Volksraad* was to have no legislative authority and still carried a white majority, colonial elites saw any influence gained by the natives as a sign that the government was losing grip on the colony.

Vincent Kuitenbrouwer recently pointed out that fears about the stability of the colony were compounded by another side effect of the war: the loss of the Indies telegraph connection.[22] Although telegraph lines were not national property, most of the world's telegraph infrastructure were under the control of a handful of business cartels with strong national ties. The Netherlands and Indies found themselves at opposite ends of one of the longest of these networks, almost entirely in the hands of a British cartel.[23] As the war began, this cartel was asked to prioritize British military communications over other messages, which they loyally did. While the prioritization of British communication never cut the Dutch off from their colony completely, the sense of disconnect was undeniable. To Governor-general Limburg Stirum it felt as if the 'umbilical cord' between the Netherlands and the Indies had been cut.[24] Kuitenbrouwer notes that Limburg Stirum's biographers have generally considered the "sense of colonial isolation and crisis to be a contributing factor for the decision … to make significant concessions to the Indonesian nationalists".[25]

The destabilizing situation especially worried people in the powerful colonial business lobby. In a bid to protect their business interests the colonial lobby started campaigning to strengthen the unity of the empire, or *'rijkseenheid'*, by formally uniting themselves within an 'Entrepreneurial Board for the Dutch Indies' in 1920. With deep pockets and political influence at their disposal, the Rijkseenheid movement spared few efforts in their campaign. To increase awareness and concern for the Dutch colonial possessions the movement donated large sums to the Colonial Institute and even founded their own magazine, the "*Rijkseenheid*".[26] But the movement went much further than just lobbying for the importance of maintaining the overseas territories and also personally financed

[21] Kuitenbrouwer, 'Radio as a tool of empire', 87; Arjen Taselaar, 'De Rijkseenheid, spreekbuis van conservatief koloniaal Nederland', *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies* 5 (1999) 4-13, 4.
[22] Kuitenbrouwer, "Radio as a tool of empire", 87.
[23] Dwayne R. Winseck and Robert Pike, *Communication and empire* (Durham & London: Duke University Press 2007) passim.
[24] Kuitenbrouwer, 'Radio as a tool of empire', 87.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] A. Taselaar, 'De Rijkseenheid, spreekbuis van conservatief-koloniaal Nederland', *Tijdschrift voor tijdschriftstudies* (1999) 4-13, 6-7.

projects that aimed to increase the 'Dutch colonial presence' in the archipelago.[27] Kuitenbrouwer suggests that it is in the light of this sense of unrest about the future of the colonies and the subsequent campaigning by the Rijkseenheid movement that we can begin to understand some of the motives that defined Indies broadcasting.[28]

It was only a few years after the *Rijkseenheid* movement came into being that researchers at the Philips Natlab in Eindhoven developed a new type of crystal oscillator that allowed for direct high-quality transmission to the Indies. So when Anton Philips, owner of the Philips Corporation, began envisioning an intercontinental broadcast using this new technology, his search for investors quickly led him to the influential members of the *Rijkseenheid*.[29] Philips cleverly invited the Queen of the Netherlands for the first official broadcast of his new transmitter, making her the first European ruler to directly address her colonial subjects with the help of radio in a monumental speech. Hearing the queens address, any doubters within the ranks of the *Rijkseenheid* were quickly convinced that Philips's radio presented a means to overcome the telegraph-line nightmare, reinforce the Dutch presence in the colony and strengthen the bonds between the colony and motherland, all in one go. Backed by the colonial lobby's wealth and influence, Philips would have his Indies radio station, the Philips Omroep Holland-Indië (PHOHI), albeit now heavily entrenched within the bastion of the colonial lobby. [30]

As the PHOHI represented the first large-scale broadcasting initiative in the colony, its development set the tone for most of the discourse and legislation regarding Indies radio. It is therefore import to examine what the relation between the Philips group and Rijkseenheid-movement meant for this development. First, we need to establish that the plan for a broadcasting service to the Indies was not a government initiative, but introduced by a business coalition. This was in marked difference with other colonial radio initiatives such as the BBC's famous Empire service, which was government led.[31] Still, the PHOHI project was quite obviously steeped in political motive. Even if the Philips Company functioned as the public face of the organization, the project was largely funded and supported by a group with ambitious political motivations. The PHOHI thus came to serve geopolitical goals at least as prominently as it did economic interests, if not more. However, and this would become important when the radio had to be embedded into a legal framework, there was a sincere discrepancy between the PHOHI's political ambitions and the Dutch cabinet's much broader concerns.

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[27] Kuitenbrouwer, 'Radio as a tool of empire', 87-88.
[28] Ibidem.
[29] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 42.
[30] Hans Vles, *Hallo Bandoeng* (Zuthpen: Walburg 2008) 90-132, 147.
[31] Pinkerton, 'Radio and the Raj', passim; Lindsay, 'Making waves', 106.

No politics on the ether

Despite the discrepancies mentioned, initial preparations for the Indies broadcasting service began smoothly enough. Philips formed a partnership with seven other companies in the limited liability company Philips Omroep Holland-Indië on the 18th of June, 1927 and their request for a radio-concession was granted shortly after. Emphasizing the project's strong connection to the colonial lobby, every single one of the companies involved other than Philips was either a Dutch Indies trading or plantation firm. Showing just how much sway the colonial lobby had, the PHOHI was able to claim a monopoly on Indies broadcasting despite competing requests for broadcasting concessions by the KRO and NCRV, two Dutch religious broadcasting organizations. Both were ultimately resigned to transmitting through the PHOHI, which they could do only as long as they acceded to demands by the PHOHI about their programming.

Although this seemed like an early victory for the colonial lobby, it wouldn't be the last the PHOHI would hear from the other broadcasting organizations. In fact, conflicts about the distribution of airtime became so heated that they eventually ended in a three-year broadcasting hiatus in 1930. Under a new telegraph and telephone law, airtime in the Netherlands had just been divided between different political parties representing the deeply pillarized Dutch society.[32] Pressured by these same political parties, which including the previously mentioned KRO and NCRV, the government then attempted to do the same for colonial radio. The PHOHI's investors were dead against the plan however. In their eyes the uneasy situation within the colony really didn't need any further incitement and the Dutch in the colony needed to represent a strong united front. Introducing pillarized party programmes on the airwaves would achieve the very opposite. Beyond anything else, the colonial lobby felt it had to keep socialist broadcaster VARA and its "depraved" ideas away from the fifty million repressed Indonesians.[33]

The colonial lobby wasn't alone in this view. When in 1930 the radio council publicly advised to divide the Indies broadcasting schedule along party lines, the decision was met with outrage from practically the entire Dutch colonial press, an almost singular occurrence in the normally so polemic Indies newspapers.[34] The *Nieuws van den Dag* called the decision "absurd and fatal" and even the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, which Rene Witte considers to be the most moderate voice amongst the

[32] Pillarisation describes the vertical segregation of a society along the lines of religion or ideology, the term was specifically phrased with the Dutch example in mind. See: Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1977).
[33] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën: Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, inv.nr. 3104.
[34] Ulbe Bosma, 'Kritiek en populisme' in: Ulbe Bosma, Angelie Sens and Gerard Termorshuizen eds. *Journalistiek in de tropen: de Indisch- en Indonesisch-Nederlandse pers, 1850-1958* (Amsterdam: Aksant 2005) 47-65, 52.

Indies press, was astonished by the "sectarianism" that was now forced upon the Indies.[35] The normally so moderate journal dedicated an entire series of tendentious articles to the matter and left very little doubt about the editor's opinions, at one point lamenting why "it seemed so impossible to create a truly national broadcasting programme in our little country".[36] Dutch newspaper *Het Vaderland* would go even further, berating the complete disregard of the dangers the introduction of "red propaganda" would have in a society so susceptible to its revolutionary message.[37] The issue cemented an idea amongst many Europeans in the Indies that became symbolized in a phrase recurring in newspapers, pamphlets and circulars throughout the 30s, often in all capitals: "NO POLITICS ON THE ETHER".[38]

Although Philips seems to have wanted to continue broadcasting within the terms set by the Radio Council, the other partners in the PHOHI coalition deemed the threat of a pillarized broadcasting system so serious that they forced him into the discontinuation of all broadcasting.[39] The Dutch political parties weren't planning to step back from their demands however, and it would take until 1933 before the conflict was finally resolved. This shows not only how afraid the colonial lobby had become of an Indies collapse, but also how deeply political the issue of broadcasting could be.

A complete freeze of broadcasting might seem like a disproportionate measure, but needs to be understood in relation to a set of "dramatically heightened conceptions" about radio's political influence that was spreading through Europe in the interwar years.[40] This sense of power people ascribed to radio in the 1930's seems to have originated within European totalitarian states. These, according to Dmitri Zakharine, turned to radio because they assumed acoustical media to "have a particular affinity for exercising political power".[41] Their logic, he suggests, was that people simply cannot close their ears in the same way that they can close their eyes, making hearing "a sense of extreme passibility and … a guarantor of authentic perception".[42] Whether this was true or not, the swift success of totalitarian states created a highly inflated belief that they were right and that people were exceptionally vulnerable to the power of radio. Showing how much weight these ideas

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[35] 'Indië wordt beschoolmeesterd', *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, (June 12, 1930) Koninklijke Bibliotheek KB C 55; Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 47-48.
[36] 'Het sectarisme in den aether', *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad* (April 28, 1928) Koninklijke Bibliotheek KB C 96.
[37] 'De PHOHI-zendtijd verdeeld!', *Het Vaderland* (June 28, 1930) Koninklijke Bibliotheek KB NBM C44;
[38] G.A. Boon, *De radio-omroep voor Nederland en Indië* (Den Haag: Haagsche Drukkerij 1930) 22*;* 'Geen politiek in den aether', *Het Vaderland,* July 15, 1930, Koninklijke Bibliotheek KB NBM C44; 'Geen politiek in den aether', *De Sumatra Post*, May 16, 1936, Koninklijke Bibliotheek KB 1634 C1.
[39] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 50.
[40] Pinkerton, 'Radio and the Raj', 184.
[41] Dmitri Zakharine, 'Audio media in the service of the totalitarian state?' in: Kirill Postoutenko ed., *Totalitarian communication: hierarchies, codes and messages* (New Brunswick & Londen: Transcript 2010) 157-176, 158.
[42] Ibidem.

carried, they even found their way into the work of prominent thinkers like Marshall McLuhan in the '60s, three decades later. Of particular interest is McLuhan's assertion that this "vulnerability" was especially pronounced in the developing regions of Africa and India, where culture was less visually oriented than in Europe.[43] With that McLuhan seemed to suggest that people in these regions, still vastly connected to auditory traditions such as the Indian *adda* or the tribal drum, were supposedly extra susceptible to radio and its acoustic message.[44]

Again, whether this was true or not, it should be clear that people at the time felt that the radio was a medium with unprecedented influence. This was most likely what inspired the Rijkseenheid movement to invest in broadcasting on such a large scale but it also seems to have had them running scared about what people would be able to hear on the device. These fears were exacerbated by a certain sensitivity many appointed to the inhabitants of the colony and the already agitated situation in the region. Such worries clearly motivated the Rijkseenheid movement in its discontinuation of broadcasting, but could also be found amongst government officials. For instance in a motivation for scrapping a KRO radio lecture in 1933: "The KRO shouldn't express its principles in such a way that it might meet with antipathy, mental disturbance or indignation … Indies society is extraordinarily sensitive to such things. Even the Europeans become oversensitive due to the climate. The natives are sensitive by nature. An untactful broadcast might create opposition against the missions and even the government."[45]

By the time the stalemate between the government and PHOHI finally ended, the fears of radio's political prowess seem to have been internalized by all parties, leading to a somewhat surprising conclusion: an attempt to expel all politics from Indies radio. The PHOHI conceded airtime to the sectarian broadcasting organizations under the stipulation of strict and pre-emptive censorship by an independent organization. An Indies Programme Commission (IPC) was founded with the task to review all programming before broadcasting. As the Indies already had a long history of censoring media this didn't raise many concerns, even if it created the odd situation where there was now a broadcasting organization within the Netherlands operating under censorship so strict that it wouldn't have been out of place within a totalitarian state.[46]

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[43] Marshall McLuhan, 'Radio: the tribal drum', *AV Communication Review* (1964) 133-145, 134.
[44] Dipesh Chakrabarty's treatise on the adda suggests that there is at least some truth to a stronger preoccupation with acoustic communication, see: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2000) pp. 180-213.
[45] Cited in: Marjan Beijering, 'Overheidscensuur op een koloniale radiozender, de Philips Omroep Holland Indië en de Indië Programma Commissie, 1933-1940', in: Bart Koetsenruijter ed., *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 4 Nederlands-Indië (Amsterdam: IISG 1992) 43-69, 63.
[46] Gerard Termorshuizen, 'het négligé bestaat uit weinige en dunne kleren', in: Ulbe Bosma, Angelie Sens and Gerard Termorshuizen eds., *Journalistiek in de tropen: de Indisch- en Indonesisch-Nederlandse pers, 1850-1958* (Amsterdam: Aksant 2005)11-26, 19; Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 18-28, 50.

