Visions of the future: imagining Islamic modernities in Indonesian Islamic-themed post-Suharto popular and visual culture

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Publication date
2014

Document Version
Final published version

Citation for published version (APA):

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Download date: 18 Apr 2024
Chapter 2

Urban Islamic Spectacles: Transforming the space of the shopping mall during Ramadan
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The increasing public visibility of Islam as Indonesia is going through processes of modernization and Islamization constitutes one of the most notable developments currently occurring in the archipelago (Hasan 2009: 229). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the public ubiquity of Islam is relatively recent, as public expressions of religion (alongside those of race, ethnicity, and class) were suppressed during the Suharto regime (1965–1998) in order to preserve national order and unity. Now, in the post-Suharto era (1998–), in tandem with the seemingly rising eagerness of Indonesian Muslims to publicly display their religious selves, Islam has moved to the center and has become part of political expressions, economic activities, socio-cultural practices, and public space (Hasan 2009: 230).

The presence and visibility of Islam in public space is most significant during the period of Ramadan, the Islamic fasting month. Ramadan is part of most Indonesian people’s lives as approximately 90% of the population is Muslim. During the thirty-day annual ritual, Muslims are obliged to refrain from eating, drinking, and having sex during the day. They should furthermore control their emotions in order to improve their spirituality during the holy month. Ramadan is also a time for giving, when people are supposed to pay attention to those less fortunate than themselves by giving donations in the form of money, food, and clothing. Through fasting, Muslims are encouraged to lead a prudent life. And then at the end of the month, at the celebration of Idul Fitri, people celebrate that they have overcome the obstacles of the fasting days. However, ironically, in recent years the rituals of fasting and celebrating Idul Fitri in Indonesia seem to have shifted from a pious practice to a euphoric spectacle of conspicuous ‘Islamic’ consumerism.

This shift can be observed in the significant and remarkable transformation that urban spaces of Indonesian cities undergo during the month of Ramadan. This transformation is the central concern of this chapter. Using data collected during Ramadan in the city of Yogyakarta, I analyze how space is produced and transformed during the holy month, thereby particularly focusing on the space of the mall. The study is here inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]) and takes two ideas of Lefebvre as its starting points. The first is the idea that space and time are always particular constructs of a specific form of modernity. The
second is the idea that in and through space, social relations are reproduced (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 19). Drawing on these two ideas, I show how via discursive representations Islam carves out a public space of its own in conformity with modern urban Islamic lifestyles and identities that exist in, and are produced by, a specific historical moment. The analysis of the production of space demonstrates how space is charged with ideological symbols, moves through social imaginations, and negotiates Islamic modernities.

While drawing on Lefebvre, the study of the production and transformation of space during Ramadan also enables a critical reading of this work and other key works in the study of space that have been inspired by Lefebvre (e.g. Harvey 1990; Soja 1996). This critical reading revolves around two related themes that are recognized in these studies: (1) the separation of space and time, and (2) the linear and permanent production of space. I develop this critique through theorizing the space of the mall as a heterotopia (Foucault 1986 [1967]) and the production of space during Ramadan as a specific heterotopic moment. I underscore the importance of conceptualizing space integrally with time, and explore the significance of temporality in the production and transformation of urban space. Based on my analysis, I will propose a new conceptual model that systematically integrates time in the study of space.

The analysis of the production of space during Ramadan conducted here is not only relevant to the study of contemporary Indonesia. As Nilüfer Göle (2002) writes, Islam has over the last twenty years acquired new forms of visibility as it made its way into the public avenues of not only Muslim, but also European, societies (Göle 2002: 173). New urban spaces, markets, and media are opening up in response to the rising demands of recently formed Muslim middle classes. The penetration of Islam into the social fiber and imaginary of societies questions the meanings and borders of a secular concept of modernity (Göle 2002: 174). The public visibility of Islam, and the specific spatial practices underpinning it, trigger new ways of imagining Islamic modern collective selves. This stresses the plurality of modernity (cf. Chatterjee 1997) as opposed to theories that speak of a single (European and secular) program of modernity. Robert Hefner (2004) has shown how Islam and modernity are compatible in contemporary Indonesia. Exploring Islamic makings of the modern self and the spatial practices associated with it could help in understanding the construction of modern social imaginaries (Göle 2002: 174). It also highlights how space plays a role in producing, reflecting, and negotiating these modernities. How are spatial practices shaping and interrogating modernities and, vice versa, how are modernities shaping spatial production?
The politics of spatial ordering

To study the production and transformation of space during Ramadan, this chapter draws on fieldwork data collected before, during, and after Ramadan 2010 in Yogyakarta, Central Java. Yogyakarta is a popular tourist destination due to its strategic location and rich cultural heritage. Home to numerous universities (three state universities and eighteen private universities), the city attracts many students from all over the archipelago. This, in combination with the rising prosperity of the city’s middle class, has led to Yogyakarta’s promotion as the modern cultural capital of Java.

In terms of architecture, with its mixture of Javanese and Dutch colonial styles, and predominantly low-rise buildings, Yogyakarta seems to stand in contrast with the gleaming, high-rise, steel buildings of the so-called ‘capital of modernity’, Jakarta. This is not to say that Yogyakarta lacks visible spatial performances of modernity, as the spaces of universities, hotels, entertainment-, trade-, lifestyle-, and health centers clearly attest. Perhaps the most evident visual displays of modernity are to be observed in the spaces of Yogyakarta’s luxurious shopping malls. The space of the mall has, since Walter Benjamin’s arcades (1999 [1982]), been a metaphor for modernity and cosmopolitanism. At the same time, the mall has been seen as a symbol of ‘American culture’ and, closely related, as a signifier of the assumed homogenization of culture – a carrier of spatio-cultural sameness (Kroes 1996: 14).

In Yogyakarta, the space of the mall undergoes a significant transformation during the holy month. It thereby seems to signify Ramadan’s allegedly public shift from a pious practice to an Islamic consumerist spectacle. This process is not unique to Yogyakarta, but can also be encountered in other cities. Further comparative research is needed to grasp how locality matters and how the mall is a ‘carrier of spatio-cultural sameness’ (Kroes 1996: 14). A focus on the space of the mall in Yogyakarta provides a good starting point. This focus enables an analysis of spatial performances of modernity in a modernizing city and offers insight into the production of space during Ramadan. It enables me to zoom in on the intersection of Islam and consumption, and helps to explore how (Islamic) modernities are produced spatially.

I study the production and transformation of space through focusing on the politics of spatial ordering. As Foucault writes:

Our [...] era [...] seems to be that of space. We are in the age of the simultaneous, of
juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered. A period in which, in my view, the world is putting itself to the test, not so much as a great way of life destined to grow in time, but as a net that links points together and creates its own muddle. [...] In our era, space presents itself to us in the form of patterns of ordering. (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 22–23)

For Foucault, our era is that of space. And the questions that confront us in this era are those of arrangement and ordering. How are things and humans ordered, arranged, stored, circulated, and classified in space? In other words, what are the politics of spatial ordering? (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 23) As space presents itself to us in the form of patterns of ordering, a study of space calls for an examination of the politics of these patterns. Therefore, attention will here be directed to the specific arrangements that are underlying the production of space.

