Space, Time and Discourse:
Indonesian Youth Socialising in Urban Places

Pam Nilan & Michelle Mansfield [*]

ABSTRAK

Setelah jatuhnya rezim otoriter, Indonesia mengalami perkembangan kelas sosial baru yang menggabungkan nilai-nilai Islam, religiusitas, modernitas, dan literasi teknologi yang tinggi. Fenomena kelas baru ini sudah dikenal di kalangan pemuda di kota-kota besar Indonesia. Penelitian ini akan mengeksplorasi reproduksi ruang urban dan waktu untuk mendefinisi ulang makna pemuda Indonesia berdasarkan nilai-nilai religius modern. Dari riset yang mengarah pada praktik-praktik spasial dan maknanya pada pemuda muslim Indonesia di Solo, khususnya di warung internet dan kafe, ditemukan fakta bahwa anak muda dewasa ini telah berpartisipasi politik secara implisit dengan mengembangkan interaksi antar pemuda. Bertentangan dengan paham Islam yang biasanya dapat ditemukan pada aliran politik Indonesia pada umumnya, pemuda cenderung tidak sejalan dengan ide kebijakan-kebijakan garis keras yang aturan moral yang ada sebagaimana yang dimiliki aliran politik tersebut. Pada akhirnya, dapat dikatakan bahwa pemuda di Solo telah 'memodernisasikan' diri mereka sendiri melalui cara-cara dengan memakai informasi yang terhubungan dengan lingkup global melalui teknologi komunikasi agar dapat memperkaya dan mendiversifikasikan norma-norma perilaku kolektif bersifat lokasi yang diambil dari sumber-sumber global di dalam ortopraksi religius.

Kata kunci: *ruang urban, praktik spasial, pemuda, dan komunikasi*

ABSTRACT

After the downfall of the authoritarian regime, Indonesia has witnessed the proliferation of a new social class which combines Islam, piety, modernity, and high technological literacy. These traits are particularly popular among youth in big cities throughout Indonesia. This research sets out to explore the reproduction of urban spaces and times among youth in order to redefine the meaning of Indonesian youth according to modern yet religious values. In addressing the spatial practices and their meanings of young Muslim Indonesians in Solo, particularly at internet cafés and shopping malls, this study finds that youth are engaging in a new form of implicit political engagement in which they develop mixed-sexed social interactions that are simultaneously both fun and morally legitimate. Against the current backdrop of Islam as an active political force in Indonesia, these young people are dispersed when it comes to hard-line policies of moral regulation. In the end, young people in Solo are better understood as 'making themselves modern' through the ways they use globally-connected information and communication technology to enrich and diversify local collective norms of conduct that derive from global sources of religious orthopraxy.

Keywords: urban, space, youth, and communication

* University of Newcastle Australia.

INTRODUCTION

Many kinds of spaces are significant for the lives of young people in cities. Not only physical though, social and symbolic spaces are equally significant. The virtual spaces made available through mobile phone and internet technology enable communication, information, sharing and networking. In both public and virtual spaces young people can collectively connect with the cultures and political agendas of a world brought closer by the pressures of global-isation (Nayak, 2004), even while they give priority to the local. 'The local now transacts directly with the global' (Sassen, 2001, page 415), altering the conditions of everyday life and producing new kinds of spatial and temporal relationships in urban settings. The spatial temporality of the contemporary city therefore offers a 'strategic lens' (Sassen, 2000, page 143) for the study of a major social formation - the period we know as youth – in terms of practices and representations.

This article addresses the practices and meanings of young Muslim Indonesians of both sexes socializing in the late modern urban spaces of the internet café and the shopping mall. It uses ethnographic data collected in 2007 from high school students in Solo, a city in Central Java, to argue that the phenomenon is best understood as an ongoing process of negotiating identities through various discourse available in space and time. Young Muslim Indonesians conduct their socializing relative to a strong discourse of moral propriety and gender separation in contemporary Islam. The internet café and the shopping mall, places that engage a form of heterotopia (Foucault, 1986, page 25), offer distinctive cultural resources for the successful negotiation of moral legitimacy in collective social practice. Yet time is equally important, and the period of respectable youth socializing in appropriate urban spaces is restricted to the two or three hours surrounding the *maghrib* call to prayer - late afternoon/early evening.

Mobile phone technology is equally essential to the successfully negotiation of moral legitimacy in mixed sex social-izing for these young people, not only in the shopping mall, but also in the internet café. Their simultaneous multi-media en-gagement in the internet café indicates how young Indonesians are 'making themselves modern' (Barendregt, 2008) through the way they use globally-connected informa-tion and communication technology to enrich and diversify local modes of social interaction in urban spaces. Assertions of modernity are also implicit in the situated social practice of these young people in the mall, arguably the paradigmatic citadel of celebration for the new consumerism (Abaza, 2001). Malls are purposefully 'de-signed for the display and consumption of modern commodities', including the suc-cessful self (Ansori, 2009, page 92). They therefore suit the need of contemporary ur-ban Indonesian young people to 'showcase' their identities (Juliastuti, 2006, page 142) in social strolling.