The IPC's primary objective was to make sure that radio-programmes intended for the colonies would be in tune with the wishes of Dutch-Indies society. This more or less resulted in the PHOHI getting what it wanted, as a 1929 survey amongst colonials had already made it quite clear that colonial listeners mostly wanted light amusement and were, as the governor-general famously called it, "averse to religious sectarianism and Dutch party politics".[47] As Marian Beijering summarizes, the IPC clearly took these wishes to heart scrapping or editing almost 10% of the texts it reviewed.[48] Anything that might meet with 'antithesis', all possible polemics and generally anything that could give occasion for discussion, were to be removed.[49] The IPC furthermore maintained enormously strict criteria for decency and shunned anything hinting towards advertising during programmes. To show just how rigorous the IPC handled its criteria, a 1937 lecture called "midwinter daydream" about the alps was condemned for being "nothing but a commercial for Switzerland".[50] Following some early unruly remarks in 1933, the IPC doubled down on these criteria, banning all discussion of government policy - a decision that was much lamented as it also implied the "positive" treatment of such policy. Beijering suggests that the IPC gave off such a clear signal that by the second half of the 1930's self-censorship seems to have taken over most of the work for the IPC.[51]

These measures seem to have had the intended effect. The VARA never commenced broadcasting and interest from the other sectarian broadcasting organizations quickly faded. NCRV, vanguard in the fight for airtime, made one single broadcast before abandoning the project. Only VPRO and KRO commenced a noteworthy broadcasting programme, and of these two only KRO was able to continue broadcasting until the Second World War. It seems that the lack of opportunity to spread their ideology, in combination with the considerable financial commitments and the idea that they would have to share their channel with the PHOHI, was enough for most to forget about Indies broadcasting.[52]

The IPC censorship kept more than just sectarianism off the Indies airwaves however. The strict guidelines became a defining influence on all Indies programming. In fear of socialist propaganda the Indies broadcasting system had been stripped of all, or as much as possible, of its political content. With politics banned, Indies radio ostensibly became a medium for light entertainment and not much else. Programming mostly existed of light classical and popular music, supplemented with informational programming about sports, all sorts of hobbies and other "small

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[47] 'Publiek afkerig godsdientig sectarisme en partijpolitiek Nederlandschen grondslag', Telegram Gouverneur General to Minister van Koloniën 19-6-1929, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Ministerie van Kolonien, Exhibitum 21-6-1929 T122.
[48] Of the 2694 texts the IPC reviewed between 1930 and 1939 it changed 201 and prohibited another 21. Marian Beijering, 'Overheidscensuur op een koloniale radiozender', 66.
[49] Ibidem.
[50] Jaarverslag IPC 1937, cited in: Beijering, "Overheidscensuur op een koloniale radiozender", 53.
[51] Idem, 66.
[52] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 50-51.

talk". Indies radio became so frivolous that Rudolf Mrazek alludes to it as a novel "little furniture", emphasizing its shiny physical appearance over its function; Marian Beijering even calls it "banal".[53] This "light" character of Indies programming was perhaps best reflected in the person of Eddy Startz and his "Happy Station" show, which still holds the record for the longest running international radio show in the world. Its name spoke volumes about its content as Startz's programme attempted to be an island of joy untouched by the troubles of the world. "A nice cup of tea" was ever present during the show, which further featured sections such as the "University of Light Learning" and the Happy Station animal gang, featuring horses named Happy, Pappy, Bright and Breezy.[54] Startz even famously changed the meaning of the letters of the PCJ transmitter to "Peace, Cheer and Joy".[55]

Considering the "no politics on the ether" mind-set and the light character of programming, one understands why authors such as Jennifer Lindsay have come to suggest that Indies radio before the Second World War was "apolitical".[56]. The PHOHI's backers wanted the colony to look as calm and stable as could be, and under the IPC's watch this became dogma. Censorship went so far that even positive news about government policy wasn't allowed for fear that it might ruffle feathers better left undisturbed. This kept the radio free of sectarian influences, but also made it impossible for the PHOHI to operate the sort of rhetoric that made the radio such a powerful tool in countries like Italy and Nazi-Germany. Above all however, the PHOHI's backers needed the colony to remain stable, so they had little need for political debate. One of the fascinating contradictions of the PHOHI was that in order to achieve its political goal it actually wished for radio content to overtly be as apolitical as possible.

Hegemony and the Indies airwaves

That is not to say however that radio was unable to influence colonial society. With political expression considered a double-edged sword, the Rijkseenheid focused on influencing people's perception of the Dutch colonizer and the PHOHI figured explicitly into this strategy. Most obviously, the PHOHI intended to strengthen ties between the Indies and the Netherlands and between Indies audiences. Radio was quite literally imagined to be a bridge between the motherland and the colony. It is not surprising therefore that the very first article in the very first edition of the PHOHI's programme guide came to be titled "De Band met ons" or The Ties between us (note the capital T).[57]

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[53] "Laag-bij-de-gronds", Beijering, "Overheidscensuur op een koloniale radiozender", 48; Mrazek, "Let us become radio mechanics", 7, 13.
[54] Jerome S. Berg, *Listening to the shortwaves, 1954 to today* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: mcFarland 2008) 259.
[55] Ibidem.
[56] Jennifer Lindsay, 'Making waves', 110.
[57] 'De Band met ons,' *De Indische Luistergids* 1 (1933) 3.

This already shows that Indies radio influenced the power relations between identity groups inside the colony, even if it couldn't broadcast explicit political content.

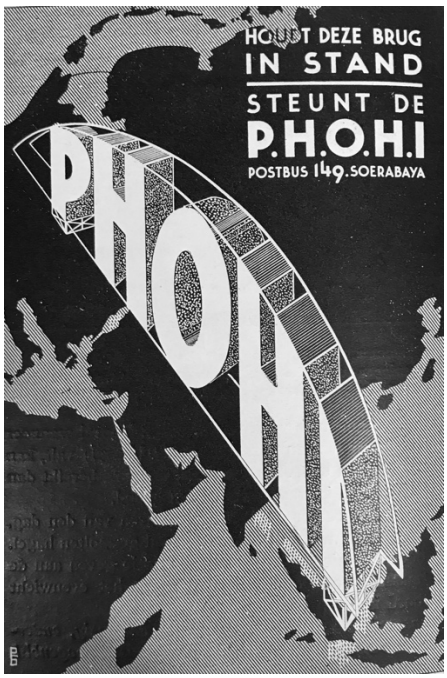

Illustration 1, PHOHI advert reading 'keep this bridge up, aid the PHOHI', *NIROM gids* 9 (1934), 24.

The plans for the PHOHI encompassed more however. As mentioned before, the Rijkseenheid intended to stabilize the situation in the colony by creating a stronger "Dutch presence". One of the primary arguments for the development of the PHOHI was therefore that it could make the colony a more pleasant destination for Dutch colonizers by making it seem closer to home, thereby luring more people to the colony.[58] The PHOHI was therefore consciously developed to bolster the numbers of the Dutch identity group within the colony, as a counterbalance to its slowly weakening authority. It should also be considered that "Dutch presence" could imply much more than just getting people to the Indies. After all, with Europeans constituting only 0,4% of the total Indies population in 1930, what difference would even a doubling of newcomers have made?[59]

In this context it is worth taking a closer look at radio's broader function in maintaining colonial rule. This study will argue that "presence" in the colonies was never just about drawing more people to the region as it was about increasing the visibility of the relatively small Dutch segment of Indies society and normalizing its authority. Beyond increasing the actual size of the Dutch identity group, radio, like other technologies, also functioned to reaffirm this groups supposed cultural and

[58] G.A. Boon, *De radio-omroep voor Nederland en Indië,* 19.
[59] Gijs Beets et al., *De demografische geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders,* (Den Haag: Nederlands Interdisciplinair Demografisch Instituut 2002) 35.

technological superiority, fundamental elements of the 'rule of colonial difference'. Studies like Brian Larkin's *Signal and noise* and Michael Adas's *Machines as the measure of men* have shown that technologies in colonial settings didn't just function as tools of the administration, but actually became a representation of their authority, establishing Western superiority through the grandeur and modernity they exuded.[60] In other words, technologies and grand infrastructural projects introduced into colonial society weren't just there to make life easier or things run smoother, they were also meant to impress local populations with the idea that they needed their oppressors. These projects, including their often grand openings and extravagant designs, thus functioned heavily in reaffirming colonial identity politics by proving the superiority of the colonizer. Brian Larkin refers to such projects and their specific aesthetic as an expression of the *colonial sublime*.[61] Radio, through its awe-inspiring technology and its unrivalled reach, had all the grandeur required for such purposes and the bombast it was introduced with certainly breathes the aesthetic of the sublime. Even before the arrival of shortwave, this was made tangible in the form of the Malabar radio station. Spanning between two mountain ridges, the Malabar station was of a unique design and became the largest transmitter ever to be built. Situated high in the mountains above Bandung, even the construction of the station itself was presented as a tour de force of technical engineering and planning. Through its eye-catching location, design and function, Malabar station was considered "a natural focal point and centre of authority".[62]

Shortwave radio pushed the envelope even further, with each new transmitter serving as a physical extension of the Dutch presence in the Indies; a geopolitical tool defining the reach of the Dutch domain and even extending it outward. Rudolf Mrazek's account of the function radio performed in the outer territories of the Indies clearly points this out:

> Indies radio achieved what the Indies railways, motor roads, and even the wire telegraph or telephone, hardly could. By the late 1930s, a wireless signal from a new system of stations on the main Indies islands, Java and Sumatra, and from overseas in Holland, reached the whole, wide, sprawling Indonesian archipelago, with the exception of New Guinea in the extreme east. The reception was not always perfect, but a new ideology

[60] Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 17-19; Michael Adas, *Machines as the measure of men. Science, technology and ideologies of western dominance* (Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press 1989) passim; Headrick, *The tools of empire,* 379.
[61] Larkin expands on the subject, explaining the way spectacles and grand openings of technological projects functioned in the maintenance of colonial authority under the British regime in Nigeria. A comparison to such spectacles and the reactions received are clearly recognizable in early Indies radio broadcasts.
[62] Mrazek, "Let us become radio mechanics", 11.

> built up fast: As far as the signal could be heard, so far there was the Netherlands East Indies. [63]

Radio therefore became a material expression of colonial identity politics; a physical representation of authority and a legitimation of colonial rule: "The Indies radio studios exuded power".[64]

Ships passing in the night

The previous section described how radio functioned in the reaffirmation of the existing colonial hierarchy. However, one could also argue that radio was a disruptive influence on colonial society, rather than a stabilizing one. Due to its focus on the establishment of Dutch presence, the PHOHI's programme was entirely presented in Dutch and it featured a specifically tailored set of Dutch cultural values. The PHOHI was created with a European colonial audience in mind, never the locals, and was to bring a sort of vicarious experience of home to the Dutch expats. Even Startz's 'Happy station', beacon of happiness that it was, never forgot to end each episode with a reminder to "keep in touch with the Dutch".[65] While chapter 2 will show that this certainly strengthened the Dutch presence in the Indies, it should also be considered that this strategy excluded non-Europeans. The problems that this exclusion created are best explained by turning our gaze to the other prominent force in the development of Indies broadcasting: the NIROM.

Broadcasting from within the colony rather than from Holland, the NIROM was more "truly" an Indies broadcasting station and was far less politically motivated than the PHOHI. Still, it became inextricably involved in the slow souring of identity relations within the colony. The NIROM's development began as early as 1921. Founded by a combination of the NV Radio Holland, Maintz & CO and the Indies news agency ANETA, the NIROM initially had little success in winning a concession. This only changed in 1929 after the group ousted ANETA in favour of a future cooperation with the PHOHI, represented by the Philips group. With the Philips group on board, the NIROM was suddenly able to claim a concession in 1930, nine years after their first attempt. But as the NIROM concession now followed on the coattails of the PHOHI's, it also inherited the "no politics" dogma which the European colonials had internalized during the PHOHI concession conflict. Most colonials had by then begun to practice an active form of "self-abstinence", as Rene Witte calls it, with regards to any political expression to keep the natives from getting any ideas.[66] This position was entrenched in law through a deceivingly simple bit of legislation, deciding that all further programming intended for the

[63] Mrazek, 'Let us become radio mechanics', 9.
[64] Mrazek, 'Let us become radio mechanics', 11.
[65] Berg, *Listening to the shortwaves,* 259.
[66] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 104.

Indies should "conform to the wishes of the Indies public".[67] The catch being that these "wishes" were to be formulated by the Indies governor, which he could do without actually consulting the public, giving him carte blanche to censor anything he deemed unfavourable.[68]

The NIROM's value as a political instrument was even further diminished by an issue relating to press releases from Indies news agency ANETA. Under the argument of protecting the rights of newspaper-publishers ANETA, which still had a bone to pick with the station, NIROM was obligated to wait with the announcement of press releases delivered by ANETA until these had also been send to all other ANETA subscribers, meaning the newspapers.[69] This severely limited the NIROM's value as a source of news. Insofar as the NIROM did broadcast actualities, even its own programme guide stressed that it "was not about the details, those one could find in the newspapers, but only about what the English would call 'the gist of the news'".[70] In describing the content of its news bulletins, another early issue of the *NIROM bode* actually failed to even mention the time it allotted for discussion of day to day occurrences, only mentioning times for a summary of sports results and equity and currency exchange rates.[71]

With such a limited role as news carrier, the NIROM clearly had even less political content than the PHOHI. And yet its programming would become a considerable subject of discussion because of the role it saw for itself and for those who it targeted. Just like the PHOHI, the NIROM likened itself to be a bridge between colony and motherland and argued that its service could "make the prospect of staying in the tropics more appealing", "lessen the isolation of those in the outer provinces" and "would allow for the further spread, and daily visibility, of Dutch music, Dutch art, Dutch thoughts and Dutch news in the Indies".[72] Their envisioned audience was therefore outspokenly Dutch. To be fair, the NIROM did express an intention to add in programming for the native population at a later stage, but they wrongly assumed native access to radio would be minimal due to the costs of a subscription. The NIROM, like the PHOHI, thus excluded and subordinated Eastern listeners by design.