The data for this study consist of pictures taken, and observations made, in four malls before, during, and after Ramadan. A number of four malls were chosen as to provide the study with ample data and to enable an examination of recurring patterns in processes of spatial production in the shopping mall. I focus on Plaza Ambarrukmo, Mal Malioboro, Galeria Mall, and Saphir Square, as they represent the four biggest and trendiest malls in Yogyakarta. These malls target adherents of the burgeoning middle class. A focus on these malls then helps to unpack how space and modern (Islamic) middle class lifestyles are mutually constitutive. Pictures were taken both inside and outside the malls. Outside, I photographed the mall and its immediate surroundings. Inside, I took pictures of the general space of the mall, individual shops, advertisements, and decorations.

I analyze this set of data by combining social semiotics (Hodge and Kress 1988) with a conceptual framework that is based on Lefebvre’s spatial triad (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]) and Foucault’s heterotopia (Foucault 1986 [1967]). Foucault’s (1980) assertion that “a whole history remains to be written of spaces, which would at the same time be the history of powers” (149), opens up the study of the production of space in conjunction with questions of power (Foucault 1980: 149, cited in Gürt 2002: 240). Social semiotics studies how power relations shape semiotic systems. It is therefore, in combination with the conceptual framework, useful for analyzing how space, and the representations that are shaping space, are socially produced.

Since my study is concerned with a temporary transformation, which includes a beginning and ending situation, the politics of spatial ordering should not only be studied in the isolated moment of Ramadan. Instead, it is important to consider the spatial ordering of the mall as it exists not only during, but also before and after the
moment of Ramadan. The mall itself already exists as a space with specific connotations and politics. Therefore, I will first unpack the spatial politics of the mall itself, where after I direct attention to the production of space during Ramadan.

**The mall as a heterotopia**

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) develops the notion that space is socially produced. With this assertion he means that every mode of social organization produces an environment, a space, which is a result of the social relations that it possesses. By producing a space that is a consequence of its own nature, a society not only materializes social relations, but also reproduces itself.

For Lefebvre, space is within society produced through the dialectical triad of *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *representational space*. These are three elements that simultaneously compose space and that are produced in relation to each other. ‘Spatial practice’ is associated with (the production of) physical space. ‘Representations of space’ refer to the hegemonic representations that are associated with the space that is produced. ‘Representational spaces’ are spaces that are directly lived and transformed by inhabiting them (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 33). With this theory of spatial production, Lefebvre aimed to understand the space of modernity (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 24). He believed that Marxist theory neglected the material aspect of production. Both space and time are constructs of specific forms of modernity (Unwin 2000: 15).

Drawing on Lefebvre’s theory and analyzing space as both a product of the social organization of a society and a construct of a specific form of modernity not only provides insight in the politics of these formations in Indonesia. It also helps to examine how modernities are shaping spatial production, and how in turn spatial practices are shaping modernities.

Looking at the production of space in the four malls through Lefebvre’s triad, and starting with the construction of the physical spaces (‘spatial practices’) of Plaza Ambarrukmo, Saphir Square, Galeria Mall, and Mal Malioboro (figures 1, 2, 3, 4), we see that the malls are large multi-floored buildings. Plaza Ambarrukmo is the largest mall of Central Java. It contains seven floors, of which two accommodate wide parking areas that hold up to 1400 hundred cars and 1500 motorcycles. The other three malls are smaller; Saphir Square and Mal Malioboro have six floors while Galeria Mall has five.
Further observing the physical spaces of the malls, we observe that the interior space of the malls is neat, spacious, light-colored, well lit, shiny, and air-conditioned. In the heart of all four malls is an exhibition space that can be used for fairs and (live) performances. Plaza Ambarrukmo contains three of these spaces; the largest (796m²) is located in its center, the others (384m² and 251m²) are located on the second floor and lower ground.

Evidently, shops occupy the largest part of the malls’ space. But there are also other amenities to be found such as food courts, cafés, beauty centers, and a variety of entertainment facilities, including a cinema (Plaza Ambarrukmo), a gaming area (Mal Malioboro), a bowling center (Saphir Square), and an ice skating rink (Saphir Square). Ambarrukmo Plaza also hosts a small mosque. This mosque is however not located in the main space of the mall. Instead, one has to go to the back of the parking lot, where a small staircase gives entrance to the mosque. Mal Malioboro has a prayer room, but like in Plaza Ambarrukmo it is hidden in one of its corners, and only a small door sign attests to its presence. Intriguingly, the architectural construction of Galeria Mall resembles a mosque, but no physical Islamic space is
present inside – notwithstanding individual shops that sell ‘Islamic’ products. These ‘spatial practices’ – the ways in which physical space is constructed – are conductive to the production of different lived moments, different ‘representational spaces’. First, spatial practices produce the mall as a place for shopping and consuming. The wide range of shops offers consumers all they want to have and provides them with a fantasy about who they could be. Second, the entertainment areas make the mall a cultural site. Third, the restaurants, food courts, and cafés also construct the mall as a culinary and social place. Fourth, the mall’s pedestrian-oriented design with benches and sidewalk terraces produces it as a place to relax, hang out, stroll, see and be seen.

It is through these different representational spaces that the mall is produced as a convenient space of economic, social, and cultural activity. In its physical construction, the mall is not explicitly a space for religious lived moments, for religious activity. Islam is present in Ambarrukmo Plaza and Mal Malioboro, but is (for those not knowing it is there) hidden, at least construction-wise. In the case of Galeria Mall, Islam is visually present in the mall’s architectural design, but a distinct space for religious activity inside is absent. Here, the representational spaces seem perfectly in line with the hegemonic representations of the mall: with the ‘representations of space’ in which the mall is a “multipurpose leisure time destination” (Kern 2008: 107).

What can then be observed here is that (1) spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space are all in sync, and that (2) in this case Lefebvre’s triad as the only analytical tool does not help to unpack politics of spatial ordering. Spatial practices are conductive to various representational spaces that in this case perfectly comply with the dominant hegemonic representations of space. In this way, processes of spatial production seem coherent and frictionless. But more important and more problematic, looking through Lefebvre’s triad presents us with an image of the space of the mall as a seemingly unambiguous space; as a space that does not display (internal) politics or contradictions.

It might be opposed here that this is because the above description has focused on what Lefebvre would have considered a center of (capitalist) power – the mall. It is not focused on a (marginal) space that, following Lefebvre, can render visible (capitalism’s) spatial politics, contradictions, and relations of power. However, a binary opposition between center and margin is problematic. Both spaces in themselves carry rules and generate their own relations of power (Hetherington 1997: 34).

Although specific relationships between order, control, and freedom always exist
within every space, the triad as an analytical tool does not directly uncover these here. It does for example not show how the mall, as a center of capitalism, also (re)produces the contradictions of capitalism spatially. What should be noted here is that attention here has focused on ‘the mall as a whole’, and not on the spatial practices of individual shops or individual consumers. These might of course be highly political.