In terms of discourse, mixed-sex teen socializing is a source of pervasive moral panic in Muslim-majority Indonesia (Park-er, 2009; Smith-Hefner, 2009; Nilan, 2008). The great fear is inappropriate male-female contact or *'pergaulan bebas'* – activities that encourage 'free' (pre-marital) sex, which is *zina* – a sin. There is a political di-mension in the regulatory force of Islam as a discourse of public piety. When it comes to the sphere of potential intimacy ex-pressed in public conduct and behavior, the personal is definitely political (Oswin and Olund, 2010, page 60). The constant ad-justments of mainstream Indonesian politi-cal parties to accommodate pressure from Muslim groups urging the moral regulation of women in regard to public space and

bodily demeanor (Tanuwidjaja, 2010, page 31), indicates the strength of this regulatory discourse. The conduct of young people socializing is therefore under a persistent gaze of surveillance that constantly force adjustment of public behaviour. For high school students, still very much under the influence of their parents and schools, the question of public conduct revolves around balancing fun and propriety. The internet café and the shopping mall are public/private spaces in which it appears this balance can be achieved through technologically-mediated interaction.

The first proposition here is that the enjoyable mediated leisure practices of young Indonesians described below do not transgress public social conduct norms because of three elements of situated practice: space, time[1] and discourse. Where young people in Solo socialize together, at what time of day, and how shared discourses regulate their actions, matter greatly as to whether they are seen (and see themselves) as engaging in legitimate social practice with peers of both sexes. Crowded, lively, private/public spaces such as shopping malls and internet cafés in daylight hours constitute very different moral spaces for socializing than the same places in late evening. Moreover the ostensible purposes of the various mediated activities, such as sourcing music, games and information, communicating with peers, window shopping, and listening to a rock band while waiting out the daily fast during Ramadan, refer to specific legitimizing discourses of religion and modernity that are complementary rather than contradictory (Ansori, 2009; Rudnycki, 2009; Smith-Hefner, 2009; Barendregt, 2008; Gerke, 2000).

The second proposition is that the mobile phone (*hp*) is the key to maintaining public propriety while enjoying communication with members of the opposite sex. The mobile phone is the ubiquitous personal accessory for everyone in Indonesia now, regardless of frequent religious warnings about its potential for constituting immoral behavior. Even in the internet café the mobile phone is in constant use by young people.

METHODOLOGY

In 2007 the author conducted four months of fieldwork in Solo. The research was part of a four year project titled Ambivalent Adolescents in Indonesia[2]. This article uses data from interviews and ethnographic observations collected in the gathering places favoured by young people in Solo. Although a range of sites was visited, two seemed particularly popular with high school students: the internet café and the shopping mall. Data in Indonesian was translated by the author with assistance from Indonesian colleagues.

INDONESIAN YOUTH CULTURE AND MORAL DISCOURSE

Regulating discourses of socializing are different for Indonesian male and female youth. Boys are permitted far greater freedom than girls (Smith-Hefner, 2005, page 2009) because it is feared girls will engage in premarital - 'free' – sex with far worse consequences for their future lives. Discourses of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, are both adamant on this topic. Islam is by far the dominant religion and provides a wealth of judgments and pronouncements on the dangers of mixed-sex socializing, for girls in particular (Parker, 2009; Smith-Hefner, 2009). At the same

---

time however, there is a strong local ethnic tradition of informal socializing *(nongkrong)* in Javanese villages and neighbourhoods. Small children are encouraged to be sociable, spending lots of time playing with other children of both sexes. For the most part, these positive discourses of Javanese age peer mixing still seem to subtly operate in Solo when youth of both sexes socialize informally with peers during their teens and twenties, despite the strength of the new moral prohibition on girls. Perhaps more broadly, in Indonesia as elsewhere in contemporary Asia, the constitution of the middle class urban individual is moving towards the paradigm of the rational choosing subject (Giddens, 1991), an entrepreneurial, reflexive self (Beck, 2000), capable of independent action and autonomous behaviour. This late modern discourse of the self is far from incompatible with contemporary discourses of Indonesian Islam, as pointed out above. The data below indicates that for high school girls in Solo, the sense of themselves as 'modern' appears to translate as choice and confidence in handling mixed-sex situations without straying beyond the bounds of respectable behaviour. The same applies to boys, but perhaps to a lesser extent given that they are not subject to the same intense moral scrutiny as girls.

Communication and information technology has had a huge effect on Indonesian youth culture. As an aspect of globalization, the time-space compression (Harvey, 1990) achieved by new forms of media and information technology erodes the constraints of distance and time on social organization and interaction, and accelerates interconnectedness. This is strongly observable not only in mobile phone communication, which facilitates youth socializing through the ubiquitous practice of texting (Goggin, 2006), but also in internet communication through emails and social networking sites.

Relevant to Indonesia Lim (2004, page 274) maintains that the 'convivial medium' of the internet is now central to everyday informal communication. Barendregt (2008, page 160) argues that cellular phone technology enables young Indonesians to be 'modern, mobile and Muslim'. In short, 'the transformation of the communication technoscape allows for the development of particular patterns in the construction of social bonds' (Licoppe, 2004, page 135), in this case, flirting by texting, while observing the conventions of moral regulation.

SITUATED PRACTICE: SPACE, TIME AND DISCOURSE

The interpretive analysis below proceeds using a theoretical framing drawn from the work of Anthony Giddens and Michel Foucault. Giddens offers a useful framing of how space, time and discourse may be used conceptually to understand situated social practices,

> All social activity is conjoined in three moments of difference: temporally, structurally (in the language of semiotics, paradigmatically), and spatially: the conjunction of these express the situated character of social practices. The binding of time and space in social systems always has to be examined historically (Giddens, 1995, page 30).

