

# Reconfiguring Ideal Masculinity: Gender Politics in Indonesian Cinema

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Elliott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—*

*I took the one less travelled by,*

*And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

For Fadli.

Thanks for being with me in travelling the less trodden path.



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## Abstract

My thesis examines Indonesian filmmakers' struggles in undermining the hegemonic ideal, *bapakism*. It focuses on the crucial years of 2000–2014. Profound socio-political and economic shifts had forced changes to Indonesia's official patterning of gender relations during the period. Consequently, the changes provoked a requestioning of what constituted ideal masculinity, as well as femininity in Indonesia. So far, inadequate scholarly attention has been paid to the workings of power and class dimensions underlying the rejuvenated gender politics to secure hegemonic masculinity, especially in popular culture. Commercial cinema was, and still is, one of the most crucial arenas in popular culture, in which political agents—primarily urban, highly educated middle classes—sought to legitimise alternative ideals or to reinforce the existing hegemonic masculinity. My thesis is interested in exploring commercial filmmakers' choices, negotiations and compromises in shaping what could be represented and idealised on Indonesian commercial cinema at this given time. Taking into account the flourishing of the 'new man' on-screen, I decided to use the filmmakers' struggles to legitimise this alternative ideal in commercial cinema as my analytic lens. The 'new man' challenges the hegemonic *bapakism*'s valorisation of breadwinning, authoritative patron leadership and heteronormativity. Combining textual analysis, field research and interface ethnography, I argue that commercial filmmakers struggled to innovate and experiment with alternative ideals which promoted equal and fluid gender relations on the big screen. Yet, the filmmakers' struggles were overshadowed by middle-class biases and moral panic.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

My thesis examines filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemony of the official cultural ideal of masculinity in Indonesia from 2000 to 2014. The period was marked by profound changes in the official structures of gender relations. It was against this background that intensive searches for alternative ideal masculinities, as well as femininities, were waged by various interest groups in various arenas. Cinema was, and still is, one of the most poignant arenas in popular culture, in which political agents have sought to legitimise alternative ideals or to reinforce the hegemony of *bapakism*,<sup>1</sup> the official most-exalted form of masculinity. In this thesis, I am interested in unpacking the workings of power that underpin Indonesian filmmakers' struggles to legitimise forms of alternative ideal masculinities through commercial cinema during the period in question. Combining textual analysis, field research and interface ethnography, I argue that during the period, new hope blossomed in terms of representing alternative ideal masculinities in commercial cinema. Progressive filmmakers used intensive innovation and experimentation with alternative ideal masculinities to promote equal and fluid gender relations on the big screen. However, as the thesis unfolds, I also demonstrate that the filmmakers' struggles were marred by middle-class biases and moral panic.

During the period from 2000 to 2014, Indonesia was recovering from multiple crises. One of the major problems was the deep and protracted economic situation triggered by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The period saw the country struggling to bounce back to its pre-crisis economic condition. The struggle manifested in major restructuring at both macro and micro levels. Furthermore, the period also saw

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<sup>1</sup> As suggested by Julia Suryakusuma, *bapakism* is basically a configuration of gender practices, personalities and culture which socially constructs its subjects, generally men, to become authoritative patron leaders in the family collectivity, ranging from a nuclear family to the nation; the idealisation of *bapakism* is supported by the idealisation of *ibuism*, which valorises women's reproductive and domestic roles (2011: 5).

Indonesia struggling to re-establish itself as a democratic country in the wake of the demise of the New Order authoritarian regime (1966–1998). The democratisation of the public sphere led to the flourishing of civil society movements and an intensifying Islamisation. Among the civil society movements were feminist and LGBTIQ campaigns, which previously had been carefully controlled by the authoritarian regime. In addition, Islamisation became the most striking feature in the politics, economy and culture of the period. Interactions between these variants triggered major changes and debates within Indonesian gender politics and called into question the official patriarchal gender order as well as the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity.

This period also saw the flourishing of Indonesian cinema, with emerging filmmakers seeking to engage productively with various transformations that were taking place in the post-authoritarian socio-cultural landscape. After a long hiatus, Indonesian cinema was reinvigorated by the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers who were eager to take part in the country's democratisation process through cinema. Consequently, Indonesian cinema became one of the most important arenas for gender politics, including the struggle to secure a new form of hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia at this given time. It was where certain political discourses concerning gender and gender relations were translated, or encoded, into film texts. Filmmakers who were critical of the patriarchal gender order and hegemonic masculinity experimented and innovated with alternative ideal masculinities to be visually depicted on the silver screen. They contributed to the shaping of what could and could not be represented, as well as which representations of masculinities could be idealised.

My thesis is situated at the intersection of these phenomena. I examine gender politics in the arena of commercial cinema and the role of filmmakers in the broader struggles to steer the gender order in a certain direction through the re-creation and

representation of masculinity and gender relations. I seek to unpack certain filmmakers' choices, negotiations and compromises in shaping what could and could not be represented, and what could and could not be idealised on the silver screen during this period in Indonesia. Recognising that the 'new man' emerged as one of the most prevalent alternative ideals seeking legitimacy on- and off-screen, I decided to use the filmmakers' struggles to legitimise the 'new man' through commercial cinema as my investigative lens. The 'new man' challenges hegemonic *bapakism's* valorisation of the breadwinning, authoritative patron of leadership and heteronormativity. Through a combination of close textual reading, field research and interface ethnography, my analysis reveals that while new hopes for more equal gender relations have indeed bloomed in Indonesian cinema, there are also strong middle-class preconceptions and anxieties that overshadow these cinematic alternative ideals of masculinity. Indeed, progressive Indonesian filmmakers working in commercial cinema took part in a broader struggle for hegemonic masculinity by promoting alternative ideals on screen, albeit marred by middle-class biases. As they did so, they had to deal with more rampant and random state and public censorship as well as moral panic.

The first premise running through this thesis is that filmmakers are political agents who actively engage with contemporary gender politics—domestically and internationally. Their creative endeavour in cinema does not take place in a social and political vacuum. Even in commercial cinema, in which politics and commercial pressures are intricately interwoven, filmmakers cannot escape from factoring off-screen political and social conditions in shaping the representations of social realities in their films. As suggested by Douglas Kellner, 'film creators tap into the events, fears, fantasies and hopes of an era and give cinematic expression to social experiences and realities' (2010: 4). Indonesian filmmakers definitely exploit contemporary gender politics to cinematically express their political views. At the same time, filmmakers,

especially those working in the commercial sphere, have to also factor off-screen politics into their filmmaking processes to ensure that their works do not attract unwanted controversy, which has the potential to harm film distribution and sales. Filmmakers have to carefully negotiate with off-screen political conditions in order to ensure that their works can reach their audience and potentially trigger changes in society.

Furthermore, considering that filmmaking is mostly a collective endeavour and takes place in particular socio-political backgrounds, the filmmakers' decisions, negotiations and compromises during the filmmaking process is a crux for politics. I acknowledge that the advance of technology has opened up opportunities for an auteur to undertake the process of filmmaking individually without the involvement of other people. Yet, such is a rare case, especially with films intended for commercial cinema. Generally, filmmakers must deal with other parties, as well as with each other, in the processes of production and the distribution of their works. The other parties include, but are not limited to producers, film consultants, the state censorship board, film distributors and exhibitors. These other parties may not share the filmmakers' political perspectives regarding gender and they may have different interests in contemporary gender politics. Even the principal crew that is working on a particular film may not necessarily hold the same vision of filmmaking, let alone of politics. The negotiations and possible compromises engaged by filmmakers as they deal with these other parties and the associated off-screen politics are my main interest in this research.

The proposition that filmmakers are political agents leads to my second premise. The representations of ideal masculinities offered on the silver screen are, thus, political. Taking into account the politics engaged by filmmakers in the production and distribution of films, we can no longer look at images of ideal masculinities on cinema screen as apolitical, detached from contemporary politics, including gender politics.

While the commercial pressure is real in every production of commercial film, we cannot sever cinematic representations from the (gender) politics underlying their production and distribution processes. In the case of my thesis, cinematic representations can indeed be political tools with which filmmakers stage their political ideals concerning masculinity. Consequently, cinematic representations of alternative ideal masculinities offered by filmmakers are part of a political endeavour aimed at replacing the hegemonic ideal and transforming the patriarchal gender order.

My thesis contributes to the existing literature on Indonesian gender politics of the twenty-first century by offering a different vantage point: the struggle of filmmakers, who are representative of urban, highly educated, middle-class Indonesians, in challenging the existing hegemonic masculinity ideal through commercial cinema. As I will elaborate in a later section in this chapter, my thesis is situated in the study of Indonesian gender politics, in which discussion on men and masculinity is still scant and attention to popular culture is minimal. I join other scholars, including Tom Boellstorff (2004), Pam Nilan (2009), Rebecca Elmhirst (2007), Sonja van Wichelen (2009) and Kathryn Robinson (2015), in exploring the masculine dimension of twenty-first-century Indonesian gender politics. Yet, I differ from these scholars in my method as I explore the pursuit for a new hegemonic masculinity in a non-formal political arena—popular culture, in which cinema is a significant part—instead of everyday politics or formal constitutional government. The battle for hegemonic masculinity is no less fierce but arguably more visible in cinema. During the period under study, the Indonesian public was witness to competing visual representations of ideal masculinities, some of which led to certain trends as well as political debates off-screen. My thesis offers insights into the workings of power and the struggles for resistance behind and around commercial cinema which eventually shapes what could and could not be represented, as well as what could and could not be idealised in terms of

masculinity in Indonesia between 2000 and 2014. This was a period marked by profound changes in gender order—the overall patterning of gender relations (R.W. Connell 2005: 84).

My thesis also contributes to this gender scholarship by exploring the class dimension of such a political struggle. Political expressions arguably vary across class lines. Commercial filmmakers are a representation of urban-based and highly educated middle classes. Their political expressions may differ from that of the rural-based lower-class men, for example in Rebecca Elmhirst's research (2007), who tend to resort to violence against the growing trend of women's mobility for employment purposes, while they face dwindling employment opportunities. As I will explain in this thesis, the progressive commercial filmmakers criticise such political expressions and draw from alternative discourses, especially gender empowerment, to create representations of alternative ideas of masculinity on screen. My thesis thus provides insights into the nuances of political expressions which are strongly influenced by class.