The NIROM shows that, within the colonial dichotomy of East and West, radio couldn't avoid expressing the specific cultural values of its target audience with the exclusion of others as a by-product, even when it wasn't a result of political intent as was the case for the PHOHI. The lack of Eastern programming quickly became an issue for natives, who had been able to acquire a radio in surprising numbers and now also wished to listen to their own music and programmes. Already In

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[67] Idem, 113.
[68] Idem, 41-77.
[69] Idem, 71-77
[70] 'Radio-nieuwsberichten', *NIROM Bode* 2 (1934) 52.
[71] 'Programma overzicht', *NIROM Bode* 1 (1934) 5.
[72] 'Houd deze brug in stand', *NIROM bode* 9 (1934) 24; Letter from NIROM/PHOHI to the governor-general, February 12, 1929, Philips Concern Archief, NIROM, 882.

1934, less than a year after official broadcasting began, the chairman of the Solosche Radio Vereniging (SRV) asserted that the "NIROM had lost sight of the fact that the Indies was not Europe, and did not consist of a homogenous group of listeners", and that "the musical wishes of the Eastern listener do not align with that of the European".[73] Obviously, the NIROM's almost entirely Dutch programme didn't come close to reflecting this heterogeneity. Local stations providing eastern music quickly developed, however these where categorically excluded from receiving any part of the NIROM licence fee.[74] This arrangement understandably angered eastern listeners who found themselves required to pay a radio licence fee to the NIROM, whether they wanted to listen to its programme or not.

The NIROM was not in fact unwilling towards demands from eastern listeners, especially as it became clearer and clearer that native radio-ownership would soon equal or even outgrow Dutch audiences. However, the way the NIROM solved the issue tells us a lot about the ailments of late-colonial society and the way radio exacerbated these conditions. Rather than becoming a station for all in the Indies, with eastern and western programming mixed throughout the day, the NIROM's own programming remained explicitly Dutch. In its own words, combining eastern and western programmes

> "would be a difficult matter, because it doesn't seem possible to take time from the programme we already have and use it for Eastern music. It is certain that Eastern music is not much liked by the European public, just as the Indonesian public does not much like European music. The number of registered listeners to NIROM is at present around 6200, of whom circa 1250 are Natives, Chinese, and Foreign Asiatics. Given this ratio, it would be unfair of NIROM to split its programming between European and Eastern music. The only solution that would be fair for all parties is to set up separate transmitters to broadcast European and Eastern music."[75]

To satisfy eastern wishes the NIROM decided to build separate transmitters and began working with local broadcasting stations to provide a separate Eastern programme. While this plan gave eastern audiences a programme of their own it also cemented an idea that people could really only be interested in either eastern or western programming, not in both, or at the very least suggested that one shouldn't hear the two of them in the same place and time. This divide was forcefully maintained throughout all of the NIROM's communication, even spawning two separate programme guides for the Eastern and Western programmes. As Hadji Agoes Salim, a prominent Indonesian nationalist later put it "With this policy, NIROM, a halfway official body, becomes as it

[73] 'Protest tegen de „NIROM". Oostersche radioluisteraars in openbare vergadering bijeen', *De Sumatra Post* (18-6-1934) Koninklijke Bibliotheek Den Haag, KB 1634 C1,
[74] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 81-82.
[75] 'Uitzendingen ten behoeve van Oostersche luisteraars', *NIROM-Bode* 8 *(*8-7-1934*)* 4–5.

were propaganda for, and a demonstration of the separation of peoples, with the approval of the ruling power".[76] Nonetheless, the plan was considered by many to be at least somewhat of an improvement, as eastern stations were now finally able to receive a part of the NIROM's licence fee for the programmes they delivered to supplement the latter's eastern broadcast.

Although this temporarily settled the issue, native listeners again became restless when the NIROM announced it was going to lower the payments to eastern stations in 1936, when it fused the eastern and middle Java broadcasts and expressed an intent to start providing its own Eastern programmes throughout the archipelago. This decision would most likely imply the end of several eastern radio stations, which had come to depend on these payments and it would effectively leave the future of eastern programming in the hands of Europeans. An attempt was made to save the local stations through a motion to revise the division of radio licence fees giving local stations a share, but this was dismissed by the Volksraad because it would effectively imply a unilateral renegotiation of the NIROM's contract. The situation created so much unrest however, that it provoked a reaction from the Indies government in 1937. In a decision reminiscing the "ethical policy" from earlier decades, the government expressed that the Eastern programme was best left in the hands of an organisation of Eastern broadcasting groups. The idea, thought up by A.D.A de Kat Angelino was that giving the eastern audience its own station would be constructive for relations in the colony and would lessen the incentive for political activities aimed against the authorities.[77] It seems that by over-delivering on native demands, De Kat Angelino hoped to neutralize the larger issue presented by mounting nationalist sentiments. Above all else, "the order and peace, should be maintained".[78] The NIROM fought this decision as hard as it could but eventually had to give way to the development of a native broadcasting station, the Perikatan Perhimpoenan Radio ketimoeran (PPRK) or Federation of Eastern Radio Societies.

Interestingly enough, Philip Yampolsky has asserted that audiences were quite annoyed by the fact that the new station didn't bring many of the NIROM's stars on board for their new programme. This suggests that easterners were not in fact concerned with the quality of an eastern broadcast created by westerners, but by the fact that it was westerners that created it. Yet another suggestion that the broadcasting of radio in the Indies cannot be seen separately from issues of identity.

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[76] Translation by: Philip Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938' in: ed. Bart Barendregt, *Sonic Modernities in the Malay world: a history of popular music, social distinction and lifestyle* (Brill: Leiden & Boston 2014) 47-112, 77.
[77] "aftrekken van een maatschappelijk steriele en juist daarom zich al spoedig tegen het gezag keerende activiteit op politiek terrein" cited in: Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 145.
[78] Beijering, 'Overheidscensuur op een koloniale radiozender', 66.

Although the PPRK wouldn't effectively come onto the air until 1940 the colony now counted three large broadcasting stations, all of which explicitly separated between eastern and western audiences. The PHOHI's reasons to remain entirely Dutch were obviously connected to its political goals, however the NIROM just as readily kept west and east on separate hours and eventually on separate channels. The PPRK, for obvious reasons, had little interest in providing western programming when two other stations already did. The separation this created was so thorough that Mrazek has come to suggest that there wasn't in fact one, but two Indies radio's, "like two planets, each moving along its own orbit in a very tight universe. If merely in order to keep on track it was logical and imperative that each of them Eastern radio as well as the European, work strenuously on building and guarding its own wholeness".[79]

Dutch East Indies radio, as we have begun to see, was almost inherently involved in the expression of specific cultural identities and therefore couldn't help but to define and sharpen certain divides within colonial society. This was visible not only in the PHOHI's idea of strengthening Dutch presence in the Indies, but also in the PPRK's remarkably similar ambition to "spread Indonesian culture throughout the archipelago".[80] Even the NIROM's inability to mix its eastern and western programming show that it functioned with a clear concept of distinct and distant identities. With that radio may have actually increased the tensions that were already building within the segregated society of the Indies.

Bridging gaps or digging trenches?

The purpose of this first chapter has been to provide the reader with a general understanding of the development of radio, showing that there is a very strong link between the development of colonial broadcasting and Indies identity politics, even if it was often poorly recognized. Dutch East Indies radio wasn't really "a-political", its politics exerted themselves on a deeper, more subtle level: that of culture, and therefore of identity politics. Although the radio was stripped of most of its political content, the involvement of the Rijkseenheid already suggests that its development cannot be seen entirely separate from the growing tensions between Indies identity groups. The fact that the PHOHI and many other Indies stations appear so docile is in fact a direct result of the PHOHI's involvement in colonial politics. The PHOHI played a defining role in the establishment of an overall discourse regarding Indies broadcasting, and because its backers needed the Indies radio to represent stability, they pushed for an Indies radio service free of political opinion and debate.

Despite this moratorium on political expression, the chapter has argued that Indies radio stations were undeniably involved in the definition of colonial identities. For the PHOHI, this was

[79] Mrazek, 'Let us become radio-mechanics', 27
[80] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 145.

most likely a conscious decision to influence developments inside the colony, without causing political unrest. By spreading Dutch culture and suggesting its superiority, the PHOHI's backers hoped to reaffirm the Dutch position at the top of the colonial hierarchy and suggest that the colony was inextricably tied to the Dutch empire. For the NIROM, the definition of separate identities was likely less an issue of geopolitical considerations, and more one of conditioning. It seems that the NIROM's producers genuinely couldn't imagine how a western and eastern audience might be interested in each other's culture or circumstances. Because both of these large stations operated with a strong separation of cultures present, other stations logically followed suite. Even when this separation wasn't politically motivated for some stations it obviously acted on colonial identity relations in important ways. It obviously reiterated the separation that was at the base of the 'rule of colonial difference', however it also caused eastern and western segments of society to drift even further apart, weakening the ties that bound them together.

This chapter has recognized two possible and opposing influences of the Indies radio. On the one hand, it may have been a stabilizing influence on the colony as it reasserted Dutch authority and strengthened ties between the colony and the empire. On the other hand, radio also function into the stronger segmentation of Indies society, exposing and widening fault lines that were slowly tearing that society apart. The question remains whether the radio was better at building bridges or at digging trenches. To measure these influences the study will now look at the way radio represented various identities and assess how heavily Indies audiences came to identify with them.

Chapter 2: Functional frivolity on the western broadcasts

The previous chapter has discussed how Indies radio became entangled with issues of identity relations within the colony. The question remains however in what way this entanglement actually affected Indies audiences and the relations between them. To answer that question the remaining chapters will explore how Indies radio represented colonial identity groups and ask how such representations affected various audiences. These chapters will highlight cases of audience identification and discuss if these represent an action of conscious identity politics or, if not, could otherwise affect identity and power relations within the colony. Doing so will help the study in assess how radio actually affected identity relations within the archipelago. Audience identification takes many forms and for many different purposes, meaning this study can never discuss all of its influences. However, by highlighting some of the ways radio affected power relations and created agency for individuals, even a limited survey can help clarify the effect radio had on colonial identity politics.

The current chapter will focus its attention on all those audiences that identified primarily or at least partially with a western identity, meaning those who listened to the PHOHI and the Dutch segment of the NIROM programme, also called the "Westersche Programma". If the previous chapter has argued that PHOHI and NIROM programmes appeared bland in a political sense, this chapter will show that they become far more interesting when examined from a cultural identity perspective. The first half of this chapter will take a closer look at the cultural substance and the identities represented in the Dutch language programmes by analysing several programme guides and recordings of the PHOHI and NIROM between 1934 and 1940. The reader should note that this only creates a partial image of the Western programmes because of the limits of the source-material, but it should at least help us identify several of its key characteristics and components. Having identified the cultural nature of the western programme, the second half of this chapter will explore how such content fitted into the identity politics of "western" Indies audiences, highlighting specific audiences that identified with these programmes and ask why they would do so? This will show that while there is no denying that the Dutch Indies radio lacked the sort of powerful rhetoric and state building often found in European broadcasts of the time, Dutch language stations in the Indies did have a unique set of sensibilities and peculiarities that made them important in other ways.

Western representations

A study of NIROM and PHOHI programme guides shows that music formed the mainstay of Indies radio, taking up as much as 79% of the NIROM's airtime.[81] PHOHI statistics counted both entertainment programming and music under the category of "recreation", making it harder to establish how much music was played, but a quick survey of programme guides suggest that music formed between 80% and 90% of its programme.[82] The music played consisted mostly of classical and light entertainment pieces and was almost exclusively western.[83] This western orientation itself is to be expected, however the vigour of its implementation went much further than one would expect, and almost denied the fact that these broadcasts were in fact destined for an audience in the tropical colonies.

A survey of the 1938 NIROM programme made by Philip Yampolsky establishes that there was hardly any kroncong to be found anywhere in the "Westersche Programma" for instance, even though it was easily the most popular genre in the Indies at the time.[84] Yampolsky goes on saying that there was "no music with any Indonesian theme" to be found. Even pieces like Godowsky's *Java Suite* and the work of 'Indische" composers like Paul Seelig and Fred Belloni were largely missing. It almost seems that their works were excluded for incorporating elements of gamelan and other eastern sounds, despite their clearly classical nature. This has led Yampolsky to suggest that in terms of music "virtually the only indication that NIROM's Westersche broadcasting was situated in the Indies is the 'NI' in the stations name.[85]

Curiously enough, while the musical programme was painstakingly curated to exclude any reference to Indonesian themes, one could hardly call it "Dutch" either. In fact, apart from the national anthem, which was played every night on the PHOHI and Sunday mornings on the NIROM, songs containing Dutch lyrics or that symbolized Dutch cultural values seem to have featured in the programme relatively little.[86] Programme guides do make occasional mention of music written by Dutch artists, but the overall programme consisted by and large of English, French, German, Italian and other European works. This broad international orientation made programme guides read like a Babylonian confusion of languages and seems somewhat at odds with the PHOHI and NIROM intentions to help spread Dutch culture in the Indies.