This model serves as the framework for data analysis in this article. It enables the explanation of how the use of two popular private/public places by young people in Solo at specific times is constitutive as morally legitimate social practice. Not only do all social practices have a spatial and temporal dimension but the constitution of meaningful action takes place in temporalized space. This understanding of the temporalization of place opens up for various interpretation on the 'possibilities of immanent and emergent orders' (Crang, 2001,

page 206), including a contemporary moral order in young people's socializing.

Contemporary private/public places like internet cafés and shopping malls in Indonesia are an example of what Foucault (1986, page 25) terms 'heterotopia'. Heterotopia is a place both real and ordinary, a set of 'mirror' images that sit in extraordinary relationship to each other at the same time. 'The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible'. The internet café and the shopping mall are examples of contemporary heterotopia that combine both 'the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes', and 'the heterotopia of the festival' (Foucault, 1986, page 26). Moreover,

> Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place … There are others, on the contrary, that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions. Everyone can enter into the new heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion (Foucault, 1986, page 26).

As new forms of heterotopia, internet cafés and shopping malls are both private and public in the same breath. They are privately owned and controlled, yet patrons pay no fee to enter the premises. Nevertheless, in the internet café there is someone near the door requiring payment for access to terminals, while in the shopping mall there are security guards at every entrance to keep out undesirables. Despite surveillance, the patron is not overtly regulated. Profit depends on the freely-moving customer (in real or virtual space) who must be left alone to make choices, to browse and discuss. Given these heterotopic qualities,

young people as visitors to these kinds of privately-owned premises treat them like public places for 'free' entertainment (Valentine, 1996). For instance a teenager with no cash to spend can accompany friends to an internet café, read emails, surf the net ('the general archive'), even play games ('the festival'), through access on a collectively-used terminal paid for by one of the crowd. The same young person can visit a shopping mall with friends and browse the goods on offer ('the archive', 'all tastes'), check out the opposite sex, and listen to live music ('the festival'), again for no cost.

There is both good and bad sides being offered in the heterotopia. A set of distorted mirror images that 'sit in extraordinary relationship to each other at the same time' (Foucault, 1986, page 24) effectively describes the mixture of useful, hedonistic and obscene material available through the internet café, for example. The juxtaposition of 'sites that are in themselves incompatible' (Foucault, 1986, page 24) also describes the heterotopia of the shopping mall in Solo, where there is a dimly-lit billiard room on the top floor and a gleaming fluorescent family supermarket in the basement. In both the internet café and the shopping mall the browsing patron may choose to go in one direction or the other, constituting either a moral or an immoral order as an emergent property of situated practice.

For youth socializing in these places, the moral direction of action is constituted through choice operating in temporalized space. Time of day is critical. For example, in Solo Grand Mall after prayers on Friday afternoon it will be assumed that a strolling young woman will stick with her girlfriends and go home early. While after dusk on Saturday night another young woman, especially if she enters the mall alone, will be assumed to be meeting a man. The timing itself suggests that she might head upstairs with him to the dimly-lit mezzanine eating

area to kiss and cuddle, or even accompany him up to the masculine space of the billiard hall. In other words there is not a single paradigm that has an absolute control over the moral practice of a young woman walking in the Solo shopping mall. The moral nature of her action is constituted not only in what she does and where, but when and with whom she does it – and the same goes for a young man. Although this statement might seem patently obvious, it holds the key to how discourse of youth moral panic produced in the media, and in religious and government rhetoric, are circumvented by young Indonesians who literally just want to have fun. The binding of a specific space with a specific time achieves the desired public moral legitimacy. The intrinsically heterotopic nature of the internet café and the shopping mall facilitates this strategic binding. Mobile phone technology provides the final piece in the puzzle, the complex strategy of balancing fun and propriety.

THE INTERNET CAFÉ

Although in 2007 every young person encountered in Solo had a mobile phone, they rarely seemed to have personal internet access, or even the use of a home computer. Internet cafés, of which there are many in Solo, offer access to teenagers and young people for email communication, music downloads, blogs, celebrity gossip, news, sports updates, games, social networking and so on. However, personalized interaction with the internet was not the goal for Solonese teenagers after school. Rather, the internet café was somewhere to socialize and be collectively entertained. It was rare to see a single user at a terminal. Not only is it cheaper for two, three or even four young people to share time on a computer terminal, but the activity itself is viewed as something you do with friends. For an hour or so in the afternoon, still wearing school uniforms, they would chat, laugh, call out

to other users and send phone text messages back and forth as they browsed, played games and downloaded music in small groups. However, the young teens were all gone by 5 pm, their places taken by an older age-group of young people. They in turn were all gone by about 8 pm, replaced by adult males. In short, waves of internet users from progressively older age groups moved through the internet café, with males progressively outnumbering females as the hours wore on. This gives a sense of how morally situated practice in the new heterotopias of urban Indonesia must be understood in relationship to time.

The following observations were made in an air-conditioned internet café in *Jalan Slamet Riyadi* – the main street in Solo, during November 2007.

3 pm: High school students aged 13-16 from nearby Muslim, Christian and public schools arrive quickly in single sex groups of three to six, buying snacks and drinks as they crowd in. Latecomers wait outside, chatting, for terminals to become free. As the teenagers fill the room, noise and body heat level instantly increases in the small space packed with terminals in tiny booths. Stools are tussled over as groups of three, four, and even five try to crowd into the same terminal. Although a few groups look for information relevant to schoolwork, most take turns to check emails or social networks. Boys play online war games as friends look on. While waiting, the boys send and receive texts on their mobile phones, showing their friends and talking and laughing. Should an email or posting of interest be found, there is a shout and friends gather in to view and comment, even suggesting possible replies. The sound of music tracks all being played at once raises the noise level even further.

