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Publication date

2014

Document Version

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Schmidt, L. K. (2014). *Visions of the future: imagining Islamic modernities in Indonesian Islamic-themed post-Suharto popular and visual culture*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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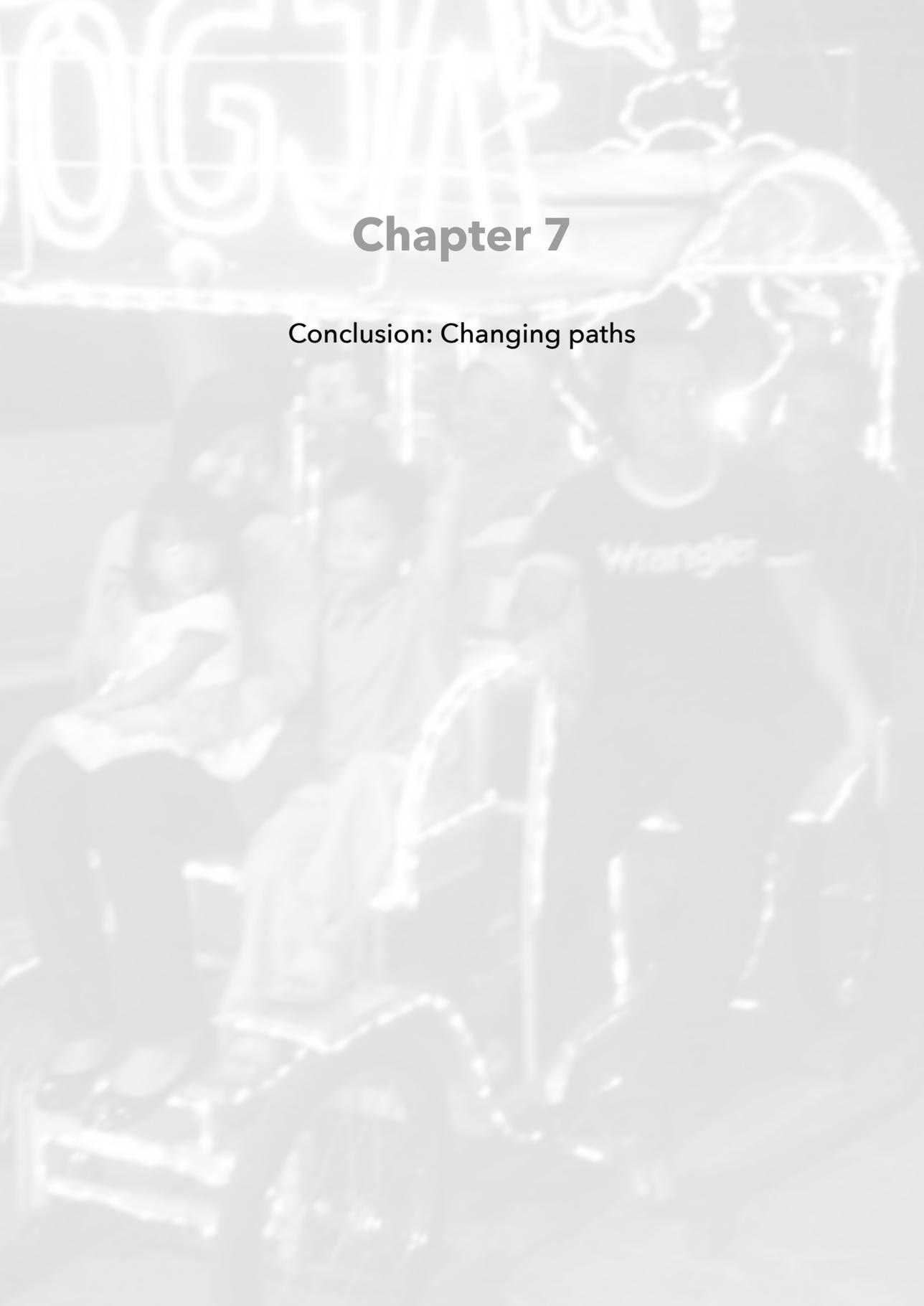
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Chapter 7

Conclusion: Changing paths



Chapter 7 Conclusion: Changing paths

“Why does our path keep changing? I want to see where we are going...”

- Mira (Mira Zayra) in *Para Pencari Tuhan* ('God Seekers')

“To be able to go forward, you must sometimes stop and just think for a while”

- Asrul (Asrul Dahlan) in *Para Pencari Tuhan* ('God Seekers')

Making sense of modernities

In one of the last episodes of *Para Pencari Tuhan* that I watched with Eka and her family, Asrul (Asrul Dahlan) has just returned from pilgrimage. He feels incredibly happy. In the last year, life has been finally been treating him well. Due to the success that Asrul and his wife Mira (Mira Zayra) had with their soupstall, they have gone from rags to riches. But their fate is flipped when their soupstall goes up in flames. They lose all of their income and are right back at where they started. While tears are running down her cheeks, Mira asks Asrul “Why does this happen to us? Where do we go from here? Why does our path keep changing? I want to see where we are going...” Asrul is silent for a while. He cries. He sighs. Then he smiles. “To be able to go forward, you must sometimes stop and just think for a while”, he answers Mira.