The songs selected did represent what audiences in the Netherlands were listening to however. In the 1930's a cosmopolitan way of conduct was "en vogue" amongst educated elites and

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[81] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 122.
[82] *De Indische Luistergids, algemeen radioweekblad* (1934-1938).
[83] Yampolsky, *Music and media in the Dutch East Indies*, 191.
[84] Idem, 192.
[85] Ibidem.
[86] 'het Wilhelmus in de N.I.R.O.M.-programma's', *NIROM bode* 3 (1934) 4.

showing in the mixing of foreign languages into everyday conversation and many other things. Eddy Startz, the popular Happy station radio host again forms a quintessential example. Startz was a polyglot admired for speaking at least six languages.[87] So while the music played didn't portray a 'traditional' Dutch culture, it certainly represented the tastes of educated audiences back home. The importance of this role becomes much larger if we consider that western records were much harder to come by in the colonies, often making radio an important source for audiences interested in keeping up with western musical tastes.

If the musical programme showed a predominantly European but not too obviously Dutch orientation, radio chats, lectures and reports paint a very different picture. This was particularly true in the case of the PHOHI. PHOHI talks and lectures were often concerned with topics so "Dutch" that one might ask "what need anyone in the Indies would have for them?". [88] One of the IPC censors, van Anrooy, indeed asked this question when he was confronted with a lecture that gave detailed descriptions of the local flora and fauna of the Waddeneilanden (a small set of isolated islands stretching the northern coastline of the Netherlands). The Waddeneilanden curiously seem to have been a popular topic as the *Beeld en Geluid* archive possesses a recording of another programme about life on the islands in the winter.[89] Another popular show, *wanderings through the motherland* journaled one PHOHI's experiences as he vacationed within the Netherlands.[90] Other topics of interest covered the current fashion in Holland, which was highly inappropriate for the Indies climate, and perhaps most curiously, very comprehensive forecasts of the Dutch weather.

The overall focus of the PHOHI seemed to be not just on Dutch subject matter then, but also on the very mundane. Although the PHOHI did report on landmark occasions, such as the launch of the first airmail service to the Indies, much of its reporting covered topics that represented everyday life in the Netherlands rather than what would qualify as news. Broadcasts covered topics such as a flower parade in Haarlem, a farmer's dance in Putten, and even the regular departure of planes and ships.[91] Reporting was characterized by a tendency to describe the news in a way "as if you were there", that compounded this focus. Reports often included titbits of information such as who sat in the audience during a race day at the Zandvoort circuit and included long silences to give the audience a chance to listen to the sounds of a plane departing or the clogs of the people dancing the previously mentioned farmers dance.[92]

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[87] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep,* passim.
[88] Beijering, 'Overheidscensuur op een koloniale radiozender'. 49.
[89] 'Winter op de Waddeneilanden', Beeld en Geluid archief (1 Jan 1938) inv nr 4938302.
[90] 'Omzwervingen door het moederland', *NIROM bode* 10 (1934).
[91] 'Reportage boerendansen Putten', Beeld en Geluid archief (1 jan 1938) inv nr 4940867.
[92] 'Reportage Circuit Zandvoort', Beeld en Geluid archief (1 Jan 1939) inv nr 4938587; 'Reportage Circuit Zandvoort', Beeld en Geluid archief (2 Jun 1919) inv nr 4938584.

Overall, this summary suggests that the PHOHI programme consciously presented a "slice of everyday life" in the Netherlands. The choice of music and topics and the way these were narrated all seem heavily intent on bringing life in Europe a little bit closer and invited people to experience that life from a distance. A description of one PHOHI broadcast takes this idea very literal:

> Saturday, May 13 everybody will obviously tune in to the PHOHI to join in the trek to Drenthe. At 1 o'clock, Amsterdam time, the Drenthe department of the PHOHI-CLUB will depart, with a speed never even surpassed by the "Pelikaan", across the PHOHI bridge to the precious motherland. There we will stray for a while across the vast meadows that you know so well".[93]

The banality of most subjects actually also contributes to this effect, as it were these simple everyday things which people most likely missed the most and which radio through its instantaneity could bring to life.

The focus on everyday life seems to have lessened somewhat when the Second World War in Europe drew near and some of the PHOHI talks began striking a more political tone. The strongest example of this was Herman Salomonson's *Torenwachter*, which started in 1939 with the intention of presenting "mood sketches" of the events unfolding in the "old country". Under the threat of war these mood sketches inevitably found Salomonson touching on political subjects. This got him into trouble with the IPC censors so regularly that IPC's archivists were actually forced to handle Salomonson's programme in a separate archive.[94] Still, even Salomon's programme was essentially about ordinary life back home and only became political as that life was under threat of invasion.

Having discussed the peculiarities of the PHOHI chat shows, we can now turn our eyes to the NIROM and its "Westersche Programma". Very few actual recordings of the "Westersche Programma" remain and many of them are about the war, making it much harder to make a precise qualification of its chat programmes. Luckily a study of NIROM programme guides can give us a general idea of the NIROM's cultural content. Although the NIROM's musical programme was explicitly non-colonial, its broadcast as a whole leaves us with a somewhat more balanced impression.[95] Even if a 1934 *NIROM gids* article still claimed "the NIROM brings you Holland in your living room", the Westersche Programma gave more attention to colonial life and even featured several programmes dedicated specifically to colonial topics. Programmes like "*the Indies in the good old days*", a programme that gave detailed historical sketches of life under the colonial regime,

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[93] 'Naar Drente', *Indische Luistergids* 18 *(1934)* 4.
[94] Gerard Temorshuizen, *Een humaan koloniaal: leven en werk van Herman Salomonson alias Melis Stoke* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar 2015) passim; 'Gecontroleerde teksten van het radioprogramma "de torenwachter", door H. Salomonson.' Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, 2.27.05 C235.
[95] *Nirom bode* 6 (1934) 5.

acknowledged the fact that this was in fact an Indies station far more than the PHOHI or even the NIROM's musical programme ever did.[96] Perhaps because of the NIROM's limited capacity to spread news however, the Westersche programma also seems to have doubled down on the type of "everyday programming" we saw under the PHOHI. An ironical piece in *Kritiek en opbouw* describes the issue pungently:

> Actually, we in Kritiek en Opbouw can find no cause for complaint about the Indies radio. They do more than we think is possible, and they do it before we might ever wish them to do so.... We know everything about how Alfred van Sprang, and Bert Garthof, and all these little what-is-their-names people are doing, how important their jobs are, how interesting they themselves are, how they stand, walk, smoke, and stammer.... We know how it is lately with cigarettes for Anita, and next week she may tell us how big her debts are.[97]

The point the editor was making is that, without news, the Westersche Programma deferred to depictions of Indies society life and gossip, something he clearly wasn't happy about.

The Dutch names mentioned in the *Kritiek en Opbouw* article allude to another characteristic of the Westersche Programma, namely that this was still a wholeheartedly Dutch experience, albeit of a slightly more colonial flavour. Even as the Westersche programma acknowledged its geographic location, covering Indies topics and allowing for some clearly creole cultural expressions, the people and society it described where overwhelmingly European. "The Indies in the good old days" gives us a strong example of this orientation. Although presenter Victor Ido sketched vivid pictures of the Indies in his show, his was an image inhabited almost exclusively by citizens of Dutch background. The show described the lives of governors, generals, lawyers and directors, members of the "sociëteit" who went to operas and regularly conversed with Holland via telegram. The native population hardly ever becomes visible other than through their interaction with these elites.[98] This character of the programme is colourfully exemplified in an account of the origin of the colonial "rijsttafel". The rijsttafel is a custom borrowed from the native Nasi Padang, but Ido's narration of its origin seems more interested in how the Dutch, or in his words "Orang Blanda", appropriated the concept and came to refer to it as "rijsttafelen", than where the custom actually came from. Ido's

[96] Victor Ido, *Indië in den goeden ouden tijd: radio voordrachten voor de NIROM gehouden* I-II (3rd print, Bandung: Nix & Co. 1949) passim.
[97] J. de K. [de Kadt],'Kleine Niromiade', *Kritiek en Opbouw* 5:3 (1942) 48.
[98] Victor Ido, *Indië in den goeden ouden tijd*, passim.

accounts present a combination of cultural influences through talks filled with Malay expressions, but that nonetheless narrate an almost exclusively Dutch experience of the Indies.[99]

In addition to the Westersche programma's colonial Dutch flavour, its audiences were also exposed to parts of the PHOHI programme relayed by the NIROM. Although good reception was rare, the NIROM attempted to relay PHOHI programmes whenever it could in order to unburden itself, which meant that the typically Dutch character of PHOHI programming occasionally found its way to the NIROM listener. Because radio talks became intelligible at a much lower quality reception than music, it was much more likely for the NIROM to relay the PHOHI's characteristically Dutch talk shows than its more cosmopolitan musical programme. Although it is hard to make out how strongly this affected the NIROM's overall programme, an idea of the way the PHOHI filled up the interstices of NIROM airtime can be extracted from the NIROM programme guide, the *NIROM Bode*, which from 1935 onward also contained the PHOHI programme guide in a separate section. Even in this limited space the PHOHI undeniably echoed through. Between June 1938 and April 1940 for instance, the opening articles of the PHOHI section of the *NIROM bode* each featured a detailed description of life in a Dutch city.[100] Bearing little to no relation to the programmes in the programme guide, these "sfeerbeelden" or mood sketches seemed solely intent on evoking the moods and visual experiences of Dutch life for those who couldn't experience it themselves. The role of the NIROM as a relay for the PHOHI is sometimes downplayed in studies due to the supposedly limited reception, however audience comments show that Indies audiences considered these European transmissions very important, meaning we shouldn't underestimate its influence.[101]

Strategies of isolation and vicarious living

Having developed a better understanding of the cultural characteristics of the PHOHI and the 'Westersche Programma', the second part of this chapter can begin to identify how the Western stations fitted into the lives and identities of its audiences, starting with its primary target group, Dutch colonials. As a small minority ruling a vast domain, the Dutch lived a relatively isolated life in the Indies and often longed for a stronger connection to their home and a Dutch way of life. The PHOHI was uniquely able to forge such a connection between colonials and the home they left behind. It did so quite explicitly in programmes such as "Microphone debutants", which made airtime available for Dutch children to send a message to their parents abroad, making for some very emotional programming, but it also did so in less direct ways.[102] One of the most striking examples of this can be found in the PHOHI weather reports. The PHOHI weather reports were very popular, even

[99] Victor Ido, *Indië in den goeden ouden tijd*, 4
[100] *Nirom bode* (1938-1940).
[101] *Nirom bode* 6 (1934) 5.
[102] Kuitenbrouwer, *Radio as a tool of empire*, 96

though they gave an account of weather in the Netherlands rather than in Southeast Asia. It might seem odd that detailed descriptions of Dutch weather were a popular programme in the Indies until we take a closer look at the way colonial audiences put such information to use. In letters sent to the PHOHI, colonials made explicit mention of how much they love these reports, explaining that when they hear about the tempestuous November weather at home, "we look to one another and say: how nice, to experience such a November storm".[103] In another letter a couple mentions how they worry about their son back in Utrecht when he has to ride to school during a foggy morning and imagine how he won't have to put on a jacket when it is sunny out.[104] I would therefore argue that what these weather reports aimed for, and seemingly achieved, was a sort of vicarious experience of life at home.

Looking beyond weather reports, such vicarious experiences seem to have informed a large part of the PHOHI programme and can even help us understand peculiarities such as the everyday character of topics, the extremely Dutch focus and the tendency to report "as if you were there". An example of how these could help people imagine a closer connection to home can be found if we take a closer look at one such report about the farmers dance mentioned earlier. The occurrence described is both so typically Dutch and so unassuming that it hardly has value to anyone not already intensely familiar with it, but carries heavy value to someone who remembers it. The narrative descriptions given "as if you were there" were most likely a conscious tool here, which invited the listener to visualize the dance despite having only a very limited idea of what is actually happening. This invites listeners to put much more of themselves into the experience; visualizing what is happening at the other end of the signal and imagining themselves a part of it. The experience when the narration stops and the sounds of clogs on distant music are all that remains, although estranging to present-day listeners, push that effect even further.

Through vicarious experience, the PHOHI thus helped colonials feel Dutch in a place where life wasn't, closing the distance to home. This experience, and the intimacy of the connection felt, become clear in the many letters listeners sent to the PHOHI, such as one from a Sumatra planter who wrote: "…to hear that cosy voice of yours. Good old Phohi, you truly make us feel happy here and make us feel one with the motherland.[105] Another suggests the PHOHI "symbolises Holland, she

[103]W. Boers, Medan, 27 November 1933, in: *De Beteekenis van de PHOHI. Brug tusschen Moederland en koloniën. Brieven van luisteraars 1 october 1933–1 januari 1934*, 18.
[104]L.P. Angenent, Serang, 4 December 1933, in: idem, 19.
[105] "Die gezellige stem van jou te hooren. Good old Phohi, je zorgt er werkelijk voor dat wij ons hier happy voelen en ons één weten met het moederland" P.H.A. Willemsen, Bandar Betsy plantation, Sumatra, no date, in: idem, 2.

is Holland. That is how I experience the sensation."[106] This emotional connection also becomes very obvious in *Het radiowonder* (The radio miracle) a poem published in an Indies schoolbook in 1934:

Vlak tegen de rimboe, daar lag het bivak,	Close to the Jungle, there was the bivouac
De wereld was verre, heel verre	The world was far, very far . . . .
De wereld en zij deelden niets dan het dak	The world and they shared nothing but the roof
Met z'n duizenden glanzige sterren	With its thousand shiny stars.
Ze dachten aan Holland, hoe lang was't geléen	They were thinking of Holland, how long was it ago
Sinds zij het vol hoop verlieten	Since they left it so hopefully . . . .
Nu zaten z' in 't oerwoud met niet om hen heen	Now they were in the jungle with nothing
Dan stilte en bos en muskieten.	But silence and forest and mosquitoes
Toch trilden hun harten van blijdschap en dank:	Yet their harts quivered of joy and gratitude:
Straks zouden ze 't vaderland horen	Soon they would hear the fatherland . . . .
Een lied uit hun jeugd, of het vrolijk geklank,	A song from their youth, or the joyfull ringing
Dat rijst uit een Hollandse toren.	Which rises from a Dutch tower.
Stil zaten ze neer, met de rimboe nabij,	Silent they sat, the jungle around them
Vereenzaamd, verbannen, verlaten	Lonely, banished, abandoned . . . .
Maar in hen daar zong het zo luid en zo blij:	But within them resounded so loud and blithe
Straks komt hier het vaderland praten!	Soon the fatherland will speak here!
En toen het nu kwam, over bergen en vloed	And then it came, over mountains and flood . . . .
Toen schokten die staalharde kerels	Then shook those iron-hard men
Van snikken, en vielen op 't kruid aan hun voet	Of snivelling, and fell on the weeds at their feet
Hun tranen als zeldzame perels.[107]	Their tears like rare pearls.