This introductory chapter is structured as follows. In the next section, I explain the theory and framework central to my thesis. I elaborate on how I engage with R.W. Connell's theorisation of masculinities and his three-structure framework. Next, I claim my research's significance in the field of Indonesian gender politics. My thesis is the first in-depth research of gender politics which focuses on the intensified struggle for hegemonic masculinity pursued in Indonesian cinema. I detail my methods, involving approach, analytical lens and data collection methods. Finally, I explain briefly how the rest of this thesis is structured.

## **Masculinities and the gender order**

R.W. Connell's theorisation of masculinity is central to my thesis.<sup>2</sup> It shaped my understanding that masculinity is an historically specific social construction. Furthermore, it helped me understand that relations among masculinities, as well as between masculinities and femininities are neither neutral nor stable. In fact, the relations among gender categories in a specific gender order are hierarchical and historically dynamic. The plurality and inequality among masculinities are the crux for gender politics. Hegemonic status among masculinities is to be won by various interest groups. It is the political battle to secure this ultimate status through commercial cinema in Indonesia in the first 15 years of the twenty-first century which my thesis aims to unpack. The ability to secure hegemonic masculinity involves having the power to steer the official gender order in a particular direction—one that is set by the winning interest group.

I depart from sex role theory in defining masculinities because of its inadequacy in explaining the multiplicity and the unequal relations among masculinities. In general, the sex role theory of gender, initially proposed by Margaret Mead (1950) and Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales (1955), emphasises stereotypical expectations for men's and women's behaviour. As R.W. Connell explained sex role theory 'connects social structure with the formation of personality, via the idea of role learning or internalisation' (1985: 262). The emphasis on social construction is appealing. Indeed, by adapting Simone de Beauvoir's famous quote, we can say that one is not born masculine (1953: 273).<sup>3</sup> Becoming a masculine man is not necessarily correlated with

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<sup>2</sup> R.W. Connell, also known as Robert Connell or Raewyn Connell, is a prominent scholar in critical studies of men and masculinity, an offshoot of feminist and gender studies. R.W. Connell's phenomenal work, *Masculinities*, first published in 1995 has become a canon source in the emerging field of study. Other works which emphasise the working of power in the social construction of gender have offered an alternative approach to studying gender and gender relations.

<sup>3</sup> In theorising about becoming a woman, de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex*, states that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman (1953: 273).



being biologically male, although male individuals are indeed the most common subjects of masculinities. Masculinities are products of power/knowledge regimes, as in is the case of other gender identity categories (Butler 1999: 4–5).

Yet, the social construction in sex role theory does not explain the fact that there must be more than one masculinity operating in a particular society at a particular time. According to Michael Messner (1998: 258), sex role theory has failed to explain the plurality of masculinity and the unequal relations between different masculinities, as well as between masculinities and femininities. Recognising the plurality of masculinity is about acknowledging that ‘ways of being a man and cultural representations of/about men vary, both historically and culturally, between societies and between different groupings of men within any one society’ (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 82–83). The intersection between masculine identity and other identities creates a myriad of different masculinities which occupy different social locations within the gender order.

Furthermore, sex role theory is inadequate in explaining the unequal relations among masculinities. A certain type of masculinity can become the most culturally exalted, while others are subordinated or even marginalised at a particular moment in history. Yet, culturally exalted masculinity does not remain at this apex position forever. Resistance against it is ever present and culturally exalted masculinity can lose its legitimacy and no longer retain its hegemonic position. Sex role theory is unable to explain resistance, change and history, which are central to this thesis (R.W. Connell 1985; Messner 1998). I shall demonstrate that at one point in history, the battle for hegemonic masculinity becomes intensified, and the hegemonic basis of culturally exalted masculinity is substantially eroded.

Thus, in this thesis I adopt R.W. Connell’s definition of masculinities. Masculinities are simultaneously two things. First, they are positions in a system of gender relations; second, they are certain configurations of gendered practices,

personality and culture, which are deemed manly, and which impact on practices in bodily performance (R.W. Connell 2005: 72). Adopting this bifurcated definition has helped me see masculinities as multiple categories. It has helped me understand the intricate relations among the multiple categories, as well as the relations between masculinities and femininities, which are historically dynamic (Hearn 2007: 392).

Masculinities are socially organised within a system of gender relations, which also organises the relations between masculinities and femininities. As masculinity intersects with other identities, such as class and ethnicity, there are multiple forms of masculinity operating in a particular culture, at a particular time (Beynon 2002: 2; MacKinnon 2003: 11). The system of gender relations is termed by R.W. Connell as the 'gender order', which is basically the overall collective patterning of relations between men and women and between masculinities and femininities at a particular moment in historical time (2002: 54).

Allow me to give an anecdotal example to explain Indonesia's official gender order. I grew up in Indonesia in the 1980 and 1990s. During secondary school years (in the 1990s), I felt very uncomfortable seeing one of my school mates, whom I had befriended at a much younger age, being verbally bullied because of his effeminate character; he was seen as less masculine than other boys. On TV, I watched how the verbal bullying of effeminate men or transwomen was often presented as comical. In a comedy film, for example the rerun of *Betty Bencong Slebor* (Betty the Reckless Transwoman, 1978, Benyamin Sueb), the transwoman character was subjected to countless derogatory remarks due to her non-normative gender performativity, and her masculinity was represented as a sham. This marginalisation of non-normative genders was not random and coincidental. They made a certain pattern of gender relations in the society to which I belonged at that particular time undesirable. In other words, the femininity and masculinity performatively displayed by the effeminate boy and the

transwoman were ‘not normal’. They were ‘unnatural’. Yet, there was no legal measure to criminalise transgenderism or homosexuality at that time. That particular patterning of relations between men and women at a collective level was part of the gender order in Indonesia at that time. It has slightly differed today. When I was conducting this research, between 2013 and 2016, there was strong support for individuals of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. At the same time, there was a strong pressure to criminalise them (Muthmainnah 2016). Such conflicting pressures were barely visible, or at least not publicly debated, in the 1980s and 1990s, although discrimination was undoubtedly widespread.

Relations among masculinities within a gender order are hierarchical. R.W. Connell’s earlier work (1996) explains that a certain form of masculinity can become the most culturally exalted and achieve the hegemonic position, while others are subordinated or even marginalised at any particular moment in history. Culturally exalted masculinity can achieve hegemonic status and become the ‘most acceptable answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (R.W. Connell 2005: 77). As a result, the configuration of gender practices constituting hegemonic masculinity become ‘taken for granted’ features of ideal masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity, in a Gramscian sense of the term, signifies a position of cultural authority and leadership, but not necessarily a total dominance. Thus, a hegemonic masculinity does not have to be the most common masculinity adopted by most men in a community at a particular moment in history, but it is certainly what most men and boys aspire towards. The majority of men, regardless of their ability to perform the gender practices that constitute hegemonic masculinity, are likely to support it as they receive what Connell terms the ‘patriarchal dividend’—the benefits allocated to men as a group for maintaining an unequal gender order (Raewyn Connell 2009: 142).

Structurally, men are the interest group motivated to maintain unequal relations between genders as they reap the benefits in forms of honour, prestige and the right to command. Femininities are also defined against this so-called hegemonic masculinity—particularly by the extent to which they can support the establishment and maintain hegemonic masculinity and thus the patriarchal gender order. The femininity deemed the most compatible with hegemonic masculinity is more culturally exalted than other femininities. R.W. Connell terms it ‘emphasised femininity’ (1987: 187).

In the case of Indonesia, the patriarchal gender order has facilitated the ascendancy of *bapakism* masculinity to the hegemonic position. *Bapakism* is basically a configuration of gender practices, personalities and culture which socially constructs its subjects, generally men, to become authoritative patron leaders in the family collectivity, ranging from a nuclear family to the nation (Suryakusuma 2011: 5). The hegemony of *bapakism* is sustained partly by the emphasis on *ibuism* femininity. According to Julia Suryakusuma, *ibuism* promotes women’s reproductive and domestic roles (2011: 2). Under the New Order regime, the policing of women’s roles as domestically bound wives and mothers was paramount to its gender politics. As shown by Suzanne Brenner (1999), for example, the authoritarian regime carefully controlled the representations of ideal women in the print media partly by censoring representations of women who were politically active and endorsing domestically bound wives and mothers. In such a way, the regime not only sustained the apolitical *ibuism* as the ultimate feminine ideal, but, in doing so, sustained the hegemony of *bapakism* by securing men’s roles in politics and in the public sphere more generally.

R.W. Connell (1987, 2005) identifies three major structures in the system of gender relations which govern the relations among masculinities, as well as between masculinities and femininities. They include the structure of: the gender relations of production; the gender relations of power; and the gender relations of emotion. These

three structures are substantially different, but they are not entirely separate. They, in fact, interweave and condition each other at all time. The three structures bear basic differences in the ordering of social relations among genders that operate in a system of gender relations at any particular time (R.W. Connell 1987: 97).<sup>4</sup>

The structure of the gender relations of production basically deals with the gendered division of labour. In the simplest term, it is the allocation of certain types of work to a certain category of people (R.W. Connell 1987: 99). It incorporates, but is not limited to

the organisation of housework and childcare, the division between paid and unpaid work, the segregation of production markets and the creation of ‘men’s jobs’ and ‘women’s jobs’, discrimination in training and promotion, unequal wages and unequal change (ibid.: 96).

These gender-based divisions of production are historically common and can be found across cultures. Yet, there is not exactly the same divisions in different cultures or at different moments of history (R.W. Connell 2002: 60).

The second structure, the gender relations of power, involves both organised, institutional power and diffuse, discursive power (ibid.: 59). Organised and institutional power has to do with authority, control and coercion imposed by authoritative bodies, such as the state and companies; diffuse, discursive power, adopted from a Foucauldian concept of power, has to do with discourses underlying gender practices. The latter form of power is intimately present and does not necessarily involve institutionalised disciplines, such as in the earlier form of power (ibid.).

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<sup>4</sup> In later work, *Gender* (2002) and *Gender in World Perspective* (2009), R.W. Connell adds another structure: symbolism, culture and discourse. This structure basically incorporates the ways in which society discursively constructs genders and sexualities through a system of representations, including symbolism, language, as well as visual representations (Raewyn Connell 2009: 83–85; R.W. Connell 2002: 65–68). However, I tend to see this structure as constitutive in the previous three structures. The cinematic representations under my investigation are structured by the relations of power, production and intimacy. The taken-for-granted depiction of men as breadwinners, for instance, is shaped by a patriarchal gender relation of production, which requires men to provide a livelihood for their family.