While the triad itself does not directly unpack the politics of spatial ordering, it does offer a systematic description of the various spatial appropriations in the mall. It also shows how space is not an inert stage where social relations are performed, but instead is an active participant in the production of these relations. The triad therefore forms a good starting point for the analysis, but it needs to be complemented with another concept to enable a reading of the politics of spatial ordering in the mall.

The above description of the mall is particularly troubled by the inward-gaze through which it operates. My description ignores that spaces are produced in relation to each other. This is problematic, as Foucault (1986 [1967]) comments:

> We do not live in sort of a vacuum, within which individuals and things can be located […] but in a set of relationships that define positions, which cannot be equated, or in any way superimposed. (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 23)

For Foucault, spatial arrangements are defined through their relationships with other spaces. Foucault’s (1986 [1967]) concept of heterotopia acknowledges this spatial relationality. Simultaneously, heterotopia shows significant overlaps with representational space, while transcending problematic features of this concept. As I propose below, extending Lefebvre’s triad with the concept of heterotopia enables a study of the politics of spatial ordering.

In ‘Of other spaces’, Foucault (1986 [1967]) coined heterotopia alongside that of utopia to indicate two types of spaces. Utopias represent a “society brought to perfection” (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 24), but are fundamentally unreal. In contrast, heterotopias are:

real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements […] that can be found in society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable. (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 24)
Heterotopias are thus real places that, within society, constitute places of otherness. This otherness is established through relations of difference with other real places in their environment, which they simultaneously represent, contest, and reverse.

Heterotopias show significant commonalities with Lefebvre’s representational spaces. They overlap in three ways. First, representational spaces and heterotopias are entangled. Heterotopias do not exist in isolation, but come into being through their relations with other sites. Representational spaces produce spaces as distinct places with a specific character. Heterotopias come into being through being distinctive. Representational spaces are thus vital to the production of heterotopias.

Second, both representational spaces and heterotopias displace the metrics of everyday life. Both are ‘other spaces’: they have their origin in everyday life (cf. De Certeau 1984 [1980]), but differ from it. Representational spaces can resist and contest the hegemonic uses of space, and in this process constitute an ‘other’ space (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 33). Foucault’s contention that “the heterotopia has the power of juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations” (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 26), shows that heterotopias are characterized by the coexistence of sites that amongst each other can be incompatible. Heterotopias are thus not only ‘other’ in comparison to other sites. They are also ‘other’ in that they stem from an endless series of contradictions within themselves (Cenzatti 2008: 81).

Third, in being ‘other spaces’ representational spaces and heterotopias can both accommodate to acts of resistance and transgression. For Lefebvre, representational spaces are spaces that must make visible the concealed power relations that have produced space. It is because they differ from everyday uses of space, that representational spaces hold the potential of resistance against “the alienating features of everyday existence” (Hetherington 1997: 23). Heterotopias too have an unsettling function: they can overturn established societal arrangements. They reflect the inverse or reverse side of society (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 3). The difference between heterotopias and representational spaces is that the latter are problematically mapped onto binaries between ‘center and margin’, ‘order and resistance’, and ‘control and freedom’. Lefebvre sees representational spaces exclusively as marginal sites of resistance and freedom. But spaces of resistance also have their own rules and codes, and generate their own relations of power (Hetherington 1997: 34). Lefebvre however does not allow for these politics, for relationships between order, control, and freedom, to exist within representational spaces.
The notion of heterotopia transcends the oppositions between ‘center and margin’ and between ‘order and resistance’, because it does not depart from the notion of order (and resistance), but from that of ordering (Ibidem). The fragmented internal ordering of heterotopias allows for politics and contradictions to exist within the same space. The otherness of heterotopia is not exclusively linked to the margins. Unlike representational spaces, heterotopias can be both center and margin (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 6). Heterotopias are “associated with both transgressive outsidersness, as well as with sites of social control and the desire for a perfect order.” (Hetherington 1997: 46)

The concepts of representational space and heterotopia thus display similarities and differences, which allow them to jointly constitute a conceptual framework that is apt to scrutinize both the mechanics of spatial production as well as its politics. In this framework, Lefebvre’s triad systematically maps the processes that are underpinning the production of space. The concept of heterotopia, based on the notion that the production of space is relational, fragmented, and contradictory allows for a study of (the politics of) the production of space.

Analyzing the fieldwork data through this framework shows the mall as an ambiguous space. During Ramadan, the mall is produced as a heterotopian other space that is at once phantasmagorical, highly controlled, and socially homogeneous. As I suggest in the following, the space of the mall is constructed as this space through two concomitant heterotopian practices: relating and regulating.

When first studying how the malls relate to their immediate surroundings, relations of difference that produce the mall as an other space appear on several levels. Malioboro Mal is located in the heart of the city. Galeria Mall, Ambarrukmo Plaza, and Saphir Square are located more off-center. Since the surroundings of Malioboro Mal and the other three malls represent two different urban environments, their relational practices are analyzed separately.

Malioboro Mal is located on Jalan Malioboro. Because of its central location, the Malioboro area has since the beginning of urban planning been designated as the center of economic activity. When in the eighteenth century the sultan appointed a Chinese captain to organize the area, Malioboro developed as ‘Chinatown’. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Dutch colonial influence became visible as colonial-style buildings arose along the street. Since the 1990s, the Malioboro zone has been the most popular shopping area in Yogyakarta (Nitisudarmo 2010).

With its direct surroundings, Malioboro Mal thus is in a relation of sameness: all are areas for economic activity. Relations of difference nevertheless exist and are constructed on two overlapping axes: on that of aesthetics, and on that of spatial
The first axis comes into being through architectural constructions. The shops on Malioboro represent utter architectural eclecticism (cf. Nitisudarmo 2010). There are buildings that still have Chinese rooftops (Figure 5), colonial style buildings (Figure 6), Javanese buildings, modern buildings (Figure 7), and buildings that combine some or all these features in their construction. The different architectural styles create a chaotic architectural street view (Figure 8). Further adding to this visual disorder, the shop owners engage in the spatial practice of attaching large, multicolored signs, and billboards made out of different materials to the shops’ facades (Figure 9). As Sisca (23), employee of the small batik shop ‘Margaria Batik’ explains: “there are many batik sellers here, it is hard to survive … I guess we all try our best to stand out [menyolok mata] to attract visitors, not only through our goods, but also through the look of our shop” (conversation with author, July 2010).
Amidst these spatial practices, Malioboro Mal aesthetically presents an other space. Opened in 1998, the mall is the largest shopping complex in the street. In relation to the rest of space, the box-ish, peach-colored mall with its neat-hung advertisements looks unruffled. In contrast to the shops outside, the mall’s shops are ordered straight along the promenades. And while the outdoor area presents a dynamic, eclectic multi-colored sight, the mall’s interior (Figure 10) is neutrally white. It combines silver staircases with an industrial steel roof-frame, which gives the mall a modern look. The only ‘less-arranged’ (and noisier) part is the gaming space on the top floor. Nevertheless, aesthetically, the mall and its surrounding spaces can thus be seen as presenting each other’s opposite.
A second relation of difference between the mall and its surroundings is constructed through the different mental and bodily experiences that these spaces produce. These different experiences of space are produced through the physical spatial arrangements, the uses of space, and the above-discussed aesthetics. Looking at the way in which space is physically arranged in the Malioboro zone, we see that street vendors are positioned opposite the shops, and that between them there is a narrow pathway. Since Malioboro is a popular shopping area, the pathway is often (over-)crowded with people (Figure 11).