The NIROM had a harder time delivering such vicarious experiences to its listeners and perhaps even fell short of its goal of bringing "Holland into the living room". Its programme was still Dutch in a way, but anyone in Holland would most likely have considered it foreign. I would argue however that where the PHOHI connected Dutch colonials to their home, the NIROM was able to connect them to other Dutch colonials on a regional level. No matter how much colonials missed their home, their actual lives were taking place within the Indies and their fates were much more closely tied to that of other colonials than to the people at home. The NIROM presented this group with a strongly western aesthetic and a common way of life, placed within a colonial context. Also, because of an obligation in the NIROM's concession to make its signal audible within the entire colony, it brought many more out of their isolation than the PHOHI's spotty reception ever could.

[106] "Zij symboliseert Holland, zij is Holland! Zóó onderga ik de sensatie." A. Büno Heslinga, Batavia, 31 Oct 1933, in: idem, 19.
[107] Jac van der Klei, J.B. Ubink, *Het ruisende woud* (3rd ed.; Wolters: Groningen & Batavia 1934) 65.

This was especially appreciated by those living in the outer provinces, one of whom wrote the NIROM that "suddenly, one doesn't feel as far removed from all the traffic and civilization".[108]

Although the Dutch audience's longing for a connection seems relatively innocent and even natural, the reality was more complex. This quickly becomes clear when we consider the nature of this isolation in the Indies and the way radio influenced it. After all, it was rarely the case that these Dutch colonials were actually alone. Even those on far off plantations were surrounded by other people. Rather, they were one of a few Dutch in an overwhelmingly Asian society, which they had to keep at a distance to maintain the construct of colonial difference. This constant process of separation informed almost every part of Dutch life in the Indies, from the "*sociëteit*" to the way one dressed or talked, and as we discussed in the introduction it began to do so even more as natives became more vocal about their rights. By the 1930's this separation began to take on much more extreme forms, showing in the growing membership of the reactionary "*Vaderlandsche Club*" and the founding of an Indies department of the fascist Dutch N.S.B. party amongst others.[109] The entire 1930s are strongly characterized by this Dutch withdrawal from Indies society as "colonials fled into the isolation of their own group."[110]

Dutch isolation was therefore not only self-inflicted, it figured actively in their identity politics. Keeping up with Dutch tastes and knowing what was happening in Dutch society wasn't just part of an innocent longing for home, but figured in culturally and politically distancing oneself from the natives. As the fastest and sometimes only information source on Dutch fashion, music, and life in general in the Netherlands, radio played a large part in this process.

It seems however that radio could do more than that. Beyond helping the Dutch distance themselves from Indies society culturally, Rudolf Mrazek seems to insinuate that radio actually allowed Dutch colonials to physically isolate themselves from the Indies. In his *Engineers in happy land* Mrazeks mentions radio being used to drown out the noise of colonial society, "moving even closer to the radio" and "if there were any, closing the windows".[111] Although Mrazek waxes a bit poetical in making his point, he sketches the interesting situation where the radio allowed listeners to bypass their direct environment and get information or maintain social relations without ever leaving the house. Mrazek therefore suggests that Indies radio actually allowed colonials to live a far more secluded life than before. Although he introduces no proof for this suggestion, an article in the *Indische luistergids* can corroborate such behaviour citing a listener who claims: "where I used to be

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[108] 'Radio-nieuwsberichten', *NIROM bode* 2 (1934) 52.
[109] Amry Vandenbosch, 'Nationalism in Netherlands East India', *Pacific Affairs* (1931) 1051-1069, 1067; S.L. van der Wal, 'De nationaal-socialistische beweging in Nederlands-Indië', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 82 (1968) 35-58, 43-46.
[110] S.L. van der Wal, 'De nationaal-socialistische beweging in Nederlands-Indië', 41.
[111] Mrazek, '*Let us become radio mechanics',* 11.

outgoing and visited the 'society' to play billiards several times a week, these days I stay home and listen to the PHOHI".[112] If Dutch colonial society was already secluded, behind the doors of the "*sociëteit*" and other private clubs, the radio turned it even more "indoors".

Agency through assimilation

Looking at some of the western radio's non-Dutch audiences, it becomes clear that this isolation wasn't the mediums only influence. Given the Western programme's proclivity for Dutch topics and tastes, one might be surprised to hear that its audience also included many non-Dutch. In fact, non-Dutch made up the majority of the Western programme's listeners, which begs the question why? As the rest of this chapter will show, these other audiences had their own reasons for listening to western shows and their reasons make it clear that even as radio enlarged the differences between east and west, it created mobility and agency for those who wished to reposition themselves within this spectrum.

Principal amongst the Western programme's other audiences were the Indo-Europeans or Indo's, a term used for the large group of colonials of Eurasian descent, due to the lack of Dutch women in the early colony. Racially, Indo-Europeans inhabited a grey area within the colonial hierarchy, making their legal position somewhat undetermined. Culturally likening themselves to the European colonizers, they were often able to enter into the European legal class, making up the majority of its lower ranks.[113] Their position was never quite stable however, and came under increasing pressure at the end of the 19th century, when Dutch women started arriving in the colony in larger numbers and began raising fully Dutch or "totok" families.[114] For Indo-Europeans, maintaining their European status therefore implied a constant process of positioning their identity, even resulting in many of them joining nationalistic or even fascist organizations like the NSB.[115] Their shifting position in the colonial hierarchy shows us not only that identity in colonial society was negotiable, but also that it functioned more as a spectrum than an actual binary opposition. Exploring the way radio helped Indo-Europeans negotiate this position gives us valuable insight into the way the medium related to identity and power in the colony.

If radio could help Dutch colonials express their western identity, it proved even more invaluable in the identity politics of Indo-Europeans. Because of the Western programme's explicitly European character it represented a unique way for this group of mixed heritage to come in contact

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112 'De PHOHI kweekt goede huisvaders', *Indische luistergids* 1 (1934) 20.
113 Roger Wiseman, *Assimilation out: Europeans, Indo-Europeans and Indonesians seen through sugar from the 1880s to the 1950s*, Paper presented to the ASAA 2000 conference (Melbourne 2000) 1-9.
114 Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas*, 157-193.
115 S.L. van der Wal, 'De nationaal-socialistische beweging in Nederlands-Indië', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* (1968) 35-58, passim.

with Dutch culture. Radio represented a crucial insight for a group that, although associating themselves with Dutch culture and heritage, in most cases had never been to the Netherlands and knew little about the country other than what they had heard in school, newspapers and stories. In terms of their identity, the impact of radio would have been much larger for this group than the totok Dutch. If to the latter radio seemed a "reminder" of home, for Indo-Europeans it was an introduction to their heritage.

The 1930's were marked by a process of "dutchification" amongst Indo-Europeans that was so significant to their identity that when the independent republic of Indonesia was established after the war, almost all Indo-Europeans emigrated from the country. Although the exact influence radio had in this process is hard to quantify this study would argue that it is hard to imagine this without its influence.[116] The radio was undeniably significant as a source of western cultural values and arrived right at the beginning of the 1930's, exactly when the dutchification of the Indo population began in earnest. The particular importance of the radio for the Indo identity group also seems corroborated by the unmatched speed with which the Indo population adopted the radio. An estimate by Rene Witte puts Indo-European radio ownership in 1940 at 28000, making it the largest audience group in the colony and almost double the size of its Dutch audience despite their relatively lower incomes.[117]

The previous section has argued that if the Dutch use of radio was at least partially informed by an attempt to widen the gap between western and eastern identities, the massive adoption of radio amongst the Indo population suggests that the technology could simultaneously be used to bridge that gap. Even if membership of the 'sociëteit' was unattainable and other European behaviours like owning a car were still out of the Indo's reach, the radio was not. It was relatively affordable, could not ban anyone and provided a perfect entry-point for anyone to come into contact with all things western.

In the same way it did for Indo-Europeans, radio therefore also opened doors for members of the native middle class to adopt a more western identity should they wish to. It is hard to quantify the occurrence of such behaviour from the available source material, as Henk Schulte Nordholt assesses that the native middle class left very few physical traces of their personal lives. And because anyone owning a radio was obligated to purchase a NIROM membership this doesn't tell us whether natives tuned into western stations either. Still an argument can be made that a considerable group of natives did tune in to the PHOHI and NIROM and used it to obtain what Schulte Nordholt refers to as cultural citizenship. For one, such behaviour falls perfectly within a pattern of behaviour mentioned in a study on native expressions of modernity by Schulte Nordholt. In this essay Schulte Nordholt suggests that expressions of modernity form an opportunity for indigenous citizens of the

[116] Gouda, '*Dutch Culture Overseas',* 173; Roger Wiseman, *Assimilation out*, 8.
[117] Witte, 125

colony to claim cultural citizenship under the colonial regime by showing how advertisements of goods in indigenous magazines depict distinctly modern values such as nuclear families and formal attire.[118] Following Ann Stoler's suggestion to look at such expressions as 'an education of desire' he argues that many natives were interested in buying these products because of this association with modern western cultural values.[119]

Dutch colonials clearly noticed this increasingly western behaviour of natives. For instance Mrs Kuyck, a Dutch expat writing home, makes the following comments about a trip to a fair: "When we left we saw a couple of native women and men at the entrance. They looked so neat and civilized […] When we walked by I heard, again to my big surprise, that they spoke Dutch among themselves."[120] It is hard to quantify to what extent the radio was responsible for such behaviour but it seems likely that it played a role in this development. Homi Bhabha warns that European colonials often viewed such behaviour as flawed. In his words, such mimicry of European values created "a subject that is almost the same, but not quite".[121] Acts of mimicry were therefore often ridiculed as being not quite right. One might consider however, that such ridicule or lampooning actually show the fear mimicking incited amongst Dutch colonials and represented yet another attempt by Dutch colonials to isolate themselves from native society. In any case, the fact that eastern audiences would be able to acquire a western level of sophistication clearly put further pressure on the notion of 'colonial difference' and would have weakened the effect of Dutch attempts at differentiation causing them to try even harder to distance themselves.

The effects of Europeanization

Western radio in the Dutch Indies might have likened more to a gossip show than a newsreel but as this chapter has argued, it was not a trifling matter. Western programmes were peculiar, to be sure, but they served a very specific role in the establishment of a stronger western identity amongst European colonial audiences, differentiating and distancing them from colonial society. Still, it is unlikely that this made radio into the stabilizing influence some of radio's backers had hoped it might be. Radio may have created a stronger Dutch presence within the colony, but that presence was largely represented by a group that the Dutch did not consider part of the European population proper. The Europeanization of various groups did create a more defined western identity but it also made that identity readily available for others to appropriate. Several other audiences could

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[118] Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'Modernity and cultural citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: an illustrated hypothesis', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2011) 435-457, passim.
[119] Idem, 440.
[120] *Met ons alles goed: brieven en films uit Nederlands Indië van de familie Kuyck*, Fridus Steijlen and Erik Willems eds. (Leiden: Brill 2008), p. 124.
[121] Homi Bhabha, 'of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse', *October* (1984) 125-133, 126.

therefore use the radio in an attempt to claim agency through a western identity. Such appropriation gradually blurred the same divide that the western radio was trying to accentuate. When mimicry in turn triggered even further attempts at differentiation by the Dutch, it may have created something like a leapfrogging effect. Although radio thus created a stronger western presence, it didn't necessarily succeed in strengthening the 'rule of colonial difference' through that presence. In fact, it may have even undermined some aspects of it, as Dutch cultural superiority was hard to maintain when it was so easily mimicked. Although radio didn't necessarily help maintaining a neat binary between eastern and western identities, it did noticeably radicalize the western extreme of the identity spectrum. This sharpened the difference between those that acted most western and those that associated with a non-western identity, possibly weakening the cohesion of colonial society.

Chapter 3 – Radio ketimuran

The previous chapter looked at how Indies radio influenced western identity in the Indies and explained how this figured into colonial identity politics. It described how the introduction of western radio stations contributed to a process of Europeanization in the Indies that some used to stabilize power relations, but that was just as easily used to destabilize the boundaries that these relations were based on. While this process was significant in its own right, even the combined audiences of the western stations represented but a fragment of Indies society and therefore western radio only directly affected an important but small part of the Indies population. Many in the Indies instead preferred to tune into eastern broadcasting, or *siaran ketimuran*. This final chapter will explore the way Indies radio presented eastern identities and ask if and how these representations might have influenced colonial identity politics.