Mira's longing to see and to know 'where we are going and why' captures much of the Islamic-themed popular and visual cultural products that I have been studying in this dissertation. Whether decorations in shopping malls, rock music, self-help books, films, or a dummy of Barack Obama in a *becak*, they all seem to wonder where Indonesia is going. They form sites for creative experiments with Islamic modernities, but they also constitute sites that attempt to discipline people into desired modern citizens. They all imagine Islamic modernities, and fantasize Islamic futures at a moment that Indonesia is simultaneously Islamizing and modernizing. Like Asrul, I would like to pause here for a while, look back, and revisit the question that I asked in the introduction: “How are Islamic modernities imagined, negotiated, and contested in Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture?” I would also like to add a question that I think is equally important: why are these modernities imagined?

If we look at the different case studies, we see that they together 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. *Gigi's Tuhan* for instance constructed a discourse in which Islam and modernity are reconcilable. Underscoring Andrew Weintraub's (2011) observation that Islam is not monolithic or unchanging (Weintraub 2011: 2), *Gigi's* song pointed out that Islam is a flexible religion that can adapt itself to a modern world. As we have seen, *Tuhan* suggested that although under forces of modernization the assumed boundaries between 'traditional' and 'modern' places are increasingly breaking down, Allah can be found everywhere. Modernity should therefore not be feared. The shopping mall during Ramadan offers a very tangible example of how a glossy, luxurious, modern urban future and Islam go together. The ways in which consumption and Islam go hand in hand stress the malleability of Islam. At the same time, the case study attests to Muslims' critical and creative appropriations of the space of the mall. The mall and the modern experience it offers become embedded in Ramadan's rituals. For middle class Muslims, the mall for instance comes to function as a convenient place for a collective experience of the *iftar*.

The self-help books and the films on their turn also construct an optimistic discourse about modernity. In this discourse, modernity offers Muslims a multitude of choices, possibilities, and opportunities. This discourse responds in a positive way to the 'second wave of Islamism'. As I explained elsewhere (p: 11), the second wave of Islamism is a religious renewal in which Indonesian Muslims blend into modern urban spaces, engage in public debates, become mobile, educated, and make use of global communication networks and technologies (Göle 2002: 174). Middle class Muslims here become professionals and consumers, who are embracing, and operating in, the modern market (Barendregt 2006: 172). The self-help book *Rasullulah's Business School* responds to these developments. The book stresses that today everyone with the right skills and the right mentality can participate in modernity and can become a successful and rich entrepreneur. For the book, the desire for wealth and Islamic piety not only go together, but also strengthen each other. This resonates with the aspirational piety and consumerist longings that Ariel Heryanto (1999: 173) has observed in today's Muslim middle classes. I have shown that *Virgin* too comments on the ways in which people blend into modern urban spaces. The film shows that Jakarta's modernity offers Indonesian youngsters the opportunity to participate in global youth culture: youngsters can dress in the latest fashion and can make use of new media gadgets, such as smartphones and laptops. The film fetishizes consumerism and a modern Jakartan lifestyle: the film constructs

this lifestyle as hip, cool and fun – although this lifestyle later also forms the ground for the girls' punishment. *Twitografi Asma Nadia* offers girls a different lifestyle. This self-help book promotes a fashionable Islamic lifestyle. *Twitografi Asma Nadia* sees opportunities for Muslims girls to learn and to travel, and stimulates a pious, ambitious, and cosmopolitan mindset. In a similar vein, the Islamic blockbuster megahit *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* emphasizes the benefits of modern urban higher education. Coining the pious and educated Fahri as the ideal modern Muslim man, the film suggests that it is through modern education that Muslims can obtain solid knowledge of Islam, which is valuable in a globalizing world.

The case studies thus articulate a positive attitude toward modernity. Taken together, they offer Muslims an array of modern lifestyle possibilities. They construct images of Muslims as, among others: happy and conscious consumers, model citizens ready to fight the ills of the nation, devoted followers of Islam, pious students, fashionable girls, dedicated wives, husbands, mothers and fathers, successful career women, and ambitious entrepreneurs.

But 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. *Gigi's Perdamaian* for instance frames modernization as leading to a dystopian future of Indonesia. In the construction of this dystopia, *Perdamaian* exaggerates very specific elements of modernization. It extrapolates those elements that are in Indonesia linked to a capitalist Western-style of modernity and frames them as leading to the dystopian future of Indonesia. In *Perdamaian*, the figure of dystopia becomes a metaphor for the direction modernity can take in Indonesia, and the direction *Perdamaian* warns for is a capitalist and consumerist road to a modern future. This warning for the future is mapped onto the condition of the present. The song expresses confusion and anger about the current rise of consumerism, and the 'wrong' uses of capital. *Virgin* also displayed a highly critical attitude towards modernity. In the film, the lead characters Biyan, Keti, and Stella become the representations of the choices, dangers, and anxieties of modernity. While the film fetishizes a currently hip modern Jakartan lifestyle, it also suggested that through adopting this modern lifestyle, the lead characters are polluting their bodies, and by extension society. By setting the story in Jakarta, *Virgin* links this modern lifestyle to 'Western-style modernity', as in public debates, Jakarta is often criticized as being the overtly 'Westernized' metropolis, which is not a particularly healthy environment for Indonesian youth to grow up. And whereas in *Virgin* the female body becomes a site through which a highly critical attitude toward Western-style modernity is expressed, in Arahmaiani's artwork *11 June 2002* the female Muslim body

constitutes the central locus for a critique of America. We have seen that in *11 June 2002*, America simultaneously functions as the ultimate example of a glossy modernity and as a capitalist, consumerist, security-paranoid dystopia that is violent and antithetical to Muslims – something that was also underlined by Obama's *becak* adventure.

