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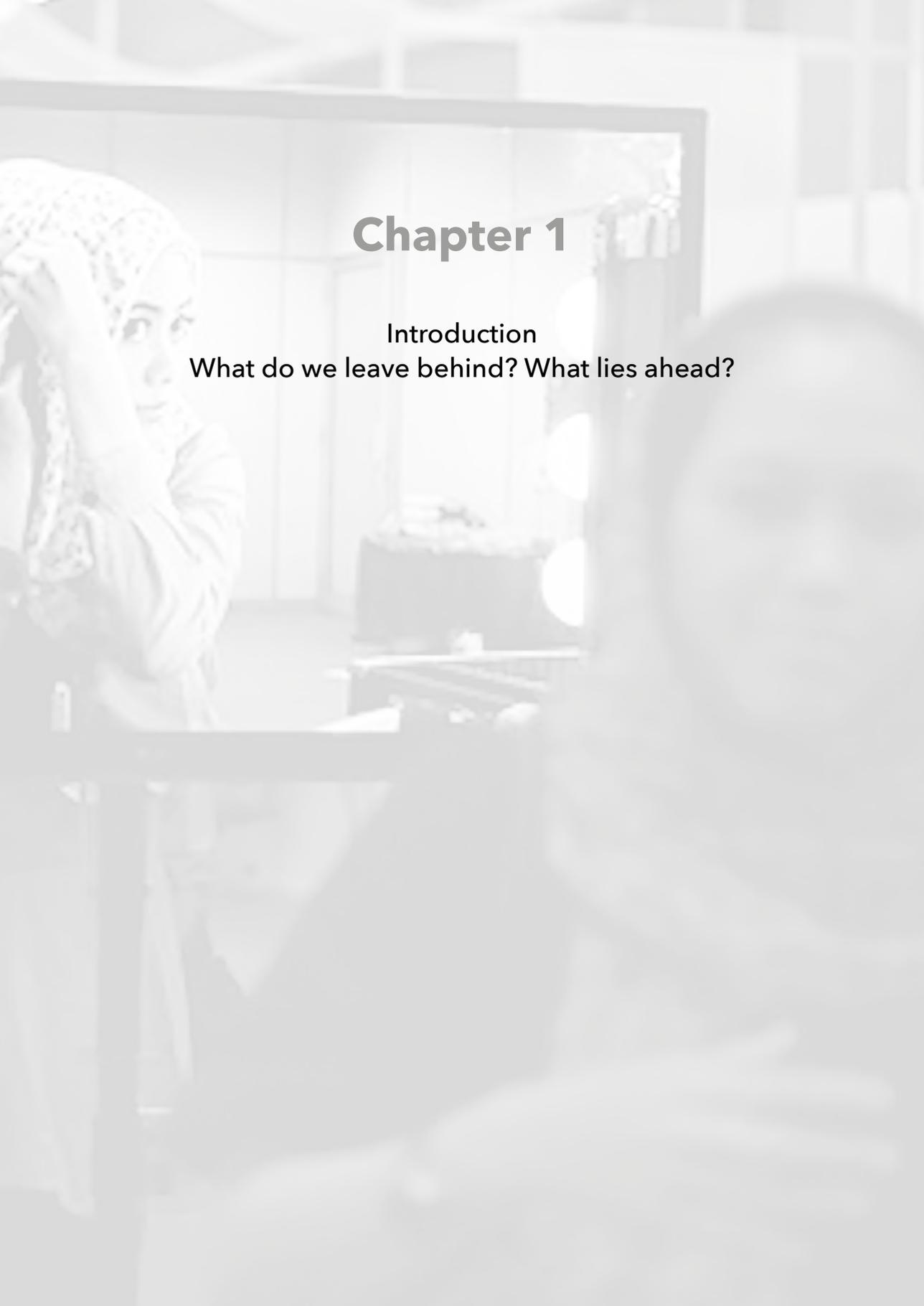
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A grayscale photograph of a woman wearing a patterned hijab, looking out of a window. The window shows a blurred view of a building exterior. The woman is in the foreground, and the window is in the background. The overall image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What do we leave behind? What lies ahead?

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What do we leave behind? What lies ahead?

“For those thousand times we fail, we have to go a thousand-and-one times forward, forward, and forward. Allahu Akbar!”

- Bang Jack (Deddy Mizwar) in *Para Pencari Tuhan* ('God Seekers')

“There’s no way all these events have passed us without giving us wisdom.”

- Haifa (Anisa Wulandari) in *Para Pencari Tuhan* ('God Seekers')

Soap affairs during Ramadan

For weeks the affairs and adventures of Haifa and Bang Jack – two characters of the Ramadan *sinetron* (religious soap series annually broadcasted only during Ramadan) *Para Pencari Tuhan* – had me and my Indonesian friend Eka glued to the TV. Watching those one and a half hour-episodes of *Para Pencari Tuhan* in that small non-airconditioned living room, in a *kampung*-house on the outskirts of Yogyakarta, on a flatscreen that was bigger than the diningtable and that lit up a significant part of the street, became a daily routine for me, Eka, her mother, father, brother, aunts, and several of the neighbours. Broadcasted on SCTV at primetime right before *iftar* (the breaking of the fast during Ramadan), every cliffhanger of *Para Pencari Tuhan* was followed by a festive homecooked dinner.

During dinner, Eka and her aunts – who are avid *sinetron* viewers – would often discuss the ‘events’ that happened to the characters. These events included, amongst others, love affairs, alcoholism, bankruptcy, being in prison, being released from prison but having nowhere to go, betrayal, desired and undesired pregnancies, divorces, elections and political intrigue, evil mothers-in-law, going from rags to riches and the other way around, stardom, terrorism, and suitcases with millions of rupiahs popping up in the street without any owner to claim them. While many of these problems are faced by soap characters all over the world, a lot of others are particular to present-day Indonesia.

Set in a village in West Java, *Para Pencari Tuhan* tells about the daily lives of a group of villagers. In the first episode we meet three former inmates, Chelsea (Melky Bajaj), Barong (Aden Bajaj) and Juki (Isa Bajaj). The three men are released from prison and wander along the roads of Jakarta, feeling lonely and lost. Juki, a former

pickpocket, is rejected by his mother on his return home, while Chelsea tries to reconcile with his ex-wife, but finds out that she is now married to the police officer that had put Chelsea in prison. The three men feel as if they are completely shut out from the world, a feeling that is underscored by the setting: all buildings in the city they try to enter are closed because it is Ramadan. Having nowhere to go, the men strand in a mosque in a nearby village and are taken under the care of the mosque keeper Bang Jack (Deddy Mizwar). While Bang Jack tries to guide the three men to the right path, we also meet the other villagers. We get to know Aya (Zaskia Adya Mecca) and Azzam (Agus Kuncoro). Aya is a beautiful Muslim girl who has excellent knowledge of religious matters and always helps out Bang Jack. Azzam is hopelessly in love with Aya, but sadly he is rejected by her time after time. Then there are Aya's brother Ustad Ferry (Akri Patrio) the chairman of the mosque, and his wife Haifa (Anisa Wulandari). We also get to know Mr. Jalal (Jarwo Strong), the richest man in the village, and his two loyal security guards Bang Udin (Udin Nganga) and Asrul (Asrul Dahlan), who develop a close friendship.

Over the course of the series this village community not only has to deal with universal soap problems (e.g. betrayal, divorce, evil mothers-in-law), but it is on top of that also repeatedly confronted with issues that relate to the changes that Indonesia is currently undergoing as processes of modernization increasingly transform the archipelago. In one episode, the village elders are for instance shocked by a sudden drop in rice production (season 6, 2012). Worried about the future of the village they set up an investigation. As it turns out, the farmers who work on the sawas (ricefields) have acquired smartphones and are now avid users of social media. Hence, they are constantly updating their Facebook statuses while they should be working the fields. They have become, in the words of one of the village elders, "unproductive citizens" due to their use of modern technology.

This plotline seems to comment directly on the '8villages' project that was launched by the French businessman Mathieu Le Bras earlier in 2012. In the 8villages project, Indonesian farmers received smartphones so they can streamline their production directly with the needs of the urban areas. As stated on the website, 8villages is an 'information revolution on the countryside' (<http://www.8villages.com>) that aims to provide "an efficient information flow between farmers and other agriculture stakeholders" (TechinAsia 2013). Participating farmers receive information about changes in food prices, weather forecast and crop demands on their smartphones. The hope is that the farmers can thereby earn more money (TechinAsia 2013).

But does earning more money and moving up the social ladder really make one happier? In another episode of *Para Pencari Tuhan* we witness how security guard Asrul and his wife begin to have success with their soupstall. For a long time they were the poorest couple in the village, but after their success they could move into a decadent house while winning respect from the other villagers. Their upward mobility is not without problems. Their wealth is threatened when in rivalry for money, other villagers make petrol bombs and set Asrul's soupstall on fire. In addition to this terror, Asrul's busy schedule puts a lot of stress on his family, and he has little time to practice Islam. The situation leaves him unhappy and at a certain point Asrul even begs Allah to restore the life he once had when his family was poor.

On the other side of town, Aya faces problems of her own. Aya seems to have everything going for her, she is smart, kind, ambitious, and a well-respected Muslim in the community. But while she wants to have a career and make something more of her life, she is constantly pressured by her surroundings to get married, have children, and become a housewife.

How to deal with all these issues? How to deal with modern technology? What are its advantages and disadvantages? How does technology affect social relations? How can you have a career, a family, and still be (considered) a good Muslim? What defines modern peaceful Islam in our post-9/11, post-Bali bombings world? Does earning more money make you happier? How can you be upwardly mobile and still be happy? What does it exactly mean to belong to the middle class? And conversely, how to deal with poverty? As Bang Jack stated in opening of this introduction: how to keep moving "forward, forward and forward" when faced with changes and challenges? And as Haifa wonders in the same opening, what lessons are taught to us during these experiences?

Central to all of these questions that *Para Pencari Tuhan* raises is the theme of 'modernity'. What is changing, what could change in the future, with which consequences, and how should we think about that? What do we leave behind and what lies ahead? What does it actually mean to be modern? As Indonesia is undergoing processes of modernization, Indonesians are increasingly confronted with these questions. Through making these questions key to its narrative, *Para Pencari Tuhan* critically negotiates what kind of modernity is right and suitable for what kind of circumstances. The series does so from an Islamic perspective. *Para Pencari Tuhan* is a *sinetron Islami* ('Islamic soap opera'), a Muslim-themed soap opera with an emphasis on prayer, moral guidance, and devoutness (Ida 2010: 1). The question is then not just 'what does it mean to be modern?', but rather 'what does it mean to be modern and Muslim?' As Indonesia – the world's most populous

Muslim nation – is simultaneously modernizing and Islamizing, this question becomes increasingly important.

The question what it means to be modern and Muslim was also underlying much of our own dinnertable discussions about *Para Pencari Tuhan*. For example when Eka and her aunts talked about what they themselves would and should do in a certain situation, or what they thought would (not) be good for the practice of Islam, for the village community – and by extension for the nation. Considering that *Para Pencari Tuhan* was watched by more than thirtytwo percent of the national television audience, and was viewed by men and women of almost all age groups; 10-24 years; 30-29 years up to 40-49 years (ABG Nielsen 2012), it is not unimaginable that issues like these were discussed at more dinnertables.

But discussions went beyond the realm of the more private sphere of the familyhome. In newspapers like *Kompas*, *The Jakarta Post* and on various blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (where the whole series can be watched: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D53SCBVachs>), viewers, journalists, cultural critics and others engaged with similar questions (see for instance 'Islam yang damai: sebagai pilihan hidup zaman modern'/'Peaceful Islam: about lifechoices in a modern time' 2012). Besides contemplating modernity, viewers and critics also wondered whether and how Islam, Ramadan, consumption, and entertainment can go together. During its broadcast, *Para Pencari Tuhan* was not only interrupted by lengthy Ramadan-themed commercial breaks, but it was also interspersed with a quiz in which participants could win one million rupiah. During the show's last quiz break, a pilgrimage tour with *Para Pencari Tuhan*'s actors could be won.

Both in terms of its negotiations of modernity and its alliances with the market *Para Pencari Tuhan* does not form an exception. In Indonesia today, media and visual culture present perfect tools to publicly fantasize and experiment with Islamic modernities. They reflect on the question whether or not the archipelago is on the 'right path' toward the 'right kind' of modernity (Brenner 1999:17; Schmidt 2012: 32). In the last decade, Indonesia has seen a boom in Islamic-themed popular and visual culture as entrepreneurs imbue cultural products with religious as well as economic value (Widodo 2008). These cultural products, which are largely targeted at Indonesia's next generation of young urban Muslims, are a key site to experiment with Islamic modernities. They provide an arena in which modern Islamic futures are envisioned. This begs the question how and which Islamic modernities are imagined, negotiated, and contested in Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture. It is precisely this question that will be the central research question in this dissertation.