The third structure relates to the gender relations of emotion, also known as cathexis. This structure has to do with the patterning of object-choice, desire and desirability; with the production of heterosexuality and homosexuality and the relationship between them; with the socially structured antagonism of gender (woman-hating, man-hating, self-hatred); with trust and distrust, jealousy and solidarity in marriages and other relationships; and with the emotional relationships involved in rearing children (R.W. Connell 1987: 97).

Generally, the patterning of emotional attachment is most notable as a set of prohibitions, such as the incest taboo, law against rape, age of consent, and homosexuality; yet, at the same time, the patterning also involves injunctions to love and develop relationship with ‘the right person’, as well as to find certain forms of femininity or masculinity more desirable in such a relationship (ibid.: 112).

I employed this three-structure model as my analytical framework to help me understand the complex processes of change to the gender order, which implicated masculinities in twenty-first-century Indonesia. The model allowed me to map the crisis tendencies of each structure, which reflect each structure’s internal tendencies towards change. It led me to trace the processes of change of gender relations in each structure, which may have developed and matured at different times. Internal contradictions within the structure of gender relations are key sites of gender politics. Indeed, as suggested by Raewyn Connell (2009: 138), the movements in gender politics follow the broad outlines of social divisions and interests defined in these structures of gender relations.

The general premise of this framework is that each structure of gender relations develops within itself internal contradictions which can undermine the accepted pattern of relations, and eventually force a change within the structure itself (ibid.: 90–91). Ultimately,

Inequalities construct interests (whether or not the interests are articulated). Those benefiting from the inequalities have an interest in defending them. Those who bear the costs have an interest in ending them (ibid.: 141).

At a particular moment in history, the crisis tendencies can no longer be offset and in turn, develop into an actual crisis of the gender order as a whole. It is at this moment of crisis that the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity is substantially eroded. Such an event is likely to provoke attempts to restore the legitimacy of the previous hegemonic masculinity or to reconfigure it (R.W. Connell 2005: 84). Supporters of hegemonic masculinity have to struggle more fiercely to defend the hegemony of the culturally exalted masculinity as emerging alternatives are more intensively sought and legitimated on various fronts. This struggle for hegemonic position during a gender-order crisis and in its wake is central to this thesis. I will explain in greater detail about the gender-order crisis in Indonesia which stimulated a more intensive search for an alternative ideal masculinity in Chapter 2.

This section elaborates the theory and analytical framework deployed in the thesis. I underscore the centrality of Connell's theorisation on masculinities in my pursuit of understanding the plurality and unequal social relations of masculinities, as well as between masculinities and femininities. In addition, I elaborate on the three-structure model framework which I deployed in my research to identify the crisis tendencies of each structure of gender relations, around which my research participants waged their struggles to reconfigure hegemonic masculinity. Eventually, I would like to conclude this section by reasserting that the plurality of masculinities and unequal relations among them are a crux for gender politics. They provide reasons for proponents of hegemonic masculinity to fiercely defend the established cultural ideal of masculinity. At the same time, they provide reasons for the opposition to delegitimise the cultural ideal and offer alternatives. It is this reinvigorated struggle for hegemonic masculinity in twenty-first-century Indonesia which is the main concern of this thesis.

## **Reel masculinities in the study of Indonesian gender politics**

In this section, I situate my research in the burgeoning studies of Indonesian gender politics and elaborate my goals. Existing literature on Indonesian gender politics mostly focuses on women, femininities and marginalised groups of genders and sexualities, with only a few studies on men and masculinities. Among the scant studies focusing on masculinities, most concentrate on the conventional arena of gender politics, particularly state policies at regional or national levels. My thesis offers an in-depth investigation of the gender politics involved in securing hegemonic masculinity in twenty-first-century Indonesia and treats commercial cinema as a crucial arena of such public gender politics.

Twenty-first-century Indonesian gender politics has been an important topic of discussion and debate among scholars. In fact, as stated by K. Robinson (2009: 164), gender politics has been an important arena of political struggle for securing state power since the turn of the new millennium. The major changes in the economy, politics and society that have taken place since the end of the second millennium arguably have motivated the burgeoning scholarship in Indonesian gender politics at this given time. Scholars such as Krishna Sen (2000), Boellstorff (2005a), Elizabeth Martyn (2005), Sharyn Davies (2005), Brenner (2006), Kate O'Shaughnessy (2009), Nelly van Doorn-Harder (2002); Pieterella van Doorn-Harder (2006), Kaleen Love (2007) and Suvianita Khanis (2013) have been discussing in which directions gender politics is leading and who the strong political actors involved in Indonesian gender politics are. Other scholars, such as Nursyahbani Katjasungkana and Saskia Wieringa (2003), Sharon Bessell (2004), Rachel Silvey (2004), Michele Ford and Lyn Parker (2008), Elizabeth Rhoads (2012), Sarah Shair-Rosenfield (2012), Ben Murtagh (2013), Stephen McNally, Jeffrey Grierson and Irwan Martua Hidayana (2015), and Ben Hilman (2017), discuss whose interests those political actors represent, and to whose advantage. The flourishing



Islamisation has also motivated scholars, such as Lily Munir (2005), Rachel Rinaldo (2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014), K. Robinson (2009, 2015, 2016), Wieringa (2015), Mirjam Lücking and Evi Eliyanah (2017), to assess the extent to which the increasingly visible phenomenon has shaped the trajectory of gender politics at this given time.

Yet, the focus on women, femininities and marginalised gender and sexualities is highly visible. Indeed, these studies have offered valuable insights. Evelyn Blackwood (2005) and Silvey (2006) have contributed to an understanding of the diversity and change in femininities as well as marginalised sexualities. Sen (2000), Boellstorff (2005), Khanis (2013), Rinaldo (2013) and Silvey (2014) have charted the multiple trajectories of personal and public gender politics of the patriarchal gender order's cost-bearer groups. In addition, Murtagh (2013) and McNally Grierson and Hidayana (2015) discuss the various platforms on which these groups are engaged in expressing their identities and political views on gender. Finally, Elmhirst (2002), Boellstorff (2004a), Brenner (2006), Davies (2016), Human Rights Watch (2016) and K. Robinson (2016) have highlighted the continued and intensifying repression as well as discrimination experienced by these groups despite the range of positive developments during the twenty-first century in Indonesia.

The focus on women and marginalised genders and sexualities is a logical consequence because they are arguably the immediate cost bearers of the patriarchal gender order. Men, on the contrary, are the recipients of 'patriarchal dividend' privileges that accrue to all men as a group by virtue of their masculine gender. The struggle of women and marginalised groups, mostly inspired by the feminist movement, has been vital in forcing changes towards an equal patterning of gender relations in Indonesia. The struggle has been more intensified since the turn of the millennium. Thus, it is a logical consequence of this development that scholarly engagement in

gender politics tends to be drawn into the struggle. In fact, like elsewhere, ‘gender politics’ is almost a code-word for these groups’ struggles for equality.

Men and masculinities are not entirely absent from the above studies. In fact, it is impossible to talk about women and femininities in isolation without making reference to men and masculinities. However, there has been a limited attempt to shift the focus to men and masculinities. This is the gap which my thesis aims to bridge. Most of the abovementioned studies on gender politics tend to overlook men as a diverse group, and masculinities as irreducible to the culturally exalted form, which seems stubbornly unchanged. Nilan (2009a) and Elmhirst (2007), who are both pioneers in the studies of masculinities in Indonesia, agree that although the focus on women and femininities are by all means necessary, these studies have made men and masculinities remain unmarked categories or at best assumed to be one-dimensional. Doing so eventually will lead to a lack of understanding about the masculine segment of gender politics at this particular moment in Indonesian history.

I argue that exploring ‘the masculine half’ of gender politics is imperative because men have different experiences in their relations to the gender ideals established in any particular society in a specific historical moment. Specifically, they establish complex social relations with the hegemonic masculinity. Michael Kaufman argues:

Though men hold power and reap privileges that come with our sex [*sic*], that power is tainted ... men’s social power is the source of individual power and privilege, but as we shall see, it is also the source of the individual experience of pain, fear and alienation (1999: 59).

Men are subjected to a paradox of the patriarchal gender order. Thus, men can also be the cost-bearer group in this same patriarchal gender order, and masculinities are not only diverse but also historically dynamic. Consequently, as Pierre Bourdieu suggested, in order to understand the effects of the patriarchal gender order, it is

imperative to accompany the ongoing struggle to free women from masculine domination with an effort to expose how the same structure of domination also affects men (2001: 114). My thesis, thus, offers an alternative perspective of gender politics by exploring the struggle to replace the existing hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia in the period marked by a gender-order crisis. It provides an analysis around which aspects of the struggle were waged by certain political agents—in this case filmmakers—and how these political agents negotiated with the competing forces mobilised to counter their political moves in undermining hegemonic masculinity.

Among the scant scholarship on Indonesian gender politics which focuses on masculinities, attention is barely directed to the struggle for hegemonic masculinity through popular culture. These studies approach the subject matter generally through an anthropological lens ( Boellstorff 2004a; K. Robinson 2015; van Wichelen 2009), a sociological perspective (Nilan 2009; Nilan and Demartoto 2012; Nilan, Demartoto and Broom 2013) research. These studies are insightful in revealing the strategies deployed by various interest groups in the struggle for hegemony. Boellstorff (2004a) and van Wichelen (2009) underscore how Islam has been used by different factions to legitimise their respective ideal version of masculinity and for that reason also to subordinate/marginalise other masculinities. K. Robinson (2015) also highlights the way that the heightened Islamisation has waged a series of masculinist backlashes against movements for gender equality in post-authoritarian Indonesia, so they can achieve their eventual goal—securing state power. At a personal level of gender politics, Nilan (2009) delineates that generally the hegemonic form of *bapakism* has lost its appeal among Indonesian youth in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Indonesian youth currently live under different sets of pressures compared to the previous generation of Indonesian men. Economic pressure, especially after the economic crisis, and the distribution of alternative images from the media, especially hypermasculinity, have made youths

critically negotiate the older hegemonic form of masculinity to better answer contemporary pressures.