A group of four boys has accessed a celebrity website for the sexy girl band *Dewi Dewi*. Their hit *Dokter Cinta* (Doctor Love)

is the ring tone for one of the boys and he plays it as they examine photos on the site together, whispering and laughing. Along the other wall, schoolgirls wearing heads-carves search for music clips of Ustad Jefri Al Buchori – the singing Muslim preacher. Soon Jefri's hit song *Yaa Rasulullah* can be heard. Nearby, a boy joins in with the catchy chorus. It is clear that certain boys and girls are emailing and texting each other, although they do not physically connect. There are covert looks, loud whispers and syncopated giggling as interaction flows back and forth in physical space, phone texting space and online space.

5 pm: The high school students have gone. Now there are young workers, and students from technical college and university. There is much less noise and the booths are not so crowded. Individuals are preparing job applications and curriculum vitae. Unlike the earlier cohort, there are several couples and mixed groups, including four young activists who are organizing a local protest action in support of the Global Day of Action for Climate Change on December 12th. Frida (21) tells me that she and her friends, university students, are arranging a small demonstration in Solo as part of climate change protests taking place across the world. Although two of them have access to the internet at home, they do not want their parents to know what they are planning, so they meet at the internet café to log onto the global campaign site and devise strategies.

9 pm: Users now are predominantly adult males. About half are browsing alone at a terminal. The room is quiet except for the low murmur of voices and muffled video combat sounds. Customers are using hired ear-phones to listen to music. In a few booths, courting couples are holding hands and necking as they browse. There are groups of two or three young men who smoke surreptitiously and talk non-stop in whispers, often playing extreme combat games. Some sites being accessed at this time of night are pornographic. Online gambling is also taking place. There is very little use of mobile phones compared to earlier in the day.

DISCUSSION

The notes above indicate the transformation of the internet café into a very different semantic space at night. It changes from a gender-inclusive morally safe teenage space for socializing in the late afternoon to a male-dominated immoral adult night-time space for online sex, violence and gambling. A similar phenomenon of age differentiation was found in Yogyakarta, just 60 kilometres south. Furuholt and Kristiansen (2007) studied 270 student users, of whom a third were female. They found that younger students were pursuing 'entertainment and socialising, such as through chatting, games etc'. However, the usage changed as older users had different purposes. Similar observations were made by Rathore and Alhabshi (2005) in Malaysian cyber-cafés. Here 41 per cent of users were students and just over a third were female. It was common to spend 1-2 hours every weekday afternoon in the cyber-cafés. Costs were low. The researchers found multi-purpose entertainment/communication use: 'emailing, chatting, and surfing, and while doing all this, being able to listen to online music'. Male teenagers were keen on playing games. A reported benefit from users was the strengthening of social bonds with friends.

Liu (2009, page 173) found similar patterns in internet cafés *(wangba)* in China, confirming yet again that the primary purpose for young people is a combination of socializing and entertainment. The young Chinese were there to 'entertain themselves, play games, listen to music, watch movies, chat and so on, not to work'. Liu found they came with friends, seldom

alone. Like the Solonese youth, Chinese young people were noisy and sociable in the space, 'I would hear laughing, shouting, and swearing among the youngsters while they interacted with each other both in the physical world and with people (often including their friends present at the wangba) in the "virtual world of games"' (Liu, 2009, page 173). They claim they have 'nowhere else to go'. The commercialization of leisure activities has resulted in the shrinking of affordable youth leisure space (Liu, 2009, pages 174-5). Liu's explanation can be equally applied to the city of Solo, which is undergoing rapid urban renewal and commercial development at present (Patanru, McCulloch and von Luebke, 2009).

In the context of rapid urbanization, the attraction of the internet café as a modern heterotopia for young people lies partly in the compelling play of technological and corporeal communication channels that such places allow. In European research on older teens communicating it is concluded that, 'today, almost all close interpersonal relationships have to be analyzed as hybrid multimedia processes that combine primary face-to-face gatherings with phone calls, text and image transmissions' (Geser, 2007, page 23). The cell phone and the internet are not anchored to the space of the internet café where face-to-face socializing is taking place. They collapse time in the sense that there is no temporal difference between a young man talking to the friend next to him, exchange of text messages with a cousin in Yogyakarta, and email dialogue with a fellow *Warcraft* enthusiast in Malaysia. When war and conflict games are being played it is common to see boys not in control of the keyboard receiving phone text messages from friends elsewhere about tricks and shortcuts. They then relay these tactics to the player (or players).

Rathore and Alhabshi (2005) are concerned that the internet café allows Malaysian teens access to pornography and gambling. There was no evidence of this during the after-school rush in the internet café in Solo. Neither the time of day nor the situation was conducive to accessing such sites. Moreover, more than half the users were girls, and in Indonesia they are not associated with a taste for pornography and gambling. Furthermore, the high school students operated in groups. This was collective situated practice, with all the accountability and surveillance that accompanies joint decision-making. Finally, their purposes for the afternoon were to socialize, to have fun and be entertained by music, music clips and online games. The mobile phone and the internet facilitated the realisation of these leisure goals. As for the moral dimension of their social practices in the internet café, this was constituted through what they did not do. Groups were single sex, not mixed, so there was no physical contact. They kept to a selective set of entertainment and networking sites. Realistically, with so many peers looking on, surveillance and accountability was high, with retribution sure to follow later if they strayed too far from the bounds of respectability.

