

## **In Search of Middle Indonesia**

### **PhD project summaries**

#### **Project 1: Business, local politics and ethnicity among the intermediate classes in Pekalongan (Central Java)**

Researcher: Amalinda Savirani; Main supervisor: Prof. dr. Mario Rutten (UvA)

The aim of this research is to examine the changing relationship between the intermediate classes and the local state within the context of decentralization in the Central Javanese town of Pekalongan. It provides insight into the effects of decentralization on the socio-political behaviour of the intermediate classes at the local level, as regards their participation in local politics and the bureaucracy, and their emphasis on ethnicity.

The economic crisis of the late 1990s often seriously affected local small and medium business enterprises, typically owned by members of the intermediate classes. At the same time, decentralization opened up more opportunities for local participation. As a result the local state has increasingly become an arena for struggle over economic benefits, social status and political power at the local level. Pekalongan has a large number of local business enterprises in the textile sector and can be characterized as a market driven economy.

#### **Project 2: Intermediate classes, ethnic segmentation, and the local state in Kupang (East Indonesia)**

Researcher: Sylvia Tidey; Main Supervisor: Prof. dr. Henk Schulte Nordholt (UvA)

This research aims to investigate the relationship between intermediate classes, ethnic segmentation and the local state in the provincial capital of East Nusa Tenggara, Kupang, on the island of Timor. Kupang is a small provincial town of approximately 220,000 inhabitants with a poor agrarian hinterland. It is an administrative and migrant town and these two features structure social relationships. The stagnant economy of West Timor is dominated by the state. Consequently, employment in state institutions and access to state resources are important factors that give shape to social relationships. The competition among the intermediate classes for access to economic and political resources is thus framed in a dynamic set of ethnic divisions and through religious institutions, which have gained strength after decentralization and regional autonomy as been set in motion.

#### **Project 3: Youth solidarities in Ternate (East Indonesia)**

Researcher: Basri Amin; Main supervisor: Prof. dr. Patricia Spyer (Leiden U)

This PhD project focuses on how “youth” of the intermediate classes creatively construct solidarities, affiliations, and aspirations with respect to several important sociological dimensions, notably religion, gender, and ethnicity in the provincial capital of Ternate, North Maluku. A crucial aspect of the project is to identify and investigate the range of contexts where gendered youth solidarities are constructed

from the more institutionalized contexts of religious and ethnic organizations to recreational forms of association like sports or “competitions” that test everything from marching to Koran recitation. Besides institutionalized settings, the project explores non-institutionalized settings where young people informally gather and “hang out.” The project homes in on the sociological dimensions of religion, gender, and ethnicity across a selection of different youth settings from the more formal and institutional to the less regulated and ad hoc with the aim of ascertaining which among these have priority and how they figure within the construction of youth solidarities.

#### **Project 4: Youth and social renewal in an Indonesian industrial town (West Java)**

Researcher: Suzanne Naafs; Main supervisor: Prof. dr. Ben White (ISS)

The PhD project uses multi-sited ethnographic techniques and a broad, interdisciplinary political-economy approach to explore the role of young people as actors in urban social, economic and political change processes. Research is focusing on ways in which young people confront and negotiate the processes, relationships and constraints which influence their access to /exclusion from continuing education; employment and careers, global and local cultural communities and political processes. The coastal town of Cilegon (population about 250,000) experienced rapid growth during the Suharto period, based initially on its combination of deep-sea port facilities and heavy industry (PT Krakatau Steel). Cilegon’s economy is both vibrant and state-dependent. Interlinked with Cilegon’s relatively large and dynamic formal-sector industrial and port sector is a large informal sector of transport, construction, trade, petty manufacture and repairs and service activities.

