

Festivals in Java:

Localising cultural activism
and environmental politics, 2005-2010

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I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at environmentalism in Central Java, Indonesia, over the years 2005-2010. Compared to the New Order that ended in 1998, this era has been characterised by greater cultural openness and political freedom. Activists have sought, found and invented new cultural spaces to agitate for change. This thesis takes two examples of this cultural activism. The first, the Forest Art Festival, organised by the group *anakseribupulau* (children of a thousand islands), was held only once, in 2006, on the edge of the forest in the town of Randublatung. The second, *Festival Mata Air* (Festival of Water), was organised by the group *Tanam Untuk Kehidupan* (Planting for Life) and held at a number of freshwater springs in Salatiga in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Festivals like these bypass colonially constructed, nationally endorsed, and globally expected modes of cultural production by working inside neighbourhoods using local methods. They exploit sites of friction between local, national and global cultural flows.

I examine these festivals using the framework of a localised version of Bakhtin's carnivalesque that incorporates a number of untranslatable local concepts and pushes and pulls at the universals that shape readings of local culture. An analysis of festivals within this framework reveals that they do more than express and exhibit culture. Festivals and the collectives that create them remix local genealogies, challenge homogenising cultural theories, and localise new technologies and aesthetics. In order to come to terms with the significance of the carnivalesque in Java new combinations of cultural theories are explored within this thesis. The features of a localised form of carnivalesque are drawn out of the festivals themselves as I examine the ways activists describe their work; the ways they interpret the globally-circulating concepts such as environmentalism; the ways they remix local rituals, stories, and images; the collaborative artworks they generate; and their localised uses of digital technologies.

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anakseribupulau, anakseribujawaban, anakseribuibu, anakseriburumah, anakseribukawan, anakseribunegara, anakseribuhutan, anakseribusekolah, anakseribuhati, anakseribualat, anakseribusolusi, anakseribukampung, anakseribujaringan, anakseribusaudara, anakseribupacar, anakseribupusuku, anakseribuagama, anakseribubahasa, anakseribunomorhp, anakseribuidentitas, anakseribuhairstyle. Maturnawun Exi dan Dju.

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