It is difficult to convey the almost frenetic intensity of phone texting during the afternoon as an integral part of the socializing and the entertainment. Adepts were able to move the computer mouse with one hand while texting with the other, glancing between the screen and the keypad. Discourses of middle class modernity in Indonesia inheret not only access to communication technology, but the capacity to master it. It can be argued that the moral respectability of users is maintained by control and selection within this field of mastery.

THE SHOPPING MALL

Just as the leisure practices of youth in Indonesia are modulated by rapid advances in technology, so they are also shaped by

expansion in the array of choices for purchase and consumption (see Chua, 2003). Nowhere is this more evident than the large shopping mall, reproduced as a distinctive commercial space now in every Asian country. Yet shopping malls are also put to other uses, such as window-shopping, meeting friends, avoiding hot weather, walking for exercise and passing time. They can signify a luxurious, cocooned escape – a kind of temporary privileged experience beyond everyday life. Architecturally, shopping malls are rather like palatial private homes. In Indonesia they belong to the same category of physical space as the houses of the rich: cool, exotically tiled, and ostentatious (Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2011). Yet they are open to any respectably-dressed member of the public who is permitted access by the security guards (Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000). Malls therefore constitute safe yet attractive gathering places for young people, who may not in fact spend any money. Research on urban teenagers in the West finds they like to spend their time in public places and commercial premises such as malls (Matthews et al., 2000; Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000). As Toon (2000, page 144) argues, urban commercial spaces provide young people with 'a means of finding out and creating a different spatiality more exciting than that offered by the impoverished landscapes of the neighbourhood'. Here, the display of desirable commodities and the possibility of chance events and unexpected encounters, add a dimension to their lives that parental homes and local surroundings cannot.

The public phenomenon of mall culture has developed rapidly over the last two decades in Indonesian cities. Strolling with friends in the mall is now an extremely common practice for contemporary young Indonesians (Pratiwo, 2003, page 12), connoting membership of the space as a legitimate middle class domain. There

was universal agreement among the junior high school pupils Atmodwirjo surveyed in Jakarta that the shopping mall was their favorite place to *nongkrong* (hang out), or *berkumpul* (gather). The three top identified activities in the mall were: talking, eating and hanging out (Atmodwirjo, 2008, page 343). Atmodwirjo concludes that, 'adolescents' needs revolve around settings of social interaction. They need to interact with the same-sex peers and opposite-sex adolescents' (2008, page 344).

In his research on shopping mall culture in Jakarta, Ansori (2009) found that young people visit the mall for the cultural purpose of *'mejeng'*,

> '*Mejeng*' refers to behaviors that purposely display a certain level of consumption, such as wearing the most up to-date fashion trend and meeting with other people of the same class in public spaces. In the mall, they hang around different areas and go from one place to another. They do not really need to buy something because that is not their main purpose. Instead, the cultural meaning of visiting the mall is to articulate and demonstrate their identity and share that interest (Ansori, 2009, page 93).

Although shopping malls were only built in Solo during the last decade, they have been rapidly taken up as places to see and be seen, bustling at most times and jam-packed during peak shopping and strolling hours. In 2007, hundreds of young people of both sexes – aged from 14 to 22 – would flock to Solo Grand Mall after Friday afternoon prayers and early on Saturday evening. Unlike family groups, they did not undertake much shopping, if any at all. Their usual practice was to move about in a small single sex groups between the five mezzanine floors over a couple of hours. Time was spent sitting at tables chatting, and leaning on the railings that line each

mezzanine floor, looking down into the deep void to talk while observing what other groups of young people were doing on the lower floors. In short, the main social practice of Solonese youth in the mall was indeed a modern example of *nongkrong* (hanging out informally with friends).

During the fasting month of *Ramadan* in 2007 there were even more young people than usual in the mall during late afternoon. This was an extension of the traditional Javanese custom of *ngabuburit* – spending time with friends and family in late afternoon while waiting to break the daily fast. Clearly the mall has become the place to be while waiting for the signal that the daily fast is over. Abaza (2001, page 110) observed a similar phenomenon in Malaysian shopping malls during *Ramadan*. The following data excerpts give a sense of the relaxed social interaction between young people that characterized *ngabuburit* in the Solo Grand Mall during *Ramadan* 2007. The balance between propriety and fun is evident throughout.

WAITING TO BREAK THE DAILY FAST

At 5.30 pm Solo Grand Mall is buzzing. A live rock band clad in Muslim clothing is blasting out *nasyid* favourites and a young man dressed as *Ali Baba* in turban and extavagantly curled shoes greets people at the front entrance. The upstairs food court is full of young people but they are not eating or drinking. State senior secondary school student Hidayat is 16. She is wearing the very common combination of tight jeans, long-sleeved top and brightly-coloured headscarf. Hidayat says that *pada bulan puasa* [during the fasting month] she often waits with her friends in the mall to *buka puasa bersama* [break the fast together]. Hidayat's seventeen-year old cousin Iqbal from Klaten agrees: waiting with friends makes the fasting period each day seem

shorter. Hidayat and her younger brother nod their assent. Later a young man called Nurdin, aged 15, a state junior secondary school student, states that *ngabuburit* is so much fun for him and his friends that he thoroughly enjoys the fasting month. He and his group of friends keep each other to the line. Because they are together, no-one breaks the fast early.