#### **Affiliated PhD project (funded by Nuffic): Youth, identity and work in Pontianak (West Kalimantan)**

Researcher: Wenty Marina Minza; Main supervisor: Prof. dr. Mario Rutten (UvA)

Among the ‘youth paradoxes’ commonly observed in Indonesia are the following:

- youth as heroes vs youth as potential traitors to the nation;
- early maturation vs prolongation of entry into marriage;
- increase in consumption vs decrease in ‘productivity’;
- investment in education vs unemployment/ underemployment (e.g. the (un)limited perception of opportunities)
- global (opening of borders) vs local (ethnic sentiments)/

Do these paradoxes also exist in Pontianak, West Kalimantan? How do the youth themselves see these paradoxes? How do adults see them? The study examines these questions by means of a local literature study, interviews with youth at places of work, learning, and leisure, and interviews with adults.

## **Postdoctoral fellowship projects**

### **Project 5: The makings of Middle Indonesia**

Researcher: Dr. Gerry van Klinken, KITLV

The 'in-betweenness' of Indonesia's modernization - neither fully globalized nor wholly parochial - has been explained in terms of resilient patrimonial culture or the small size of modernizing elites. This research proposes to situate the social history of Indonesian modernization since decolonization more concretely as well as more broadly in provincial towns. The approach is to combine insights from urban geography and historical sociology. Nearly all of Indonesia's 200 substantial provincial towns grew up in step with the expanding colonial state from the mid-nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. The urban society that emerged in them was created by this process of state formation, and it in turn shaped the kind of state that developed, most decisively after the decolonization of 1945-49. Today the bureaucracy, under-resourced and therefore bound up with urban society in numerous particularistic ways, but highly desirable in an economy lacking industry, remains the central political fact in provincial towns notably outside Java.

### **Project 6: Youth, religiosity, and aspirations in Middle Indonesia**

Researcher: Dr. Noorhaidi Hasan, Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic State University, Ciputat, Jakarta

This postdoc project analyzes how the so-called "Islamic revival" informs the construction of youth identities and shapes their political aspirations and activism in provincial Indonesian towns. The current Islamization in Indonesia has, among other things, meant an accentuation of religious symbols in public, a rise in forms of personal religiosity, the proliferation of Islamic institutions, and the spread of new lifestyles. Beyond this general context, the postdoc focuses comparatively on how the Islamic revival contributes to the political aspirations and activism of youth as evidenced, for instance, in the success of the largest Islamist party in Indonesia today (the Justice and Prosperity Party, PKS) or the appeal some young people of the radical Islamist organizations whose "street" actions have been a constant feature of the post-New Order politics.

## **Short-term postdoctoral fellowship projects**

### **Scouting to the Future. Youth and state in Indonesia, 1960s – 2000s.**

Researcher: Dr. Pujo Semedi, Gadjah Mada University

Under the pretext of preventing the further political fractionalization of Indonesian youth, in August 1961 President Sukarno established a centralized, state-sponsored boy scout organization called Praja Muda Karana (Youth Cadre of the Country), Pramuka. From then on, Indonesian boy scout movements, which used to be affiliated either to certain political party or mass organizations, were lumped together

into a single body under direct government control. Although individual participation is not compulsory, every school, private or public, of any level, from primary to university, is obliged to form a boy scout unit for extra-curriculum activities for students. Up to the present Pramuka is the biggest youth organization in Indonesia with millions of active members, and perhaps one out of thirty or so middle-aged Indonesians was once a Pramuka. The Indonesian boy scout might be perceived rather negatively as a state-controlled youth organization, but the fact that millions voluntarily participate in the organization is certainly telling us that there must be something the youth gain from Pramuka, and very likely it is not just the fun of walking along mountain track or of any other scouting games. This study aims to reveal Indonesian youth as active agents in their own life. They deal with state intervention in their domain and utilize their participation in youth organizations as an investment for their future. Data for this study has been collected through participant observation among youth in a middle size, typical Indonesian town, interviews and library studies on the development of the Indonesian boy scout.