The case studies are thus utterly ambivalent about modernity. On the one hand, modernity offers a bewildering array of choices, opportunities, and lifestyles. On the other hand, modernity signals social decline and a deprivation of morals and values. We can understand the ambivalent discourse and the strong ambiguity toward modernity when we turn to the work of Partha Chatterjee (1997) and place the case studies' negotiations of modernity in both a historical perspective and in the context of our current global condition.

In *On Modernity* (1997), Chatterjee suggests that we should always consider modernity in relation to the condition of postcoloniality. According to Chatterjee, the advent of modernity in postcolonial contexts often perceived with a sense of skepticism (Chatterjee 1997: 14). Chatterjee seeks to understand why this is the case. In the context of India, he asks:

Why is it the case that [...] the foremost proponents of our modernity have been so vocal about the signs of social decline rather than of progress? [...] There must be something in the very process of becoming modern that continues to lead us, even in our acceptance of modernity to a certain skepticism about its values and consequences. (14)

Chatterjee finds an explanation for this skepticism in the ways in which the history of modernity has in postcolonial contexts been intertwined with the history of colonialism. He writes:

'we' [referring here to India, but can also be read as concerning other former colonies] have never been quite able to believe that there exists a universal domain of free discourse unfettered by differences of race or nationality. Somehow, from the very beginning we had a shrewd guess that given the close complicity between modern knowledges and modern regimes of power, we would forever remain consumers of [...] modernity; never would we be taken seriously as producers. (14)

Hence, the same historical process that has shown the former colonized the value of modernity, somehow also made them 'victims' (for the lack of a better word) of modernity (20). Because the history of modernity has been intertwined with the history of colonialism, postcolonial contexts have often been cast, and cast

themselves, as consumers of modernity rather than as producers. This sentiment intensifies in the world arena of modernity. Chatterjee explains:

We must remember that in the world arena of modernity, we are outcasts [...]. Modernity for us is like a supermarket of foreign goods, displayed on the shelves: pay up and take away what you like. No one there believes that we could be producers of modernity. The bitter truth about our present is our subjection, our inability to be subjects in our own right. (20)

The coming into being of 'multiple modernities' is thus not free from relations of power, and the imagining of the futures is not free from experiences of the past. According to Chatterjee, there is in postcolonial contexts often skepticism over the present, because it is marked by subjection, by the inability to be subjects in one's own right. As he comments:

All that needs to be noticed is that whereas Kant, speaking at the founding moment of Western modernity, looks at the present as the site of one's escape from the past, for us it is precisely the present from which we feel we must escape. This makes the very modality of our coping with modernity radically different from the historically evolved modes of Western modernity. (14)

Whereas the modern present for Kant signified an escape from tutelage and from dependence (10), modernity is for the former colonized linked to feelings of dependence that intensify or resurface in the global arena of modernity. According to Chatterjee, the attitude toward modernity of the former colonized, therefore, cannot but deeply be ambiguous (20). It is also for this reason that it is attractive for postcolonial contexts to escape from the present and idealize the past, which was at least their own creation (20). Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture too shows a desire to escape from the present, however not to the past, but to the future, which can again be Indonesia's creation.

According to Chatterjee, for formerly colonized societies to become subjects in their own right again, they need to "reject the modernities established by others" (20) and be the creators of their 'own' modernity. He asserts:

[Our] ambiguity does not stem from any uncertainty about whether to be for or against modernity. Rather, the uncertainty is because we know that to fashion the forms of our modernity, we need to have the courage at times to reject the modernities established by others. In the age of [Indian] nationalism, there were many such efforts, which

reflected both courage and inventiveness. Not all were, of course, equally successful. Today, in the age of globalization, perhaps the time has come once more to mobilize that courage. Maybe we need to think about ‘those days’ and ‘these days’ of our modernity. (20)

The products of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture that I studied here reject the ‘modernities established by others’ by displaying a highly critical attitude towards what they imagine as Western-style modernities. And while rejecting imagined Western-style modernities, the case studies offer Islamic modernities as alternatives. Islamic popular and visual culture thus echoes Chatterjee’s call to reject the modernities established by others to become a creator of one’s own modernities again. But how ‘Indonesian’ are the modernities that Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture imagines?

When I look at the case studies, I observe a tension between an imagined ‘Indonesian Islamic style of modernity’ and an imagined ‘Middle-Eastern/Arabian style of Islamic modernity’. We might read these styles as representing two strands of Islam that are prevailing in Indonesia today and that are in a dialogical relationship with each other. 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 (cf. Eliraz 2004). On the other hand there is a syncretic Islam, which is seen as a distinctively Indonesian (Javanese) strand of Islam. It is impossible to make a hard distinction between local and global Islam – since what is seen as local, is already globalized and part and parcel of the global. It is equally problematic to make a hard distinction between traditionalist and modernist Islam, or to see them as opposed. However, as I argued elsewhere (p: 13), at a moment in which Indonesia is caught in processes of modernization, both strands of Islam publicly articulate different modern Islamic futures. Islamic popular culture and visual culture may, via the politics of representation, evoke different conceptions of Islamic modernities to support either liberal or conservative agendas, or a combination of both.