Although the *ketimuran* stations share a lot of similarities, their programmes were much less uniform than those of its western cousins, making it harder to describe all of their idiosyncrasies in a single effort. To create something of a general characterisation of eastern programming, this chapter will focus specifically on the musical programming of eastern radio, of which an image is somewhat easier to establish thanks to thorough studies made by musicologists such as Philip Yampolsky and Franki Notosudirdjo. This characterisation will help us establish a general idea of the circumstances that defined representations of eastern identities on Indies radio and ask in what manner these representations are related to colonial identity relations and identity politics.

The many nodes of the eastern network

Efforts at broadcasting with an explicitly eastern orientation started as early as 1930, when Mangkunegara VII, the younger prince of Surakarta, donated a small transmitter to a local '*kunstkring*' (arts circle) to broadcast gamelan concerts from the royal palace.[122] With only 20 radio's present in the area at the time and broadcasts scheduled to occur only once every 35 days, it was a modest start by any standards.[123] Nevertheless, this small initiative was to become an important factor in the further development of broadcasting with an eastern character.[124] By 1933, the kunstkring had clearly gotten a taste for radio and founded the very first official ketimuran broadcasting club: the *Solosche Radio Vereniging* (SRV), which began broadcasting in early January 1934. Effectively a regional station, the SRV broadcast was received only in Solo but its influence would be felt in a much wider region. Being the first, the SRV set a precedent for the development of

[122] Philip Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938', 54.
[123] Idem, 183
[124] Idem, 55.

other stations by showing that it could be done without large financial backing and it even actively aided in the founding of 'sister-organizations' in several other cities. The very first station to follow its lead was the *Mataraamse Vereniging voor Radio Omroep* (MAVRO), established in Yogjakarta in February 1934. That same year also saw the founding of the *Vereniging voor Oosterse Radio Luisteraars* (VORL) in Batavia, an association promoting the interests of eastern listeners.[125] Within a year the VORL negotiated a deal with the NIROM to provide an eastern programme to Batavia on its behalf and on January 1st, 1935 it began broadcasting under a new name, the *Vereniging voor Oosterse Radio Omroep* (VORO)

The VORO was the first station to explicitly mention its "Oosterse", meaning eastern, audience in its title. By doing so, the VORL and later VORO explicitly championed all those audiences that western programmes did not, rather than choosing to focus on single groups like the Javanese or Chinese. Its choice for defining itself as 'eastern' is not surprising, considering that the VORO operated under the NIROM's auspices – even broadcasting from the NIROM studios - and was specifically intended to complement the latter's western programme.[126] The idea that these stations should provide programming for all eastern audiences was apparently widespread, as its old name 'Vereniging voor Oostersche Radio Luisteraars' was taken up by a Bandung radio station within that same year. However, the 'Oostersche' or eastern orientation of stations was not entirely self-evident. When natives and Chinese gathered in Surabaya in May 1935 to discuss the establishment of a radio association, the initiators apparently felt it necessary to invite the SRV president to hold a speech about the benefits of an all-inclusive eastern orientation before putting the issue to a vote.[127] In his speech SRV president Sarsito explicitly advocated the unity of a combined eastern audience, explaining that such a larger audience would allow for better and more extensive broadcasts. Sarsito was apparently able to convince his audience as the gathering subsequently voted in favour of the establishment of the Vereniging Oostersche Radioluisteraars Soerabaja (VORS). Still, when it came down to establishing their own station the VORO members chose to call it the *Chinese en Inheemse Radio Luisteraars Vereniging Oost Java* or CIRVO, reflecting its composite character of Chinese and natives (*inheemsen*).[128] As we will show further on, most stations did in fact service a composite eastern audience. However, as their station names suggest, they did approach the issue with some care. Founded in 1936, Radio Semarang seemingly chose to avoid the issue all together. Siaran Radio Indonesia (SRI), another station founded by the Mangkunegara in 1936, took a different approach.

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[125] 'Oostersche radio luisteraars', *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (27-12-1934) KB C55
[126] 'Oosterse Omroep', *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch Indië* (24-12-1934), KB C 255.
[127] 'Ver. van Radioluisteraars', *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad* (21-5-1935), KB C 64; 'Oostersche radio-luisteraars. Nieuwe vereniging opgericht', *De Indische Courant* (21-5-1935), KB C 248.
[128] 'Oosterse omroepvereniging Cirvo', *Soerabijasch Handelsblad* (23-8-1935) KB C64; CIRVO viert eenjarig bestaan met Inlandse kunst', *De Indische Courant* (26-8-1937) KB C248.

Not only was the SRI the first ketimuran station to actually take a Malay name, its name even explicitly mentions Indonesia.[129]

Popping up all over the archipelago shortly after one another, these local stations quickly established a ketimuran radio network consisting of multiple nodes. Although there were obvious connections between several of them - via the NIROM and the SRV – and several seemed to have worked together, there was no unified programme that could be likened to the '*Westersche Programma*' until the very end of the 1930's when the PPRK was introduced. In the absence of an overarching eastern service within the archipelago, ketimuran radio remained a large constellation of smaller organizations, servicing smaller, sometimes overlapping regions with their individual programmes. What this study refers to as 'ketimuran broadcasting' therefore actually consisted of a patchwork of small and medium sized stations for the better part of the 1930's.

Eastern stations were not only much smaller than western stations; they also operated under very different circumstances. As the word "*vereniging*" (member organisation) in the name of almost every early station suggests, ketimuran stations generally weren't commercial operations but collectives (perhimpunan) of volunteers and members. In general eastern stations operated as grassroots organizations, dependent on financial donations and the on-going commitment of volunteers and working with limited budgets.[130] The SRI formed a noteworthy exception, being "a philanthropic service of the kraton (palace) to disseminate Javanese high culture". [131] Most stations were therefore almost completely operated, programmed and maintained by their own audience members. This intertwined producers with their audiences, meaning ketimuran stations offered programming for the local community by the local community. [132] Many stations apparently even depended on records borrowed from locals to fill up their programme.[133] Because many cities and regions boasted their own traditional musical genres, tastes and dialects, these local ties caused ketimuran stations to express strong local variations. Effectively, the regionally diffused spread of ketimuran stations made it possible for eastern radio to differentiate its programmes between regions and their strong ties to local members made sure that they full-heartedly did.

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[129] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 141.
[130] I use the term grassroots in the sense that they were "self-organized and functioning through collective action", not in the sense of 'from lower classes'. Early radios were still quite expensive, making radio clubs a hobby almost exclusive to the local elites and upper middle class.
[131] Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938', 56.
[132] There is an interesting parallel to be drawn here to the Indies newspapers, whose distribution was often limited to a single town and similarly leaned heavily on editorial contributions by its readers, see for instance: Mrazek, 'Let us become radio mechanics', 11; Termorshuizen, 'Het néglige bestaat uit weinige en dunne kleren', 13-19.
[133] Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938', 51.

Philip Yampolsky has made an analysis of the spread of musical genres across five eastern radio stations during the year 1938 that gives us an insight into the regional distribution.[134] *Kroncong* and *Hawaiian*, which might be considered the local versions of a "low-brow" pop music, were easily the most widespread, but even these already show some significant differentiation between regions. Kroncong for instance was particularly strong in the Solo region while Hawaiian found a lot more playtime in Batavia. [135] Curiously Central-Javanese *gamelan*, in spite of its locally specific origins, was also relatively widespread. *Macapat*, another central Javanese genre, was quite popular in Solo and Surabaya and also finding some playtime in Batavia, but was completely absent in Bandung.[136] Sundanese music was found mostly in Bandung and again in Batavia. Music from the western island of Sumatra was found almost exclusively on the NIROM's Oostersche programma (which we will discuss shortly) and the VORO in Batavia. Almost all stations also carried at least some programming catered specifically to Chinese audiences and most of them even carried some European music, despite this genre's already strong prevalence on the western network. It is important to note that while genres were freely adapted to include thematic and even stylistic elements from specific locales, there seem to have been some very specific considerations involved. Kroncong for instance would not be played together with Hawaiian music, despite the fact that these genres included almost identical instrumentation.[137] This already suggests that programmers and musicians were making specific considerations about the cultural associations contained within their programmes and kept certain cultural registers separated from each other.

The range of programming available was obviously kaleidoscopic and we haven't nearly been able to cover everything on the air. However there are already several remarks we should make on the basis of this short summary. First, the geographical spread of genres shows us that ketimuran radio programmes strongly reflected the identities of local populations. This is why most stations incorporated some Chinese music, as the Chinese were spread throughout the Indies, while the only significant presence of Sumatran music was on the NIROM's eastern programme and the VORO, which catered to the local Minangkabau population of Batavia. Second, the distribution of genres simultaneously shows that local populations hardly ever consisted of a single identity group, which is why most stations catered to a broader 'eastern' audience.

This is most obvious in the case of the VORO, which catered to the culturally diverse city of Batavia and broadcast almost every genre conceivable, including quite a lot of European music. The

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[134] Yampolsky focuses on the VORO (Batavia), VORL (Bandung), SRV (Surakarta) and the NIROM's West (Batavia/Bandung) and East Java (Surabaya) broadcasts. He limits himself to these stations and to the year 1938 as these are the only year and stations for which program guides allow a detailed tabulation.
[135] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 141.
[136] Yampolsky, *Music and media in the Dutch East Indies*, 194.
[137] Yampolsky, *Music and media in the Dutch East Indies*, 202.

addition of European music was not necessarily a service to European listeners however, as certain eastern audiences had become accustomed to western music and also liked to hear some of it on the radio. The *Batak* of northern Sumatra for instance showed a distinct appreciation for European church music due to the influence of the Rhenish Missionary Society in their region.[138] Finally, although several genres - especially kroncong, hawaiian and Central Javanese gamelan – seem to have been present 'across the board', we should be careful before classifying any of them as universal. One of the playlists analysed by Philip Yampolsky makes this quite clear, by showing us that even performances of a regionally unbound genre like kroncong could be thematically very specific and pertain to a single city, in his example Batavia.[139]Almost without exception eastern stations represented segmented cultural registers that related to specific local identities. The image of ketimuran programming that arises is therefore one of highly localized diversity. The ketimuran radio network was a patchwork of stations that represented compartmented snapshots of regional populations, often including traditional local genres and specifically local thematic expressions, side by side with other identities.

Now that we better understand the regional cultural representations that most of the local eastern stations offered, we should shortly discuss the position of the NIROM and its "*Oostersche programma*" (Eastern programme) within this network. Although initially ambivalent about providing an eastern programme, we have already shown how the NIROM was quickly forced to concede that it also had an obligation to its eastern audience members. As we have seen in chapter 1 however, the NIROM intended to do so without it affecting its western programme. The NIROM already had a deal with the SRV to provide some programming for relay to the central Java area and quickly made similar deals with the VORO and MAVRO to provide programming for the regions of Batavia and Yogyakarta, respectively. As already mentioned, the VORO even broadcast from the NIROM studios. It seems that the NIROM was unable to strike similar deals with the VORL and CIRVO however and it began producing a programme of its own in both Surabaya and Bandung. Because of NIROM's bartering with local stations, the station was able to provide eastern programming to most of Java by 1935. As can be extracted from its new eastern programme guide *Soeara NIROM,* this was a complicated construction however, as it did so by effectively maintaining five separate local *Oostersche programma's* for different regions.[140]

At this point, the NIROM obviously held a somewhat complicated position within the broader ketimuran broadcasting network. The Oostersche programma added five extra transmitters. Some of these nodes made original contributions to the network, others simply relayed local programming. In

[138] Notosudirdjo, *Music, Politics and the problems of national identity in Indonesia,* 189.
[139] Yampolsky, *Music and media in the Dutch East Indies*, 202.
[140] *Soeara-NIROM* (1936-1937).

1936 the NIROM replaced these smaller transmitters with two large ones. Rather than running five separate eastern programmes, the NIROM now operated just two: one that serviced the western region of Java (and given its programming of Sumatran music, also Sumatra whenever reception was strong enough) and another that serviced central and east Java and the '*Groote Oost*' (the islands of the great east, beyond Java). Although the NIROM intended to slowly provide a more coherent programme of its own, it kept the deals it made with the SRV, MAVRO and VORO in place, meaning these local stations suddenly acquired a vastly larger reach through the NIROM relays.

As the NIROM continued to develop its infrastructure and merged several of its eastern programmes into one, it began servicing an increasingly large region. But it still felt it had to maintain the service to each of its locally oriented audiences, allotting time to many separate genres. As an article in *Soeara NIROM* put it "every kind of art that comes before the microphone needs a time for broadcast and reception that is coordinated with others … so the neat and handsome garden of radio broadcasting can satisfy and delight all the groups of listeners who wish to enjoy the beauty of NIROM's garden".[141] Just like the local stations, the NIROM clearly felt it had to preserve the integrity of genres by giving each of them a fair amount of playtime, creating a very diverse programme.

Reactions to the NIROM programme show however that Indies audiences didn't always have as much appreciation for the diversity of this programme. As a frustrated programmer writes in *Soeara NIROM*, "if we broadcast Javanese gamelan, our Sundanese and Melayu listeners will say, 'Don't play too much Javanese music, because we don't understand it.' And if we broadcast *wayang golek* from Sunda, the Javanese listeners will say, 'don't play too much Sundanese music, because we don't understand it at all."[142] So even though the NIROM spread local tastes throughout the entire region, suggesting a possibility for convergence and unification of identities, audience reactions show that the NIROM served strongly compartmentalized audiences, who most likely tuned in only for those specific programmes that were to their tastes. In so far as eastern audiences heard programmes not specifically intent for them, audience reactions suggest that they did not understand them, making the experience similar to that of the '*noise*' that Brian Larkin's *Signal and noise* is named after. Larkin's study of such experiences suggests that while audiences could still listen to such 'noise', for example programmes in languages or styles they did not understand, their experience of it would have created very little opportunity for any identification to occur.[143] This would have been an even stronger issue for NIROM relays of programmes by local stations, which the NIROM continued to relay to a vastly larger region.