Figure 11: The crowded pathway between the shops and street vendors

As local students Eka (24) and Sara (23) comment: “it can make shopping uncomfortable, we have, in the heat, very little personal space” (conversation with author, August 2010). And as salesman Sie (26) adds:

The dense space also makes it a popular area for pickpockets, street musicians, beggars, and street children hoping for the generosity of shoppers. [...] For me it is an exciting place, there is so much going on... but it is also noisy and busy [ramai] with people and traffic ... motorbikes, becaks, cars, horses. (Conversation with author, August 2010)

The spatial arrangements of the Malioboro zone, together with its architectural aesthetic eclecticism and the uses of space thus produce a lively, energetic atmosphere. Since these aspects stimulate the human senses rather intensely, they can also be conductive to an intense, and sometimes hectic, spatial experience for visitors – especially when compared to the spatial experience in the mall. As student Dika (20) explains: “compared to outside [Malioboro], the mall is more relaxed,
clean, cool… entering feels like going up for fresh air.” (conversation with author, August 2010) In the middle of lively Malioboro, the mall thus represents an enclosed tranquil environment. Dika’s boyfriend Michael (22) adds: “we go to the mall when we want to take a break from going around [jalan-jalan]… and then these lounge seats [JCO, cafeteria] are such a relaxed spot.” (conversation with author, August 2010) With its air-conditioned, clean, well-ordered, and bright interior, the mall thus is a place where one can momentarily escape the outside rush, heat, pollution, and traffic.

Hence, Malioboro Mal and its surroundings are produced as ‘other spaces’ through relations of difference. The space of the mall exists as a neat and ordered space in relation to the Malioboro shopping district, while the Malioboro district itself exists as (more) energetic, ruffled, and chaotic in relation to the mall.

The other three malls that I would like to look at in this chapter are located along the highway that connects Yogyakarta and Solo. This area is less packed with buildings in comparison with Malioboro. The malls border residential areas: on the south-side Demangan, and on the north-side Demangan Baru. Plaza Ambarrukmo and Saphir Square are furthermore directly bordering the residential area near the banks of the Gajah Wong River. On the southwest, the malls border Kotabaru, the former Dutch officials residential area. This neighborhood is more spacious than other city areas, as the Dutch designed it as a garden city. Apart from Kotabaru, the malls’ immediate surroundings are (visually) not significantly ‘other’ in relation to the rest of city space. These areas represent regular city space: they are engaged in relations of sameness with most of Yogyakarta’s city space.

In relation to these surrounding spaces, Plaza Ambarrukmo, Saphir Square, and Galeria Mall, but also the earlier discussed Mal Malioboro, exist as heterotopian ‘other spaces’. Relations of difference that construct them as such are twofold. The malls (1) constitute ‘unreal real places’ and (2) engage in different temporalities. Both relations of difference are conductive to each other and are elaborated below.

In relation to their surroundings, the malls come into being as unreal real places. Foremost, the malls are real places; they are physical places of economic, social, and cultural activity. At the same time, the malls are also unreal as they represent a placeless place, a ‘non-place’ (Augé 1995) and a seemingly ‘perfect’ world that exists nowhere outside its walls.

When looking at the malls, we see that spatial practices construct the four malls as enclosed worlds-on-themselves that resemble small towns. In their centers, the four malls feature large spaces (Figures 12-13), which function as town squares. These are spaces for fairs, markets, presentations, and performances. Benches,
plants, and palm trees are placed alongside the square and promenades, creating a
town feeling (Figure 13). This ‘town’ is however placeless. Entering Plaza
Ambarrukmo is like stepping into another world. It is a world that could have been
almost anywhere else, and that could best be termed ‘global’. It seems to exist
nowhere in particular (Muzzio and Muzzio-Rentas 2008: 148). One enters a large,
light, polished, luxurious, seemingly ‘culturally neutral’ space. There are shops,
cafes, and restaurants of international chains. Signs and markers of Indonesian-ness
and resemblances with the outside world are largely absent. Through their physical
construction and design, the malls keep the other world, the real world, at a
distance, especially in the shopping areas. Windows to see the outside world are
absent in spaces other than the cafeterias or restaurants. Saphir Square here seems
to be an exception since it does offer a view on the highway. Windows are also
absent in Mal Malioboro. But Mal Malioboro is not that placeless compared with the
other three malls. Located in a tourist area, this mall sells, for instance, many
souvenirs, such as batik products. Often Indonesian pop songs are played, whereas
in the other malls only ambient music is played.

Figures 12-13: The ‘center’ of Plaza Ambarrukmo

While the real world is kept at a distance, the placeless world inside is constructed
as a seemingly ‘perfect’ world. Inside, there is no poverty, only luxury. In strong
contrast to its surroundings, it is a world that is modern, luxurious, clean, and
comfortable – a space for the wealthy middle class. Comparing this world, for
instance that of Plaza Ambarrukmo, with its direct surroundings, makes clear that this perfect world is a fantasy, and that it (in Yogyakarta) exists nowhere outside its walls. Hence, while the malls are real spaces, they also exhibit characteristics of a utopia, the perfect society that has no real place.

By being these ‘unreal real places’, the malls are engaging in different temporalities than their surroundings. As I pointed out earlier, the Malioboro area architecturally accumulates in one place different periods of time: Chinatown, the colonial period, and the present. This is also true for the surroundings of the other three malls. While colonial-style Kotabaru represents the past, the spaces of the bordering residential areas represent the present. In relation to these representations of the past and present, the malls represent something different. The malls are not engaged in the present world that unfolds outside their walls. Instead, through their signified newness and ‘modern-ness’ they represent a glossy, luxurious, modern urban future that is yet to come into existence outside the malls’ walls. At the same time, we can also see the malls as a representing a specific kind present. In this present, Indonesia is engaged in processes of modernization, which increasingly causes places to display a modern look. As representations of a glossy future or a modernizing present, the malls in Yogyakarta (still) engage in different temporalities than the spaces that surround them. This further contributes to the malls’ ‘otherness’.

While the space of the mall is ordered through practices of relating, it is also ordered through a practice of regulating. Plaza Ambarrukmo, Mal Malioboro, Saphir Square, and Galeria Mall appear to be open and public spaces – one can walk in and out. As much as they appear to be open public spaces, the malls are private spaces, i.e. they are privately managed. Because they are private property, the liberties and rights as they apply to public space, do not apply to the space of the mall (Kern 2008: 107–108). It is for instance prohibited to give a political speech, hand out leaflets, or take photos in the mall.