I dwell on a nonconventional yet poignant arena of gender politics where a fiercer and more visible struggle for hegemony is taking place—popular culture. Popular culture, of which cinema is part, must not be treated as simply as a by-product of commercial commodities. Instead, it should be seen as a more complex arena of meaning making and exchanging. In that sense, popular culture is ‘a site of struggle between the “resistance” of subordinate groups and the forces of “incorporation” operating in the interests of dominant groups (Storey 2009: 10). Specifically, I will demonstrate that commercial cinema is rife with gender politics, in this case to secure hegemonic masculinity. Ideological battles to contest or defend hegemonic masculinity take place behind, on and around the cinema screen. I examine the filmmakers’ strategies and compromises in challenging the hegemonic ideal and promoting an alternative ideal masculinity.

I chose Indonesian commercial cinema as my field site in which to explore the struggle for hegemonic masculinity; first because it can be an unequal playing field for filmmakers intending to challenge hegemonic masculinity. Filmmakers as political agents do not hold absolute power in determining what can and cannot be represented on the silver screen. As I stated earlier, they have to deal with other factions who may have different interests but have more power over what they can do behind the scenes. The struggle to reconcile the different interests and navigate the unequal power relations behind and around the screen is the crux for the politics that I am interested in.

Furthermore, the pressure for profit making in commercial cinema is immense, unlike in independent cinema. The production of commercial films generally relies on funding provided by profit-oriented film companies and investors. Film investment itself is categorised as a high-risk venture because the profit projection is often very

difficult to predict (Smith 2015). In addition, the distribution of commercial films relies on profit-driven cinema theatres and other commercial distribution outlets.

Consequently, filmmakers working in this particular arena are burdened by the pressure to make their films sell well in commercial film markets and not stir unwanted controversy and censorship which potentially hamper the sales of films. Thus, filmmakers are generally compelled to make their works 'political but safe' (Putut Widjanarko, personal interview, 10 March 2014). Therefore, filmmakers, as political agents, should carefully negotiate between, on one hand, the profit-making pressure, which generally demands conformity with the dominant norms, including those of gender, and on the other hand the political intention of critiquing dominant social constructions of gender. My thesis dwells on this area of nonconventional gender politics, examining how filmmakers negotiate the tension in the nexus between political intentions and the profit-making mission in order to be able to stage their political struggle on screen.

Second, when films are successful in penetrating the commercial markets, the distribution of images of gender through cinematic representations can reach a far wider audience, unbound by geographical boundaries. It can lead to the creation of a new popular trend. In some cases, these trends are then adapted into other forms of popular culture, including fashion, lifestyle, television, music and literature. The adaptation is less likely to take place in reverse. This is unlike the images of men and masculinities in the print media, as investigated by Suzie Handajani (2010, 2012), and literature, as examined by Marshall Clark (2010). For example, the popularity of Rangga in *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* (What's up with Cinta?, 2002, Rudy Soedjarwo) was more influential as an alternative ideal masculinity than male models gracing Indonesian men's lifestyle magazines, which promoted configurations of masculine gender practices around the period of the film's release. Furthermore, barely any magazine published and sold in

Indonesia, including men's lifestyle magazines, has a readership of more than 700,000 or published more than 300,000 copies of each edition (Kasali 2007). *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* attracted more than 2.5 million moviegoers. *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* was adapted into a television series in 2003, and an advertisement campaign for a social media platform in 2014. It led to a reprinting of Sjuman Djaya's drama script *Aku* (I), first published in 1987, which was read by Rangga in the film (Anjani 2014). In short, the competing images of masculinities in cinema are likely to be more visible compared to other forms of popular culture. After all, as suggested by John Beynon, cinematic representations of masculinities are often visually more enticing, carefully packaged, and frequently idealised; they tend to have a more powerful impact than flesh-and-blood men (2002: 64).

One scholar who is concerned with representations of masculinities in Indonesian cinema is Clark (2004, 2008, 2010). While not specifically locating his research in gender politics and rather sporadically focusing on only a few films, Clark's analysis offers valuable insights on the intensifying challenges against the hegemonic construction of ideal masculinity in Indonesian cinema in the post-authoritarian era. While Clark focuses on the end product, I trace the ideological battle surrounding masculinities behind, on and around the cinema screen. In addition to examining the film texts, I explore the intricate and complex political struggles engaged in by filmmakers as they produce and attempt to legitimate certain alternative ideal masculinities. In other words, I am interested in the political processes which make a certain cinematic representation of an ideal masculinity possible to produce and distribute at a given time.

I examine the ongoing struggle within Indonesian cinema to visually represent what it means to be a masculine man in contemporary Indonesia. During the period 2000 to 2014, the legitimacy of *bapakism* masculinity as the hegemonic masculine ideal

was seriously undermined by a myriad of emerging alternatives in various fronts, including cinema. Not only did I find *bapakism* masculinity to be represented as less desirable in many commercial films, but a number of filmmakers also shared with me their criticism of it. Innovations and experimentations on cinematic representations of alternative ideal masculinities were intensified during the period in question. The struggle to legitimise the emerging alternatives was increasingly visible and some of them became strong contenders for the hegemonic position. This was a different environment from what Sen (1994) encountered in the 1970s and 1980s, in which commercial cinema was mostly occupied with representations of hegemonic masculinity and others complicit with it. Thus, an in-depth study into commercial cinema as a platform for the gender politics involved in securing hegemonic masculinity is timely and significant.

### **Filmmakers and the voices of the Indonesian middle classes**

Indonesian commercial filmmakers' struggles have become a significant area of study since they represent the diverse voices of the urban middle classes. Like any other countries, the middle classes are the lynchpin of political movements, including that of gender. My study offers a glimpse into the unconventional political moves carried out by factions within the Indonesian middle classes. Indeed, the discussion I offer cannot represent the whole gamut of Indonesia's middle classes. However, it will enrich the existing studies of Indonesia's gender politics at this particular moment in history by providing insights into the nuances of political expressions among middle-class Indonesians. This section defines my use of the term 'middle class' and scrutinises the significance of understanding Indonesia's middle-class members' unconventional politics through cinema. I argue that commercial filmmakers, representing factions of Indonesian middle classes, hold vital roles in shaping which forms of masculinity can

and cannot be idealised on- and off-screen at this given time. Yet, it is also worth questioning the potential middle-class bias in such cases.

In this thesis, I define ‘middle class’ as a social category characterised not exclusively by financial capital. Indeed, financial capital is an important defining feature of middle-class identity, yet it does not explain the particular lifestyle adopted by its members. I adopt the definition offered by Ariel Heryanto which stresses that members of the middle class are generally characterised as being economically distinguishable from both the working classes and from the elites (1999: 28).<sup>5</sup> They tend to reside in urban areas, have modern education qualifications and occupations; and certain cultural tastes, which manifest most clearly in consumer culture (*ibid.*). This definition is in line with Gerry van Klinken’s proposition that social class is not merely about financial income or consumption levels; instead, it is a political concept supposed to be able to explain different political behaviour between the rich and the poor over matters of common good (2014: 2). In this thesis, I expand the notion of political behaviour beyond electoral politics. I explore the use of political strategies in undermining the established hegemonic masculinity in twenty-first-century Indonesia. I use the plural form of the term to acknowledge the diversity within the category—middle classes.

Indonesian commercial filmmakers are part of the burgeoning middle classes. First, most of the filmmakers working in Indonesian cinema are urban based and have a relatively stable financial background. There is no exact figure of the number of commercial Indonesian filmmakers there are at this given time, yet, I can confirm that they are mostly based in Jakarta. It is hard, though not impossible, to find commercial

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<sup>5</sup> The elite class generally profits from the existing social order by virtue of their wealth and bureaucratic power (Heryanto 1999: 28).



films emanating from other cities in Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many of the filmmakers are not originally Jakartans, but their work with Jakarta-based film production houses often requires them to reside in the greater metropolitan area for the sake of efficiency. Moreover, it is highly likely that commercial filmmakers, like other filmmakers, come from middle-class or upper-class families. Of more than 30 filmmakers I met during my fieldwork, they generally came from families with stable financial backgrounds which facilitated their higher degree training, in film or other fields. The notable feminist filmmaker I mentioned earlier, Nia Dinata, was born in Jakarta and came from a wealthy family.<sup>7</sup> Another example is Salman Aristo, a prolific script writer and director, who was born and raised in Jakarta. His parents were teachers (Personal interview, 11 April 2014). These filmmakers are representative of the voices of the Indonesian middle classes who are actively engaged in politics, including gender politics.

Second, commercial filmmakers tend to display lifestyle and cultural tastes which distinguish them from elite and lower-class people. A lifestyle that stands out and defines their middle-class identity among filmmakers is an awareness of socio-political and cultural issues regarding gender equality. Such lifestyles in turn shape their cultural tastes, including their film consumption and filmmaking. Filmmakers who have a background in gender activism—such as Nia Dinata, Shanty Harmayn and Lucky Kuswandi and their films—became important reference points among my research participants when we discussed representations of gender in Indonesian cinema. These activist filmmakers have set the benchmark for other Indonesian filmmakers in producing alternative visual representations of gender, both masculinity and femininity.

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<sup>6</sup> Between 2000 and 2015, there were barely any films produced in provincial towns other than Jakarta which were able to penetrate major cinema theatre chains. In 2016, there was one which was finally able to penetrate the commercial film market: *Uang Panai' = Maha(l)r* (Dowry), directed by Asril Sani and Halim G Safia. The comedy was very popular in its home city before finally securing distribution contracts with major exhibition companies.

<sup>7</sup> Dinata's father, Dicky Iskandar Dinata, was a successful banker during the New Order. Her grandfather was an inaugurated independence hero, Otto Iskandar Dinata.

I was privileged to have the experience of interacting with and having intensive discussions with these filmmakers and watching the ways that their films were constructed—as the new ‘cool’ for other contemporary Indonesian filmmakers (see Chapter 3).

Furthermore, most contemporary Indonesian filmmakers received higher education training, either domestically or overseas. It is usually during the period of pursuing higher education that these filmmakers learned about gender equality. Notable, feminist filmmaker, Nia Dinata, in an interview with me, claimed that she began to question gender equality and racist depictions in popular culture when she was pursuing her undergraduate degree in media in the United States. Dinata said:

When I was taking a course called *Minority Literature*, I learned about unequal gender relations which took a toll on women and the LGBT community. The course has substantially shaped the way I see representations of gender in films and other forms of popular culture. Well, it has shaped the way I see things generally (Personal interview, 28 May 2018).