The short story about *Para Pencari Tuhan* foreshadows the five key themes that are explored in the pages of this dissertation while searching for an answer to this central question. These themes concern the intersections of Islam and modernity with (1) consumption, (2) nation(alism), (3) subjectification, (4) gender, and (5) geopolitics. Taking different objects of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture as case studies, I will explore these themes in separate chapters.

Since the intersections of Islam with consumption and capitalism are central to Islamic-themed popular and visual culture, I start by exploring this junction. I do so through analyzing (visual decorations in) the space of the shopping mall during Ramadan (chapter 2). What happens to the space of the mall during the holy month? How is this space transformed? And how does visual culture play a role in this transformation? How does visual culture knit together Islam and consumption?

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus on three of the largest outlets of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture: music, self-help books, and film. In chapter 3, I look at music videos by the Islamic rock band *Gigi* and map how Islamic popular culture participates in debates about modernity. With which issues does popular culture engage? How does it form a site for experiments with modernity? And what kinds of modernities are imagined?

Chapter 4 extends these questions to Islamic self-help books. Central to this chapter is not so much the question what kinds of modernities are imagined, but rather what 'ideal' modern Muslim subjects are imagined and promoted through Islamic-themed popular culture. What, for instance, defines modern subjecthood? What politics are underpinning the construction of modern selves? And how to view Islamic-themed popular culture then? Does it constitute a site for creative experimentation and contestation, or does it attempt to discipline people into responsible modern citizens? Or do both apply?

In chapter 5, I study how the questions raised in chapter 4 are gendered. By analyzing three films, I explore how representations of masculinity and femininity negotiate 'right' male and female modern identities. How are gendered bodies subjugated to a national project that revolves around the desired modernization of the Indonesian nation? Is there room left for the practice of critical politics?

Chapter 6 takes up this last question and translates it to our current geopolitical constellation. Taking Islamic-themed art as a case study, I contemplate the possibilities for Muslim politics in a post-9/11 world. How does visual culture provide space to contest the alleged volatile position of Indonesia and Muslims in a post-9/11 world? How are politics and aesthetics intertwined? And how is the ability to critique inherent to being modern?

Before moving on to these case studies, I will first delve deeper into the phenomenon of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture. Why is Islamic-themed popular and visual culture booming? Why is its study urgent? Subsequently, I discuss the concept of modernity and explicate the research methodologies that are underpinning my study.

Islamic-themed popular and visual culture

This dissertation takes Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture as its object of study. The term 'popular culture' is diffuse and filled with a variety of different meanings. It brings together two notions: 'culture', referring to that whole way of life and its forms of signification (Williams 1989 [1958]: 4), and 'the popular', referring to 'the people'. These notions are highly complex in itself, and as Stuart Hall points out: "when you put the two terms together, the difficulties can be pretty horrendous." (Hall 2010 [1981]: 72)

Raymond Williams (1983) summarizes four meanings of the word 'popular' in relation to 'culture': "well liked by many people"; "inferior kinds of work"; "works deliberately set out to win favor with the people", and the "culture actually made by the people for themselves" (Williams 1983: 237).

In 'Notes on Deconstructing the Popular' (2010 [1981]), Hall discusses these four definitions of 'the popular' and points at the problems inherent to them. First, seeing cultural products as 'popular', for the reason that many people listen to them, buy them, read them, consume them, and enjoy them to the full (Hall 2010 [1981]: 75) is problematic since it begs for a quantitative index that can help to determine whether something passes for 'popular culture' or not. Second, viewing popular cultural products as 'inferior kinds of work' is equally problematic. This description makes a rigid and artificial distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture, which denies that categories are discursive and change over time. What is considered popular culture can never be fixed once and for all (77). Third, emphasizing popular culture's commerciality invites perspectives that associate popular culture with imposed manipulative consumerism, and that reduce people to cultural dupes (75). Finally, when defining popular culture as 'culture actually made by the people for themselves', popular culture becomes an infinitely expanding inventory. Basically everything that 'the people' do can fall on the list. Also, we cannot determine who exactly are 'the people' and who are 'not the people'. This definition tends to validate an 'authentic' culture of the people. This is problematic as there can never

be an autonomous culture that is free from relations of power (75).

Vis-à-vis these definitions of popular culture, Hall (1981) offers an understanding of popular culture that draws on Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony and that stresses the dynamic and political nature of popular culture. Popular culture here is a site of constant struggle between the resistance of subordinate groups and the forces of incorporation that operate in the interests of dominant groups. As John Frow and Meaghan Morris (1996) note, popular culture is then not imposed culture, nor a spontaneous oppositional culture of the people, but a terrain of negotiation and interaction between the two. It is "a contested and conflictual set of practices of representation bound up with the processes of formation and re-formation of social groups" (Frown and Morris 1996: 356). As Chantal Mouffe (1981) asserts, the popular cultural field is marked by a struggle to 'articulate and disarticulate' (cf. Mouffe 1981: 231) specific meanings, ideologies and politics.

While this Gramscian approach to popular culture has been widely influential, the object of popular culture itself has in the last two decades undergone significant changes, which force us to rethink what defines popular culture. Tony Bennett (2009) for instance suggests that governmental practices that go hand in hand with the soft power tactics of institutions and governments call for a different understanding of popular culture (Bennett 2009: 309-310). For Bennett, a changed definition of popular culture does not define it in semantic terms (as a meaning-making practice), but rather sees it as a governmental practice that transforms both mental and physical behavior (Ibidem).

Henry Jenkins (2006a) on his turn argues that struggles over convergence are redefining the face of popular culture. Convergence here refers to the "technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes" that come with "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the corporation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of entertainment experiences." (Jenkins 2006a: 2-3)

As Jenkins points out, the circulation of media content depends heavily on consumers' active participation (3). Consumers are encouraged to participate, seek out new information, and make connections among dispersed media content (Ibidem). In this 'participatory culture' (cf. Jenkins 2006b) the lines between producers and consumers of popular culture blur (Miller 2011: 89) – although only a small percentage of all users create content (Van Dijck 2009: 47), and corporations still exert greater power than the aggregate of consumers (Jenkins 2006a: 3).

In Jenkins' view, not only do the dynamics between producers and consumers of popular culture change, but our experience of popular culture transforms as well.

Because there is more information on any given topic than anyone can store in his or her head, there is an added incentive for us to talk about the popular culture we consume. As a result, for Jenkins, consuming popular culture increasingly becomes a collective process. None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills (4).

My own understanding of popular culture combines these perspectives. Following Hall (1981), I see popular and visual culture as a field of constant struggle over meaning and power. In my analysis of *Gigi's* music videos (chapter 3), I for instance observe tensions between different styles of modernities that are in popular discourse connected to different visions of a modern future, and to different political positions. And in my study of Islamic-themed art (chapter 6), I wonder how visual culture helps to contest to the volatile position of Muslims in a post-9/11 world. Following Bennett (2009), I simultaneously see popular and visual culture as accommodating to governmental tactics. The construction of ideal modern subjects in the self-help books (chapter 4) and the films (chapter 5) that I analyze, shows that we need to pay attention to the governmental practices of popular culture. One of the self-help books leans heavily on comments that fans of the author posted on Twitter. This demonstrates that – although the author and/or publisher have the final say about what ends up in the book – the relation between producers and consumers of popular culture is changing, and that these processes deserve our attention.

I focus particularly on Indonesian *Islamic*-themed popular and visual culture. I here understand Islam as an Abrahamic religion based in the Qur'an, the teachings (*Hadiths*) of Prophet Muhammad, and the laws (*sharia*) that guide human behavior. The focus on Islamic-themed popular culture highlights Islam as a 'practical religion', meaning that I explore the ways in which cultural practices articulate Islamic ideas, categories, and symbols in the pursuit of comprehending, expressing, and formulating social experience (Weintraub 2011: 4). Through making Islamic cultural practices central to the analysis, I emphasize the dynamic, contested, and performative nature of Islam in present-day Indonesia.

As Kenneth George (2010) however points out, defining what makes cultural forms 'Islamic' is complicated and wrought with assumptions about what constitutes both culture/cultural forms and religion (George 2010, cited in Hoesterey and Clark 2012: 208). Despite its name, 'Islamic popular and visual culture' has a tenuous relationship with the religion of Islam itself. While some Muslims produce 'Islamic popular culture' for overt religious purposes, many others do not, and some do not

even consider themselves Muslims. Following Ben Arps (1996: 395), James Hoesterey and Marshall Clark (2012: 208), I use the prefix 'Islamic' in this dissertation to describe cultural practices that are considered to *bernafaskan Islam* ('to breath Islam'), which means that they are inspired by Islam or that they connote Islam thematically.

In the post-Suharto era (1998-), Indonesia has witnessed a phenomenal rise of media and popular cultural products that *bernafaskan Islam*. This spectacular boom of Islamic media and popular culture was facilitated by a number of structural – political, economic, social, and cultural – transformations that in the past fifteen to twenty years have radically altered the Indonesian cultural scene.

Probably the most drastic transformation has been the liberalization of the cultural scene after the collapse of the authoritarian New Order regime in May 1998. The 'New Order' is one of the four periods that through time have characterized the social-political lives of Indonesians. The period before Indonesia's independence (1945) is called 'the colonial period', the time frame in which Sukarno ruled over the archipelago is known as the 'Old Order' (1945-1965). The era that subsequently stretches from the moment that president Suharto rose to power in 1966, until his fall in May 1998 is called the 'New Order'. The period after the collapse of the regime is referred to as the *Reformasi*, 'post-New Order' or 'post-Suharto' era (1998-present) (Ahmad 2003).

During the New Order (1966-1998), president Suharto guided an impoverished nation to rising prosperity and outward stability, however at the cost of abridged political and civil liberties, gutted democratic institutions, nepotism, and flourishing corruption (Schwarz 1997: 119-120). Although media were under the strict control of the Department of Information, Sen, Hill (2000), and Kitley (2000) note that media did leave room for contestations. Media were nevertheless part of Indonesia's 'national culture project', a range of state-sponsored activities that were designed to disseminate the state's ideology and construct a shared Indonesian national identity (Kitley 2000: 3-4; Sen and Hill 2000: 12).

To bring about a shared Indonesian national identity, ethnic, regional, and religious differences were systematically suppressed. The 'SARA-regulation' banned cultural products that foregrounded differences based on *suku* (ethnicity), *agama* (religion), *ras* (race), and *antara golongan* (social relations/class) (Sen & Hill 2000: 12). Under this regulation, cultural expressions of Islam were banned. In this way, Suharto hoped to safeguard the unity of the geographically fragmented nation and maintain order in a country of extremely diverse cultures, religious beliefs, languages, and traditions. This did not mean that Islam was invisible in the public sphere. As Florian

Pohl (2009) notes, under the influence of the global Islamic revival, Muslim activists have since the 1970s contested Islam's political suppression and have tried to stimulate public and political Islam (cf. Pohl 2009: 74).

The public promotion of (political) Islam was, at that time, a dangerous endeavour. The suppression of Islam was part of the strong anti-Islam politics that marked Suharto's rule during the 1970s and 1980s. Suharto feared political Islam, which he rejected for its desire of an Islamic state (Van Bruinessen 2011: 1). Under the infamous 'Anti Subversion Law' that was put into place in 1969, Muslim political leaders and those who spoke out about (political) Islam were often prosecuted as right-wing extremists who endangered the stability of the nation. As a result, many people were afraid to publicly identify themselves as Muslims.

At that time, no one could have imagined that a couple of years later, in the mid-1990s, the government's view on Islam would have made a 180 degrees turn. As the authoritarian regime was losing power in the 1990s, Suharto tried to build new partnerships to maintain power in the face of a divided military that had been his main support base (Heryanto 2008: 14). He started to give way to political Islam by making the composition of the cabinet and the military more Islamic (Ibidem). In this way, Islam became politically institutionalized. Muslim political leaders that had been imprisoned were released, and people who were speaking out against Islam were taken to court (Heryanto 1999: 175). Suharto also lifted the ban on the veiling of Muslim schoolgirls and made a very public pilgrimage to Mecca.

While Islam was gaining political space politically, the state was losing control over media due to changes in media technologies and economies. In the case of the audiovisual media, the sheer volume of material started to defeat the government's attempts to censor it (Sen and Hill 2000: 12). As a result, Islam also gained cultural terrain and become more visible in the public domain (Weintraub 2011: 4).

It was not until the collapse of Suharto's regime in May 1998 that the character of the Indonesian cultural scene changed drastically. In 1999, then-president Habibie did away with the requirement for all publications to have a publishing licence. Media were deregulated and privatized. After three decades of state-dominated political culture and censorship, post-authoritarian Indonesia could develop a cultural scene in which identity politics are prominent (Widodo 2008). Groups whose shared interests, identities, and ideologies were oppressed and marginalized during the Suharto regime, and particularly Indonesia's large Muslim community, took

advantage of the newly liberated public sphere and relative freedom of press¹ to assert their presence and participate in public discourse. Simultaneously, entrepreneurs imbued cultural products with religious as well as economic value when they realized the enormous potential of a national and regional (Malaysian, Singaporean) Muslim market (Widodo 2008).