### **From Lombok with Affection: Ethnic Harmony in Lombok**

Researcher: Dr. Tamrin Amal Tomagola, University of Indonesia

Lombok, especially since the launching of decentralization reforms in 1999, has been the site of violence in recent years. There are, however, grass-root signs of the potential for peaceful ethnic coexistence in Mataram city, and to some extent, on the island as whole. This research project describes how different layers of affection based on kinship, gender, religion and ethnicity are played-out, negotiated, constructed and experienced by a contemporary urban lower middle class Sasak community in the city of Mataram, Lombok. It further argues that despite on-going challenges, the community has managed not only to keep inter-ethnic violence under-control, but also to survive intact as a community.

### **Local understandings of communal violence and its aftermath in eastern Indonesia**

Dr. Chris Duncan, Arizona State University, visited KITLV as a Middle Indonesia fellow September-December 2008. He worked on a book manuscript concerning the discursive and religious aspects of communal violence in small-town Maluku. He addressed a seminar on 3 December 2008 at KITLV on the topic: "Moving beyond the elite: Local understandings of communal violence and its aftermath in eastern Indonesia".

### **Eluding the law: innovative bureaucratic practices to evade anti-corruption rules in provincial towns**

Dr. Erwan Purwanto, Gadjah Mada University, visited KITLV as a Middle Indonesia fellow in April-June 2009 and wrote on evolving techniques of corruption in provincial towns. Local Elites in Middle Indonesia Dr. Nankyung Choi, City University of Hong Kong, is a Middle Indonesia fellow July-December 2009. She is writing about the life histories of local elites in a Middle Indonesian town (Pontianak).

## **Flat and Frictionless: transnational governance and early childhood in Jogjakarta**

Dr. Janice Newberry, University of Lethbridge (Canada), visited KITLV as a Middle Indonesia fellow May-July 2009 and wrote on new modes of governance over childhood in a Middle Indonesian town (Jogjakarta).

## **Sighting Middle Indonesia, a photo exhibition**

Dr Chris Brown, photographer and anthropologist, University of Washington Seattle, visited KITLV as a Middle Indonesia fellow in 2010 - 2011. He writes on “Being young in a provincial town in Indonesia”. He is preparing a book on urban street life in Java, called *Streets and Children in Surabaya*, based on five years of experience and research in Indonesia's second largest city.

Among his activities is a visual project on youth in several Middle Indonesian towns in which other Middle Indonesia researchers are active. 'Sighting Middle Indonesia' is an exhibit of colour photographs from three Indonesian cities. More than just reportage, it also looks to expose local remakings of the global image-scape. For an increasing number of Indonesians, there is an as-yet inchoate intermediate ground—between rural communities and the Jakarta megalopolis, between the wealthy and privileged and the impoverished and desperate—where making a living is as much a matter of imagining new possibilities as taking advantage of them. Expectations about "middle class" life seep in through global media, but need to be actively constructed locally. In doing so, middle Indonesians rely as much on creative re-imagining and on cultural habits of vision as they do on copying global images. This exhibit was designed as an accessible and illuminating companion for the conference 'In Search of Middle Indonesia' at KITLV in Leiden, 27–29 September 2010. This event assembled an international group of scholars at the culmination of a five-year research project focusing on provincial cities and middle-class lives in Indonesia. A preview of the exhibit can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/sightingthemiddle>.

## **Others**

Dr Michael Buehler, London School of Economics, and Dr Marcus Mietzner, Australian National University, both previously announced as forthcoming Middle Indonesia fellows, did come in 2008 but under the KITLV Modern Indonesia program.

Dr Nicolaas Warouw, Gadjah Mada University, Jogjakarta, writes on “Defining the class boundaries of urban workers: notes for research agenda”.

Dr Joseph Errington, Yale University, writes on “The languages of Middle Indonesia”, an empirical study into local variations on Malay languages in Kupang, Ternate, and Pontianak.

Dr. Cornelis Lay, Gadjah Mada University, writes on “growing up in Kupang”.