Security firms police all four malls. Taking the security procedure of Plaza Ambarrukmo as an example, when arriving by car, one first has to pass the security check at the south gate. There, the trunk of the car will first be checked. Then one has to pass by security officers who are standing at the door and who ask you to open your bag, or who will scan your bag electronically – all for possible terrorist threats. These officers are installed at the entrances of all four malls. Inside, other guards are constantly patrolling the malls’ promenades to ensure that everybody sticks to the mall’s rules, and that ‘undesirables’ are escorted out of the mall. Plaza Ambarrukmo has a twenty-four hour security system with cameras installed in every
strategic place. In this way, it is ensured that the mall’s ‘perfect’ world is maintained, and that it is a world of perfect order and control. This however also results in the construction of a space that is – principally along the lines of class – socially homogeneous. Those deemed worthy through their behavior and appearance, are protected from having to encounter those portions of society that may be disturbing; the rowdy, the poor, homeless people, panhandlers, beggars, or street kids. Another way in which the mall excludes particularly working class sections of society is through its high prices. Since renting space in the mall is often more expensive than renting space outside, prices in the mall are higher. The space of the mall is both rented out to shops that sell expensive luxury goods (e.g. Golf House), but also to shops that are somewhat less expensive (e.g. Matahari), but that are usually still more costly than street shops.

Hence, through different forms of government (security checks, rules, cameras, patrolling, prices), the shopping mall is constructed as a safe place that is free from real-world nuisances. This demonstrates the working of a heterotopian logic. Foucault writes that: “heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time.” (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 27) The four malls are simultaneously open and closed spaces. As this heterotopian space, the mall embodies, preserves, and exposes a central contradiction of capitalism, one that is divisionary and exclusionary. The mall’s ‘perfect’ world is maintained, but also contested through a mechanism of regulation. An ambiguous panopticon-like space (cf. Foucault 1975) is produced that is phantasmagorical, but that can only be so through being highly controlled and exclusionary.

While the tactics of regulation are not unique to Indonesia’s shopping malls (similar procedures can be encountered in malls in for instance India or the Philippines), there is also something decidedly Indonesian about it. In ‘Back to the city: a note on urban architecture in the New Indonesia’, Abidin Kusno (2006) demonstrates how urban architecture in Jakarta is a site for both political inclusion and exclusion. Kusno observes that in Jakarta there is a tension between architecture that symbolically includes lower class sections of society (e.g. Adi Purnomo’s housing projects), and architecture that excludes the urban poor (e.g. Jakarta’s ‘superblocks’). In Jakarta, the latter architectural structure is dominant.

A parallel can be drawn between Jakarta’s superblocks, the multifunctional high-rise residential buildings that Kusno analyzes, and the shopping malls that I study. Like the mall, the superblock is a world-on-itself, although more ‘complete’, as it contains apartments, offices, gyms, pools, gardens, and shopping facilities. As
Kusno notes, Jakarta’s superblocks are structures that reproduce a form of citizenship based on class through the promotion of behavior that fits the norm of these new urban environments (Kusno 2006: 76) – something that was also observed in Yogyakarta’s malls. According to Kusno, this reveals the growing uncertainty about the status of the middle class following financial crisis of 1997 and the fall of Suharto’s regime in 1998, which had previously sustained the middle class (91). Imagining the middle class as fearful that their identity is out crowded by lower classes (Ibidem), the superblock and mall harden class distinctions. Through their design strategies, their specific regulatory practices, and their disengagement with the world around them, the mall and the superblock reflect the growing conflicts between circuits of poverty and luxury consumption in Indonesian cities today (Ibidem).

**Ramadan as an Islamic heterotopic moment**

The space that is transformed during Ramadan thus already exists as a phantasmagorical, regimented heterotopian space. The mall is produced as a placeless and ‘culturally neutral’ space, and not as an explicitly (visibly) Islamic space. What then happens when, during Ramadan, ‘Islam’ is explicitly and excessively produced in this heterotopian space? Which aspects of this heterotopia are transformed? And how to interpret these changes?

Another important question that a study of the spatial production during Ramadan helps to answer concerns the role of ‘time’ in the production of space. In works that have focused on the production of space, two related themes are recognized: (1) the separation of space and time, and (2) the linear and permanent production of space.

In *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]) and in other key works that have focused on the social production of space (e.g. Harvey 1990, Soja 1996) there is a tendency to treat ‘space’ and ‘time’ as separate concepts. Since these studies are concerned with the production of space, the notion of space is privileged over the notion of time. In giving dominance to space, the significance and the role of time in the social production of space remains underexplored (Unwin 2000: 21).

Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]), Harvey (1990) and Soja (1996) do incorporate an understanding of time in their works. Lefebvre for instance writes that: “if space is produced, if there is a production process, then we are dealing with history” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 95, cited in Unwin 2000: 21). He also stresses the presence of
a temporal dimension in space:

Let everyone look at the space around them. What do they see? Do they see time? They live time, after all: they are in time. Yet all anyone sees is movements. In nature, time is apprehended within space—in the very heart of space. (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 95, his emphasis)

According to Lefebvre, time is thus in the heart of space. Why then is time neglected? Lefebvre struggles with this issue in various (sometimes contradictory) ways, commenting that “time is distinguishable, but not separable from space” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 175) and that “time is known and actualized in space, becoming a social reality by virtue of a spatial practice. Similarly, space is only known in and through time” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 219, cited in Unwin 2000: 21).

Tim Unwin (2000) describes how in works influenced by Lefebvre a separation between space and time persists. David Harvey (1990: 22) for example studied the experience of space in the history of (post)modernism. While his focus is on space, Harvey argues that we have both spatial and temporal worlds. Harvey uses theories of time-space compression to bring these separated worlds together. Edward Soja (1996) updated Lefebvre’s spatial triad to include his concept of ‘thirstspace’ (cf. Soja 1996). Drawing on Foucault’s (1986 [1967]) study of space, Soja is aware of the historicity of spatiality (cf. Unwin 2000: 21). Nevertheless, time, as a concrete element remains absent in his theorization of space.

Hence, in these studies, space and time are separated. Yet, simultaneously there is sense that the two are connected. How to conceptualize the intimate relation between space and time in the process of the production of space? And what would be a systematic method to study the two together?

What can also be noticed from studies that have focused on the production of space (e.g. Axenov et al. 2006; Rotenberg 2001) is a conceptualization of this production as a linear process that produces a long term and/or permanent transformation. The transformation is often tied to processes of modernization and political changes. Consequently, the production of space has been theorized as a gradual process that produces a more or less stable end product (space). Thinking about space as a product of continuously changing social relations, opens up the possibility of non-linear and non-permanent production processes. But how then to conceptualize such processes?

The transformation of the space of the mall during Ramadan in Indonesia provides an excellent case to reflect on these questions. Scholars have addressed
the performative and cyclical nature of the mall on various occasions, for instance during Christmas in the United States (e.g. McMahon 2005), and during Ramadan in Turkey (Sandikci and Omeraki 2007) and Dubai (Fattah 2005). The ways in which time concretely plays a role in the production of space however remain unexplored. In the following, I propose that time is imperative to the production and transformation of space in a threefold way: as ritual, as historicality, and as schedule. Through their entanglement with the elements of Lefebvre’s triad, these three modes of time are ordering the space of the mall in a specific way during Ramadan. They are conductive to a particular lived moment, a particular representational space in the four malls. This lived moment can be viewed as an ‘Islamic heterotopic moment’, which temporarily produces (more) heterogeneity in the space of the mall.