This resulted in an explosive growth of the media industry in general, and the Muslim popular cultural industries in particular. In the wake of the financial crisis that hit Indonesia in 1997, the media industry was the only industry whose job market expanded (Heryanto 2008: 6). National and local television stations emerged, the music and publishing industries achieved astonishing sales figures, and a new generation of Indonesian filmmakers produced films that often surpassed the popularity of Hollywood titles (Heryanto 2008: 6).

These major changes in the Indonesian political and popular cultural sphere coincided with two closely related processes: the rise of a Muslim middle class and ‘the second wave of Islamism’ in Southeast Asia. It is through these processes that the growth of the Islamic popular cultural industries in Indonesia can be further understood.

Parallel to the much-discussed rise of the East Asian middle classes in the 1980s and 1990s (cf. Kim 2000; Chan 2000; Vogel 2013; Goodman 2008), wealthy and educated Muslim middle classes emerged in Southeast Asia (Van Leeuwen 2011: 16; Barendregt 2006: 174). Richard Robison and David S. G. Goodman (2013) note that Western liberals often assume that the rise of the middle class in Asia is, in cultural terms, a process of convergence. Burgeoning Asian middle classes are seen as embodying universal interests, which will create an Asia that is more like the liberal stereotypes: more rational, more individualistic, more democratic, more secular, and more concerned with human rights (Robison and Goodman 2013: 2). As Bart Barendregt however asserts, Southeast Asian middle classes do not necessarily display the alleged ‘universal’ features of middle classes elsewhere, especially when it concerns rationality, democracy and secularism (Barendregt 2006: 174). In

¹ Some limits on press freedom however remain, for instance in journalism. Censorship and suppression by the government has now been replaced by more nuanced influences measures. Reporters and editors are often constrained by the commercial and political interests of the owners of the large media conglomerates. Journalists also resort to self censorship to avoid prosecution for defamation in Indonesia’s corrupt courts. In some parts of Indonesia that are troubled by political violence, such as Papua, the threat of journalists being intimidated, beaten up or killed for what they say and write is still very real. Two international press freedom watchdogs, the Center for International Media Assistance and Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) therefore both classify Indonesia’s media as ‘Partly Free’ (Infoasaid Indonesia Media and Telecoms Landscape Guide 2012: 18).

Indonesia, the educated middle classes² are often more orthodox and religious than other social groups (174). Moreover, they are eager and proud to display their piety in public.

The middle classes' public piety is part of the 'second wave of Islamism': a religious renewal in which Muslims in Indonesia blend into modern urban spaces, increasingly engage in public debates, and use global communication networks to give themselves a public voice (Göle 2002: 174). In these urban spaces, middle class Muslims become professionals and consumers, who are operating in, and embracing, the modern market (Barendregt 2006: 172). In this climate, a new form of Islamization emerges. This form does not just imply religious devotion, but it also implies the increased public visibility of Islam. At the center of this contemporary form of Islamization is what Heryanto calls the 'new Muslim', a term that relates Islam to a modern world of lifestyle, talk shows, and fashion (Heryanto 1999: 173) Heryanto writes:

Gone are the old and rigid meanings of 'religion' and 'politics', as well as the clear boundaries that separate them from 'lifestyle'. In today's Islam in Indonesia, old familiar images have been replaced by new ones. The associations of Islam with rural poverty religious dogmatism, the Middle East, anti-Chinese, anti-West sentiments, and with fundamentalists seeking to establish an Islamic state, are juxtaposed with new images. Now Islam is also associated with television talk shows, name cards with PhDs from prominent Western schools, erudite intellectual debates, mobile telephones and consumption of ketupat during Ramadan at McDonald's. (Heryanto 1999: 177)

The 'new Muslim' signifies a change in Muslim identity in Indonesia. As new and positive images of Muslims and Islam start to circulate in the public sphere, it suddenly becomes 'cool' to be a Muslim and to consume images of oneself. Indonesia's popular cultural industries have responded swiftly to these new consumer demands. As Idi Subandy Ibrahim (2007) points out, in post-Suharto Indonesia: "images of Islam are ever-present and inescapable in the public sphere as producers now point their arrows at Muslims" (Ibrahim: 2007: 139, my translation). Blockbuster films, TV shows, popular music, radio stations, journals, and glossies have all met their Islamic equivalents over the past few years. Religion and consumption go hand in hand. And as I show in my study of shopping malls (chapter

² For a comprehensive account on what precisely defines these Indonesian middle classes and their lifestyles, see: Van Leeuwen, Lizzy (2011) *Lost in Mall: an ethnography of middle-class in Jakarta in the 1990s*, Leiden: Brill.

2), the holy month of Ramadan is the period *par excellence* for entrepreneurs to cash in. During Ramadan, middle class spaces like expensive restaurants, luxurious hotels, and shopping malls are filled with Muslims who are celebrating – and consuming during – the holy month. Different processes have thus facilitated the rise of Muslim popular and visual culture in Indonesia. The liberalization of the Indonesian cultural scene after the fall of Suharto, Islam's increased political presence, the privatisation media, the rise of the Indonesian middle classes, and the eagerness of these classes to explore new forms of religiosity through consumption and public piety, have all contributed to the post-New Order boom of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture.

Not everybody has greeted these developments with enthusiasm. Indonesian Muslims have questioned the sincerity of those who 'cash in' on the market value of Islam (Hoesterey and Clark 2012: 209). Particularly conservative and Islamist groups in Indonesia have blamed Islamic popular cultural products for being 'commercial Islam', 'Islam Lite', 'cool Islam', 'casual Islam', 'air-conditioned Islam', '15-minute Islam', 'market Islam', or even 'the Devil in disguise' (Barendregt 2009: 27; Van Nieuwkerk 2011: 10). Underlying many of these claims is the idea that Islam is eternal, divine and God-given, while popular culture is fleeting, man-made and superficial. And since popular culture is associated with pleasure, commerce and 'the West', it is often considered unsuitable for Indonesian Muslims (Weintraub 2011: 2). These narratives that place Islam in opposition to popular culture are based in reductive and essentialist ways of understanding both Muslim life and popular culture. Popular culture is here discursively constructed as superficial through narratives that create a hierarchy between high and low culture. Islam too is not unchanging, but flexible. As Andrew Weintraub (2011) stresses, Islam's teachings are understood to be applicable to all adherents at all times (Weintraub 2011: 2). The case study Islamic rock music (chapter 3) shows how easily Islam translates to modern media. In *Gigi's* rock music, Islamic practices and messages are accompanied by energetic drum beats and aggressive guitar riffs, which demonstrates that Islam is a flexible religion, adaptable to the tastes and conditions of a modern world..

If Islam is indeed flexible and manifold, what kinds of Islam are informing Indonesian Islamic visual culture? As suggested earlier, Islam is Indonesia's dominant religion. Almost 90% of Indonesia's 250 million inhabitants identifies as Muslim. This Muslim community is often understood in terms of two orientations of Islam – traditionalist and modernist Islam – that are not opposed, but are in a dialogical

relationship. Contrary to what their names may suggest, modernist Islam is not necessarily more 'modern' than traditionalist Islam.

'Traditionalist Islam', also known as 'Indonesian/Javanese Islam', 'liberal' or 'popular Islam', is a Sufi-inspired orientation of Islam that is adapted to local circumstances. It has blended with *adat* (customary law), Hinduism, Buddhism, and local mystical practices (Weintraub 2011: 3-4). It is an open and syncretic form of religion that celebrates local beliefs and practices. Traditionalists reject strict or literal interpretations of Islam.

Alongside traditionalist Islam, 'modernist Islam' has developed. Whereas traditionalists are often located in rural areas, modernists are often members of the growing urban middle class. This version of Islam, sometimes also called 'scripturalist Islam', 'literalist Islam' or 'reformist Islam', strives for literal interpretations of religious texts. It rejects the syncretism of the traditionalists. Instead, modernists aim to purify their faith to a 'true' Islam by stripping it off 'naive eclecticism'. They here often look to a 'Middle Eastern or Arabic' version of the Islam (cf. Eliraz 2004), which they consider as more pure than syncretic Islam (Riddell 2002: 70). Advocates of radical Islam, including Front Pembela Islam (FPI) and Jemaah Islamiah (JI), also align with this reformist version of Islam. These radical movements do however not appeal to large segments of the population, and people who practice modernist Islam are not necessarily more conservative than traditionalists (Weintraub 2011: 3-4).

These two orientations of Islam, and particularly the organizations that are associated with them, define Islamic discourse in Indonesia (Barton and Fealy 1996: 56). The respective organizations, Nadhlatul Ulama (traditionalists) and Muhammadiyah (modernists), are the most influential Islamic forces in Indonesia today. While neither is a political party, both have, as popular religious forces, the capacity to frame national debates (56). And although the boundaries between the two have significantly blurred³ (Liddell 1996: 623), both display different visions of a future Islamic modernity .

Traditionalist Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) is with approximately fourty million followers the country's largest Islamic organization. Due to its size, NU has a strong voice in national public debates related to the (modern) future of the archipelago. In this context, it has primarily called for religious moderation, communal harmony, and a

³ Although both organizations differ in their respective emphases and visions, the boundaries between both have also blurred. There is a growing acceptance of the idea that the truth lies in synthesis rather than antithesis. This is for instance reflected in interorganizational relations, Islamic school curricula, and the working beliefs of many ordinary Muslims (Liddell 1996: 623).

society marked by openness, collaboration, and respect between different religions. Stressing an 'open' and syncretic modern future for Indonesia, NU has actively opposed radical groups that have been involved in attacks on Western and Christian symbols in Indonesia (Riddell 2002: 70-71).

Modernist Muhammadiyah is with thirty million followers the nation's second biggest Islamic organization. Where traditionalists call for communal harmony, Muhammadiyah has profiled itself as an organization that does not shy away from confrontation. They have for instance pressured the government to pass the anti-pornography law (cf. Allen 2007) and confronted European countries over the publication of the Muhammad cartoons. Since 2006, Muhammadiyah is said to have veered towards a more conservative brand of Islam. One of Muhammadiyah's central aims has become to heighten people's sense of 'moral responsibility'. In public debates related to the (desired) course of modernity, Muhammadiyah has questioned 'Western' forms of modernities, as it considers those styles of modernity as 'unmoralistic' and irreconcilable with an Indonesian Islamic modernity. Their visions have, particularly by NU, been criticized for being too 'closed', which traditionalists consider problematic in a multi-religious, multicultural Indonesia.

In this context, Islamic popular culture and visual culture may, via the politics of representation, evoke different conceptions of Islamic modernities to support either traditionalist or modernist agendas, or a combination of both. As such, products of Islamic popular and visual culture are important participants in the public debate between at least two orientations of Islam and their visions for a modern Islamic future.

Positioning the research

When during my fieldwork I told friends that I was studying 'popular and visual culture', many of them frowned. Puzzled by my interest in something so 'plain' and 'global', and confused about my presumed ignorance of the more validated topics (e.g. 'ritual' or 'traditional arts', Strassler 2010: 16) that usually fall under the gaze of researchers with an interest in Indonesia (Ibidem), they would ask me: "but why don't you study something more special, something that is of more value to people, something that is more Indonesian?" While this view of Indonesian popular culture as 'less valuable' often contradicted greatly with my friends' own excitement about it, it is a view that resonates strongly in the academic field.

As Ariel Heryanto (2008: 6) also points out, Indonesian popular culture is still an underexplored field of study, in spite of the fact that Indonesia has a vivid popular cultural scene. According to Heryanto, three reasons explain this lack. First, Indonesian popular culture is a comparatively new phenomenon (6). As Raymond Williams (1960 [1958]) argues in *Culture and Society*, popular culture emerges with industrialization and urbanization (Williams 1960 [1958]: vi; xii). In Indonesia sustained industrialization took place only in the 1980s. This was right at the heyday of the Suharto regime (1966-1998), when control over media was tight (Heryanto 2008: 6). During Suharto's rule, Indonesian producers of popular culture were often discouraged by the numerous censorship regulations and high numbers of imports. This led to a fairly low number of national productions (cf. Sen and Hill 2002). And while popular culture was a topic of debate among intellectuals in the 1970s, this did not result in comprehensive studies of the topic (Heryanto 2008: 6).

The field of Indonesian studies has mainly been focusing on institutional and economic processes of nation building and modernization. Here, attention has particularly been directed at the negative effects of these processes, e.g. corruption, human rights abuse, militarism, and ethno-religious conflicts (Heryanto 2008: 7). As Laurie Sears and Carlo Bonura (2007) point out, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the new geopolitics of terror have recently resurrected an interest in area studies, and specifically in the Southeast Asian region. Home to over a quarter billion Muslims, Southeast Asia (and particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and southern Thailand) has become a suspect site within the analysis of US security agencies. This has led to a heightened interest in extremist religious practices in the area (Sears and Bonura 2007: 4). While issues like extremism and corruption deserve critical scrutiny, the attention they have won has been to the detriment of the more fun and pleasurable aspects of daily life, like media and popular culture (Heryanto 2008: 7)

When the focus of scholars is on cultural practices in the archipelago, most observers have devoted attention to the so-called 'traditional or ethnic cultures' of Indonesia, 'official versions' of national cultures, and the 'avant-garde' taste of intellectuals (Heryanto 2008: 7). In this intellectual climate, popular and visual culture is still struggling for scholarly attention. It is also in this context that I believe that my study holds particular value for the study of contemporary Indonesia.