Raras is a state senior secondary school student wearing a purple headscarf. She states *yang penting nggak ngurangi pahala puasa* [the important thing is not to diminish the religious merit of fasting]. She says she usually reads the Koran in the mosque for *ngabuburit,* except on Saturdays, when she goes to the mall with her friends to wait while listening to the live band. Hearing this, a boy at a nearby table calls out *ngabuburit paling asyik kumpul bareng teman-teman ngobrol, bahas pelajaran, dan nyanyi sambil main gitar* [*ngabuburit* is the most fun when you're together with your friends, talking, discussing school, and singing along with the guitar]. Raras' friend Fitria laughs, maintaining that *wah seru abis tuh! Kalau ngumpul ma teman-teman biasnya lupa waktu, puasa sehari singkat* [totally far out cool! When I'm together with my friends I forget the time, so the fast is shorter]. She says *suka mendengarkan musik rock sambil nunggu beduk* [I like to listen to rock music while waiting for the drumbeat that signals the end of fasting].

Two girls - Addin and Hesti - are at another table. Addin attends *Al Islam* secondary school. She states: *kumpul bareng teman-teman ke tempat-tempat seperti mal sambil menunggu berbuka bersama mempunyai kenikmatan tersendiri. Selain itu juga memupuk rasa kekompakan dan kebersamaan* [going about with my friends to places like the mall while waiting to break the fast really diverts my attention. It also enriches feelings of togetherness and unity between us]. Hesti is from Karanganyar.

She is actually the aunt of Addin (a great joke). She says that, in the outer suburb of Karanganyar, *suka jalan-jalan sambil nongkrong di taman bersama teman-teman sambil menunggu berbuka* [I love hanging out with my friends in the park while waiting to break the fast] because *mempunyai makna tersendiri* [it has a special meaning]. Hesti tells me that *aku biasanya kumpul sama teman-teman di Taman Pancasila, di sana ngobrol sambil menunggu berbuka puasa bareng teman-teman* [I'm usually together with my friends in Pancasila Park, where we chat while waiting to break our fast together]. She adds *suka menanti buka puasa bersama teman-teman, baginya sangat nikmat karena mereka sebaya* [I like waiting to break the fast with my friends. I enjoy it so much because they are the same age as me].

To gain a sense of not only what young people had to say on that fasting day in the mall, but what they actually did in terms of social practice, it is necessary to provide some observational data:

A group of five girls aged about 16, three wearing the headscarf, two bareheaded, pass a group of six slightly-older senior high school boys examining a range of computers displayed on the ground floor. The girls obviously know who the boys are because they start laughing and talking more loudly as they move slowly past to take the escalator. The boys pretend to ignore them. The girls stop on the floor above, crowding around a kiosk selling handbags which offers a view of the ground floor. After about five minutes the group of well-groomed boys, wearing t-shirts, runners and low-slung jeans, takes the escalator. As soon as they move, the girls move too, taking the next two escalators up to a shop which sells jewellery and knick-knacks. Four of the girls examine the necklaces and bracelets on display while the fifth girl is busy sending text messages, some of which she shows to her friends.

After circulating around once or twice on the floors below, the group of boys ascends to the same floor. Two of them are texting as they ride the escalator. They walk slowly past the girls, who are still in the jewellery shop, and go into a trendy young men's clothing shop – a *distro* – on the other side of the mezzanine. Text messages are still being sent.

After about ten minutes, the boys take the escalator up to the next floor. They wander slowly through the games arcade. The girls, in high spirits now, leave the jewellery shop and take the escalator up to the same floor, where they inspect plush children's toys in a stall opposite the entrance to the games arcade. Two of the boys then play a game not far from the entrance where they compete in shooting at targets, noisily cheered on by their friends and singing along with the *nasyid* song (*Allah Maha Besar*) being belted out by the live band downstairs. The girls more or less drop the pretence of looking at fluffy animals to observe the target-shooting game from a distance. As it comes to a close, one girl looks at her watch and shepherds her friends over to a table in the food court. They sit down and all begin to text or play with their mobile phones, continuing to chat. Some ten or fifteen minutes later, the group of boys saunters over and occupies a table not far away. By this time it is only a few minutes to the end of the daily fast. All the tables outside the food outlets on the top floor of the mall are fully occupied by young people. The level of chatter and laughter gets louder and louder until the live music ends suddenly and a sonorous amplified drumbeat comes to end the fast.

The girls break their fast with bottles of iced tea, while the boys drink coca-cola. The live band has started playing popular rock favorites. As soon as they have all eaten, some of the boys start to call out to the girls, who seem to ignore them while texting furiously. The boys, like the girls, are showing text messages to each other and

laughing. This kind of interaction, the boys paying attention to the girls who pretend to ignore them, goes on for about thirty minutes more, then the same girl who had led the way to the table gathers her friends and proceeds downstairs. All five girls are picked up outside the mall in a van, probably driven by a family member. The boys walk around for perhaps fifteen minutes more, then take the exit themselves, driving off in twos on motorbikes.

By 8 pm the band has long gone. Most family groups and teens have left the mall and many shops have closed their doors. Some young people are still present, pre-dominantly male and older, sitting in fast food outlets such as Pizza Hut and McDonalds on the first floor. As the night proceeds, men up the age of about 40 and a few young women congregate outside the cinemas and the billiard hall on the top level adjacent to the car-park entrance. The air is thick with clove cigarette smoke here and the lights are not so bright. The top level will remain open until 11 pm, with access only through the car-park.