In this context, *Gigi’s Nationalism* draws on a national imagination to argue for a kind of modernity that is based in the nation’s own resources. On their turn, the self-help books promoted modern Islamic citizen-subjects that are fit to participate in Indonesian Islamic modernities. The books encouraged the construction of subjects that are aware of, and that intervene in, the unequal spread of wealth (although *Wonderful Family* forms an exception here), while actively negotiating the cultural, ethnic, and religious differences that exist in the archipelago. By contrast, *Gigi’s*

Perdamaian gestures to Mecca. In addition, the song's rejection of a capitalist or consumerist style of modernity is mapped onto past and present conflicts in the global Islamic world.

There were also case studies that displayed both styles at the same time. These case studies provide a middle ground between an Indonesian and an Arabian imagination, and between a conservative and a liberal orientation of Islam. We have for instance seen this in the shopping mall. In the malls' spatial practices during Ramadan, Arabic, and Indonesian imaginations seamlessly and creatively go together. I proposed that the heterotopic moment of Ramadan (cf. chapter 2) imagines a modern Islamic world that exists between Indonesia and an Arabic world, while negotiating a modernity in which capitalism and Islam go together.

In a similar vein, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* creatively ties both styles together. It does so through the model of masculinity that it promotes. I suggested that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* constructs the masculinity of its lead character Fahri as an ideal-type of Muslim masculinity that aspires to be modern, educated, pious, easy-going, modest, compassionate, respectful towards women, and that is adapted to global sensibilities and lifestyles. This gentle type of masculinity is coined against conservative and aggressive masculinities that are in the film embodied by Egyptians. But Fahri is not a 'laissez-faire Muslim'. The film grounds his masculinity in a thorough knowledge of Islam. It is through Fahri's piety and his solid education in Islamic theology that he is able to make the 'right' decisions in the film. Through promoting this type of Muslim masculinity, the film offers an Islamic alternative to secular modernities and its accompanying models of citizenship and subjecthood (see also Hoesterey and Clarke 2012). At the same time, Fahri's masculinity blurs the assumed boundaries between modernist and traditionalist, or between orthodox and liberal strains of Islam. It offers Muslims a model of modern citizenship in which Islamic piety and a global young lifestyle go hand in hand. In Heryanto's (2010) words, it offers Muslims "an alternative between the persona of the young militant Muslim with technological weapons and that of the old-fashioned, provincial and orthodox Muslim." (Heryanto 2010)

As I also argued in the chapter on film (chapter 5), this type of 'in between' or 'middle ground modernity' has particular relevance for an Indonesian project of modernization. On the one hand, it eases internal tensions, i.e. tensions between forms of Islam that imagine a different future for the modern Muslim nation. By promoting piety and avoiding orthodoxy, this kind of 'in between' or 'middle ground modernity' may in the end be the best defense against reactionary radicalism. As Heryanto notes "many Muslims and non-Muslims alike continue to suffer from

economic marginalization. Their frustration helped the recruitment for militia groups for various actions, some using Islam jihad as a rallying cry.” (Heryanto 2010) As the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, these radical groups are gaining ground in Indonesia and are often very vocal. They do however not appeal to large segments of the population (cf. Hefner 2009; Van Bruinessen 2002). By promoting piety and avoiding orthodoxy, a ‘middle ground modernity’ finds a gentle way to adapt to stricter religious sensibilities. At the same time, this type of ‘in between’ or ‘middle ground modernity’ that is adapted to global sensibilities also eases external tensions, i.e. tensions between a Muslim nation and a global world that might be antithetical to Islam. Easing these external tensions is of crucial importance if Indonesia is to interact successfully and productively on a global stage.

It might then be the ‘middle ground’ modernity of the Gucci-clad Muslim youngsters (cf. Vatikiotis 2006); the modernity of the *anak-anak gaul* (hip youngsters), who spend their Friday nights in the upscale shopping malls, not in the trendy wine or cigar bars, but in the new coffee houses, that offers Indonesia the most promising modern Islamic future. This is a future that is not exclusively Indonesian, nor exclusively global. It is an Islamic modernity that is ‘at large’ (cf. Appadurai 1996), that is mapped onto a global Islamic world, but that is accustomed to local peculiarities.

Modernities and the means of mediation

To study how Islamic modernities are imagined in Indonesian popular and visual culture, I have looked at a wide range of different cultural products and forms: shopping malls, rock music, self-help books, films, and contemporary art. In the previous section, I elaborated how these different case studies all imagine Islamic modernities. But how do their different forms matter in the ways they imagine these 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?

These are questions of genre and medium specificity. The concept of ‘medium specificity’ is a contested one in media theory. Identified with modernism, the concept has been traced back to the late eighteenth century in a 1766 essay by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, ‘Laocoön’, in which Gotthold argued that to be successful, a work of art must observe their distinctive, inherent properties (Dunn 2009: 1159). Today medium specificity theories generally concern themselves with

the idea that different media have 'essential' and unique characteristics that form the basis of how they can and should be used (Sutton & Maras 2006: 98).

The problems with the medium specificity thesis are well documented and are at least twofold. This first problem finds its roots in the way we generally define a medium. As Mary Ann Doane (2007) writes: "We tend to think of a medium as a material or technical means of aesthetic expression (painting, sculpture, photography, film, etc.), which harbors both constraints and possibilities, the second arguably emerging as a consequence of the first." (Doane 2007: 130) In this definition, a medium is a medium "by virtue of both its positive qualities (the visibility, color, texture of paint, for instance) and its limitations, gaps, and incompleteness (the flatness of the canvas, the finite enclosure insured by the frame)." (Ibidem) Inherent to this definition is the idea that there is something that each medium does best, which in medium specificity research often leads to the tendency to offer "form recommendations rather than descriptions" (Maras and Sutton 2006: 99). The idea that there is something 'that each medium does best' also becomes problematic when considering it in the context of mixed or hybrid media, which combine the qualities of different media.