This does not mean that the academic field of popular culture is non-existent in Indonesia. In the last two decades, a number of scholars have made significant contributions to the study of Indonesian media and popular culture. Of seminal importance to the development of the field have been Krishna Sen and David Hill's

Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia (2000), Philip Kitley's *Television, Nation and Culture in Indonesia* (2000), Ariel Heryanto's *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* (2008) and *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (2014). While Sen, Hill (2000) and Kitley usefully highlight how during the New Order regime media functioned as vehicles of the national cultural project and as sites of protest against cultural policies, Ariel Heryanto (2008; 2014) provides extensive accounts of the developments in the archipelago's cultural scene after the fall of the regime.

Other equally valuable additions are Melani Budiarta's (2002) work on the representations of violence against women; Ben Arps' work on audio media (1996; 2003) and the use of Javanese language on the Internet (2002, with Supriyanto); Bart Barendregt's writings on mobile phones (2008) and popular music (2002; 2006; 2008); Karl Heider's (1991) mapping of Indonesian cinema; Katinka van Heeren's (2012) study of ghost movies; Emma Baulch's (2002) analysis of Balinese punk music; Patricia Spyer's work on journalism (2006) and photography (2009); Tom Boellstorff's (2005; 2007) writings on gender; Marshall Clark's (2004) work on masculinity and violence in film; Edwin Jurriëns' (2003; 2007; 2008; 2009) studies of radio; Mark Hobart and Richard Fox's (2013) analysis of entertainment media; Sonja van Wichelen's study on gender (2010) and the representation of female leadership in mass media (2006); Angela Romano's (2003) writings on the workings of newsmedia; Klarijn Loven's (2009) study of local languages and discourses in *Si Doel*, and Pam Nilan's (2003) inquiry of romance magazines and *sinetron*.

When looking at the literature on Indonesian Islamic-themed popular culture, we can note significantly fewer studies. In this context, Ben Arps (1996) and Bart Barendregt (2002; 2006; 2008) made significant contributions. Their work on two popular music genres that connote Islam (*qasidah modern* and *nasyid*) shows how popular music can simultaneously function as entertainment and as *da'wah* (the preaching of Islam and the summoning of people to Islam). Other highly insightful additions are Andrew Weintraub's (2011) edited volume on Islam and popular culture, Ida Rachmah's (2009) critique of representations of women in Ramadan *sinetron*, and James Hoesterey's (2008) analysis of Muslim preacher AA Gym.

The study of Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture is relevant for a number of reasons. First, Islamic popular culture is omnipresent in the public domain and in the private lives of Indonesian Muslims. Analyzing Islamic-themed popular culture helps in understanding the religion of Islam as an everyday socio-cultural phenomenon and as lived practice, rather than as an abstract theological phenomenon. A critical reading of Islamic-themed cultural practices becomes urgent

when considering that these practices are an integral part of the Islamization and modernization of present-day Indonesia (Weintraub 2011: 4). Not only do popular cultural products contribute to the increased visibility of Islam in the public domain, they also publicly experiment with Islamic modernities. Through the image bank of visual culture, consumers are provided with the opportunity to imagine, create and perform their modern Muslim identity. Since Islamic popular culture is largely targeted at the *generasi muda Islam*, Indonesia's next generation of urban middle class Muslim youngsters, it plays a key role in Indonesia's aspired Islamization and in the shaping of a modern Muslim nation and self. What kinds of 'Indonesia's' are through visual culture presented to these young people? And what kinds of modern Muslim selves does visual culture promote?

The analysis of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture is not only relevant to the study of contemporary Indonesia and the ways in which Islamic modern selves are imagined through popular culture, but should be seen in a broader context. My study also contributes to the fields of cultural studies/media studies and religious studies in different ways:

First, it challenges the persistent Eurocentrism in Cultural Studies. As Robert Stam and Ella Shohat (2005) have rightly addressed, Cultural Studies risks becoming a Eurocentric form of Anglo-American gazing (Stam and Shohat 2005: 481). Although many Cultural Studies scholars have critically scrutinized the construction of Eurocentric discourses in cultural products, they have mainly done so within the narrow confines of Anglo-American media and popular culture. The field's main focus on English language cultural practices not only denies the existence of other regionally and globally important centres of cultural production (e.g. Bollywood, Latin America, East Asia), but it also reduces Cultural Studies to a rather inward-looking academic field (Stam and Shohat 2005: 481). Almost ten years after Stam and Shohat's plea to de-centre and de-eurocentralize Cultural Studies, the discipline still shows little engagement with, curiosity towards, or even vicarious knowledge of cultural practices coming from other locations. And more problematic, Stam and Shohat's comment that "whatever does not belong to the Anglo-Western world is peripheralized as Area Studies" (481) is still spot-on.

As Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet (2014) point out, the disciplines of Cultural Studies and Area Studies both need each other. Whereas Eurocentrism burdens Cultural Studies, a history of colonialism, imperialism, Cold War objectives, and more recently 'the war of terror', continues to burden Area Studies (Chow and de Kloet 2014: 8; Sears and Bonura 2007: 4). As Chow and de Kloet (2014) note, while "a turn to local or indigenous knowledge runs counter to the project of Cultural Studies

itself – that tries to put the cultural adjective under erasure – an uncritical globalization of western knowledge is equally problematic.” (Chow and de Kloet 2014: 8-9) By relegating assumed ‘peripheral locations’ to the realm of Area Studies, Cultural Studies lays itself open to charges of universalism and ethnocentrism. Cultural Studies therefore needs Area Studies’ sensibility to spatial and cultural contexts (8). On the other hand, “[Area studies] requires engaging with global scholarship, recognizing the unilateral production of universals, questioning the replication of unequal patterns of data collection and storage” (Sears and Bonura 2007: 7-8). It is here that area Studies could benefit from Cultural Studies’ critical theorizations (Chow and de Kloet 2014: 8).

In the past decade, several attempts at collaboration and at a de-centered mode knowledge production in Cultural Studies have been made. The most notable here is the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies project and journal, which aim to enhance the communication and exchange between Asia and other regions of the Cultural Studies world. Other important contributions are Chen Kuan-Hsing’s *Asia as Method* (2010), Emma Baulch and Julian Millie’s special issue on media and politics in Indonesia for *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (2013), Ackbar Abbas and John Erni’s *Internationalizing Cultural Studies: An Anthology* (2005), and Daya Kishan Thussu’s *Internationalizing Media Studies* (2009). Following their example, it is also at the junction of Cultural Studies and Area Studies that I position my study.

Central to my study is the relation between media, religion, and modernity. When looking at research that is concerned with media and religion, we can observe that a considerable amount of research focuses on Judeo-Christian expressions in popular culture (cf. McDannell 1998; Forbes and Mahan 2005). Little attention has been given to the connection between religion and media in (postcolonial) societies where the advent of modernity is prominent. Here, secularity and the public decline of religion are seen as intrinsic features of modernity (Meyer 2012: 6). At the same time, Muslim communities worldwide are confronted with the question what it means to be ‘modern’ and ‘Islamic’. Indonesian Islamic popular culture negotiates this question. My study, through its examination of what takes place in these popular cultural texts, could help us to understand the modernities of contemporary Islam. The study of Islamic modernities remains highly relevant to Muslim majority societies that are modernizing and to Muslim minority societies, like the Netherlands, in which Muslims are actively looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith while participating in an assumed modern society (cf. Ramadan and Van Cuilenborg 2005).

My study is also of value to the fields of Islamic and religious studies. In these fields, Southeast Asia in general, and Indonesia in particular, are conspicuously

absent from discussions about Islam. As Robert Hefner (2000) explains, this marginalization of Indonesia has in the past been justified for the reason that Indonesia is geographically far from the historical heartland of Muslim, and especially Arab, civilization (Hefner 2000: xvii). Inasmuch as the study of Islam in the West initially developed through research on Islamic law, there was perhaps a ground for this exclusion (xviii). However, today, Islamic studies concerns itself with a host of issues enveloping in the world of Islam, including religious authority, civil society, philosophy, international relations, and cultural practices (Arkoun 2002: 100). Since we have in the past few years seen an unheralded evaluation of global Islam, Indonesia's absence can no longer be justified. It is important for Islamic studies to engage more with Indonesia. Not only does the tremendous amount of studies that is focused on the Middle East or the Arabic world often lead to a misperception that Islam does not exist anywhere else (Weintraub 2011: 1), but excluding Southeast Asia from the discussion denies Islamic studies the opportunity to engage with a range of different versions, orientations, and practices of the Islam. It thereby misses out on a chance to create a more diverse, and transnational field of study, which acknowledges the complexity and multiplicity of the Islam.

Within Islamic studies, my study of media and religion highlights the changing modes of religious authority. Such a study is of increasing importance since Islam has recently acquired new forms of visibility as it has made its way in the public avenues of both Muslim and European societies (Göle 2002: 173). This new visibility has led to the coming into being of a Muslim public sphere (cf. Göle 2002), in which Muslims are through media – and not so much through traditional forms of religious authority – linked around areas of common interest (cf. Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Weintraub 2011: 5). As chapter 4 shows, new forms of religious authority, like Islamic self-help books, are quickly gaining popularity. If one is to understand the modernities of Islam in our contemporary world, topics like these should be incorporated in critical Islamic studies.

Theorizing Islamic modernities

Modernity is easy to inhabit but difficult to define. [...] Some [...] question the value of the very idea of modernity, but the word is all around us, and it may already be too late to legislate its uses.

Dipesh Chakrabarty 2002: xix-xx

In *Habitations of Modernity* (2002), Dipesh Chakrabarty stresses the difficulties of defining the term 'modernity'. Over the course of this research, I too have struggled with defining and using the term. Modernity is generally understood as 'the state or quality of being modern' and has been used as a short hand term to refer to a 'modern society'. The related term 'modernization' describes the transformation of a society from a rural and agrarian condition to an industrial, urban, modern society. This 'modern society' is often seen as embodying the following characteristics: an optimism for the idea of the progress of history, a conception of humans as rationally capable beings for bringing about such progress, secularism, the practice of law, a range of political institutions – including the nation-state and democracy, economic institutions – especially industrial production, and a free market economy. It is a society, "which unlike any preceding culture, lives in the future, rather than in the past" (Giddens 1998: 94).

While this seems to be a clear-cut and comprehensive definition, the problem with the concept of modernity is at least twofold. First, if modernity is indeed a definable concept, we must be able to categorize some people or practices as nonmodern. As Chakrabarty (2002) points out, in the nineteenth and twentieth century this was a relatively easy task. Following the tenets of the Enlightenment, many Western intellectuals saw modernity as "the institutions that delivered us from the thrall of all that was unreasonable and irrational. Those who fell outside its ambit could be described as *premodern*" (Chakrabarty 2002: xix, his emphasis). Today this understanding of modernity produces a moral dilemma. Because who exactly are assumed to be 'premodern'? Lower classes? Peasants? People who practice magic? Javanese mystics?

Chakrabarty (2002) remarks that these groups bring into the public domain their own ideas about justice, spirits, and magic (Chakrabarty 2002: xix). It is problematic to interpret their practices as introductions of the traditional into the modern. Most of these people are as caught up in institutions as the middle and upper classes are. And theoretically speaking, they too enjoy political rights guaranteed by the country's constitution. Even non-literate members hold these entitlements (*Ibidem*). But how can we then describe the lives of those who are our contemporaries, yet whose life challenges 'modern distinctions', for instance the distinction between feudal and industrialist? (xx) And as Chakrabarty rightly asks, can "the designation of something or some group as *non-* or *premodern* ever be anything but a gesture of the powerful?" (xix) Which relations of power are involved in categorizing a region or a group of people as not yet modern? Marking others as nonmodern is a morally

and politically complex task. At the same time, the concept of modernity loses its value if everything and everyone in the world is by definition modern.

While the first problem relates to issues of categorization (who are exactly modern?), the second problem has to do with the very categories with which we think. It is difficult for social science categories and terms – like modernity – to attain a universality that is free of historical and contingent differences between societies (Chakrabarty 2002: xxii). If we look at the conception of modernity at the beginning of this section, we see that it does not fit Indonesia, particularly where it concerns secularism. In Indonesia many of those who are considered to be modern, are more religious than other social groups (Barendregt 2006: 174).