The first way in which time plays a role in the transformation and production of space is as ritual. Ramadan is an annual religious ritual with a predetermined duration and series of traditions. It takes place every ninth month of the Islamic calendar and lasts thirty days. The term ‘time as ritual’ refers to that bounded period of time that entails the advent, presence, and passing of the ritual of Ramadan.

Time as ritual is the driving force in the transformation of the space of the mall. It activates and stimulates the spatial practices that start and end the temporary transformation of space during Ramadan. With the arrival of Ramadan, the
management of the mall and the individual shop owners modify the space of the mall by garnishing it with colorful decorations that signify Islam and Ramadan. In the center of all four malls, large ornaments are hung (Figures 14–15). Stickers, billboards, and advertisements embellish shop windows and decorate the shops’ interiors, displaying special Ramadan discounts.

Figure 16-17: Malioboro Mal before (16 July 2010) and during Ramadan (28 August 2010)

Through these different spatial practices, the neutral and tranquil interior of the mall (Figure 16) is transformed. It is turned into a bright-colored visual spectacle full of Islamic symbols (Figure 17). This transformation is temporary as, with the passing of Ramadan, the mall returns to its calm and neutral-looking appearance. Time as ritual, through activating specific spatial practices, thus perforates normality and produces in the same space, another (layer of) space. This other (layer of) space contrasts with the ‘normal space’ of the mall. Hence, within the very same space, temporary otherness is produced.

Time as ritual therefore forms the first building block in the construction of a heterotopic moment. It creates a momentary breach in normal, linear spatial production, and links the production of space to pieces of time. Foucault describes how heterotopian production is linked to time:
Heterotopias are linked [...] to bits and pieces of time. [...] The heterotopia enters fully into function when men find themselves in a sort of total breach of their traditional time. [...] There are [...] heterotopias linked to time in its more futile, transitory, and precarious aspects, a time viewed as celebration. [...] They are absolutely time-bound. To this class belong the fairs, those marvelous empty zones outside the city limits, that fill up twice a year with booths, showcases, miscellaneous objects, wrestlers, snake-women, optimistic fortune-tellers etc. (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 26)

By linking time and spatial production, time as ritual temporarily constructs a heterotopia. As pointed out earlier, the space of the mall already exists as a heterotopia. Time as ritual produces temporary otherness in(to) the existing heterotopian space. This otherness is ‘Islamic’. It is signified Islam that is produced in the normally neutral, secular (looking) space of the mall, and that marks a change in spatial production. Therefore, we can speak of an Islamic heterotopic moment. It is through studying the politics of spatial ordering in this Islamic heterotopic moment that the spatial transformation during Ramadan can be understood.

When examining the Islamic heterotopic moment, we see that the spatial practices that were activated by time as ritual are not apolitical or ahistorical. The decorations, ornaments, posters, and shop windows are not empty free-floating signifiers. Instead, they are politicized by time and context. They are induced with meaning by ‘time as historicality’. Time as historicality refers to a specific moment in the history of Indonesia: a moment in which the country is simultaneously Islamizing and modernizing.

Time as historicality produces seemingly incongruous bricolages in Ramadan’s spatial practices; in the decorations, ornaments, posters, and shop windows. Through this practice, the heterotopic moment juxtaposes in a single real place different spaces and locations that seem incompatible with each other (cf. Foucault 1986 [1967]: 26). It hereby produces (more) heterogeneity in the space of the mall. In the Islamic heterotopic moment, these bricolages are twofold. They exist between Islam, Ramadan, capitalism, and consumption on the one hand, and between Indonesia and ‘Arabia’ on the other. In the following, I elaborate both through analyzing the aesthetics of spatial practices.

When visiting the malls during Ramadan, the omnipresent and seamless bricolage of Islam, Ramadan, capitalism, and consumption is striking. This bricolage is constructed through different but related practices. First, spatial practices delve into a formulaic sign system to create a recognizable ‘Islamic atmosphere’ that must sell products. The color green – the color of Islam – is predominantly used in the malls’
decorations and advertisements. Other examples of the mobilization of a formulaic sign system are the repeated use of the symbols of the mosque, deserts with camels, and ketupat (rice dumplings) (Figures 15; 17; 20, 24-25). Arabic-looking fonts are often used for Indonesian texts on decorations, but Arabic vocabulary is absent. By drawing on this formulaic sign system, a visual culture comes into being that communicates ‘Islamic festivity’ to the malls’ visitors.

Moreover, symbols that specifically connote the excess of Idul Fitri (end of Ramadan), are mobilized throughout the whole period of Ramadan. Figures 14 and 15 show details of the central ornaments in Mal Malioboro. Figure 14 reads “Selamat Idul Fitri 1431”, the greeting that is used to wish each other a good celebration at Idul Fitri. Figure 15 displays ketupat, rice dumplings wrapped in palm leaves. Ketupat is in Indonesia traditionally consumed at the end of Ramadan. Both are thus symbols of the celebration and the excess at the end of Ramadan. In other spaces, such as markets, restaurants, entertainment centers, or on billboards along the city’s roads, these symbols were only visible near the end of Ramadan. By contrast, in the mall they were on central display from the start. Together with the festive atmosphere that is produced, this spatial practice creates in the enclosed world of the mall an early and prolonged moment of celebration – and of consumption.

In addition, in the endeavor of selling individual products, traditions that are characteristic for the ritual of Ramadan are mobilized. Figures 18-20 show how
Ramadan’s traditions are used to sell products. The advertisements here are for books, but similar ads were also found for other products such as clothing, motorcycles, cars, CDs, and golf packages. Figure 18 shows an advertisement for Islamic books in Galeria Mall. The text reads “the great Ramadan 1431, clean your heart with buying (our) discount books.” One of the central aims of Ramadan, namely the purifying and ‘the cleaning of the heart’, is here turned into a selling slogan, into a reason to consume. It is suggested that through buying (and reading) these books one will become a better Muslim. Figures 19 and 20 demonstrate similar strategies. Both are advertisements for the Gramedia bookstore and show Islamic books. The poster of Figure 18 reads “add insight during Ramadan”, while Figure 20 reads “purity from the heart, have a good fasting period.”

The bricolages of Islam, Ramadan, capitalism, and consumption that are marking the heterotopic moment are not exceptional. Instead, they reflect a historical moment in which Islam is increasingly commodified. As explained in the previous chapter, entrepreneurs are currently imbuing cultural products with religious as well as economic value to take advantage of the country’s huge Muslim market (Widodo 2008). This has led to a wide range of cultural expressions, e.g. films, TV series (cf. Subijanto 2011), music, and literature, in which signified Islam functions as a selling mechanism. As I pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, not everybody has positively greeted this development. Conservative and Islamist groups have blamed ‘Islamic’ popular cultural products as being ‘Islam Lite’, ‘15-minute Islam’, or even as being ‘the Devil in disguise’ (Barendregt 2009: 27). But religious commodification should not be equaled with commercialization. Commodification always entails the ideologization of commodities. It is as much about selling ideology as it is about selling products (Lukens-Bull 2008, cited in Hasan 2009: 242).