The second problem with the medium specificity thesis is its normativity. The discussion of the essence or specificity of a medium is very quickly liable to become normative (Maras and Sutton 2006: 100). Critics for instance establish the 'essence' of a particular medium from their own historical, cultural, and personal perspective, and then begin to use that definition in order to exclude all manifestations that run counter to it (Ibidem). As Maras and Sutton (2006) point out: "All too rapidly medium specificity arguments seem to become medium purity arguments. This is a dangerous tendency when seeking to describe media in their early stages of emergence, or when seeking to study a mixed or alchemical media form such as hypermedia." (Ibidem)

To circumvent these problems, Rosalind Krauss (1999; 2000) has offered alternative understandings of media and medium specificity. Krauss sees a medium as "a set of conventions derived from (but not identical with) the material conditions of a given technical support, conventions out of which to develop a form of expressiveness that can be both projective and mnemonic" (Krauss 1999: 296, cited in Doane 2007: 131). Medium specificity then describes the crucial recursiveness of that structure that is a medium: "For, in order to sustain artistic practice, a medium must be a supporting structure, generative of a set of conventions, some of which, in assuming the medium itself as their subject, will be wholly 'specific' to it, thus producing an experience of their own necessity" (Krauss 2000: 26, cited in Doane

2007: 131). Krauss here thus proposes a more restricted specificity that takes an individual work and its activation of particular conventions as its point of departure, and not the medium itself (Doane 2007: 131). Following Krauss, I would like to look back and reflect on the specificity of the form of each of my case studies, and I would like to do so without making larger claims about what ‘essentially’ defines the media that support these cultural expressions.

If we start with the two non-mass mediated forms that I have studied – shopping malls and art – we see that their different forms stimulate different ways of engaging with the modern. We also see that their forms are shaping their different negotiations of modernities.

Shopping malls are real physical spaces, to which one physically has to go and immerse oneself for an experience of modernity. As I have suggested in chapter 2, the form – i.e. the architectural structure of the mall – plays a key role in the kinds of modernities it imagines. Because the space of the mall is closed off from real-world nuisances – through for instance the absence of windows and the policing of its borders – it is able to imagine and represent an arguably ‘perfectly’ modern world, which particularly involves the middle class. In addition, I have shown that through the relations of difference that the mall sets up with its surrounding (chaotic, hot, eclectic, busy) spaces, this kind of modernity becomes a sensuous and a bodily-experienced modernity.

In the debate about Islamic modernities, the artworks *11 June 2002* and *Membuat Obama dan Perdamaian yang dibuat-buat* articulate a critique of the United States. As we have seen, the works construct ambivalent discourses about the United States, in which America functions as both the ultimate example of a glossy modernity and as a capitalist, consumerist dystopia that is violent and antithetical to Muslims. In the artworks, the narrative through which this critique is expressed is partly contained in the aesthetics and the performance of the works, and partly in the context in which the works exist.

To fully put together the critique, one has to know the context. One for instance has to know about Arahmaiani’s travel story, about the rules in Islam for male-female interaction, about the ongoing military conflicts in Muslim countries, and about Obama’s spectacle of international peace-making. The works thus demand a certain degree of knowledge and participation from the audience. Hence, not only form matters, but the implied audience of the works matters too. Arahmaiani’s *11 June 2002* was exhibited at the Venice Biennale. And although the performance of *Membuat Obama dan Perdamaian yang dibuat-buat* took place on the streets of Yogyakarta (for everyone to see), the work was displayed at the Jogjak Biennale, the

National Gallery in Jakarta, and in various upscale shopping malls throughout the country. These spaces of exhibition imply an educated middle class and/or student audience, which are expected to have the contextual knowledge to put together the work's critique.

In my study of self-help books, I have suggested that *Wonderful Family*, *Rasullulah's Business School*, and *Twitografi Asma Nadia* mobilize governmental tactics to promote and construct modern Islamic citizen-subjects that are fit to participate in Indonesian Islamic modernities. What is significant is that the books very clearly and explicitly delineate these subjects as having certain desired features, e.g. they are hard working, responsible, ambitious, and cosmopolitan. This clear and explicit delineation stems from both the genre and the form of these books.

Since the books are self-help books and thus aim to help people, they must give clear instructions. They cannot be mysterious about what they want from readers. Therefore, desired behavior is often explicitly described. Because the books are largely non-fictional, readers may skip the parts that deal with problems that they do not have. Readers may also read the book in an entirely different order. Instead of developing the 'helpful' and desired subject position over the course of the book, *Wonderful Family*, *Rasullulah's Business School*, and *Twitografi Asma Nadia* therefore construct their desired subject position in each of the separate sections – which leads to a clear but repetitive promotion and delineation of modern citizen-subjects. And while the printed word on the page of these books may give readers something to look at, the books are neither visual nor auditory media – although *Wonderful Family* does contain a few images and forms an exception here. The books may create images in readers' minds, but without the visual element, readers are easily distracted and, relying on their reading alone, may find it hard to decipher, absorb and retain too much information (Dunn 2009: 1163). To compensate for this distraction greater repetition and redundancy must be built into the books advice (Ibidem). This repetition too results in the explicit and recurrent promotion of the 'right' modern behavior in *Wonderful Family*, *Rasullulah's Business School*, and *Twitografi Asma Nadia*.