Indonesia does not form an exception here. More regions do not smoothly fit the assumed blueprint of modernity. In Asia, the rise of industrial capitalism has hardly been accompanied by the encouragement of free markets. Instead, protectionism, quotas, and in some cases corruption and cartels have been central elements in this process (Robison and Goodman 2013: 2). To many Western observers, the Asian entrepreneurial classes do not entirely adhere to a bourgeois ideal of rationality. The upsurge of the new rich in China, Taiwan, and parts of Southeast Asia has for instance brought about a rapid increase in the demand for products like tiger penis and ivory, thereby bringing endangered species closer to extinction. These practices have been cast as bad taste and odd ways to adopt ‘the modern’ (2). Japanese businessmen, who are reading comics instead of the financial section during their subway ride home, appear incongruous to those who do consider themselves part of bourgeois culture (Ibidem). Does not fitting the assumed blueprint of modernity make these regions or peoples less modern? And compared to whom?

In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and Historical Difference* (2000), Chakrabarty engages with these questions. Chakrabarty addresses why “Europe remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Kenyan,’ and so on.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 27) He observes that “there is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called “the history of Europe.” (27) Europe’s dominant position is secured through teleological narratives of historical transition. These narratives, as Ien Ang (1998) points out, “posit Europe as the sole ‘motor’ for progressive historical change in the world, as the unique bearer of modern civilization, and as the deliverer of modernity to the rest of the world.” (Ang 1998: 76) In this way, modernization will always be a known route, and the modern will always be something that has already happened elsewhere, and which is to be reproduced with some local content (Chakrabarty 2002: 39).

Europe here thus remains the pinnacle of modernity, ‘the original’ (cf. Chow 1995), while non-Europe follows a linear trajectory towards that ideal, but will never fully reach it. This denial of coevalness, the systematic tendency to place the other in a less modern time (Fabian 2002: 33), reduces foreign modernities to translations of a European original. These translations are prone to be cast in terms of a lack, an inadequacy, or incompleteness. As Rey Chow (1995) puts it, “the value of translation is derived solely from ‘the original’, which is the authenticator of itself and of its subsequent versions.” (Chow 1995: 1984) The universality that is instilled in modernity in this way gives rise to a Eurocentric discourse that sanitizes Western history and modernity, while patronizing non-Western trajectories (Stam and Shohat 2005: 482).

Hence, while the concept of modernity is problematic because it cannot achieve a universality that is completely free of historical and contingent differences between societies, powerful forces have endowed it with such universality. As a result, the West often remains the yardstick by which success is measured, casting foreign modernities as deficient.

If modernity is such a problematic concept, why do I still insist on using it? Like Chakrabarty (2002), I realize that it is of course possible that modernity has outlived its effectiveness as a concept. At the same time, it seems like we cannot do without modernity in the context of our everyday discussions of development, equality, and democracy (Chakrabarty 2002: xx). These discussions do not only pertain to the future of Indonesia. If we look at the discussions about Islam, integration, and multiculturalism that have recently taken place in the Netherlands – or Western Europe more generally – we see how tropes like ‘backward’, ‘not modern’, and ‘unsuitable’ endure in rhetoric even when we no longer believe in the applicability of these ideas. The presence of such a discourse shows that, despite our doubt towards them, historicist or stagist notions of modernity are never really far from our thoughts. Modernity continues to shape our understanding of the world. It is therefore important to, as Chakrabarty has put it, “engage and reengage our ideas about modernity in a spirit of constant vigilance.” (xx)

But how to view modernity then? What should one say about types of modernity that do not fit the canonical understanding of the term? In response to these questions, Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000) has coined the theory of ‘multiple modernities’, which has been adopted by a range of different theorists (e.g. Arnason 2000; Bhabra 2007; Delanty 2004; Wittrock 1998; 2000; Hefner 1998; Tambiah 2000). What unites all of their approaches is a strong rejection of totalizing and Eurocentric classical theories of modernization.

In the 1950s and 1960s, classical theories of modernization (cf. Parsons 1966; 1971) promulgated the view that the worldwide expansion of the cultural program of modernity, as it was developed in Europe, would lead to a homogenous world (Eisenstadt 2000: 1). This form of 'Western' modernity would 'naturally' be taken over in all modernizing societies and would prevail throughout the world.

Multiple modernities proponents interfere by claiming that modernity has, from the start, always been multiple (Kaya 2004: 40). After the Second World War, European modernities crystallized as they expanded, giving rise to multiple modern institutional, cultural, and ideological patterns, i.e. multiple modernities, which sometimes showed a strong ambivalence towards the 'Western' cultural and political project of modernity (Eisenstadt 2001: 320). These forms of modernity are so diverse that adherents of the multiple modernities paradigm speak of modernity in the plural.

Partha Chatterjee (1997) in his writings on modernity in India, too emphasizes that "there cannot be just one modernity irrespective of geography, time, environment or social conditions. The forms of modernity will have to vary between different countries depending upon specific circumstances and social practices." (Chatterjee 1997: 8) Stretching this comment a bit further, he asserts that:

true modernity consists in determining the particular forms of modernity that are suitable in particular circumstances; that is, applying the methods of reason to identify or invent the specific technologies of modernity that are appropriate for our purposes. Or, to put this another way, if there is any universally acceptable definition of modernity, it is this: that by teaching us to employ the methods of reason, universal modernity enables us to identify the forms of our own particular modernity. (Chatterjee 1997: 8-9)

The different multiple modernities are thus never constructed in a geographical or temporal vacuum, but are always constructed according to specific socio-cultural conditions of that time: they are rooted in a particular historical moment of a society.

The emphasis on the plurality of modernity opens up the possibility of examining different Islamic modernities in the context of Indonesia. What also makes the approach useful to my project is that it places a strong emphasis on the cultural elements of modernity. The emergence of the multiple modernities paradigm has coincided with the cultural turn in the social sciences in the 1990s. Multiple modernities theorists have strongly argued against a perceived neglect of cultural factors in the study of modernities. For them, modernities cannot only be grasped in economic or institutional terms. They observe that something fundamental separates us from our pre-modern ancestors, and that the spread of institutions has been so

uneven that the change must lie elsewhere: in the realm of culture (Fourie 2012: 58) Cultural orientations are here embodied in institutions, but are not reducible to them (Arnason 2000: 65).

The centrality of culture allows me to study the imagination, negotiation, and contestation of modernities in Indonesian popular culture. The multiple modernities approach recognizes that it is in and through cultural practices that we can explore the complex interplay between ‘the imagined traditional’ and ‘the imagined modern’. For many people in Indonesia, modernity has been a double-edged sword, containing within itself both the hope of freedom and material benefit, but also a perceived loss of identity. Popular culture and visual provides people – both as producers and as consumers – with the creative “opportunity to identify or invent the specific technologies of modernity that are appropriate for our purposes” (Chatterjee 1997: 8-9).

Drawing on the multiple modernities perspective also poses a number of challenges to my study. A question I am for instance constantly confronted with is: how multiple are Indonesian modernities? The theory of multiple modernities exhibits serious ontological confusion since it has not consistently defined its primary unit of analysis (Fourie 2012: 62). Sometimes each society is considered to have its own variant of modernity, while at other moments religion or the territorial state is seen to determine the major dividing lines between ‘modernities’ (59). Cultural differences are in the multiple modernities literature almost always differences that are located at a cross-national or cross-civilizational level (Schmidt 2006: 84). Cultural differences however also occur within nations, for instance between different provinces or among different groups of people. Does this mean that single nation-states contain different ‘multiple’ modernities within themselves? Is there a Balinese modernity? A Sundanese modernity? A Jakartan modernity? Or even a modernity of Jakarta’s new rich?

The Indonesian cultural sphere provides an opportunity to engage with this dilemma. It forms an arena where different orientations of Islam and different styles of modernity struggle for power. Through the analysis of different case studies, I explore how Indonesian modernities are not monolithic wholes, but are internally multiple, diverse and at times conflictive. As my analysis of visual culture in shopping malls (chapter 2) for instance shows, different styles of modernity are – despite their individual battles – also imagined to collaborate in the project of shaping a modern Muslim nation. The Indonesian cultural sphere thus enables the possibility of researching the existence of multiple modernities within a single nation-state.

Another dilemma I encounter by using the multiple modernities approach, is that it views modernity as mobile and open to revision, while it conceives the societies that it encounters as rather static. Societies and cultures are never closed entities, but are open to change. If modernity is indeed 'a force of dynamism and agency' (Fourie 2012: 60), then it would be contradictory to imagine that it can so easily be shaped by culture. As Fourie suggests, empirical research could here elucidate some of these questions, but the multiple modernities approach largely resided in realm of theory (Fourie 2012: 59-60).

My study can here interfere critically. In my study, I explore how Indonesian Islamic popular culture both reflects, and is shaped by, the processes of modernization that are currently transforming the archipelago. What fascinates me is how through the construction of powerful discourses that are related to the preferred course of modernity, popular culture and visual culture becomes an important participant in the public debate, and as such may play a key role in the aspired modernization of Indonesia. By taking this as point of departure, my study treats neither culture nor modernities as static entities. Both are open to change and revision during their mutual encounters. But how do they interact? How do they mirror and revise each other?

Another question that confronts me is how to speak of local modernities without falling into the trap of cultural essentialism. In response to classical theories of modernization, the multiple modernities approach attempts to deconstruct singular notions of the modern in order to explain the multiplicity of modernities around the world. Every region is seen as having a unique modernity. By stressing the uniqueness of regions and cultures, the multiple modernities approach lays itself open to charges of essentialism and might revert to the simplistic cultural generalizations that it hopes to avoid (Fourie 2012: 62). How can I speak of Indonesian Islamic modernities without essentializing either Indonesia or Islam?

For Volker Schmidt (2006), part of the problem is that the multiple modernities literature does not tell us what cultural differences consist of. It also fails to reflect on how significant these differences are and why they justify speaking of modernity in the plural instead of in the singular (Schmidt 2006: 80-81). What makes a particular region so unique that it can be viewed as having an institutional and cultural outlook of its own? Are the multiple modernities so distinctive that they differ enough to be considered categories on their own? Several attempts have been made to circumvent these problems. Peter van der Veer (1998) for instance suggests that we should speak of modernity in the singular, and of history in the plural. For him this approach retains "a sense of the uniqueness and power of European modernity

together with a sense of the complexity and variation of its clash with historical processes in many parts of the world" (van der Veer 1998: 285). On his turn, Schmidt (2006) proposes to speak of 'varieties of modernity', rather than of multiple modernities (Schmidt 2006: 82). Like the multiple modernities literature, the 'varieties of modernity' approach emphasizes difference. The differences that it concerns itself with are seen "as *family differences* within a common mode of societal (more specifically, economic) organization, that of modern capitalism." (Schmidt 2006: 82, his emphasis) A problem with both of these approaches is that they focus on institutional, political, and economic factors and neglect cultural elements of modernity.

The singularity or plurality of modernity will continue to fuel scholarly debates. Rather than determining whether modernity is either singular or multiple, I think it is more urgent to study what comprises the defining features of modernities in a particular cultural context (Fourie 2012: 66). My study of the imagination of Islamic modernities in Islamic-themed popular and visual culture engages with this issue.

Methodological considerations

Encounters with modernities

How to operationalize something so large and all encompassing as modernities? How to choose case studies from a burgeoning and eclectic Islamic cultural scene in which now every cultural phenomenon seems to have an Islamic variant? These two questions haunted me at the start of this research project. And when I went on my first fieldwork trip in 2009 to collect data, I still had not figured them out. Not knowing where to start and having no criteria for selection yet, I started to hang out with a group of Indonesian university students, in the hope that they could give me a few leads. I soon learned that the ways in which they encountered modernities in their daily lives were very diverse, but that they also showed significant overlaps. These observations inspired me to take the experiences of one of those informants as a lead in selecting my case studies. What I wondered was: how and where does a young urban Muslim in Indonesia today encounter modernities in his or her daily life? And what role does visual culture play here? In an attempt to make the large and still rather abstract notion of 'modernities' more tangible, I used the personal narrative of a Muslim girl, Nisa, and more specifically her encounters with modernities, in constructing a framework for the selection of my case studies.

I realize that by taking just one person's encounters with modernities as a lead in constructing an empirical frame for my study, I risk being charged with particularism. It is however not my aim to provide a 'representative' account of Indonesian Islamic-themed popular culture, if such a project is even possible. The Islamic popular cultural scene is so diverse that an all-encompassing examination is beyond the scope of a single study. Instead, I hope to provide a glimpse of this cultural scene, while showing how its products become a site for the imagination, negotiation, and contestation of modernities. And although Nisa's narrative is highly personal and specific, her ambitions and her newly acquired middle class-ness also seem characteristic of a young generation of urban Muslims. The ways in which she encounters modernities are not obscure, but are shared by many of her generation.

When I first met Nisa in 2009, she was eighteen years old. She had just enrolled in a humanities and arts program at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Central Java. Nisa was born and raised in Solo, a city of approximately five million people (including six outer regencies), located at sixty kilometres east of Yogyakarta. After she started her program at the university, she moved out her Solo family home and into a student house in Yogyakarta. Due to her father's recent success as a businessman – he owns several private health clinics – Nisa and her family could permit a middle class lifestyle. Nisa would herself however always stress her humble upbringing, and she preferred to live in a student dorm instead of a private apartment. Although she decidedly identifies as Muslim, she is also open to Javanese beliefs and traditions. Like many other young Indonesians, she had aspirations to go abroad, a goal she accomplished in 2013 by receiving a scholarship to study in the UK.