DISCUSSION

There a number of points to note above. Firstly, there is no doubt that the live band was a significant attraction for young people to spend their time waiting to break the fast in the mall, providing a deeper sense of bonding as an appreciative audience with the same tastes. Secondly, the extent of mobile phone texting in the observed mall interaction was intensive, enhancing and supple-menting what was going on in the physical space, similar to the internet café. Secondly, there is no way of judging the content of all texts sent and received in the interactions observed, but it is assumed from reactions that at least some, if not the majority of text messages, were exchanged flirtatiously between the group of young men and the group of

young women. It is possible to read this in terms of the gap between public conduct and private interaction that mobile phone tech-nology inflects (Garcia-Montes et al., 2006, page 72). The young men and women were not publicly in physical contact, but there was a great deal of private communication between them, the nature of which we can only guess at. In short, they were maintain-ing propriety in the public sphere by staying in separate single sex groups, while in the dimension of technologically-mediated per-sonal communication, they were having lots of fun together.

In terms of space and time binding to produce meanings, the physical space of the shopping mall transforms into a very different moral space for situated practice between late afternoon/early evening and night, in a similar way to the internet café. By late evening, the mall with its cinemas showing M-rated films and its smoky bil-liard rooms, belong semantically to the do-main of the night-time libidinal economy, like nightclubs, dance parties, band gigs and karaoke bars. It seems significant that throughout the evening Solo Grand Mall closes down progressively from the bottom up to the top until only the 'immoral' spatial component of the heterotopia on the highest level remains open late.

It is useful to consider theoretically the situated practice of young Solonese wait-ing out the daily *Ramadan* fast with friends in the space of the mall as encoding a dis-tinctive late modern discourse of religious orthopraxy. The mediated subjectivity they demonstrate and share in this commercial space during the holy month of Ramadan is constituted within a moral discourse of piety, but at the same time, expresses an equally legitimate and modern 'material culture of success' (Rowlands, 1996). To conduct socializing in the commoditized zone of the mall is to produce the moral le-gitimacy (Liechty, 2003) of being middle

class, implicitly 'modern, honorable, and decent' (Ansori, 2009, page 92). In this situated practice of socializing, the space of the shopping mall, the discursive orthopraxy of Islam, and the time of day are bound together in the constitution of a youthful subjectivity both modern and pious at the same time. In short, these young Solonese achieve public propriety within the new conservative political discourses of Indonesia in carefully negotiated time/space constituencies while having lots of interactive fun through the capacities of mobile phone technology.

CONCLUSION

Using a framework adapted from the work of Antony Giddens, the interpretation of data in this article has proposed three intertwined elements of situated practice - space, time and discourse - for grasping the phenomenon of Muslim high school students conducting mixed sex socializing in Solo that does not transgress the bounds of respectability. Where young people choose to socialize together, at what time of day, as well as what they actually do, largely determine whether a moral or an immoral order of practice is emergent. In the temporalized space of both the internet café and the shopping mall, the purposes of situated practice for young Solonese are hanging out with friends, entertainment and low-level flirting. In this situated practice, the use of popular music and new communication technologies is not incidental, but integral to the multi-layered social interaction produced. These practices are inevitably located in relation to the pervasive moral panic in Indonesia about how informal mixed-sex socializing, combined with exposure to communication technology, can lead to immoral behavior, especially for girls. The internet café and the shopping mall though, as heterotopias in Foucault's terms, facilitate by the very nature of their discursive

complexity the production of mixed-sex youth social interaction that is both fun and morally legitimate at the same time.

We argue that the examples here of young Solonese socializing in the internet café and the shopping mall encode a new form of implicit political engagment. Public Islam is very much an active political force in Indonesia now, and young people are at the forefront of both support and resistance lobby-groups in regard to hard-line policies of moral regulation. The data above collected from 'ordinary' secondary school students in Solo indicate the complementary entwining of Islamic, and late modern secular discourses of reflexive choice and self-regulation in the constitution of young people's subjectivity in contemporary Indonesia. Personal conduct is highly politicized and requires the public demonstration of propriety through judicious selection and strategic balance of many previously unquestioned social practices. Since the local now transacts directly with the global (see Sassen, 2000, 2001), we can see how the globally mediated regulatory discourse of Islam has altered the conditions of everyday life for young Solonese. This regulatory discourse is taken up locally to produce new kinds of spatial and temporal relationships between youth in urban settings. Yet this is far from a simple return to values of personal modesty and gender segregation. Young people in Solo are better understood as 'making themselves modern' through the ways they use globally-connected information and communication technology to enrich and diversify local collective norms of conduct that derive from global sources of religious orthopraxy.

REFERENCES

Abaza, Mona (2001) 'Shopping malls, consumer culture and the reshaping of public space in Egypt', *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(5): 97-122.

Ansori, Mohammed (2009) 'Consumerism and the emergence of a new middle class in globalizing Indonesia', *Explorations: A Graduate Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 9: 87-97. Available http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/10713 accessed 21 December 2009.

Atmodiwirjo, Paramita (2008) 'The use of urban public places in Jakarta for adolescents' hanging out', *Journal of Asian Architecture and Engineering* 7(2): 339-346.

Barendregt, Bart (2008) 'Sex, cannibals, and the language of cool: Indonesian tales of the phone and modernity', *The Information Society* 24(3): 160-170.

Beck, Ulrich (2000) *The Brave New World of Work.* Oxford: Polity Press.