In my study of *Gigi's* rock music, I have pointed at the affective dimensions of their use of sound. As Anne Dunn (2009) asserts, sound is often more immersive, in its effect and affect, than vision. We can use vision in distancing, critical ways; this is much harder to do with hearing – hearing "does not keep the world at a distance, but admits it." (Bull 2000: 118, cited in Dunn 2009: 1164) Music enters into to body and becomes a bodily experience. As Motti Regev (2007) points out: "music, in ways unlike any other form of art, moves the body. It does so either 'internally', by

vibrating inner organs and arousing emotions, or 'externally', by prompting actual movements of the head, hands, feet or the whole body." (Regev 2007: 335) In a similar vein, Pierre Bourdieu (1979 [1996]) asserts the specificities of music. He writes: "music is bound up with 'interiority' ('inner music') of the 'deepest' sort" (Bourdieu 1979 [1996]: 19).

The affective dimensions of *Gigi's* rock sound play an important role in the ways the band imagines modernities. As we have seen, in *Perdamaian* the anger and unruliness of *Gigi's* rock sound for instance accommodates to, and strengthens, the discourse that discourages the 'wrong' style of modernity. And as I have shown, in *Nationalism* the use of sound and voice articulates feelings of optimism, and calls out to an audience in wholehearted enthusiasm to get ready to serve Indonesia. In his study of musical nationalism, Regev (2007) notes that with "musical nationalism, membership in the nation is calibrated to specific genres and styles, and through them to specific forms of corporeality, of feeling 'intensely present'" (Regev 2007: 335). Because music enters into the body, it makes people feel 'intensely present' (Frith 1996: 144, paraphrased in Regev 2007: 335). In this way, *Gigi's* affective call to help establish an Indonesian modernity, positions the audience – through their bodies – as members of a national community that aspires the coming into being of a modern nation.

The music video, as a medium, further constructs the affective ways in which imaginations of modernities are here mediated to an audience. Characterized by a relatively short-duration (around three to four minutes), music videos need to tell 'their story' in a short amount of time. *Gigi's* music videos do so through the use of fast editing and information-rich visuals. These visual tactics – in combination with the band's unruly rock sound – stimulate the senses intensely, and thereby strengthen the affective ways in which *Gigi's* music communicates their anger and enthusiasm about particular forms of modernity to their audience.

As I have suggested, the films *Berbagi Suami*, *Virgin*, and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* show a public fascination with what it means to be modern and engage with the question whether or not Indonesians are on the 'right' path to the 'right' kind of modernity. In my analysis, I proposed that the three films negotiate modernity through their representations of masculinity and femininity. I have shown how these representations are constructed through different audiovisual and narrative techniques – many of which are specific, though not exclusive, to the medium film. I however do not want to repeat too much of the analysis here. But there is one aspect about the 'form' of film that is particularly important for the ways in which modernities are imagined and negotiated in *Berbagi Suami*, *Virgin*, and *Ayat-Ayat*

Cinta. The films constantly attempt to align us with their views on what constitutes ‘the right’ and ‘wrong’ kinds of modernities. The films attempt to do so via our emotional involvement with the characters. Through the use of audiovisual and narrative strategies, we are encouraged to identify with Biyan or Fahri, to relate their emotions, and to relate to their points of view (for instance on what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, on what constitutes Islam, or on the ways women or foreigners should be treated). In this way, we are as spectators positioned vis-à-vis different styles of modernities, and are invited to align with the styles that the films consider to be ‘right’. This is a particularly powerful way of mediating modernities, because there is – for instance compared to the art works – less room for ‘participation’, less room to create a completely different narrative, to not agree and align with the films ‘heroes’ and ‘heroines’.

Where do we go from here?

The question ‘where are we going?’ was central to the rock songs, films, self-help books, malls, and art works that I have studied in my dissertation. Up to this point, the ‘we’ in this sentence stood for Indonesia, the modern Muslim nation, and the global Muslim world. In the last section of my dissertation, I want to 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 would like to suggest four directions that research could take. I summarize these directions under the headings: audiences, bodies, spaces, and flows.

Audiences

Islamic popular culture not merely displays visions of global modern Islamic futures. Since it is targeted at the *generasi muda Islam*, Indonesia’s ‘next generation’ of urban middle class Muslim youngsters, it plays a key role in the aspired Islamization of Indonesia and the shaping of a modern Muslim nation. As I have pointed out in the introduction, popular culture is a field of contestation. Imaginations of Islamic modernities are always negotiated, never fully under control of the producer or wholly contained within the text. It is therefore important to study what the role of Islamic popular culture is in processes of constituting Muslim identities among the *generasi muda Islam*, including possibilities of resistance and selective appropriations. The case study of the shopping mall for instance showed people’s

conscious and creative appropriations of the space of the mall, which challenged the popular view that Ramadan signals a shift from a pious practice to a euphoric spectacle of conspicuous 'Islamic' consumption.

These observations raise a number of important questions for further research. These questions first concern people's motivation for consumption. Because why do so many Indonesians enjoy these products? Why do people read Islamic self-help books? Or see *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* over and over again? What generates pleasure, fun, or other emotions? Questions also concern people's negotiations of these products. How does the *generasi muda Islam* consume, appropriate, and negotiate the modernities that Islamic popular and visual culture presents to them? How do they engage with the romantic stories of Islamic-themed films? What do youngsters think about the new forms of religious 'pop' authority that can be found in today's media sphere? And considering that through the image bank of visual culture, young Muslims are provided with the opportunity to imagine their modern Muslim identities: what kinds of modern identities do they create and perform? And how is new media technology appropriated to construct a modern identity? How do people appropriate media technology and communication networks to feel part of the *Ummah* (the transnational Muslim community)?