Nisa's encounters with modernities can be seen as taking place in at least three cultural 'spheres', which I define as the material and immaterial shared and sometimes overlapping spaces; compartments of life, through which we often unthinkingly navigate. When thinking about how Nisa encounters modernities, a first sphere can be untangled. I call this sphere the 'leisure sphere'. It is through the places where Nisa likes to hang out and spend her free time (e.g. shopping malls, upscale restaurants, swimming pools of chic hotels) that she participates in modernity. Second, Nisa encounters negotiations of modernities through the 'media sphere', that is, through her consumption books, films, music, television programs, and other Islamic-themed popular cultural products. Third, Nisa participates in modernity through both her academic education in the arts, and her work as art critic and programmer. It is in this professional or 'creative sphere', that she in recent

years has become increasingly mobile. It is also through this sphere that she has created opportunities to travel and to take part in the global art world.

| Chapter overview | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Chapter | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Sphere | Leisure sphere | Media sphere | Media sphere | Media sphere | Creative sphere |
| Objects | Shopping malls - Plaza Ambarrukmo - Mal Malioboro - Galeria Mall - Sapphire Square | Rock music <i>Gigi</i> : - <i>Tuhan</i> (2004) - <i>Perdamaian</i> (2005) - <i>Nationalism</i> (2009) | Self-help books - <i>Wonderful Family</i> (2012) - <i>Rasullulah's Business School</i> (2011) - <i>Twitografi Asma Nadia</i> (2011) | Films - <i>Berbagi Suami</i> (2006) - <i>Virgin</i> (2004) - <i>Ayat-Ayat Cinta</i> (2008) | Contemporary art - <i>Membuat Obama dan Perdamaian yang dibuat-buat</i> (2009) - <i>11 June 2002</i> (2003) |
| Theme | Consumption, space | Nation(alism) | Subjectivity | Gender | Geopolitics |
| Theory, Concepts | - Production of space (Lefebvre) - Heterotopia (Foucault) | Imagination (Appadurai) | Governmentality (Foucault) | Biopolitics (Foucault) | - Ur-history (Benjamin) - <i>Lieux de mémoire</i> (Nora) - Distribution of the sensible (Rancière) |

Figure 1: chapter overview

These three cultural spheres, the leisure sphere, the media sphere, and the creative sphere form the framework of this dissertation. Within each sphere different objects are selected as case studies (Figure 1). Through the analysis of these case studies, I show that the three spheres are closely connected with the Indonesian Islamic popular and visual cultural scene. As Figure 1 shows, to study the leisure sphere, I take shopping malls as my object of study. What interests me here is how the space of the shopping mall is transformed during Ramadan, and what the role of visual culture is in this transformation. Within the media sphere, I explore the three largest

outlets of Indonesian Islamic popular culture: Islamic popular music, Islamic self-help books, and Islamic-themed films. To study the creative sphere, I examine two contemporary Islamic-themed art works. In what follows, I briefly specify my choices of these case studies. More elaborate explanations about the objects of study and their selection are provided in the respective chapters.

The leisure sphere

Case study: The transformation of the space of the shopping mall during Ramadan (chapter 2)

Objects of study: Four shopping malls in Yogyakarta. I focus on Plaza Ambarrukmo, Mal Malioboro, Galeria Mall, and Saphir Square.

Criteria for selection: A number of four malls in Yogyakarta are chosen to provide the study with ample data and to enable an examination of recurring patterns in processes of spatial production in the shopping mall. Plaza Ambarrukmo, Mal Malioboro, Galeria Mall, and Saphir Square are selected as they represent the four biggest and trendiest malls in Yogyakarta. The selected malls target adherents of the burgeoning middle class. A focus on these malls then helps to unpack how space and modern (Islamic) lifestyles are mutually constitutive.

The media sphere

Case study: Islamic rock music (chapter 3)

Objects of study: Three music videos of the band *Gigi*. These music videos are: *Tuhan* (2004), *Perdamaian* (2005), and *Nationalism* (2009).

Criteria for selection: As an epitome of Islamic rock music, the band *Gigi* forms an excellent case to understand Islamic rock music in the current post New Order era. I focus on music videos – and not just on songs – as they allow me to involve the visual dimension in the analysis. *Tuhan*, *Perdamaian*, and *Nationalism* are selected, since they each engage in a different debate related to modernity. This not only enables a study of *Gigi*'s negotiation of modernities, but it also allows me to demonstrate the different debates in which Islamic popular and visual culture participates.

Case study: Islamic self-help books (chapter 4)

Objects of study: Three Islamic self-help books. These books are: *Wonderful Family* (2012) by Cahyadi Takariawan, *Rasullulah's Business School* (2011) by Abdollah Richmoslem and Laode Masihu Kamaluddin, and *Twitografi Asma Nadia* (2011) by Asma Nadia.

Criteria for selection: First, the books represent the three largest sub-categories in self-help literature, namely women, family, and business. Second, the books revolve around different 'content-dimensions' and in this way represent different types of self-help books that are on the market in Indonesia.

Case study: Islamic-themed cinema (chapter 5)

Objects of study: Three films. These films are *Berbagi Suami* (Love for share, 2006), *Virgin* (2004), and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Verses of love, 2008).

Criteria for selection: Indonesian Islamic-themed cinema often functions as a catalyst for national debates about gender relations (Van Wichelen 2010: 235). This chapter aims to examine (1) how representations of (Muslim) masculinity and femininity in cinema are constructed, (2) how these constructions negotiate 'sensitive' topics like polygamy, (homo)sexuality and domestic violence, and (3) how these representations engage with Indonesia's post authoritarian present of Islamization and modernization. These three films are selected for their Islamic subthemes and storylines, and because of their thematic engagement with Muslim femininity and masculinity.

The creative sphere

Case study: Contemporary Islamic-themed art (chapter 6)

Objects of study: Two contemporary artworks. These works are: *Membuat Obama dan Perdamaian yang dibuat-buat* (2009) by Wilman Syanur and *11 June 2002* (2003) by Arahmaiani.

Criteria for selection: The aim of this chapter is to investigate the criticality of Indonesian Islamic modernities. How does Indonesia negotiate its position as a Muslim nation in a post-9/11 world? I approach this question through looking at two artworks. What unites these artworks is that they are all connected to Islam by having an Islamic theme running through; they mobilise issues associated with Islam to come to terms with the present state of the world. I select *Membuat Obama dan Perdamaian yang dibuat-buat* and *11 June 2002*, because their politics revolve

around the same topic. The works negotiate and contest current geopolitics and the volatile position of Indonesia and Muslims in a post-9/11 world. Moreover, the works engage in different politics to formulate their critique. In this way, they enable an examination of the different strategies and facets of this Muslim criticality.

Notes on the case studies

When looking at my choice of case studies, a few things can be observed. First, the selected case studies are relatively recent, the 'oldest' case study dates from 2003 and the most recent case study from 2012. Hence, they are produced during the 'post-New Order' or 'post-Suharto' era. I choose to focus on this period, because as I explained earlier, this period marks the heyday of Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture. This does not mean that I view the post-New Order era as a clearly cut-off unit of time. While a direct comparison between the New Order and the post-New Order is not the main aim of this dissertation, at several moments (e.g. in chapters 3, 4 and 5) parallels between both periods are drawn.

The case studies combine the more archetypal genres of popular culture, i.e. books, films, and music, with other cultural practices, i.e. (visual decorations in) shopping malls during Ramadan and contemporary Islamic-themed art. In this dissertation, I bring all of these case studies together under the header 'popular and visual culture'. I realize that shopping malls and art might seem like odd additions. I however include them in my study for several reasons.

First, they are both cultural practices that construct and negotiate (Islamic) modernities. Young urban Muslims, like many others of their generation, enjoy hanging out in shopping malls. Visits to shopping malls are part and parcel of daily life, especially for middle class Muslims. It is one of those places where they participate in modernity or can fantasize about a middle class life – if only through window-shopping. In addition, the phenomenon of Islamic popular culture is often associated with capitalism, consumption and the commodification of Islam. The transformation of the space of the shopping mall during Ramadan demonstrates these processes. It therefore provides an excellent case study to construct the setting for this dissertation and to explore the intersections of Islam, capitalism, and modernity.

Indonesian contemporary art is an important part of the Indonesian cultural scene. Quite recently, a new understanding of Islam and art has developed that mobilizes issues related to Islam to articulate political, social, and cultural dissatisfactions with

the present state of a post-9/11 world. This makes contemporary art an excellent case to investigate the criticality – i.e. the ways in which visual culture critiques, contests, and rejects specific modernities – of Indonesian Islamic popular and visual culture in the context of our current geopolitical constellation. This focus does however not mean that I believe that popular culture is ‘uncritical’ in comparison to art. As the analyses of music, self-help books and film show, these products also give way to critical politics. I would like to stress that a distinction between high and low culture, or between art and popular culture is hard to maintain. I refuse to establish a cultural hierarchy between art and popular culture, and would like to avoid cutting the cultural field into high and low, or the people versus the elite. As Douglas Kellner (2011) has pointed out, these distinctions generally serve as a front for normative aesthetic evaluations and, often, a political program, i.e. dismissing mass culture for high culture, or celebrating the popular while mocking high culture (Kellner 2011: 7).

Notwithstanding the artificiality of the boundary between art and popular culture, I do acknowledge that these cultural practices are located on different planes, for instance in terms of their access, evaluation, distribution, and circulation. The sheer variety of, and the differences between, the case studies however provides me with the opportunity to address questions concerning genre and medium specificity – something I engage with in the conclusion. How do the means of mediation, e.g. different genres, media, and visualities matter when it comes to the imagination, negotiation, and contestation of Islamic modernities?

On the use of theories and methods

Located at the junction of Cultural Studies and Area Studies, the dissertation is underpinned by insights from the humanities as well as the social sciences. While both seek to understand ‘human culture’, they differ in the ways they approach their objects of study. Spanning five years of my research life, the dissertation reflects my own trajectory, and sometimes my own struggles, of navigating between both perspectives. I notice that some chapters lean more towards a humanities perspective, while others move more in a social sciences direction. By combining insights and methods from both perspectives, I hope that my study as a whole circumvents the twin pitfalls of both, the theoreticism of the humanities and the empiricism of the social sciences.

Although the case studies all engage with the theory of multiple modernities, my dissertation is theoretically eclectic. Theorists ranging from Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre, to Walter Benjamin, Jacques Rancière, and Arjun Appadurai inform the study. This theoretical eclecticism is in many ways a conscious decision. I choose theories and concepts according to the specificity of each case study and each object. Inspired by Hall's contention that "theory is a detour on the route to something more important" (Hall 1991: 42), I believe that theory must be 'useful' in relation to the empirical data; it should highlight important aspects of the objects under study and scrutinize how the objects navigate through a political field. With the concepts I have chosen, I am able to do so.

Stressing the 'usefulness' of theory also means that I would very much like to refrain from 'theory for the sake of theory'. My point of view does however not imply that I simply aim to 'apply' theory to my case studies. As Mieke Bal (2002) has emphasized, we must always "allow the object to speak back" (Bal 2002: 45). Explaining this idea she writes:

Making sweeping statements about objects, or citing them as examples, renders them dumb. Detailed analysis – where no quotation can serve as an illustration but where it will always be scrutinized in depth and detail, with a suspension of certainties – resists reduction. Even though, obviously, objects cannot speak, they can be treated with enough respect for their irreducible complexity and unyielding muteness – but not mystery – to allow them to check the thrust of an interpretation, and to divert and complicate it. (45)

Our objects and concepts should always be in conversation with each other. In this way, objects can enrich both interpretation and theory. This is also how theory can change from a rigid master discourse into a live cultural object (45). In my study, I aim to facilitate a conversation between objects and concepts. I hope to go beyond merely highlighting the specificities of the objects, and instead let the objects speak back to theory.

Regarding my choices of concepts and theories, I realize that the theorists that inform my study can be located at different positions along the spectrum between critical theory and poststructuralist thought, but that differences among them remain.

In defense of my own eclecticism – in terms of disciplinary perspectives, methods and the use of theory – I want to suggest, following Hall, that I think that often “the problem is that it is assumed that theory consists of a series of closed paradigms”, rather than to “understand theorizing as an open horizon” (Hall 1996: 138). I would like to underscore here that research in Cultural Studies – and the same counts for Area Studies – should remain open to (external) theoretical influences that sometimes may be conflicting amongst each other. Research should show openness towards those theories that on the face of things seem to have little more than misplaced and contradictory relationships to Cultural Studies – and Area Studies is only one example here. As Hall asserts, “Cultural Studies is fundamentally about theorizing in the postmodern context, it does not believe in the finality of a finished theoretical paradigm.” (Hall 1996: 147) In Hall’s spirit, I believe that Cultural Studies must ‘theorize with an open horizon’: it must stay open to, and find ways for, consciously conjoining seemingly conflicting approaches and concepts. Such an outlook secures the ‘unfinished-ness’ of an academic discipline.