The generation that is active in Indonesian cinema in the twenty-first century mostly consists of young people who did not experience filmmaking under the New Order authoritarian regime. Thus, this latter generation is often referred as the ‘new generation’ of Indonesian filmmakers (Sasono 2012: 122). Having said that, these filmmakers may navigate the cinemascapes differently, tailoring their gender politics into works from the older generation. In this way, they do not have to undergo multiple layers of censorship but may have to face more rampant and random public censorship. They may have more varied outlets for distribution but still face the same distribution monopoly.

Who are these filmmakers speaking to us through their work in commercial cinema? In the context of Indonesian cinema of the twenty-first century, the demography of the immediate consumers of commercial films is dominated by young,

urban, middle-class consumers. This is mostly due to the urban-centred locations of cinema theatres and the relatively expensive price of a cinema ticket. The film-watching culture in twenty-first-century Indonesia has shifted since the arrival of Cineplex and the increasing significance of a single film exhibition chain, Cinema 21, in the late 1980s. In 2007, the company managed 370 theatre screens across the nation, concentrated in big cities and more than half located in malls in greater Jakarta (Sasono 2008: xi). The arrival of cineplex in Indonesia in the late 1980s, as suggested by Syahmardan Ardan (1992), gradually made the conventional cinema theatres that offered a large space but a single screen out of fashion and soon out of business. Hence, film watching has become part of an urban middle-class lifestyle.

Furthermore, cinema going is becoming more of an exclusive urban middle-class practice with the relatively expensive ticket price. Based on my fieldwork field note, to watch a film in a small Cineplex in Malang, East Java, cost around Rp. 35,000 (US \$2.6 on weekdays) and Rp. 50,000 (US \$3.7 on weekends and public holidays) in 2014. The minimum monthly wage in the region that particular year was around Rp. 1.6 million (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Malang, 2018). This figure means that the price of a ticket on a weekend is almost equal to the wage earned for a day job, which makes it a luxury for the lower classes. Certainly, the price in Jakarta and other big cities in Indonesia was higher than in Malang. Together with the urban-centred locations, we can discern that the immediate consumers of films are the middle classes, who can afford to buy cinema tickets and make their way to the fancy shopping centres where the film theatres are often located.

Consequently, to be a successful bankroller, a film's contents must be acceptable and attractive to this major segment of consumers. According to Garin Nugroho and Dyna Herlina, for an Indonesian audience to decide which film they want to watch, the story is the most important factor, in addition to the popularity of the film director(s)

and actors (2015: 308). Therefore, in order to increase the potential investment return and profit, filmmakers' creative endeavours should aim at appealing to the above-mentioned demography. Thus, it is common to find that the story is urban-centred, mostly in Jakarta and its greater regions, and presents characters who are young and professional, showcasing middle-class aspirations and lifestyle. The middle-class lifestyle generally includes but is not limited to urban residence, higher education, cosmopolitan outlooks, as well as possession of consumer products and cultural tastes which distinguish them from the lower class but at the same time represent a critique of the upper class.

As in other political struggles in Indonesia and globally, the urban-based middle classes play significant roles in gender politics in the twenty-first century. This is often the case globally in any form of politics. As reinforced by Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heeler (2006: 496), in their research about the political behaviour of the Indian middle classes, in a country where the bourgeoisie has not achieved hegemonic status and the working-class formation has been weak and fragmented, the middle classes play significant roles in politics. Moreover, according to Michael Kimmel and Michael Kaufman, the middle classes are generally the groups that are feeling most besieged in the face of the widespread changes to the conventional gender order, and they have the resources to fight the siege (1994: 262–63). In the intensified gender politics in twenty-first-century Indonesia, the urban-based, educated middle classes have been the main participants in almost any public controversies and debates regarding gender, such as those surrounding the legalisation of the Anti-Pornography Bill (see M. Budiman 2011; Rinaldo 2013), and the public debate on polygamy (Nurmila 2009; van Wichelen 2009). Thus, we can expect to encounter various forms of masculinities representing the concerns, anxieties, desires and frustrations of the Indonesian middle-classes to be competing for legitimacy in Indonesian commercial cinema.

Reflecting on the internal diversity within the categories of the middle-classes, I did not expect to encounter singular political views, including those on gender, among Indonesian filmmakers. Just like other members of the middle classes, they represent diverse political views. In fact, as argued by Manneke Budiman (2011), various elements of the Indonesian middle classes tend to react in different ways to social and cultural issues, gender included, which emerged in post–New Order Indonesia. Such divergent views reveal the category’s internal complexity and heterogeneity in terms of moral and political views. According to Heryanto (1999: 27) each segment of the Indonesian middle classes may provide a different political response at a particular moment in history in the complex and dynamic process of democratisation. Consequently, understanding the political responses of filmmakers working in commercial cinema has provided me with insights into their various responses towards the intensified struggle for hegemonic masculinity and gender politics in general. In writing this thesis, I focused my investigation on filmmakers who intended to undermine the hegemony of *bapakism* through their work in commercial cinema.

By claiming that filmmaking is a middle-class practice, I do not wish to undermine the flourishing movement among marginalised segments, mostly the lower class, of Indonesian society to empower themselves politically. The movement, Cinema Lovers Community of Purbalingga spearheaded by Bowo Leksono, aims at civil society education through cinema. Eric Sasono (2017) terms this bottom-up political movement as ‘pedestrian cinema’. Katinka van Heeren (2012) has also warned film scholars not to overlook this flourishing movement. Yet, such a movement is still in its infancy and the hegemony of middle-class cinema culture remains strong. As also acknowledged by Sasono (2017), the emergence of a bottom-up political movement through pedestrian cinema has not changed the cinema culture in Indonesia entirely, although their presence and role in empowering marginalised groups can no longer be disregarded.

Thus, the middle-classness of Indonesian cinema, especially commercial cinema, remains a strong feature of Indonesian cinema culture in the twenty-first century. Eventually, this middle-classness of commercial cinema can be an entry point to understanding the diverse political expressions of Indonesian middle-classes towards changes in the gender order during the period from 2000 to 2014.

### **Research methods**

I used a cultural studies approach to analyse the intensified struggle for hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia. Cultural studies acknowledge the importance of media and culture in the maintenance and reproduction of societies. Forms of media and culture, such as television, film, music, magazines, and advertising, offer role and gender models, fashion hints, lifestyle imageries and icons of personality reflecting proper and improper behaviour, moral messages and ideological conditioning, and often times sugar-coats social and political ideas (Kellner and Durham 2006: ix). This is the point at which I depart from many other scholars who previously examined Indonesian gender politics. Cultural studies have allowed me to explore commercial cinema as an arena of political struggle for hegemonic masculinity. It allowed me to examine cinematic representations as important political tools to contest the legitimacy of the existing cultural ideal masculinity.

My main reason for deploying a cultural studies approach to the study of gender politics, particularly the struggle for hegemonic masculinity, is that it has allowed me to explore the politics pursued in popular culture. Cultural studies recognises that popular representations, including those in the cinema, are cultural products which are produced, circulated and consumed in the context of uneven power relations between agents, that are themselves partly shaped by the dominant social constructions of gender. Simon During asserts:

[C]ultural objects are simultaneously ‘texts’ (that is, they have meaning) *and events and experiences*, produced out of and thrown back into, a social force field constituted unevenly by power flows, status hierarchies and opportunities for many kinds of transportation, identification and pleasure (2005: 6).

In other words, cultural studies allow researchers to view commercial cinema as more than a cultural product dedicated for mere pleasure. Instead, commercial cinema is also an arena of struggle through which to channel certain political view(s), including those of gender. It is an arena of struggle to contest or defend certain social constructions and beliefs. In the case of my research, commercial cinema is a field where the struggle to challenge and defend the hegemonic ideal and legitimise alternative ideals can also take place. In that sense, commercial cinema is a site of struggle where hegemonic masculinity is established and maintained by the dominant group, and also where subordinate masculinities are negotiated. Commercial cinema is not an arena which is won once and for all by the dominant group espousing hegemonic masculinity. In fact, in contemporary Indonesia, cinema is one of the key arenas of struggle for hegemonic masculinity.

Certainly, it is not my intention to suggest that gender representations in films mirror social reality. Yet, cinematic representations and social reality display a dialectical relationship. Cinematic representations are not produced in a social vacuum. They are partly inspired by their contemporary social reality. As Heryanto suggested, intended or otherwise, commercially produced films constitute a collective statement about what is considered ‘normal’ (for that matter what is considered ‘not normal’: the odd, the humorous, the attractive, or scary) within a particular state-regulated social setting (2014: 51). Consequently, researching masculinity in commercial cinema will yield an equally rich analysis of gender politics.

In order to glean the historical dynamics of the representations of ideal masculinities, I watched films produced during the New Order (1966–1998) and after its

demise. I watched around 20 films produced during this time. I also watched four films produced during the period of economic and political crises in 1997–1999. In addition, I watched around 60 Indonesian films produced between 2000 and 2015. I watched most of the films in 2013 prior to doing my fieldwork in order to equip me with information on the representations of gender as well as any controversies surrounding their production or distribution. By doing so, I could glean the historical dynamics of the cinematic representations of ideal masculinity.