To understand how the spatial practices are ideological, we need to look at the second bricolage that marks the heterotopic moment.

In the heterotopic moment, the malls are not ‘placeless’ anymore. While markers of cultural identity used to be largely absent in the heterotopian space of the mall before Ramadan, now spatial practices are merging markers of Arabic-ness and Indonesian-ness. As discussed, in the malls, Arabic-looking fonts and stereotypical desert-camel imaginaries connoting Islam are present. Plaza Ambarrukmo, Mal Malioboro and Galeria Mall take this Arabic imagination a step further. In these malls, a ‘one thousand and one Arabian nights’ theme is created. During Ramadan, Ambarrukmo Plaza is for instance exotically dressed in ‘Enchanting Sahara’-style. Moroccan lamps are hung in shop windows (Figure 21), the white pillars of Plaza Ambarrukmo are draped in dark blue fabric with gold-colored embellishments.
(Figure 22), and gold-mosaic gates are placed in front of stores (Figure 23). Centro, a clothing and lifestyle store had also adopted this theme for its advertisements. In these ads (Figures 24-25) non-Indonesian looking models are placed in ‘the Sahara’. In Mal Malioboro and Galeria Mall similar themes are created, most markedly by the Matahari store.

Figures 21-23: (From left to right) Shop window for Matahari in Mal Malioboro, pillar of Plaza Ambarrukmo, and entrance of Centro (inside Plaza Ambarrukmo)

Figures 24-25: Advertisements for Centro in Plaza Ambarrukmo
While the Arabic theme seems prevalent, markers of Indonesian-ness are also present. The Indonesian *ketupat* symbol is dominant on ornaments and in Plaza Ambarrukmo a *bedug lebaran* is placed at the entrance (Figure 26). The latter is a traditional Indonesian drum that is played to indicate the break of the fast. Moreover, the products that are advertised through the use of an Arabic imaginary are not distinctively Arabic. Clothing here presents a good example. Often *batik* clothing and accessories are advertised in settings and posters that use Arabic signs (Figure 27). Also, the clothing advertised in Figures 21 and 27, reflects global and/or Indonesian Muslim fashion, rather than Arabic or Middle Eastern Muslim fashion, which predominantly uses white fabric.

Through the bricolage of Arabic- and Indonesian-ness, the world of the mall is in the heterotopic moment thus not placeless anymore. While still defying one clear location, it does exist somewhere, namely in a space between Indonesia and the Arabic world. While it is clear that symbols of Arabic- and Indonesian-ness are used to sell products, they also move through socio-political imaginations.

In *Popular Culture in Indonesia*, Ariel Heryanto (2008) explains how post-Suharto Indonesia is reminiscent of Indonesia in the 1950s. Now, as well as in the 1950s, Indonesia tried to rebuild a modern nation-state after the demise of a long-running repressive government. In both periods, the project of imagining and constructing a
modern nation proved to be difficult (Heryanto 2008: 9). One of the reasons for this difficulty is the seeming incompatibility of the major ideological forces that constitute Indonesia. Heryanto describes four of these identities: ‘Javanism’ (referring to what is known as ‘Javanese culture’ or Javanist syncretism), ‘Islam’, ‘developmentalism’, and ‘Marxism’ – the latter dramatically weakened after the events of 1965 (cf. Heryanto 2008). Although these forces have blended in heterogeneous composites, their relationships have also been characterized by tension, rather than mutual desire (Heryanto 2008: 10).

Heryanto shows how popular culture is a site where tensions between these different ideological forces can be observed. In this light, we might read the bricolage of Arabic- and Indonesian-ness as juxtaposing two strands of Islam that are prevailing in Indonesia today. On the one hand there is a reformist (Sunni) Islam, which strives towards a purification of faith–often taking Arabian/Middle-Eastern styles of Islam as example – and on the other a syncretic Islam, that is seen as a distinctively Indonesian (Javanese) strand of Islam. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, at a moment in which Indonesia is caught in processes of modernization, both versions publicly articulate different modern Islamic futures. However, in the malls’ spatial practices, Arabic and Indonesian imaginations seamlessly and creatively go together. When seeing the mall as a representation of a modern future, then the heterotopic moment imagines this modern Islamic world as existing between Indonesia and an Arabic world, while negotiating a modernity in which capitalism and Islam go together.

Time as historicality thus produces seemingly ambiguous bricolages in the space of the mall during Ramadan. These bricolages do not only temporarily produce more heterogeneity in the space of the mall, but both bricolages also reflect a present historical moment and negotiate a potential (modern) future moment. In the context of contemporary Indonesia, the heterotopic moment composed by time as ritual and by time as historicality then functions in two ways. On the one hand, the heterotopic moment works as a magnifying glass over the current public visibility of Islam. On the other hand, it provides a snapshot of an Islamic modernity. As a magnifying glass, the heterotopic moment shows us how Islam today carves out a public space of its own. It displays the sign system through which Islam is spatialized. As a snapshot, the heterotopic moment provides a ‘momentary image’, a fragment of social reality, in which we are able to fleetingly see ‘the meaning of the whole’ (Frisby 1985: 6). As such, the heterotopic moment provides us with a glimpse of a particular modern Islamic future. This is a future in which Islam, modernity, and capitalism seamlessly go together; that exists between two versions
of Islam; and that particularly includes a middle class. The heterotopic moment as magnifying glass and snapshot then simultaneously exist in reality as well as in potentiality, in the present as well as in the future.

The spatial practices stimulated by time as ritual and time as historicality seem to construct this heterotopic moment as a moment that confirms the transformation of Ramadan from a pious practice to a consumerist spectacle. A third mode of time, ‘time as schedule’, partly contests the above-observations. Time as schedule refers to the daily rhythm and routine of Ramadan, which strongly affects the ways in which the space of the mall is produced at different moments during the day. While the mall is open during fasting hours (sunrise to sunset), it is extremely quiet during the day. It is only after breaking of the fast that the space suddenly becomes crowded. When asking mall visitors about their (shopping) routines during Ramadan, many of them confirmed that they liked to visit the mall after the breaking of the fast. College students Rahmanita (22) and Bambang (22) explain that they come to the mall to collectively break the fast. Rahmanita:

I’m from Medan, and he [Bambang] is from Surabaya. Since our families are far away, we gather here with our peers to do the iftar together. We eat, walk around, shop […] Many young people hang out here after iftar, I enjoy seeing that… we are all doing this together and have successfully finished another day. (Conversation with author, August 2010)

Suhada (36), English teacher, explains her visit to the mall as a treat after a tough day of fasting:

I have three young kids and work full time, just before iftar, my husband and I come to the mall to stroll and to treat the kids with food. Fasting is tough and this is the moment we can relax a bit. We meet friends, and let the kids play together in the [gaming] hall when they have been good all day. (Conversation with author, August 2010)

Hence, while in the mall the ritual of Ramadan has spatially shifted into a consumerist spectacle, people still adhere to the ritual’s premises. Moreover, the mall is not only a place for shopping, but also becomes embedded in Ramadan’s rituals: it functions as a place for a collective experience of iftar.