In the context of ‘researching with an open horizon’, I hope to show how my theoretical eclecticism can be productive, and how Cultural Studies and Area Studies can collaborate with, and contribute to each other. In what follows, I describe how I have used methods from both fields.

Ethnographic observations

This study draws on data collected during three fieldwork periods that span a total of ten months. The first fieldwork was conducted from January until April 2009 (four months); the second fieldwork trip took place in 2010 from May until September (four months), and the last fieldwork was conducted from April until June 2012 (two months). All of these fieldwork trips took place in Yogyakarta, a city of 3,4 million people (BPS DIY 2013) in Central Java. I choose Yogyakarta as a research site for its rich cultural scene. The presence of this scene allowed me to speak to many people involved in the media and the arts. Being a university city, this location also allowed me to mingle with students, with the ‘young Muslim generation’ that I spoke of earlier. I admit that this single-sited approach risks a particular Java-centeredness. This might seep through the contextualization of the different case studies, for which I often use comments by local people. ‘Local’ is here however already a problematic term, since quite a few people I talked to were from outside Java. Furthermore, the

texts that I analyze are not location-bound – except for the shopping malls. Instead, the cultural products I study are created for a nation-wide, sometimes even regional, audience.

Since cultural texts are my main objects of study, I have during my fieldwork collected ample sets of data related to my research. These include among others films, books, television recordings, (V)CD's, newspaper articles, flyers for events, magazines, photos, and even *Idul Fitri* greetings cards. The sheer amount of gathered data made it impossible to include everything in this dissertation. I narrowed down this set of data to five case studies using the criteria described earlier (see pages 27-30).

I did not only go 'to the field' to collect objects. Following Paul Willis and Mats Trondman (2000), I see ethnography as "a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contacts with agents", which helps in "presenting, explaining and analysing [...] culture(s) in which experience is located." (Willis and Trondman 2000: 5-6) To contextualize my case studies; to better understand what I study; hence to better explain 'culture' – a problematic term, which I use for the lack of a clearer alternative – I mingled with those who consume Islamic-themed popular cultural products. In their company I often went to Islamic music festivals, Muslim book fairs, watched Ramadan TV, or we simply just hang out together. During these events and meetings, I would often take photographs, while afterwards I made notes about our conversations. The photographs (chapters 2, 4 and 6) have become part of my corpus and I draw on the notes I made throughout my fieldwork.

Apart from data collection and participant observation, I have also conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with several consumers (twenty-four interviews) of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture, and with people who work in the cultural scene (eleven interviews). I should emphasize here that the aim of this study is to provide an analysis of a series of texts, and not a production or audience study. While I cannot stress enough that both production studies and audience research are highly relevant (cf. Hall 1980; Ang 1982; Morley 1992; Mayer, Banks and Caldwell 2010), it was not feasible to extensively include both in this dissertation. My goal is to explore how products of Islamic popular culture are sites for the imagination, negotiation, and contestation of modernities. In the light of this goal, the in-depth interviews have improved my understanding of the Islamic popular and visual culture scene, and have helped me to contextualize the phenomena I am studying. It is then also to these objectives that I use the interviews in my study: I

cite from them to contextualize and to deepen my understanding of the phenomena studied.

I put a strong emphasis on contextualizing, because as Lawrence Grossberg (1997) points out with his notion of 'radical contextualism': "context is everything and everything is context for Cultural Studies; Cultural Studies is perhaps best seen as a contextual theory of contexts and the lived milieu of power." (Grossberg 1997: 7-8) For Grossberg, cultural forms are always involved in a dialectical practice: they are contingent on the specificities of the historical conjuncture in which they appear, but they also constitute this conjuncture (8). Context is thus not just something 'out there' within which practices occur, or which influence the development of these practices; practices constitute the very context within which they are practices (Slack 1996: 125). The interviews I conducted have helped me to grasp this dialectical process; they helped me to understand the context that shapes cultural products, and have helped me to see how cultural products shape the context in which they appear. In the analysis of my case studies, I hope to lay bare this dialectical process. I for instance hope to show how a context in which particular 'modern behavior' is considered unsuitable for women is reflected and negotiated in popular films, and how in turn, these representations (1) define the ways in which sexuality can be discussed publicly, and (2) become part of a national project of modernization. In this way, we cannot only understand how Islamization and modernization shape cultural products, but we can vice versa also understand how cultural products play a role in the Islamization and modernization of Indonesia.

The interviews that I conducted were semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews, i.e. interviews conducted through the use of a topic list. In-depth interviews explore the construction of social meaning "through the medium of extended talk" (Schröder 2003: 147). They seek "to illuminate [...] practices and experiences, by getting those involved to verbalize them in the non-natural, but open situation of the qualitative research interview, in which informants have considerable power to influence the agenda" (147). In contrast to for instance focus groups, this method enabled me to ask questions that are tailored to the specific circumstances divulged by the respondent (153). Individual interviews also provided me with opportunities to illuminate more intimate aspects of people's thoughts and experiences. My interviews all took place in an open and casual setting, like a coffee place or a restaurant, and were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. I have recorded the interviews – if informants agreed – and have made transcripts of the interviews.

The somewhat unconventional way in which I use the interviews in this dissertation does not mean that I see the cultural texts as determining agents or as containing all meaning. While it was beyond the scope and goal of this dissertation to include a full-fledged production or audience study, I hope that this dissertation might provide a starting point for such projects. If we are to understand the dynamics of Indonesian Islamic popular and visual culture in its totality, then the ‘determining moments’ (Hall 1980: 164) of production and consumption must be scrutinized as well.

In the end, my fieldwork experience has made me realize the importance and the indispensableness of such a venture. My original PhD-proposal ‘only’ contained four objects. It was through my fieldwork that I encountered many more fascinating and relevant objects. I think it is telling that I eventually ended up with fifteen objects instead of four. In the field, I also sharpened my focus, reformulated my questions, and discovered details and information that I would have never found from behind my desk in Amsterdam. Fieldwork has also made me more conscious, and forced me to enquire, about my own (speaking) position as a researcher. To claim that ‘locally produced’ knowledge generates a ‘deeper’ understanding of culture is highly problematic. It assumes that culture has an essential core to which some can come closer than others. While not encountering many difficulties, it is undeniable that my background as a mixed Dutch-Indonesian, but European looking, non-Muslim woman played a part in my interactions with people in the field. I sometimes struggled to make people I had just met feel at ease. A few young informants for instance took my Europeanness in combination with my position as an academic as a hint that I must be a ‘cultured person’, making them hesitant to speak about their consumption of popular culture. Mentioning that I binge-view the same TV shows or listened to the same music often helped a great deal to made them feel more comfortable.

Whereas being ‘in the field’ was inspiring, being back was at times difficult – and not only because it brought me back to the more mundane task of writing. In the field, I had direct feedback on my questions, ideas, and observations. I could instantly ‘test’ my ideas, and ask questions about the things I did not understand directly. I could even walk into a shopping mall and encounter a case study. Home in Amsterdam, I sometimes felt detached from my research topic. While I tried my best to keep up with what was going on in Indonesia by reading online newspapers and by keeping in touch with Indonesian friends, I could not help a nagging feeling

and fear of missing out. On the other hand, I also experienced what many people have told me about 'going back': that distance is good, that it helps you to reflect. Often, I could see matters, observations, and objects clearer outside the context of fieldwork.

Textual analysis

In this dissertation cultural texts are my prime objects of study. 'Text' here refers to a complex set of discursive practices that are situated in specific cultural contexts. As Roland Barthes (1972) has emphasized, these cultural-practices-as-texts must be read critically to reveal their underlying cultural meanings (Barthes 1972: 107-108).

Earlier in the introduction, I suggested that to understand the dynamics of Indonesian Islamic popular and visual culture in its totality, one must in addition to its textual practices also scrutinize its production and consumption. The strength of such a mixed-method approach will always be the understanding of meanings in the context of their creation and their possible re-interpretation at a specific time and location (Fürsich 2009: 249). Notwithstanding my earlier comment, I would like to highlight that a primarily textual approach also has its own strengths and relevance.

As Elfriede Fürsich (2009) has observed, critics of textual analysis often base their critique on the assumption that text-only studies lack depth. Textual analysis presumably results in incomplete findings, which have to be substantiated or even authenticated by audience reactions or production context. These kinds of claims short-change the central contribution of textual analysis (Fürsich 2009: 244). The task of textual analysis is the critical evaluation of cultural artefacts in their own right, as creative moments in the circuit of culture that are often beyond the intentions of the producers (244). As 'creative moments', *Gigi*'s music (chapter 3) or the Islamic-themed blockbuster *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (chapter 5) are not just raw materials that have to be authenticated through audience readings.

What also makes textual analysis valuable is that it allows me to lay bare latent meanings and omissions of these creative moments, and that it enables me to interpret these creative moments in the cultural context in which they appear (241). When I for instance look at recent Islamic-themed films (chapter 5), I wonder what kinds of gendered cultural sensibilities prevail in these films and how we can understand these sensibilities. Why do they appear at this moment in time? How do

they compare to earlier periods? Neither inquiries into production practices nor audience readings can be used to answer these questions (246).

Another trait of textual analysis is that it helps to unpack the spectrum of readings that a cultural product promotes. This is to ask in what ways a cultural product initiates various subject positions (247). In my study of Islamic self-help books (chapter 4), I am for instance interested in the kinds of modern Islamic subject positions that are promoted through these books. This goes beyond the question how an audience may read or appropriate the books. It instead refers to the larger question of which life stories, and which gender, sexual, class, and ethnic identities self-help books encourage and which ones they discourage or exclude.

There are many forms of interpretive textual analysis, including among others, rhetorical analysis (cf. Selzer 2004), discourse and ideological analysis (cf. Lassen, Strunck and Vestergaard 2006), psychoanalytic approaches (cf. Rodowick 2013), and approaches inspired by affect theory (cf. Ahmed 2013; Gregg and Seigworth 2010). To analyze the imagination of modernities in Islamic-themed popular and visual culture, I carry out a discourse analysis (see next section). I am interested in the ways in which visual and narrative textual components construct discourses about the modern future of Indonesia.

Chapter 2, in which I analyze shopping malls, forms an exception. In this chapter I do not draw exclusively on discourse analysis to reveal underlying cultural meanings about Islamic modernities. In my study of shopping malls, I use a spatial analysis inspired by the works of Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) and Foucault (1986 [1967]) to investigate how not only (audio)visual texts, but also spaces play a role in production, imagination, negotiation, and contestation of Islamic modernities.

Discourse analysis, visual analysis, narrative analysis

To explore what kinds of modernities are imagined in the selected case studies and how these modernities are negotiated and contested, I conduct a discourse analysis by studying both the visual level and the narrative level of the selected texts. Since there are many types of discourse analysis, it is important to make a distinction between what is called Critical Discourse Analysis and the type of discourse analysis that is informed by the work of Michel Foucault.

As Linda Graham (2005) explains, Critical Discourse Analysis draws inferences from linguistic features in texts. It aims to provide a framework for the systematic

analysis of texts, so that researchers can go beyond speculation and can demonstrate how texts and language work. Critical Discourse Analysis thus seeks to provide a definitive account (Graham 2005: 3).

By contrast, a Foucault-inspired analysis eschews claims to objectivity and truth. Here “the claim to truth can itself be seen as a powerful rhetorical practice.” (Edwards and Nicoll 2001: 105, cited in Graham 2005: 3) Rather than seeking a definitive account, a Foucault-inspired analysis emphasizes that the process of analysis is “always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint.” (Wetherall, 2001: 384, cited in Graham 2005: 3) Central to this form of discourse analysis thus is a poststructural sensibility, which sees theorizing as resting “upon complexity, uncertainty and doubt, and upon a reflexivity about its own [...] claims to knowledge about the social” (Ball, 1995: 269).

In my study, I draw on Foucault’s (1989 [1972]) understanding of discourse and discourse analysis. I use a Foucault-inspired discourse analysis, because it allows me to carry out a detailed investigation of the relation between (visual) language and other social processes. It opens the way for a context-specific analysis of how (visual) language works within power relations.

In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1989 [1972]) Foucault has described his understanding of ‘discourse’. For him, discourse refers to:

the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (90)

Hence, for Foucault, statements are constitutive of discourses. How should we then see these statements? As he continues:

At first sight, the statement appears as an ultimate, undecomposable element that can be isolated and introduced into a set of relations with other similar elements. A point without a surface, but a point that can be located in planes of division and in specific forms of groupings. A seed that appears on the surface of a tissue of which it is the constituent element. The atom of discourse. And the problem soon arises: if the statement really is the elementary unit of discourse, what does it consist of? What are its features? What boundaries must one accord to it? (90-91)

Foucault emphasizes that a statement is not merely a sentence (92), a proposition (92) or a speech act (97), but is:

a function of existence [...] that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space. It is this function that we must now describe as such, that is, in its actual practice, its conditions, the rules that govern it, and the field in which it operates. (97)

For Foucault, a 'statement' is thus a 'statement as function'. This 'statement as function' can be conceptualized as a discursive junction box where words and things intersect and become invested with specific relations of power (Graham 2005: 7). The statements that are constitutive of discourses are thus always connected to relations of power. As such, statements, and by extension discourses, have a constitutive effect; they work to structure the possibilities of how we can think about a certain topic.