I use the Indonesian filmmakers' struggle to legitimise a 'new man' masculinity as an alternative ideal as my magnifying lens to understand the broader gender politics of hegemonic masculinity staged in Indonesian cinema. The 'new man' is a hybrid configuration which incorporates gender practices which have been exclusively associated with femininity, in addition to other conventional masculine features. The 'new man' is characterised by emotional sensitivity, a willingness to compromise breadwinning roles and to share day-to-day domestic and caring responsibilities, paying attention to fashion and physical performance, and fostering equal gender relations of power (Beynon 2002: 100). The 'new man' first became popular in the American and British media and popular culture of the 1980s. It was promoted as an alternative to the older Western hegemonic masculinity: machismo masculinity (Beynon 2002; Chapman 1988; Gill 2003; MacDonald 2007).<sup>8</sup>

Following the filmmakers' journey to legitimise the 'new man' became an important method of investigation into Indonesia's gender politics staged in Indonesian

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<sup>8</sup> There are two strands of this 'new man' masculinity: the nurturer and the narcissist. The nurturer strand emphasises men's emotional sensitivity and involvement in day-to-day domestic and caring duties, while the narcissist emphasises emotional sensitivity and fashionable looks (Beynon 2002: 100). While the narcissist strand was mostly inspired by the expansion of fashion to appeal to male customers, the emergence of the nurturer strand was arguably stimulated by men's reaction to the social change and changing gender roles evoked by feminism (*ibid.*). The nurturer strand of the 'new man' has since been given weight by political leaders. One example would be Barack Obama's personalisation campaign which shows him displaying a "softer" form of masculinity, complete with "hands-on" fatherhood experiences', which contrasts him with more macho political leaders such as Vladimir Putin and Boris Yeltsin (A. Smith 2016: 27).



cinema in the twenty-first century firstly because the ‘new man’s’ features contrast with the *bapakism* ideal in many ways. The gender practices, personalities and culture constituting this particular ‘new man’ ideal challenge the features of *bapakism*.

*Bapakism* generally emphasises men’s ability to be family breadwinners and authoritative patron leaders of a family collectivity. *Bapakism* discourages men from being involved in day-to-day domestic and caring duties and emphasises them being more focused on their breadwinning role. Also, unlike the ‘new man’ ideal, *bapakism* does not condone equal power relations between men and women in the context of the household. In terms of the gender relations of emotion, ‘new man’ masculinity is open to homosexuality, while *bapakism* valorises heteronormativity. Thus, the struggle to legitimise ‘new man’ masculinity provides rich insights in to which masculinity features have become more acceptable and which ones are still largely rejected in screen representations during the period under investigation and why. After all, what can and cannot be visually screened in cinema is highly political and closely linked to off-screen politics.

Moreover, the ‘new man’ stood out as a formidable challenge to the hegemonic ideal in films produced between 2000 and 2014. A proto ‘new man’ alternative masculinity promoted through Rangga, the male protagonist of *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* became a legitimate alternative ideal as the film soared to popularity in 2002. Rangga’s masculinity featured emotional sensitivity, interest in literature, disavowal of masculine aggression and competitive sports, willingness to share domestic work, in addition to a steadfast belief in democracy. Yet, this masculinity was not able to totally depart from the authoritative male/patron/leader norm—a quality constantly challenged by his love interest, Cinta. Rangga’s emotional sensitivity, rejection of masculine aggression and willingness to share domestic work were then reproduced by other cinematic representations of ideal masculinities. Moreover, the gay ‘new man’ in the *Arisan!*

franchise who supported more fluid and equal gender relations of production and power, as well as embodying a subversive form of gender relations of emotion has been lauded by many scholars, such as Maimunah Munir (2011), Tilman Baumgärtel (2012), Fatimah Rony (2014) and Murtagh (2013) as the contemporary canon in representing gay men in more positive light, despite there being a few reservations (see Chapter 6).

I assume as filmmakers promote alternative ideals which undermine the prominent gender practices that constitute the most culturally exalted forms of masculinity, they have to negotiate their different views of what constitutes an ideal masculinity with the long-held ‘common sense’ cultural ideal. It is their interest in projecting an alternative like the ‘new man’ and their negotiation with other parties involved in the production of such an alternative image of the masculine ideal which are my main research interests, in addition to how they actually cinematically depict the alternative ideal in relation to the hegemonic ideal on screen. Taking into account the ‘new man’s’ popularity, I question further which direction the filmmakers aim to steer the gender debate amidst the gender-order crisis in Indonesia and why.

I combined critical textual analysis of selected film texts, field research and interface ethnography to collect data for this research. Reading the texts allowed me to look at how relations between multiple forms of masculinity, as well as between masculinities and femininities were portrayed on screen. Furthermore, reading the film texts in context allowed me to analyse why certain representations of masculinity and gender relations were able to be produced at that particular moment in history. I specifically selected five films to be analysed in this thesis. These films clearly promote the ‘new man’ masculinity as an alternative ideal that renders *bapakism* obsolete. I again watched the selected films and other films which are arguably connected to the production of these five during my analysis stage. I conducted discourse analysis on the

film texts to elicit the narrative strategies, such as plot, framing of gender issues and characterisation that were deployed in promoting the ‘new man’.

I conducted field research to explore filmmakers’ experiences during the production and circulation of images of alternative ideal masculinities. In 2014, I spent six months in Jakarta, where most commercial films are produced and where most filmmakers working for commercial cinema reside. I conducted semi-structured personal interviews with 27 filmmakers, mainly producers, directors and scriptwriters, whose works featured the ‘new man’ masculinity. I also interviewed two actors. I maintained correspondence with some of them to obtain further information on certain aspects. I conducted another personal interview with a producer in April 2016 via video call to follow up on some information I had gathered previously from other filmmakers. Examining the production and circulation of cinematic images of ideal masculinities, as narrated by the filmmakers in personal interviews and publicly available statements, afforded me rich data on the gender politics behind, on and around the screen. These insights were valuable in developing an understanding of personal and structural levels of engagement with particular forms of masculinity among filmmakers and how such forms could shape the production of certain representations of masculinity in films.

I combined interviews with filmmakers with a more general interface ethnography method to unpack the political struggle that shaped the representations of masculinities in cinema. As experienced by John T. Caldwell (2008) and Sherry Ortner (2010, 2013) in their research among Hollywood film communities, I felt the need to experience live and relatively natural encounters with the selected filmmakers. Yet, due to their busy schedules and the difficulties associated with obtaining permits to be on a film set, such opportunities were impossible during my field research. Thus, following Ortner’s innovation (2010, 2013), I complemented my interviews with interface ethnography by attending events in which the target participants interface with the

public (Ortner 2013: 26). In my case, I participated in special screenings and film festivals. I did so in order to have more opportunities to interact with the filmmakers. After special film screenings, the principal filmmakers usually discussed their creative processes and the film's distribution. In film festivals, not only did similar opportunities present themselves, but I also had the opportunity to explore further contemporary representations of ideal masculinity in films that had been selected to compete for prestigious awards.

Additional material was acquired from interviews with activists in feminist women's organisations and the men's movement. Their insights enriched my analysis of the dynamics of masculinities off screen and possible representations on screen. During my fieldwork, I spent roughly two months travelling to Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Semarang to pursue this part of the research. I interviewed seven activists, three of whom were active in the Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru (New Men's Alliance), a profeminist men's movement established in 2009 to support the Indonesian feminist movement to promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination. The female activists I interviewed were also involved in the establishment of Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru. Five of the filmmakers were either directly or indirectly connected to Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru. It was from them that I could confirm my hypothesis that 'new man' masculinity was a significant alternative to *bapakism* not only on-screen but also off-screen.

Finally, I also gathered information from media publications and other related sources publicly available on the internet and social media. I collected material concerning the production and circulation of films from news reports. Prior to the release of a film, filmmakers and the film production companies involved usually released press statements, as part of the marketing campaign for the film. I also gathered news reports concerning the production and circulation of the selected films, including

any controversy surrounding the production process. Unlike press releases, these news reports capture incidents, controversies, as well as positive credits for the films. At times, they incorporate filmmakers' and other stakeholders' responses to films. In addition, I gathered information from interviews with filmmakers that had been conducted by the media. Publicly available film reviews and criticisms were also valuable data which provided me with insights into how certain films were received by this critical segment of the audience.

These methods of data collection yielded abundant material on the gender politics engaged by filmmakers in their attempts to reconfigure hegemonic masculinity. My discourse analysis on film texts, interviews and other additional material helped me to explore the filmmakers' strategies and compromises in challenging hegemonic masculinity and promoting an alternative ideal masculinity.

## **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion.

The following is a brief overview of each chapter, excluding the introduction.

Moving on from the introductory segment of this thesis, in Chapter 2 I discuss the socio-economic and political background of the era. I only briefly discuss this off-screen social, economic and political background in Chapter 1. Considering the complex situations underlying the search for alternative ideals of masculinity in Indonesia at that given time, I take the liberty of exploring it in more detail. In doing so I provide an understanding of the situatedness of the filmmakers' political struggles against the hegemonic masculinity ideal. Employing R.W. Connell's three-structure framework, I map the trajectory of the gender-order crisis in Indonesia at that time and explore its implications for hegemonic masculinity—*bapakism*. I argue, in the first instance, that the economic and political crises that emerged towards the end of the twentieth century sped up the maturation of the internal contradictions within the three

structures of gender relations in Indonesia's gender order. I also argue that the gender-order crisis eventually triggered, on one hand, more fervent oppositions to any overthrow of hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, the gender-order crisis also motivated various interest groups to defend hegemonic masculinity. It is against this background that Indonesian filmmakers' struggle to undermine the legitimacy of hegemonic *bapakism* should be situated.

Theoretically, in Chapter 2, I depart from the common use of 'masculinity in crisis' or 'crisis of masculinity' that appears in the flourishing scholarship of Indonesian gender politics, especially among scholars working on the politics of masculinity. Adopting R.W. Connell's concept of 'gender order crisis' (2005), I argue that locating a crisis of masculinity is likely to overlook the complexity of the process of change within the overall gender order. Crises which affect masculinities as well as femininities are not accidental. Instead, 'crisis' is a process which is caused by the inability of the system to accommodate its internal contradictions any longer. As such, the crisis not only affects the dominant cultural gender ideals, but also other masculinities and femininities subordinated to them. Consequently, locating a crisis in the gender order eventually allows researchers like myself to explore the reinvigorated struggle for hegemonic masculinity and the complex process of realignment within the gender order.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the broad implications of the gender-order crisis on Indonesian cinema. I offer a broad overview of how the gender-order crisis crept into the structure of Indonesian cinema and forced changes in cinematic representations of gender and sexualities. I question how new avenues for both political engagement and restraints opened up spaces for commercial filmmakers to innovate and experiment with alternative gender ideals on screen. I demonstrate that the gender-order crisis pervaded Indonesian cinema during the 2000–2014 period. I identify two major forces significantly shaping the directions of gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema at

that time. They are Islamisation and women's cinema. On one hand these pressure groups developed into strong forces of change within the structure of Indonesian cinema as well as on the cinematic representations of genders and sexualities. Yet, on the other, they deepened public anxiety and moral panic concerning gender and sexualities. In this chapter, I pre-empt the discussion in the following three chapters on the internal gender politics within Indonesian cinema which filmmakers had to deal with as they staged their political struggles on screen.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 discuss the filmmakers' struggles in undermining hegemonic masculinity through the idealisation of an alternative masculinity, the 'new man', which subverts its most pertinent gender practices: breadwinning, authoritative leadership and heterosexuality. Using R.W. Connell's three-structure framework to map the filmmakers' resistance, the three chapters offer insights into the gender politics involved in replacing the existing hegemonic ideal with an alternative which has the possibility of better equipping Indonesian men navigate the changing landscape of gender relations at this particular moment of history.