Chua, Beng-Huat (2003) *Life is not Complete without Shopping.* Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Crang, Mike (2001) 'Rhythms of the city: Temporalised space and motion'. In Jon May and Nigel Thrift (eds) *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality,* London: Routledge, 187-207.

Foucault, Michel (1986) 'Of other spaces' (translated by Jay Miskowiec), *Diacritics* 16(1): 22-27

Furuholt, Bjørn and Kristiansen, Stein (2007) 'Internet cafés in Asia and Africa – venues for education and learning', *The Journal of Communication Informatics* 3(2). Online. Available: http://ci-journal.net/index.php/ciej/article/viewPDFInterstitial/314/352 Accessed 30 December 2009.

Garcia-Montes, Jose, M. Caballero-Munoz and Perez-Alvarez (2006) 'Changes in the self resulting from the use of mobile phones', *Media, Culture & Society,* 28(1): 67–82

Gerke, Solvay (2000) 'Global lifestyles under local conditions: The new Indonesian middle class'. In Beng-Huat Chua (ed.) *Consumption in Asia,* London and New York: Routledge, 135-158.

Geser, Hans (2007) 'Patterns of multi-channel communication among older teens'. Soziologisches Institut der Universität Zürich. University of Zurich. Available: http://socio.ch/mobile/t_geser4.pdf Accessed 31 December 2009.

Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony (1995) *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism,* 2nd edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Goggin, Gerard (2006) *Cell Phone Culture.* London & New York: Routledge.

Harvey, David (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Juliastuti, Nuraini. Translated by Camelia Lestari (2006) 'Whatever I want: media and youth in Indonesia before and after 1998', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7(1): 139-143

Licoppe, Christian (2004) 'Connected' presence: the emergence of a new repertoire for managing social relationships in a changing communication technoscape, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22(1) 135 – 156.

Liechty, Mark (2003) *Suitably Modern: Making Middle Class culture in a New Consumer Society.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Lim, Merlyna (2004) The internet, social networks and reform in Indonesia'. In Nick Couldry and James Curran (eds) *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 273-288.

Liu, Fengshu (2009) 'It is not merely about life on the screen: Urban Chinese youth

and the internet café', *Journal of Youth Studies* 12(2): 167-184

Matthews, Hugh, Limb, Melanie and Percy-Smith, Barry (1998) 'Changing worlds: The microgeographies of young teenagers, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 89(2): 193-202.

Nayak, Anoop, (2004) *Race, place and globalization.* Oxford: Berg.

Nilan, Pam (2008) 'Young People and Media in Muslim Southeast Asia', in Youna Kim (ed.) *Media Consumption and Everyday Life in Asia.* London & New York: Routledge, 45-58.

Oswin, Natalie and Olund, Eric (2010) Governing intimacy, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 28 (1): 60-67.

Patunru, Arianto, McCulloch, Neil and von Luebke, Christian (2009) 'A tale of two cities: The political economy of local investment climate in Solo and Manado, Indonesia', Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. Available: http://www.ids.ac.uk Accessed 10 October 2009.

Parker, Lyn (2009) 'Religion, class and schooled sexuality among Minangkabau teenage girls', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkinde [BKI]* 165(1): 62-94.

Pratiwo (2003) 'Markets and Malls in Jakarta', *IIAS Newsletter,* 31(July): 12.

Rathore, Animesh Singh and Alhabshi, Sharifah Mariam (2005) 'A case of urban cyber cafés in Malaysia', *Information Technology in Developing Countries* 15 (1). Online. Available: http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/egov/ifip/apr2005/article3.htm. Accessed 30 December 2009.

Rowlands, Mike (1995) 'The material culture of success: Ideal life cycles in Cameroon'. In Jonathon Friedman (ed.). *Consumption and Identity.* London: Harwood Press, 116-135.

Rudnyckyj, Daromir (2009) 'Spiritual economies: Islam and neoliberalism in con-temporary Indonesia', *Cultural Anthropology* 24(1): 104-141.

Sassen, Saskia (2000) 'New frontiers facing urban sociology at the millennium', *British Journal of Sociology,* 15(1): 143-159.

Sassen, Saskia (2001) 'Impacts of information technologies on urban economies and politics', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 25(2): 411-418.

Smith-Hefner, Nancy (2005) 'The new Muslim romance: Changing patterns of courtship and marriage among educated Javanese youth', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36(3): 441–459.

Smith-Hefner, Nancy (2009) '"Hypersexed" youth and the new Muslim sexology in Java, Indonesia, *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 43(1): 209-244.

Tanuwidjaja, Sunny (2010) 'Political Islam and Islamic parties in Indonesia: Critically assessing the evidence of Islam's political decline', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32(1): 29-49.

Toon, Ian (2000) 'Finding a place in the street: CCTV surveillance and young people's use of urban public space', in David Bell and Azzadine Haddour (eds) *City Visions.* Harlow: Pearson Education, 141-161.

Valentine, Gill (1996) 'Children should be seen and not heard: The production and transgression of adults' public space', *Urban Geography* 17(3): 205-220.

Vanderbeck, Robert M. and Johnson, James H. (2000) 'That's the only place where you can hang out': Urban young people and the space of the mall', *Urban Geography* 21(1): 5-25.

Van Leeuwen, Lizzy (1996) *Airconditioned Lifestyles: Nieuwe Rijken in Jakarta.* Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.

Van Leeuwen, Lizzy (2011) *Lost in Mall: An Ethnography of Middle Class Jakarta in the 1990s.* Leiden: KITLV Press.