Reflecting on their shopping behavior, visitors of the mall showed an awareness of negative discourses about Ramadan and consumption. High school student Tina’s (17) comment is here illustrative:
I do carefully watch my spending, many shops in the mall offer discounts and it is easy to lose yourself, they keep warning us … I don’t need it, I think a lot of us don’t even shop for ourselves like many say, we buy gifts for our family, friends to give away at Idul Fitri. I mean that is also an important part of Ramadan. (Conversation with author, August 2010)

A different perspective is offered by hotel receptionist Dian (22): “I shop more during Ramadan, but I don’t care to shop for big expensive things… I mean that’s not the idea of Ramadan for me. I buy books to better study Islam. I go out and find headscarves for me and my friends to wear during Eid.” (conversation with author, August 2011)

While more thorough ethnographic research is needed on pious consumption during Ramadan – that for instance also explores the variables of gender, class, age, education, and ethnicity – these comments do indicate that consumption entails a cautious negotiation. These girls’ carefully position their shopping practices within their interpretation of Ramadan. This confirms what Carla Jones (2010) has observed in her study of religious commodification, namely that pious consumption is a complex process of negotiation (cf. Jones 2010).

Two final observations can now be made about the production of space during Ramadan. First, while time as ritual and time as historicality seem to be the two constructive forces in the coming into being of the Islamic heterotopic moment, it is time as schedule that finally produces it as a lived moment, as a representational space. Second, this representational space is less straightforward than it may appear. We cannot claim that Ramadan has simply shifted from a pious practice to a spectacle of consumption in which Muslims passively consume. Time as ritual, historicality, and schedule produce this representational space as a complex heterotopic moment. To further grasp the complexities of this moment more research is needed, for instance a more elaborate examination of pious consumption during Ramadan and shoppers’ individual motivations; an analysis of the (gendered) spatial politics in the mall; a close reading of the (religiously themed) booths and sales points that mock or copy (products from) the formal stores in the mall; a comparison with processes of spatial production during other festivals in Indonesia such as Chinese New Year or Independence Day; or an analysis of the spatiality of Ramadan in different Indonesian cities, which can help to tease out how local specificities play a role in the construction of the Islamic heterotopic moment.
Towards an integral study of space and time

In this chapter, I have analyzed the politics of spatial ordering in four shopping malls to explore the ways in which space is produced during Ramadan. I first proposed that the space of the mall is constructed as a phantasmagorical, highly controlled, and exclusionary heterotopian space. I then suggested that during Ramadan, time is imperative to the production and transformation of space in a threefold way: as ritual, historicality, and schedule. Through their entanglement with Lefebvre’s (1991 [1974]) triad, these three modes of time produce an Islamic heterotopic moment in the already heterotopian space of the mall.

Time is thus imperative to the production of space. However, in scholarly accounts of spatial production, time and space are often seen as separate notions. Based on my analysis and its theoretical framework, a new conceptual model for the study of space and time can be envisioned. The model that I would like to propose systematically integrates ‘time’ in the production of space. Figure 28 visualizes the ways in which the space of the mall is produced during Ramadan.

* Time as ritual, historicality and schedule

Figure 28: Conceptual model for an integral study of space and time

In this model, space is produced through Lefebvre’s triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. These three elements, that are each occupying a corner of the triangle, jointly construct and compose space. As was shown in the analysis, Lefebvre’s triad does not exist in a void. Spatial practices,
representations of space, and representational spaces exist in a specific context, and in this context they intersect with time. In the case of Ramadan, time was for example important in a threefold way (as ritual, historicality, schedule). These three modes of time intersected with Lefebvre’s triadic elements and through this interaction a heterotopic moment was constructed. The model can, however, also be used to study other spaces, at other moments. In studies of other spaces, time can be imagined to take on many other forms. Time as historicality, seems to be of continuing presence, since all spatial production always takes place in a particular historical moment.

My case study of Ramadan showed that the intersection with time produces each of Lefebvre’s triadic elements in a particular way. Consequently, time thus influences the ways in which space is produced. Therefore, time is, in the model, located at the heart (of the production) of space.

During Ramadan, time as ritual, historicality, and schedule produced in the space of the mall a representational space – a heterotopic moment – that is full of contradictions and politics. At the beginning of this chapter I however argued that the concept of representational space does not allow for politics and contradictions to exist within the same space. I also argued that Lefebvre’s ‘representational space’ and Foucault’s heterotopia (1986 [1967]) share significant similarities. At the same time, heterotopia overcomes some of the problematic features of representational space. The concept of heterotopia, based on the notion that the production of space is relational and internally fragmented, does allow for a study of the politics in the moment of representational space. Therefore, in the model, heterotopia extends Lefebvre’s triad at the position and the moment of, representational space, with which it is entangled, but which it also transcends.

Through positioning time at the heart of space, the model ensures that Lefebvre’s three elements cannot be considered without, or apart from, specific ‘contextual modes of time’. And since Lefebvre’s elements are always at the basis of the production of space, time is in this way systematically integrated into the study of space. The model thus enables an integral study of space and time. In this integral study of space and time, the concept of heterotopia helps to unpack the politics that are underpinning the production of spaces.

My study of spatial politics in the mall (during Ramadan) shows that spaces produce, imagine, and negotiate Islamic modernities. I have suggested that the malls as heterotopias are representations of a modern future. During Ramadan, a heterotopic moment imagines this future modern (Islamic) world as existing between Indonesia and an Arabic world, while it negotiates a modernity in which capitalism
and Islam go together. The analysis here thus shows how space is not an inert stage where modernity is performed, but instead is an active participant in producing and fantasizing Islamic modernities.

The analysis also points at the notable role that visual culture plays in spatial negotiations of modernity. As we have seen, visual culture is central to the transformation that the space of the mall undergoes during Ramadan. During the holy month, Islam, piety, capitalism, and consumption all come together in the space of the mall. Visual culture knits these seemingly contradictory elements together and suggests that modernity, Islam, and capitalism are compatible. At the same time, visual culture facilitates the public visibility of Islam. Through a visual sign system, Islam carves out a public space of its own. And as we have seen, the signs that are mobilized in this endeavor are not free floating signifiers, but are ideologically charged.

These observations raise a number of questions. While the Islamic-themed visual culture in the mall is only temporarily on display – once a year during Ramadan – the Indonesian cultural industries are today producing Islamic-themed popular and visual culture (e.g. films, books, magazines, music, television programs) on a mass scale. Do these products also move through social imaginations? How are modernities imagined, negotiated, and contested in these products? In what kinds of debates do these products engage? What audiences are targeted? What politics are practiced? In the following three chapters, I will explore these questions by zooming in on three forms of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture: music, self-help books, and film.