Chapter 4 explores the filmmakers' struggles to reconfigure hegemonic masculinity around the gender relations of production. I argue that the filmmakers waged their political struggles around the male-breadwinner norm and men's share of day-to-day domestic and caring duties; yet, this struggle was cast and in the interests of middle-class professionals. Through the filmmakers' struggle to legitimise a 'new man' which emphasises more fluid gender relations of production, as an alternative ideal in *7/24* (Seven Days/Twenty Four Hours, 2014, Fajar Nugros) and *Hijab* (Veil, 2015, Hanung Bramantyo), I demonstrate that filmmakers had to negotiate between two poles: the immense pressure to depict more fluid gender relations of production and the pressure of maintaining the breadwinning men/home-making ideal, which had given weight to the hegemony of *bapakism*. Yet, the struggle to legitimise the 'new man' also

shows that this political struggle for hegemonic masculinity was focused on the interests of middle-class professionals, rather than the lower classes.

Chapter 5 examines the filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemonic masculinity around the gender relations of power. In this chapter, as my analytical lens I used the filmmakers' struggle to promote a non-authoritative Muslim 'new man' in Islamic-themed films, especially *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman with a Keffiyeh on Her Neck, 2009, Hanung Bramantyo), one of the few Islamic-themed films which problematises men's authoritative patron leadership in the public and domestic spheres. Islamisation has been the single most visible feature of Indonesian politics, economy and culture in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Coinciding with the decline of men's authority in the public sphere, due to the surge of women into public-sphere roles, the heightened Islamisation that occurred from 2000 to 2014 triggered an intensive use of literal interpretations of Islamic texts to defend men's authority and patron leadership especially in the domestic sphere. This chapter seeks to understand how filmmakers tapped into this Islamisation and gender politics as they staged their resistance to the existing hegemonic masculinity. First, I demonstrate that there is new hope in the cinematic representations of an ideal masculinity. The filmmakers attempted to offer cinematic representations of a religiously justifiable alternative ideal masculinity encouraging men to treat women as equal partners in both the public and domestic spheres. Unfortunately, as my second argument shows, the filmmakers' struggle was biased in favour of the middle classes. The idealisation of an alternative masculinity heavily rested on a male Muslim protagonist who was urban-based and highly educated, while rural-based, less educated men who were graduates of traditionalist religious education institutions were 'othered'.

In Chapter 6, I examine the filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemonic masculinity around the gender relations of emotion. The established structure of the



gender relations of emotion is heteronormative. Heterosexuality has thus been a significant gender practice defining ideal masculinity in Indonesia. From 2000 to 2014, civil society movements put immense pressure on the need for formal recognition of the rights of non-heteronormative individuals. Yet, counter arguments against such progressive movements were also prevalent on various fronts. In this chapter, I develop my analysis of the filmmakers' struggles to promote the gay strand of the 'new man' as a legitimate alternative ideal masculinity through *Arisan!* (The Gathering, 2003, 2011, Nia Dinata), the first Indonesian film which celebrates and promotes a gay masculinity as a legitimate alternative ideal. I offer two arguments.

First, I demonstrate that filmmakers must make aesthetics, narrative and distribution compromises in order to stage any subversion against men's heterosexuality on the silver screen. On the one hand the compromises made by the filmmakers indicate that it was possible to portray resistance openly in the public sphere, such as through cinema, amidst the escalating moral panic against non-heteronormative subjects that emerged at that time. Yet, on the other, the compromises indicate a strengthening anxiety against the increased visibility and support of marginalised groups, which overshadowed the production and distribution of certain images of masculine ideals on screen at that time. Second, I argue that unfortunately, despite its progressive nature, the filmmakers' struggles are clearly cast in the form of middle-class professional gay men. As shown in the struggles of filmmakers to legitimise the gay 'new man' as an alternative ideal in the *Arisan!* franchise, they tend to overlook the efforts of lower-class gay men in expressing their gender and sexuality, especially amidst the heightened moral panic. The filmmakers did not extend their struggle to imagine that a legitimate gay alternative ideal of masculinity should be class inclusive.

The last chapter of this thesis is the conclusion. I summarise my key points and establish linkages to the overarching argument of the thesis. I maintain that while new

hopes for more equal gender relations have indeed bloomed in Indonesian cinema, there are also strong middle-class biases and anxieties that overshadow these cinematic alternative masculinity ideals. In addition, reflecting on the negotiations and compromises made by filmmakers, as they tailor their political perspectives regarding masculinity on screen, I call into question the direction they took and the interests they served by doing so. The findings of my research eventually show that during the period marked by profound changes within the gender order, the political struggle for hegemonic masculinity found its momentum. Part of the broader struggle to establish gender equality, the struggle waged by progressive Indonesian filmmakers was directed at exploring alternative ideal masculinities which were expected to better equip Indonesian men in navigating the shifting landscape of gender relations at that given time. The filmmakers certainly had to face the reinvigorated defence of the status quo, waged by various interest groups supporting existing hegemonic masculinity and the official patriarchal gender order. Despite their middle-class biases, the filmmakers struggle represents the burgeoning of new hope for equal gender relations. By centring the struggle for hegemonic masculinity in a nonconventional yet poignant political arena—commercial cinema—my research offers a unique and important perspective in looking at Indonesian gender politics in the twenty-first century.

## Chapter 2

### A Gender-Order Crisis

In this chapter I discuss the social, economic and political backgrounds against which the intensifying innovation and experimentation for alternative ideal masculinities in Indonesian cinema took place. I claimed in Chapter 1 that the years 2000 to 2014 were marked by a gender-order crisis. It was a period when profound changes took place within the established structures of gender relations that supported Indonesia's gender order. The internal contradictions within the structures of gender relations of production, power and emotion could no longer be counterbalanced. Consequently, a gender-order crisis was inevitable. This chapter maps the gender-order crisis in Indonesia at that given time and explores its implications for the hegemonic masculinity of *bapakism*.

I propose two arguments in this chapter. The first argument is concerned with the stages leading up to the gender-order crisis. I argue that the economic and political crises towards the end of the twenty-first century sped up the maturation of the internal contradictions within the three structures of gender relations in Indonesia's gender order. The second argument deals with the implications of the gender-order crisis on hegemonic masculinity. I argue that the gender-order crisis triggered more fervent opposition to hegemonic masculinity. However, the gender-order crisis also motivated various interest groups to defend the same hegemonic masculinity. It is against this background that Indonesian filmmakers' struggles to undermine the legitimacy of hegemonic *bapakism* should be situated.

This chapter aims at providing economic, social and political backgrounds to our understanding of why a certain segment of Indonesian filmmakers, represented by those promoting the 'new man' as an alternative ideal through their work in commercial cinema, were strongly motivated to destabilise the hegemony of *bapakism* at this

particular moment in history. I explained in Chapter 1 that filmmakers are political agents and their works in cinema, including representations of masculine ideals, are the political instruments they use to fight for certain political causes. In short, filmmakers do not work in a social, political and economic vacuum. Consequently, understanding the underlying social, political and economic pressures which provoke these political agents to mobilise their resources to accomplish their cause is imperative. This chapter then helps us situate the filmmakers' struggles within broader gender politics in Indonesia at that time.

This chapter departs from the popular concept of 'masculinity in crisis', also known as the 'crisis of masculinity' used by scholars working on Indonesian masculinity. Instead, it proposes to employ the 'gender-order crisis' concept devised by R.W. Connell (2005) to understand the changes in masculinities as the consequence of changes taking place within the gender order. In doing so, I differ from, among others, Rebecca Elmhirst (2007), Sonja van Wichelen (2009), Pam Nilan (2009a), Sharyn G. Davies (2016) and Alicia Izharuddin (2017) who have overlooked the long and complex trajectory of changes which have affected the construction of an Indonesian ideal masculinity and the relations between the official ideal and subordinated masculinities as well as with femininities. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the trajectory of changes which implicate masculinities can only be understood by mapping the structures of gender relations that support the gender order and the development of their respective internal contradictions. Indeed, changes in deeply rooted social constructions such as hegemonic ideal masculinity do not happen overnight due to accidental events—even events as substantial as the economic crisis. Changes in a system, such as a gender order, take place over time. Certain accidental events may speed up the development of already existing internal contradictions within each of the structures of

gender relations and may eventually erode the hegemonic bases of the official ideal masculinity, but they are not the core causes.

I unpack my arguments in the following way. First, I offer a theoretical insight into what constitutes a gender-order crisis and outline the drawbacks associated with the ‘masculinity in crisis’ concept. Then, I provide a broad explanation of Indonesia’s official gender order and its hegemonic masculinity. Such an explanation is important in order to understand how things were before the crisis. In the last three sections, I map the trajectory of the gender-order crisis and its implications for the hegemonic status of *bapakism*. I conclude this chapter by offering a reflection on how the off-screen gender-order crisis might shape the ways in which masculinities are represented in commercial cinema.

### **Who or what is in crisis?**

In this section, I examine the debate among scholars involved in men and masculinity studies about the concept of ‘crisis’ in relation to masculinity. This is despite the concept being one of the most commonly employed in the field. One of the on-going debates revolves around who or what is in crisis. There are two major factions in this debate. The first one locates the notion of crisis in masculinity itself. Even within this first faction, there is disagreement on the precise nature of the crisis in masculinity—how it manifests itself and is actually experienced by the subjects of masculinities (Beynon 2002: 75). The scholars within this faction agree with R.W. Connell (2005) who theorises that masculinity is not a system, but a configuration of gender practices. Thus, we cannot speak of masculinity being in crisis; instead, we can speak of a crisis in the gender order and masculinity is implicated in the crisis process. This section assesses the drawbacks of the first concept and the perks of the latter.