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[141] Soeara Nirom, translation by Yampolsky, *Music on Dutch East Indies radio,* 82.
[142] Soeara Nirom, Translated in: Yampolsky, Music on Dutch East Indies radio, 84
[143] Larkin, *Signal and noise*, 53.

So, even though the NIROM broadcast introduced local genres to much larger audiences, it is somewhat doubtful that it would have created any strong unification of cultural preferences. Even if it could, we should note that there was still a difference between what the NIROM transmitted over its eastern and western Java transmitters. So while the NIROM presented something of a unified programme to a larger audience, it still wasn't quite an all-Indies broadcast, making at least two separate programmes that involved partitioned local contributions and mostly catered to individual audience groups separately.

Although the varied nature of the eastern programmes doesn't really allow us to treat all of its peculiarities, we now have something of a general image of the broad cultural registers presented on eastern radio that stemmed from the vast local variation of cultural identity within the Indies. Reactions to the NIROM programme suggest however that even though ketimuran stations represented multiple identities, their audiences remained largely segmented. A VORO article confirms such a reading of audience listening behaviours, stating that "every group wants its own music".[144] Effectively, the large variation of tastes and a seeming lack of understanding of 'foreign' cultural registers amongst audiences caused ketimuran radio to experience a heavy form of compartmentalization both in programming and in audience listening behaviour. As the NIROM's struggle to find an all-inclusive programme shows us, this was very challenging for broadcasts aimed towards a larger region and might help explain why eastern radio developed mostly on a regional level.

Nationalism, regionalism and the question of ketimuran identity

Ketimuran radio as whole represented something of a microcosm of local Indies identities throughout the 1930's. The question that now remains is if and how these diverse representations of eastern identity may have catalysed negotiations of colonial relations and through them Indies power relations or politics. It should be clear that a unified identity was much harder to find amongst eastern audiences. This discouraged many of the groups most likely to appropriate eastern radio for political purposes: the Indonesian nationalist movements. To be sure, nationalists did mingle in debates regarding radio on specific occasions and we will discuss several of them later on, but as Rene Witte establishes in *De Indische radio-omroep*, very few nationalists were actively involved with radio during the 1930's.[145] Ketimuran station names are very telling in this regard. One only needs to remember that all but two of the station names mentioned in this study were Dutch. In fact, going by station names, only the SRI's suggests that it was actually created with a specifically 'Indonesian' audience in mind. Even the later PPRK, which will be discussed further on, referred to itself as

[144] Translation by: Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio', 84.
[145] Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 100.

ketimuran, meaning eastern or oriental rather than Indonesian, despite being the only station to present a single eastern broadcast to the entire region.

The lack of nationalist involvement in the development of eastern radio is unusual, considering their activity in so many other parts of Indies life and I have found little explicit evidence for their disinterest. I will suggest however that their absence should be explained by a moratorium on political expression and the lack of a pre-existing culturally unified identity amongst eastern audiences. The lack of room for overt political activism on Indies radio is something we have already discussed in chapters one and two. This impacted eastern broadcasts even more severely. For instance, even mentioning the word "Indonesia" was forbidden on the radio.[146] Both Henk Schulte-Nordholt and Franki Notosudirdjo have suggested that in other instances the prohibition of political expression directed nationalist activities towards the cultural field.[147] In the case of radio however, the complexity of the culturally diversified Indonesian society made it incredibly difficult to find a musical form that would represent the many and varied people they sought to bring together.[148]

Early ketimuran radio was thus somewhat ill-suited to the active promotion of Indonesian nationalism, but that is not to say it didn't play a part in colonial politics. For one, while ketimuran radio had problems in pointing out a national identity, it was quite adept at expressing local identities, which opened it up to a range of more regional identity politics. In this respect it is worth noting the crucial role traditional courts in the Indies played in the development of ketimuran broadcasting. We have already mentioned that both the SRV and SRI owe their existence to the Mangkunegara princes, however they were far from the only stations with ties to traditional regimes. The *bupati* (regent) of Bandung, for instance, supported programming of central Javanese gamelan on the VORO, even including several instructional programmes on how to dance and play the genre.[149] Similarly, the bupati of Surabaya was patron to a small radio club in his region.[150] Some stations even operated from dedicated studios built within the royal palace. This was the case for the early SRV but also for the MAVRO, which conducted its broadcasts from the palace of Hanengkoeboewomo VIII.[151]

So why would these local princes go out of their way and put such effort and resources in to the development of broadcasting even allowing radio studios to operate from within their palaces? An argument could be made that broadcasting from within the royal kraton was a result of pragmatic thinking. Many Indonesians considered the broadcasting of "live" music to be the true purpose of the

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146 Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio', 90.
147 Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'Localizing modernity in colonial Bali', *Journal of Southeast Asian* Studies 31 (2000) 101-114, 104; Franki Notosudirdjo, *Music, politics and identity,* 172.
148 Franki Notosudirdjo, *Music, politics and identity,* 172-173.
149 Yampolsky, *Music and the Media in the Dutch East Indies*, 194.
150 'Chineesch-Inlandsche radiovereeniging', *De Sumatra Post* (23-8-1935), KB 1634 C1.
151 Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938', 54; Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 141.

radio and there was simply no place where live musical performances occurred more regularly than at the royal kraton.[152] I would argue however, that the kraton's involvement in broadcasting also tied into a royal effort at identity politics. As the traditional seats of power, the Mangkunegara and other royal families had a vested interest in promoting the traditional culture of their region, which legitimized their rule. This, for instance, is why the SRI was so explicitly dedicated to "disseminate Javanese high culture" and nothing else.[153] As Franki Notosudirdjo put it, "cultural activity has a significant function for the court, i.e. the glorification and legitimacy of court sovereignty".[154] By connecting themselves to the ketimuran radio studios, the traditional seats of power were able to assert an important influence over eastern programming, allowing them to promote the traditional culture that their authority was rooted in and reaffirm their importance in Indies society. Amir Sjarifoeddin, a socialist party leader, made this same connection between royal power and their ability to distribute art:

> The regents were seen by the people as an all-powerful elite .... Their orders came as if from heaven and they had to be obeyed .... Some now worry that the centre wanes and disappears... In this "critical" time, some feel like a fish in a pond that is drying up. But there is the rain, which falls suddenly, as if the heavens had indeed opened; not one but several studios and radio transmitters are working already.
>
> In this our age, a microphone becomes the centre. "microphone!"[155]

Financing a radio studio or allowing broadcasts from the palace gave royal families the ability to dictate parts of the cultural programme, which helped reaffirm their own position of authority. However hosting a ketimuran broadcast inside the palace would have even benefited the kraton at times when the station wasn't pushing for specifically local or traditional content. In the first chapter we touched on the geopolitical function of the Malabar radio station as a physical representation of colonial power and Dutch presence. I would argue that a ketimuran palace studio performed a similar function on a regional level. Like the Malabar station, the kraton studio established a local centre of radio infrastructure. It made the kraton more visible as a regional centre and orientated listeners toward it, affirming the kraton's authority and legitimacy. By increasing the visibility of the kraton in people's daily lives it established something of a bulwark against the centralizing influences of the colonial regime and helped to keep the old order in a position of power.

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[152] Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938', 49-50.
[153] Idem, 56.
[154] Notosudirdjo, *Music politics and the problems of national identity,* 103.
[155] Amir Sjarifoeddin, 'Dari Kaboepaten ke Microfoon', *Soeara Timoer* 1:2 (January 12, 1941).

The meddling of royal families in local radio broadcasts suggests a clear example of active identity politics through radio. Although the regionality of early ketimuran broadcasting thus made it somewhat unsuitable for nationalist politics, it played noticeably well into the politics of the traditional royalty of the region. If we consider the ample influence royal families had over studios and their programming it might even be suggested that they could have consciously kept these stations regionally oriented to focus on their specific needs, giving yet another explanation for the regionality of eastern broadcasting. Rudolf Mrazek also stresses the importance of royal patronage, mentioning that: "the kratons, palaces of Javanese nobility turned colonial official, appeared to be the safest places from which stations might broadcast, and their identity be defined."[156]

Awareness through cultural polemics

In consideration of colonial identity politics, eastern radio obviously seemed better suited to the promotion of regional identities than to the purposes of Indonesian nationalists. Even as a heavily regionalized medium, radio was also able to catalyse the development of a national consciousness, as it created and highlighted certain common connections between Indies audiences. Benedict Anderson argued that vernacular newspapers were of such vital importance, because through them "readers gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions of people in their particular language field".[157] This act of 'becoming aware' is underlined by James Hagen, who suggests that even when "the experiences were vicarious and the sharing not exactly reciprocal, the news revealed the contours of a social world beyond the immediate experience of its readers and reading the news made readers feel a part of that expanded social world".[158]

Ketimuran radio contributed to that awareness by inserting Indies audiences into a larger society in several ways. For one, although Indies radio was relatively light on news, it could create awareness of other audiences through the instantaneity of its programme. Different from newspapers, radio was consumed in synchronicity and in a sense together with all the other listeners that tuned in. As such, listening to the radio didn't just help audiences imagine a shared experience, it was in itself a shared experience. This may seem like a very distant sense of shared experience but Anderson already suggested such an experience didn't need to be very direct. When discussing a serialized story written by Indonesian nationalist Mas Marco Kartodikromo, he shows that Kartodikromo never feels the need to specify the community that his characters embody by name and suggests that even Kartodikromo's reference to "'our young man' means a young man who belongs to the collective body of readers of *Indonesian,* and thus, implicitly, an embryonic Indonesian

[156] Mrazek, 'Let us become radio mechanics', 29.
[157] Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]) 44.
[158] James M. Hagen, 'Read all about it, the press and the rise of national consciousness in early twentieth century Dutch East Indies society', *Anthropological Quarterly* 70-3 (July 1997) 107-126, 107.

'imagined community'".[159] Because ketimuran radio focused specifically on eastern audiences, this suggests that anytime broadcasters addressed their listeners directly, they were addressing a collective eastern Indies audience and reinforcing its collective identity.

Beyond such a literal sense of shared awareness, radio also created new common interests amongst eastern audiences and forced them to organize to advance these interests. As we have already seen in the very beginning of this chapter, ketimuran stations opted for a combined 'eastern' audience as only such a combined group of members would be able to maintain a quality radio programme. Radio therefore brought together groups from different origins under a single organization and forced them to work together. When it came to their misgivings about the NIROM and the eventual replacement of the NIROM by the PPRK, radio forced these organisations to transcend regional politics. This is an important notion, considering many earlier nationalistic efforts and groups may have called for an Indonesian nation but often operated through branches on a regional level.[160]

Philip Yampolsky suggests that while the eastern audiences constituted an Indonesian public, it would be anachronistic to suggest that this public had an Indonesian consciousness.[161] I would argue however that radio did slowly help these audiences to imagine themselves as part of the same community. Radio represented a point of cultural convergence in certain aspects, even if these aspects often were the lowest common denominators. Most obviously, I would suggest that radio promoted the unification of Indonesian language. The endeavour to develop a unified language was considered so important to the development of Indonesian nationalism that it was one of the general tenets of the 'Youth Oath' (*Sumpah Pemudah*) made by Indonesian youth organizations in 1928.[162] Yet Low-Malay, the language most able to unify Indonesians, was in fact a second language to many and therefore not regularly spoken within their own circles. Radio, because of its heterogeneous audience, was a constant source of spoken Low-Malay, familiarizing people with the language and perhaps even unifying its internal structure and grammar throughout the regions.

Even in instances where there was no sense of unity and hardly any common cultural ground or interest to unite behind, radio forced processes that sparked debate about what these common values and interests should be. This becomes most obvious when we take a look at the advent of the PPRK. Up to this point the PPRK has been left largely out of this discussion because it didn't officially come onto the air until 1940, meaning its programme would have had very little effect on the identities of colonial audiences before the Japanese takeover. Founded in 1937 by a combination of

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[159] Anderson, *Imagined community*, 32.
[160] Shiraishi, *an age in motion*, passim.
[161] Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies Radio', 90.
[162] "one land, one nation, and one language" translation by: Notosudirdjo, *Music politics and the problems of national identity*, 159.

the VORO, MAVRO, SRV, CIRVO and VORL, the PPRK promised to reach an audience encompassing most of the eastern listeners in the colony. As a manifesto written by PPRK editor Hamid Algadrie shows, the PPRK saw an important role for itself in the development of Indonesian identity:

> Indonesian society has only recently arisen from sleep. It has been a static society but is now moving to become a dynamic one; it is an Eastern society that has just 'married' with Western society and has not yet produced the child that will, when it is grown, be Indonesian culture in the true sense, namely *a culture that can be understood by every member of Indonesian society, and that contains an active spirit!* In our view, this is PPRK's primary duty: to aid in forming this Indonesian culture for the future, and to ensure the success of the 'marriage' between Eastern and Western culture, so our society and culture do not become something unproductive, 'between two worlds, the other powerless to be born,' as in a wrong marriage, one that cannot produce healthy offspring.[163]

The activist language of this manifesto shows a distinct change in position from earlier stations, which considered the heterogeneity of their audiences almost a priori. This new position would make the PPRK a cause of regular debate, but it would most obviously do so when touching on the issue of a national music.