One particular direction research might take here involves the immensely popular social media. Indonesia is currently one of the top five social-media markets in the world (Lake, *The Jakarta Globe*, 2014). It may seem quite a feat for Jakarta to be named the world's number one 'Twitter city', considering that it is the capital of a nation in which only a quarter of the Indonesians have Internet access at home (Ibidem). There are a number of reasons for the adoption of social media platforms among Indonesians. The country's youthful demographic has seen social media assume its position as a leading activity on the Internet. Another key contributor is the accessibility of mobile Internet devices, mostly smartphones, which have doubled in usage over the past years backed by increasingly affordable data plans (Ibidem). The popularity of social media among urban youth begs the question what the relations are between new media technologies and modernity. How are social media used to participate in modernity? How do people construct a modern identity through sharing, liking, and tweeting? How do Twitter-literate Indonesians engage in debates online? How do Islam and social media go together?

Intriguingly, *macet* (traffic jams) in Indonesia's fast developing cities have become a contributing factor in Indonesia's obsession with status updates and retweets. Hence, we should also turn the question around, and not only look at how media products stimulate negotiations with modernities, but also probe into the question

how spatial changes and development evoke media use. The most popular times for Indonesians to login into their virtual communities is just before and after the conventional nine-to-five work day begins – the hours many of us could think of other places where we would rather be (Lake, *The Jakarta Globe*, 2014). This makes one wonder: how are social media integrated into modern working lives? What ‘modern’ negotiations take place over social media use?

Bodies

Several of my case studies suggest that the gendered body is a central locus for negotiations of modernity. In the films, the self-help books, and contemporary art, the gendered body forms a contested terrain on which struggles over modernity take place. I have shown that the body here functions as a metaphor for society. Like the body, the notion of the society and the nation rely on a demarcation of what does not belong to it. In practice these lines are difficult to draw, but they are nevertheless postulated.

In my case studies, gendered bodies were mobilized in an Indonesian project of modernization. At the same time, we see that in Indonesia – like elsewhere – projects of self-enhancement and bodily transformations have become central to a consumer lifestyle. As Foucault noted, the body is molded by “a great many distinct regimes” (Foucault 1971: 153, cited in Hancock et al 2000: 3). It is an outcome of the play of power, and power “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.” (Foucault 1978: 39, cited in Hancock et al 2000: 3) Our bodies have become malleable and “we have become responsible for the design of our own bodies” (Giddens 1991: 102, cited in Hancock et al 2000: 3).

When considering the malleability of the body together with its significant role in processes of modernization, questions of self-stylization and the plasticity of the gendered Muslim body become urgent. My case studies have pointed out how regimes of power try to govern people via their bodies, but how do people govern themselves? How is the physical gendered body a locus and a focus for the affirmation and performance (Butler 1990) of modern Muslim identities? How are modernities (re)produced and contested through embodied acts and bodily practices? How do coolness and ‘modernness’ come together in young Muslim bodies? What body aesthetics can we distinguish? How do little tactics of personal style contest regimes of power? How do fashion and faith go together? How is the body a site of inscription of religious and social values? How are Islamic

consumption (cf. Jones 2007; 2010) and the gendered body connected? And how do the Islamic industries play into the self-enhancement wave?

Zooming in on the Indonesian Muslim fashion industry and its creative appropriations by fashionable young Muslims could provide a compelling way into these questions. The Indonesian Muslim fashion industry is currently booming. By 2020, Indonesia hopes to be the Paris of Muslim fashion. The country aims to become the global and creative leader in the Muslim fashion industry – which is worth nearly one hundred billion US dollar by some estimates (*New York Post*, 2013). The 2020 fashion plan is initiated and supported by the Indonesian government, which is actively championing and investing in young designers and the garment trade – an industry that employs more than three million people and annually contributes about fifteen billion US dollar to the national economy (Ibidem). As Mari Pangestu, the minister of tourism and creative economies comments: “We can be a trendsetter. We have the vision and mission that Indonesia can be the capital of Muslim fashion.” (Mari Pangestu, cited in *New York Post*, 2013)

Indonesian Muslim fashion is a far cry from the conservative black abayas worn in the Middle East and challenges stereotypes of Muslim fashion as conservative, uninventive, and uncool. As the 27-year old Indonesian fashion designer Nasution comments: “To make Muslim wear that makes people look cool has always been my mission” (Nasution cited in *New York Post*, 2013). The colors in Indonesian collections range from fresh and light pastels to demure earth tones and lime green turbans, which are combined with wild print jackets. There is also some shape revealed while keeping the body covered (Dita Alangkara, *Huffington Post*, 2013). This kind of fashion is not restricted to the catwalk. Many young Indonesian Muslim women wear bright and creative headscarves along with brand-name jeans, long-sleeved fitted shirts, and sneakers. How do these women negotiate their dressing practices? How are acts of self-stylization conducive to modern identities?

Looking into the Indonesian Muslim fashion industry and the ways in which Indonesian men and women appropriate fashion offers an opportunity to study the body at the intersections of consumption, gender, aesthetics, modernity, and Islam.