In my study, I use discourse analysis to investigate how imaginations of modernities in popular and visual culture constitute discursive formations that function to enunciate what modernity is and how it is to be seen. Key questions for me here are: what discourses about Islamic modernities are constructed in Islamic-themed popular and visual culture? How are these discourses linked to relations of power in the context of contemporary Indonesia? How are these discourses constructed through (audio)visual and narrative elements of the objects under study? What is visible and invisible; audible and inaudible; sayable and unsayable; included and excluded? What escapes the limits of discourse?

To investigate these questions, I conduct a visual and narrative analysis. These two methods help me explore how visual and narrative elements work to construct discourses. Visual analysis takes the image as its primary object of study. It studies "the functions of a world [...] through pictures, images, and visualizations, rather than through texts and words" (Mirzoeff 1999: 8). As a method, it tries to lay bare how the visual constructs and conveys meaning. 'The visual' is here always seen as polluted by the non-visual: by power structures, beliefs, cultural sensibilities, discourses, and ideologies. It is the main goal of a visual analysis to unpack these processes, to interrogate the image, and to show how the image is a socio-culturally specific construction that is enmeshed with power.

Visual analysis finds its roots in semiotics. Semiotics focuses on how signs and sign systems transmit meaning. A sign consists of a signifier (or sign vehicle, e.g.

white) and a signified (or mental image, e.g. purity). What is crucial is that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary and dependent on context (Bignell 2004: 68). The idea that the relationship is arbitrary, implies that it is a matter of convention – or as I would like to underscore “a matter of politics” (Saukko 2003: 101). There is always a struggle over meaning. Practices of signification are arenas where different social groups compete to make the world mean (102).

In the study of my objects, I pay particular attention to the construction of the image and its practices of signification. When I say ‘construction of the image’, I mean that I am interested in the ways it has been given shape through, amongst others, cinematography (e.g. distance, angle, movement, framing, editing) and mise-en-scene (e.g. the use of light, setting, dress/costumes, props). Although not strictly visual in its modality, sound cannot be seen apart from the (moving) image. Sound can for instance be used to organize a space (Vande Berg 2004: 71). I therefore also pay close attention to acoustic codes.

In addition to a visual analysis, I conduct a narrative analysis of the selected texts (except for case study of the shopping malls). It is important to point out that ‘the visual’ and ‘the narrative’ are not two separate qualities of cultural texts. Stories are often told through the visual, or as John Hartley (1992) has put it: “no picture is pure image; all of them, still and moving, graphic and photographic, are talking pictures.” (Hartley 1992: 28-29)

Visual analysis and narrative analysis can however not be conflated. Whereas visual analysis takes the image as its primary object of study, narrative analysis takes as its object of study the entire text, focusing on the construction of the narrative (Stokes 2003: 67). ‘Narrative’ is here understood as “an ordered sequence of images and sound that tells a fictional or factual story.” (Bignell 2004: 86)

The point of departure for narrative criticism is the idea that “human beings construct their understandings of themselves and their lives, their immediate environments, and even worlds outside their direct experience, through narratives.” (Vande Berg 2004: 198) Since narratives are central to how we understand and experience the world, they are:

important avenues toward understanding a society’s culture – how it sees itself valuatively and characterologically, where it sees itself coming from and tending toward, [and] by what mechanisms it passes on guidance and wisdom to later generations. (198)

Since narratives provide insights into the ways a society envisions itself and 'where it is tending toward', they make excellent sites for the imagination and negotiation of modernities. It is therefore that I critically scrutinize the narrative dimensions of my case studies.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2

Urban Islamic spectacles: transforming the space of the shopping mall during Ramadan

Since the intersections of Islam with consumption and capitalism are central to Islamic-themed popular culture, I start by exploring this junction. I do so through analyzing (visual decorations in) the space of the shopping mall during Ramadan.

In recent years, the holy month of Ramadan has in Indonesia allegedly shifted from a period of piety to a euphoric spectacle of consumerism. This shift can be observed in the remarkable transformations that urban spaces of Indonesian cities undergo during Ramadan. Drawing on fieldwork data, thereby particularly focusing on the space of the shopping mall, this chapter analyzes how space is produced (cf. Lefebvre 1991 [1974]) and transformed during Ramadan. I suggest that space is not an inert stage where modernity is performed, but that space is instead an active participant in producing and fantasizing Islamic modernities. In this chapter, I also point out that visual culture plays a notable role in the transformation of space during Ramadan. I show how Islam, through discursive representations, carves out a public space of its own. The production of space is charged with ideological symbols and moves through social imaginations.

I suggest that the case study of Ramadan enables a critical reading of two themes that can be recognized in previous studies concerned with the production of space: (1) the separation of space and time, and (2) the linear production of space. Through theorizing the space of the mall as a heterotopia (cf. Foucault 1986 [1967]) and Ramadan as a specific heterotopic moment, I propose a conceptual model that systematically integrates time in the study of space and that can help to study non-linear spatial productions.

Chapter 3

'A place where grace and sins collide': Islamic rock music and imaginations of modernity

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus on three of the largest outlets of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture: music, self-help books, and film. In chapter 3, I look at Islamic rock music.

In Indonesia's post-authoritarian mediasphere, Islamic piety and coolness by no means exclude each other. Today Islam has found its place in an urban youth culture that places 'coolness' as its core value. The Indonesian rock band *Gigi* represents this new 'coolness' in Indonesian Islamic-themed popular culture. By taking *Gigi* as a case study, and by analyzing three of their music videos, I explore how Islamic popular culture engages in debates about the desired course of modernity, and how it forms an arena where Islamic modernities are imagined, negotiated, and contested. In this chapter, I particularly zoom in on the following questions: In what kinds of debates does Islamic popular culture participate? What kinds of modernities does it imagine? How 'Indonesian' are these modernities? What transnational imaginations and politics underpin their construction? Through my analysis, I also raise questions about the 'capacities' of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture. How to view Islamic-themed popular and visual cultural products? Do they constitute sites of creative experimentation and contestation, or do they attempt to discipline people into responsible modern citizens? Or do both apply? By drawing on Arjun Appadurai's (2004; 2013) ideas about cultural capacities, I show that in the ways *Gigi* imagines Islamic modernities, their music gives way to an 'ethics of possibility' and an 'ethics of probability' (cf. Appadurai 2013: 188). This means that on the one hand, popular culture provides the tools to imagine, fantasize, and stimulate the coming into being of desired Islamic modernities, but that on the other hand, these constructions are never free from relations of power.

Chapter 4

'How to become a Muslim billionaire, just like Prophet Muhammad?': Self-help gurus and governmentality

In chapter 4, I study Islamic self-help books. Central to this chapter is not so much the question what kinds of modernities are imagined, but rather what 'ideal' modern

Muslim subjects are imagined and promoted through Islamic-themed popular culture.

The global Islamic revival of the last three decades has in Indonesia fragmented traditional forms of religious authority whilst producing new figures of public piety (Hoesterey 2012: 38). Recently, Indonesia has seen a boom of Islamic self-help literature. Through Islamic self-help books, pop culture preachers and self-help gurus offer Islamic guidance to Indonesian Muslims. In this chapter, I will analyze three books: *Wonderful Family* (2012), *Rasullulah's Business School* (2011), and *Twitografi Asma Nadia* (2011). I explore how these books provide families, entrepreneurs, and young women with inspirational stories and practical manuals for living in a modernizing Indonesian society. I suggest that while 'helping' readers, the books mobilize governmental tactics to promote and construct specific modern Islamic citizen-subjects that are fit to participate in Indonesian Islamic modernities. I propose that these subjects are not just gesturing towards a distant modern future. Rather they point our gaze back to the disputes and contradictions that exist in a present Indonesian society. The books encourage the construction of subjects that are aware of, and that intervene in, the (unequal) spread of wealth, while actively negotiating cultural, ethnic, and religious differences.

Chapter 5

'So Islam really honors women?': Muslim masculinity and femininity in Islamic-themed films

In chapter 5, I study how the questions raised in chapter 4 are gendered. I do so by looking at Islamic-themed films. Representations of gender in Islamic-themed films have in the past few years stirred national debates about polygamy, the position of women in Islam, sexuality, and domestic violence. In this chapter, I critically scrutinize these representations. I suggest that we need to view these representations in the light of Indonesia's recent history. During Suharto's New Order, representations of masculinity and femininity were part of the regime's national project, and as such served a national function. State sponsored media products linked good citizenship for women to good domestic qualities, thereby creating highly stereotypical images of women. The fall of the New Order regime opened up a space for identity politics, and for a critical attitude toward New Order gender stereotypes, although regulation and (self) censorship continue to exist today.

The newly liberalized cultural scene nevertheless provides ample opportunities for the creative industry to construct different representations of gender, and to tackle taboo-issues, like sexuality, polygamy, and (domestic) violence.

But how are representations of Muslim masculinity and femininity in post-New Order Islamic-themed cinema constructed? How do these constructions negotiate 'sensitive' topics like polygamy, sexuality, and (domestic) violence? How do they compare to their New Order counterparts? And do these constructions also serve a specific national function?

In this chapter, I explore these questions through analyzing three post-New Order Islamic-themed films. These films; *Berbagi Suami* (Love for share, 2006), *Virgin* (2004), and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Verses of love, 2008) all engage with 'sensitive' issues. By drawing on Michel Foucault's (1975-1976 [2003]) notion of biopolitics, I suggest that the sensitivities portrayed in these films are closely linked to anxieties that come with processes of modernization, and that it is through the representation of gender that modernity is negotiated. I propose that post-New Order representations of masculinity and femininity obtain their own national function; they negotiate 'right' male and female modern identities in an era of modernization.

Chapter 6

Unearthing the past and re-imagining the present: Contemporary art and Muslim politics in a post-9/11 world

In this chapter, I look at Islamic-themed contemporary art. After 9/11, popular and academic discourses have often constructed Islamic communities as hostile to visual culture. Contemporary Indonesian art shows how visual culture is a site of (Muslim) politics, creativity, contestation, and conflict, a site where issues associated with Islam are mobilized to come to terms with the present state of the world. But how are aesthetics in these artworks mobilized as a way of negotiating and contesting political, cultural, and historical circumstances? How are politics and aesthetics (Rancière 2004) intertwined? What kind of critique is articulated and what tactics are employed here? And how might we understand these politics? Is it possible to read these politics of (Islamic) aesthetics as resistance? If so, how is this resistance structured? And how is being critical a part of being modern?

In this chapter, I explore these questions by analyzing two art works: *Membuat Obama dan Perdamaian yang dibuat-buat* (2009) by Wilman Syanur and *11 June*

2002 (2003) by Arahmaiani. Through conducting a visual analysis of these art works, I propose that a Benjaminian socio-historical politics underlies the objects' aesthetic strategies. Drawing on the works of Walter Benjamin (1999 [1982]; 1968 [1940]) and Pierre Nora (1996 [1989]), I suggest that through their aesthetics the works evoke fragments from the past to question the construct of the present. The works keenly fragment the past and translate these fragments into images. These visual historical fragments are reassembled within the present to challenge present (dominant) narratives that are antithetical to Muslims. I suggest that these aesthetic strategies form the base of a (Muslim) politics.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Changing paths

In the conclusion, I first revisit the question that I asked earlier in the introduction: "How are Islamic modernities imagined, negotiated, and contested in Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture?" I also explore a question that I think is equally important: why are these modernities imagined? I suggest that the case studies construct a highly ambivalent discourse about modernity and about an Islamic modern future. On the one hand, the case studies display a positive attitude towards modernity. On the other hand, the case studies also articulate a negative attitude towards modernity, and express a fear and skepticism over the condition of the present. I propose that we can understand this ambiguous discourse by seeing it in the light of Indonesia's postcoloniality and in the context of our current global condition.

To study how Islamic modernities are imagined in Indonesian popular and visual culture, I look at a wide range of different cultural products and forms: shopping malls, rock music, self-help books, films, and contemporary art. In the conclusion, I reflect on the question how the different forms of these case studies matter in the ways they imagine modernities. How do the means of mediation, e.g. different genres, media and visualities matter when it comes to the imagination, negotiation, and contestation of Islamic modernities?

The question 'where are we going?' is central to the rock songs, films, self-help books, malls, and art works that I analyze in my dissertation. Throughout my dissertation, the 'we' in this sentence stands for Indonesia, the modern Muslim nation, and the global Muslim world. In the conclusion, I make this 'we' stand for

'scholarship', and think about where scholarship at the intersections of modernities, Indonesia, and Islam could go in the future. Taking cues from my case studies, I present a future research agenda and suggest four directions that research could take. I summarize these directions under the headings: audiences, bodies, spaces, and flows.