The lack of a national music that was able to speak to all Indonesians was not in fact a new problem and Franki Notosudirdjo has traced the attempts at establishing one at least as far back as Ki Hadjar Dewantara's *Kinanthie Sandoong*, composed in 1916.[164] Recognizing the issue that traditional musical genres were specific to certain locales, Ki Hadjar attempted to modernise Javanese gamelan by blending it with European elements. Such a blend was not in fact new, but according to Notosudirdjo, Ki Hadjar was the first to "place this idea within the context of a nationalist ideology and envisioned it as a model for a new Indonesian national culture".[165] As an anonymous critic described it in the May 1920 issue of *Wederopbouw*, it made the mistake of wanting to make a Javanese product – gamelan – into an Indonesian one by Europeanizing it.[166] This single notion reflects many of the issues involved with finding a national music. To many people a national music couldn't consist of traditional styles such as gamelan, as these were strongly connected to a single region.[167] However, attempts to de-regionalize such music and cut them loose from their origin

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163 Translation by: Yampolsky, 'Music on Dutch East Indies Radio', 88.
164 Notosudirdjo, *Music, Politics and the problem of national identity in Indonesia*, xxiii-xxiv.
165 Idem, 143.
166 'Toonkunst in de toekomst', *Wederopbouw* May (1920) 75-76.
167 Javanese gamelan was especially problematic in this context as this suggested a reiteration of Javanese supremacy over the other regions, for more see: Notosudirdjo, *Music, politics and the problems of national identity in Indonesia,* 169.

almost always came under critique for incorporating far too many foreign elements, especially European ones.

Debate simmered throughout the 1920's and 30's but suddenly spiked less than two weeks after the PPRK had started broadcasting, when it programmed an 'Indonesian People's Concert' on the 11th of January, 1941.[168] Although PPRK director Soetardjo considered the concert a high point in the development of eastern radio, it was condemned by others. Ali Boediardjo, a young Indonesian law student, was so offended that he wrote critiques in both *Poedjangga Baroe* and the Dutch Language magazine *Kritiek en Opbouw* suggesting "the concert deserves to sink into oblivion".[169] The issues Boediardjo had were mostly with the PPRK's choice of music, "of all possible things… kroncong",[170] "to create a public opinion and suggest that kroncong is a general Indonesian music".[171] His solution was to broadcast Gamelan next time. His attack on kroncong immediately invoked a reaction by Armijn Pané who felt "Boediarddjo apparently forgets that there are people from Sumatra, Manado or Ambon, who do not find the atmosphere of *gender* and *slenthem* [gamelan instruments] appealing'. The issue became a "well known polemic" involving several other writers and summed up the various advantages and disadvantages of different genres as a *moesik persatoean* (music of unity) in the middle of the public eye.[172]

Although Franki Notosudirdjo has argued that this debate was in fact a continuance of an earlier and much broader "polemics on national culture", he himself already mentions that "in the early 1940's the polemics of national culture revolved around the issue of national music."[173] I would argue that the sudden central role of music came to play in debates about national culture could only be explained by the presence of a pan-Indonesian radio station. Although the issue was not solved on the radio, these polemics show us that radio forced people to consider each other's viewpoints and created discussion about the future culture of Indonesia. The importance of such discussion was already stressed by Pane when he mentions "the nationalist movement is not only a political movement, but also the term for the awakening of our awareness in all aspects of social and cultural life."[174]

Radio might not have been able to end this discussion or complete Pane's awakening, but it did make Indonesians aware of each other's feelings about the matter and helped them understand

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168 Mrazek, 'Let us become radio mechanics', 28.
169 Ali Boediardjo,'Eenige opmerkingen over en naar aanleiding van het eerste volksconcert van de 'Perserikatan Perkoempoelan Radio Ketimoeran'', *Kritiek en Opbouw* 4:1 (February 15, 1941) 11-12; Notosudirdjo, *Music, politics and the problems of national identity,* 175.
170 Boediardjo, 'eenige opmerkingen over en naar aanleiding', 11.
171 Translated by: Notosudirdjo, *Music, politics and the problems of national identity*, 175-176.
172 Yampolsky, Music on Dutch East Indies radio in 1938', 89.
173 Franki Notosudirdjo, *Music, politics and the problems of national identity,* 193.
174 Armijn Pane, "Gamelan tegenover krontjong, droom tegenover werkelijkheid." *Poedjangga Baroe* 1.1 (1941) 9-30, 12.

each other better. Even when they could not come to an agreement on the issue it seemed to make them aware of their connection and created a space for negotiation of a shared future. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, editor of *Poedjangga Baroe*, seems to suggest that for the moment, that was as far as national unity could even exist:

> Indeed the drive for unification within the spirit of Indonesia has never been rooted in the past; instead it is rooted in the future, in the hope that we all together will stand along with other nations in a confidence that what has been hoped and desired can only be realized together in a collaboration, with unity...The concoction for the future of Indonesian society and culture has to be searched for in accordance with the need for Indonesian society to advance in order to reach its perfect form. What particularly tied our nation together are our collective needs.[175]

Mixed results

Because of the vast differences between Indies audiences, ketimuran radio naturally developed into a predominantly regionally oriented network with programmes that segmented different identities and was even further compartmentalized by audience listening behaviour. In terms of the active promotion of specific identities its role therefore largely seems to have been limited to affecting local power relations. Because the kraton performed an important function of regional control within the colonial administration, this did not necessarily present an issue for the colonial hierarchy. However, if we look at the broader development of eastern identities, eastern radio still existed explicitly in juxtaposition to western broadcasts, suggesting that it fed into the polarisation of Indies society, albeit less unequivocally than the western stations did. Indies radio may not have presented the strong unified eastern identity nationalists were hoping for, but it did instil in many a sense of being eastern and caused various groups such as Chinese and natives to work together in 'Oosterse' organisations. As the chapter shows, such collaboration also helped spark debates that made people more conscious of each other's cultural strata, creating opportunities for understanding. In this sense, ketimuran radio even contributed, albeit indirectly, to the future development of Indonesian nationalism by shaping several factors that could help eastern identity groups come closer together or fuelling debates that would eventually help establish a common ground.

[175] Translation by: Notosudirdjo *Music, politics and the problems of national identity in Indonesia*, 165.

Conclusion

Radio arrived in the Dutch East Indies at a time of political and societal unrest caused by a destabilization of relations between various identity groups. This thesis has explored the relation between these events by studying the extent to which broadcast radio catalysed identity politics within the troubled colony. Although Dutch East Indies broadcasting before the Second World War has often been considered inconsequential due to its generally frivolous programming, this study argues that a better look at the motives behind its development, the cultural registers of programming and audience listening behaviours suggest that it was both a product of the strained identity relations in the colony and became an influence on the further development of identity relations in the archipelago.

Politics through identity

The first thing one needs to understand about Dutch East Indies radio was that its ostensibly apolitical façade has to be understood in relation to the political unrest caused by the reconfiguration of identity relations that was unfolding within the colony. The removal of politics from the Indies radio began with the development of the PHOHI which, as the first large Indies stations, defined much of the legal and physical infrastructure of Indies radio. Strongly pressured by the Rijkseenheid movement the PHOHI intended to shape Indies radio into a stabilizing influence within the combustive colony, but to do so it needed the radio to be frictionless. The Rijkseenheid was so serious about this cause that it was willing to go without broadcasting all together rather than allow pillarized party broadcasts on the ether. Their fierce determination to keep the airwaves free of provocative issues eventually resulted in legislation that removed most, if not all, politics from the radio.

Although Indies broadcasters had to eschew explicit political expression, this study has argued that the medium nevertheless influenced colonial society. The PHOHI, for instance, clearly had plans to strengthen the presence of Dutch culture in the Indies and advocate its superiority to rationalise Dutch colonial authority. Although few other stations were as politically motivated as the PHOHI, most of them also undeniably shaped negotiations of colonial identity relations as they either reflected or disavowed the segregated and hierarchical state of Indies society. This was most obvious in the case of the NIROM, which considered the mixing of western and eastern programming undesirable and perhaps even impossible. With the PHOHI and NIROM clearly prioritizing western programming, many smaller stations turned their eye to the eastern audiences these two giants left out, resulting in the establishment of separate channels for eastern and western groups inside the

colony. Even with political expression smothered, it seems Indies radio affect society through the identities it defined.

Perspectives of the impact these processes of identity definition had seem to have fallen into one of two camps. On the one hand there seem to have been those that thought that a stronger separation between western and eastern groups might be a stabilizing influence within the colony. Such a strategy was clearly behind the PHOHI broadcasts as they attempted to reinvigorate Dutch culture within the colony. In their perspectives a stronger Dutch presence might help sustain the 'rule of colonial difference' by normalising the Dutch presence and showing its more developed nature, whilst keeping it separate from the native population. In a slightly different way, such faith in the stabilizing influence of separate programming also lay behind the NIROM's dual programme, and de Kat's decision to create a separate eastern broadcasting station. In these cases, it seems a policy of "to each, their own" was believed to keep everyone happy. One might just as easily suggest however, that such a dichotomy caused an even further disintegration of colonial society as it could also polarize groups within it.

Splendid isolation?

In order to quantify these influences, the rest of this study has attempted to characterise the representations of both western and eastern identities and has asked what role these representations played in the identification by colonial audiences. As stated before, the definition of Dutch identity in particular, was intended to have a stabilizing influence upon the colony. Because of this, Dutch radio in the Indies performed a very specific role for Dutch audiences. Through 'vicarious experience' western stations strengthened the bond Dutch colonials felt to their motherland whilst also isolating them from their direct environment. This social and physical isolation was continuously strengthened by a reinforcement of Dutch cultural tastes and practices that helped Dutch audiences distinguish themselves from other social groups. As chapter 2 has argued however, an issue with this approach was that it could not properly exclude non-Dutch listeners and was easily mimicked by outsiders vying to claim a place within the Dutch system. Western radio provided a wealth of cultural information that helped Indo-Europeans and natives prove they could be 'just as cultured and developed' as westerns. Such appropriation of western culture clearly put a strain on the idea of native inferiority. Although the western stations therefore undeniably aided in the Europeanization of the Indies, it is doubtful that this created more stability as it couldn't really solidify the rule of colonial difference.

The influence of the Eastern stations remains somewhat harder to qualify. Because of the vast resources required to produce radio, audiences that weren't represented by the western radio often chose to work together to establish their own 'ketimuran', or eastern stations. Despite their

overall 'eastern' orientation, however, the differences between them should not be underestimated. Cultural variation amongst regions caused eastern stations to operate on a provincial level. Beyond that, they almost always catered to a multitude of local audiences with very different tastes and who listened mostly only to those programmes specifically intended for them. As such ketimuran broadcasts were subject to large regional differentiation and self-segregation amongst audiences through listening behaviours. This orientation towards local traditions and culture was often encouraged by the traditional regimes of the Indies, whose authority rooted in local culture. Although ketimuran radio therefore often strongly promoted traditional eastern values this wasn't necessarily a threat to colonial authority as many of these regimes were strongly incorporated into the Dutch system of indirect rule.

The regional orientation and cultural variation of ketimuran stations made eastern radio a somewhat problematic medium for Indonesian nationalists, who therefore largely ignored the radio during this period.[176] But even if the early eastern radio exposed at least as many differences as similarities between eastern audiences, it shouldn't be ruled out in the development of a pan-Indonesian identity. Even if eastern representations did not amount to a single unified Indonesian identity, Ketimuran radio forced eastern audiences into contact with each other becoming a point of cultural convergence. Radio furthered the spread of Malay as the common language and pushed collaboration between groups both locally, in the upkeep of stations, and across regions, when opposing legislation or fighting the NIROM's growing influence. Beyond that, even though audiences often segmented themselves, the eastern radio allowed them to imagine themselves as part of the same eastern audience, presented opportunities for them to learn more about each other and triggered discussions about topics such as the national music, which paved the way for future unification. Although these were small steps, they triggered further debates on the concept of a state of Indonesia and Indonesian identity, which at this point in time was more a political concept than a cultural reality. If we consider that in 1951 the Indonesian minister of culture and education, Bahder Djohan, suggested that the national music should consists of "the peaks of regional music plus selective foreign musical elements", it seems that it would be such understanding and appreciation of each other's cultural registers, rather than any unified culture, that should define the Indonesian national identity. [177]

[176] Nationalist would eagerly use the radio during the revolution and independence war however. For more see: Lindsay, 'Making waves', 105-123.
[177] Notosudirodjo, *Music, politics and the problems of national identity in Indonesia* (2001) 6.

Drawing up the balance

Even when considering the limitations of the scope of this study, it should be quite clear that radio, like other media, was a factor in Indies identity politics and therefore deserves closer study. More than anything, the representations discussed and groups studied are there to show that different audiences used radio for different and sometimes very contrasting purposes that all deserve to be looked into, as many of them figured in important debates about what the future of the Indies or Indonesia should be. If we consider colonial identity on a spectrum, we might say that radio especially pushed the Western extreme further away from Dutch East Indies society as a whole, while simultaneously allowing for a more dynamic range of identities and an increasing mobility on that spectrum. On the eastern end its influence was less unequivocal due to the regional nature of ketimuran stations, however here too, it most likely expressed some sharper defining of identities. Indies radio therefore was a catalyst for the sharper definition of eastern and western identities. Although some at the time would have considered this as a stabilizing factor, this study would argue that the increase of hybrid identities largely cancelled out any solidification of the 'rule of colonial difference' that segmentation might have entailed. It therefore seems likely that Indies radio predominantly fed into the polarization of colonial society, and had a destabilizing influence upon Indies society.

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