Spaces

In my study of shopping malls, I suggested 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. Spatial practices are shaping and interrogating modernities and, vice versa, modernities are shaping spatial production. The

analysis of the presence of Islam in the mall points out what Lily Kong (2010) has also observed, namely that: “religion [is] neither spatially nor temporally confined to ‘reservations’, practiced only in officially assigned spaces at allocated times.” (Kong 2010: 757) Instead there are many ways in which everyday spaces can be implicated in religious meaning-making, and there are many ways in which everyday spaces challenge religious life, beliefs, practices, and identities. (Ibidem)

In Indonesian cities today, there are many ‘unofficial religious spaces’, that like the mall accommodate and contest religious meaning-making and religious values. I am here for instance thinking of the streets near Yogyakarta’s universities where Muslim and non-Muslim students hang out until midnight, the trendy coffee bars where young Muslims huddle over their lattes, Muslim golf courts, Islamic markets, places of Islamic banking, and even homes, which are now subject to trendy ‘Islamic interior design’. How are in these unofficial everyday religious spaces, Islamic practices constructed, contested, and enhanced? And how do these informal and banal Islamic practices in turn shape the cities’ spaces? What does the ‘informal’ Islamic city look like? And how does the informal Islamic city intersect with the modernizing city?

Another way in which studies on space, modernity, and Islam could fruitfully intersect, is by looking at processes of urbanization in the archipelago. Urbanization and rural-urban migration in Indonesia have increased tremendously following processes of modernization and development (Resosudarmo and Suryadarma 2011). At the same time, the income gap between the rich and the poor is widening. This divide is becoming increasingly visible in the modern urban spaces of Indonesian cities (Priyambodo 2013; Fabi 2013). As Kusno (2006) notes, city spaces and city architecture are reflecting the growing conflicts between circuits of poverty and luxury consumption in Indonesian cities (Kusno 2006: 91). Today, Islam-based organizations like Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, among others, are attempting to interfere in these circuits of urban poverty. As Kong (2010: 765) asserts, here a field for religious geography opens up; to study how religion plays a role in the management of urbanization processes. What role does Islam play in urban areas where globalization, capitalist development, and reindustrialization have been accompanied by unemployment, poverty and exacerbated inequalities? What role can Islam – through Islam-based organizations – play in alleviating urban social problems, in enhancing urban social welfare, and in addressing urban social justice? (Kong 2010: 765)

Flows

Ayat-Ayat Cinta was not only a hit in Indonesia. Following its success on the national market, the film was also released in other parts of Southeast Asia, resulting in packed cinemas in both Singapore and Malaysia. Also, *Gigi* does not only perform in Indonesia, but also in Malaysia, while Indonesians in turn listen to Malaysian Muslim pop stars and bands.

Bart Barendregt (2006) has suggested that young Asian Muslims do not longer mind the political boundaries between Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore (Barendregt 2006: 170, editor's introduction). For Barendregt, the consumption of 'pop Islam' in these nations clearly bespeaks a cultural commonality – and can form the basis of a regional 'transculturalism'. (Ibidem) Islamic-themed popular and visual culture is flowing back and forth between Southeast Asian countries. Yet, as Ariel Heryanto (2010) asserts, writings on 'intra-Asia' popular cultural flows have mainly focused on East Asian popular culture, for instance on the Korean Wave or on J-Pop (cf. Iwabuchi 2004; Chua 2004; Chua and Iwabuchi 2008). Heryanto asserts: "Seriously missing in these analyses are two major alternative streams. The first is those works with strongly Islamic content, and the other is a range of pop cultural forms [...], which are heavily indebted to Bollywood." (Heryanto 2010)

The intra-Asian cultural flows of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture beg a range of questions that deserve our attention. What processes are underpinning the crisscrossing of these Islamic products? How do the Islamic cultural industries of Southeast Asian countries collaborate to produce 'pop Islam'? How do different regional audiences consume these products? What meanings and viewing pleasures are generated? Which elements of mediated Islam work well across different cultural contexts? And can we indeed speak of regional 'Islamic' transculturalism in Southeast Asia?

As Heryanto notes, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta's* popularity lies partly in its style, which struck a cord with urban youngsters. "Despite its richly and markedly Islamic elements, in many sections the film resembles features of Hollywood and Bollywood movies, as well as Indonesian television dramas." (Heryanto 2010) In a similar vein, *Gigi's* music videos mobilize global rock aesthetics together with an Arabian imagination. This raises questions about the aesthetic practices of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture. How to conceptualize these aesthetics? Can we think of global 'Islamic' aesthetics? Do the same aesthetic tactics recur in Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic popular and visual culture?

These questions that concern the production, circulation, consumption, and

aesthetic practices of Islamic-themed popular and visual culture become increasingly important as the 'Islamic' cultural flows between Southeast Asian nations continue to intensify.

Looking back and taking cues from my case studies, I have here suggested that questions of flows, audiences, bodies, and spaces are urgent and can inspire future research that is located at the intersections of modernities, Indonesia, and Islam. In one of the opening quotes of this dissertation, *Para Pencari Tuhan's* Haifa looks back at her life, and tells her husband Ustad Ferry that "there's no way all these events have passed us without giving us wisdom." Her husband looks at her and responds: "yes, it has been quite a journey, but now we can prepare for the road ahead". In my dissertation, I have shown how, like Haifa and Ustad Ferry, Indonesian Islamic-themed popular and visual culture evaluates current and past developments and prepares for the road ahead. The visions of the future that popular and visual culture offers while taking different roads are diverse, and the future itself will tell us which futures Indonesia will eventually find at the end of the road. But so far, and let me end with Ustad Ferry's words: "it has been quite a journey."