The concept of ‘masculinity in crisis’ generally refers to a condition where men are in a ‘predicament, confused about their place in the world and society’s expectations

of them' (Manzoor 2016: n.p.). Western masculinities have been subjected to this strand of 'crisis' talk both in scholarly and media discussions since the late 1960s, especially in the wake of the civil rights movement and the shift to a post-industrial economy in many Western societies (S. Robinson 2000: 2). Roger Horrocks (1994), one of the prominent proponents of the concept, claims that masculinity in Western society is in a deep crisis—becoming precarious and damaging to men. Despite being the major benefactors of the patriarchal gender order, many men are, writes Horrocks,

haunted by the feelings of emptiness, impotence and rage. They feel abused, unrecognised by modern society. While manhood offers compensations and prizes, it can also bring with it emotional autism, emptiness and despair (1994: 1).

Asian masculinities have been subjected to the same scrutiny especially in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis.<sup>1</sup> The term is deployed by, for example, Laikwan Pang (2002) and Pattana Kitiarsa (2005, 2007) to discuss men's hypermasculine responses towards economic pressures. In short, 'masculinity in crisis' signals the obsolescence of a certain masculinity and the men's insecurity in their masculine identity at a particular moment of history (Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003: 4). Generally, the feeling of insecurity concerning masculine identity is discussed in relation to destructive hypermasculine acts committed by men against themselves or others.

Such an understanding of a crisis in masculinity is also adopted by several scholars working on masculinities in Indonesia. Rebecca Elmhirst (2007), for example, discusses young men in a Sumatran region feeling 'left behind' as their female counterparts have more opportunities for mobility and employment. The dwindling work opportunities experienced by these young men in their hometowns and the

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<sup>1</sup> Indonesia was one of several Asian countries worst hit by the financial crisis. Later in this chapter I will discuss how this financial crisis, which soon turned into a very bad economic crisis, has forced major changes in Indonesia's gender order. It became one of the important catalysts of the gender-order crisis taking place in twenty-first-century Indonesia.

increase of women's participation in the paid workforce in the domestic and foreign job markets have forced these men to rethink their roles and positions vis-à-vis women in family and society. Elmhirst (2007) suggests that often such insecurity and confusion among men regarding their gender identity leads to male violence. In similar vein, Izharuddin (2017), in her research on the representations of gender in contemporary Indonesian cinema, asserts that the economic pressure caused a crisis of masculinity among many Muslim men and made them turn to religion for a solution. Van Wichelen (2009) employs the concept to signal a crisis of hegemonic masculinity. Basically, these scholars employ the concept to indicate a rupture in the dominantly shared ideas of becoming masculine subjects in Indonesia in the wake of the economic crisis.

Adopting R.W. Connell's concept of 'gender order crisis' (2005) in understanding changes in masculinities and their social relations, I beg to differ from previous scholars. Connell adapts the Habermasian concept of a 'legitimation crisis'—a decline in the confidence in certain structures of administrative functions, institutions or leadership (Habermas 1976), to explain changes within the system of gender relations, which eventually implicates masculinities. In this concept, the crisis takes place within a coherent system, instead of a configuration. In the Habermasian concept of crisis, at the time of crisis, a system can be destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. As my argument goes so far, masculinity is not a system on its own. Instead, masculinity is a configuration of gender practices, personalities and cultures as well as their embodiment (R.W. Connell 2005: 71). We can thus only discuss the disruption or transformation of masculinity, instead of its crisis (R.W. Connell 2005: 84). Locating the 'crisis' within masculinity risks obscuring the complex processes of change, which affect the whole system of gender order. Missing in the discussion of 'masculinity in crisis' in Elmhirst (2007), Izharuddin (2016) and van Wichelen (2009), as well as Horrocks (1994) and

Sarfraz Manzoor (2016), is the exploration of the extent to which changes implicate the whole structure of the gender order and provoke a reorganisation of gender relations.

Furthermore, in the Habermasian concept, a crisis of a social system is a process, instead of something produced by accidental changes. Crisis results from the structure's inherent contradictions which become increasingly incompatible and can no longer be accommodated (Habermas 1976: 2–3). R.W. Connell (2005) adopts this concept to recognise that the crisis in a gender order results from the inability of the system of gender relations to contain its own internal contradictions. Acknowledging change as a process and resulting from internal contradictions helps researchers to understand the system as imperfect and to explore the efforts put in place to counterbalance this imperfection over time. Indeed, certain circumstances may speed up the crisis of a system, such as the economic crisis, in cases presented by Elmhirst (2007) and Izharuddin (2016), or the demise of a long-reigning authoritarian regime, in the case presented by van Wichelen (2009). However, these circumstances cannot explain the growing incompatibilities within the system of gender relations and the painstaking strategies implemented by certain interest groups, including the state, to prevent a crisis in the overall system over a period of time.

Each structure of gender relations supporting a particular gender order bears with it internal contradictions. As explained in Chapter 1, R.W. Connell (2005) identifies three structures of gender relations governing the social relations between masculinities and femininities, as well as between men and women. They are the structures of the gender relations of production, power and emotion. The internal contradictions are the sites which make the gender-order prone to crisis. In a gender order which valorises male authority, these crisis tendencies can be counterbalanced mostly by providing a patriarchal dividend (see Chapter 1) to men as a group for



maintaining an unequal gender order, and by managing challenges to prevent major changes within the gender order.

At a particular moment in history, however, the crisis tendencies can mature and erupt into an actual gender-order crisis. Sudden and massive changes, such as economic or political crises, in the environment where the gender order operates can speed up the process of change. They can accelerate the maturation of crisis tendencies. Changes in the patterning of gender relations, especially on a large scale, are not trivial. While at a personal level, changes in the patterning of gender relations can upset personal images of one's self, assumptions about personal relationships, social embodiment and everyday habits, at a macro level, they can upset and provoke the reorganisation of cultural and institutional arrangements (R.W. Connell 2002: 138). Consequently, when these changes are experienced by a large segment of a society, they can intensify gender politics (Raewyn Connell, 2009 137). It is in such situations that masculinities and femininities are inevitably affected. For one, the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity can be substantially eroded; alternative ideals are more intensively sought and legitimated in various arenas. New exemplars are produced by various interest groups to secure the hegemonic position. In such gender politics, 'masculinity is made a principal theme, not taken for granted as background' (R.W. Connell 2005: 205).

This section has defined my position on the notion of crisis, arguing that the notion of 'crisis' bears with it an assumption of a coherent system. Thus, in this thesis I define crisis as taking place within the gender order and implicating masculinities. In particular, I will show that the crisis of the official gender order, the legacy of the New Order, has required reorganisation and a reconfiguration of masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity. I will demonstrate that the gender-order crisis has resulted in a fierce struggle for hegemony as the gender-order crisis led to the erosion of the

hegemony of the most culturally exalted form of masculinity—*bapakism*—like never before.

### **Indonesia's official gender order and its hegemonic masculinity**

In this section, I provide a brief overview of Indonesia's official gender order and its hegemonic masculinity. While acknowledging Indonesia's diversity, I shall demonstrate that there is a macro level patterning of gender relations which is sanctioned by the state and major cultural institutions in Indonesia. Understanding the social construction of Indonesia's gender order will help map the crisis tendencies born within each of the structures of gender relations. I argue that Indonesia's gender order is discursively constructed in a familial model which guarantees the dominant position of men who espouse *bapakism*, the subordination of women and other men adopting subordinated masculinities.

Indonesian studies scholars generally agree that 'the family principle' was vital in the consolidation and sustenance of the New Order. According to David Reeve (1985: 359), there was no theme more frequently articulated by the regime's leader, Soeharto, than 'the family principle' in addition to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.<sup>2</sup> The family principle was an ideal used to create an organic unity of state and society which fostered harmony and consensus, rather than open debate and majority decision making (Reid 1998: 25). David Bouchier and Vedi Hadiz (2003) use the term 'organicism' to refer to this official New Order ideology. They argue that 'Soeharto and many of his closest political allies promoted the idea that authority within the Indonesian state should reflect the patterns found within traditional families and orderly village societies' (2003: 8).

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<sup>2</sup> In Indonesia, the principle is known as *azas kekeluargaan*.

This family principle is inseparable from the idea of centralised power, as was prevalent in Javanese culture (Anderson 2007). It was partly reflected in the ‘steeply-ascending pyramid’ political structure of the New Order, in which the apex was dominated by the presidency (Liddle 1985: 71). The presidency, the centre of the oligarchic network of state leadership, linked and oversaw all key institutions and state management, including policy making, resource mobilisations and security (Suryakusuma 2011: 5). The legitimised centrality of presidential power thus rejected the standard elements of liberal constitutionalism, including the separation of state power and individual rights, and eventually sustained the reign of the New Order for more than three decades.

The intimate trope of family also provided the basis in the fashioning of the official gender order under the New Order. The principle is both hierarchical and gendered. Michael van Langenberg (1986) and Saya Shiraishi (1997) agree that this principle has naturalised the authority of the male leader of the family, in a unit as small as a nuclear family, to a larger one such as the nation. In fact, the principle is based on the paternalistic relationship in the *kawala-gusti* (Javanese for patron–client) model; a family state with the ‘wise father, the caring mother, and their children who know their places, duties and responsibilities’ (Shiraishi 1997: 84). The father figure, in this patterning of the family, becomes the natural leader of the family, under whose authority other members are subject. The regime shaped the gender order in such a way partly for the sake of legitimising its grip on state power (K. Robinson 1998: 67). The regime devised itself with state policies and programs which enshrined men’s authority and leadership status as well as women’s domestic roles. The policies include, for instance, the Marriage Law 1974, which is still valid. The law clearly stipulates that men are the leaders of the households and they are responsible for providing livelihood and protection for the members, while women are homemakers.

The valorisation of male authority within Indonesia's official gender order produced *bapakism* as the hegemonic masculinity. *Bapakism* is a configuration of gender practices, personality and culture, which legitimises men as authoritative patron leaders of the family collectivity. The ideal fits perfectly with the patriarchal gender order. According to Julia Suryakusuma, *bapak*, or literally father and protector, connotes 'the authoritarian, patron leader of the family collectivity' (2011: 5). *Bapakism* combines paternalistic and authoritarian masculinities. The paternalistic masculine ideal of the Javanese aristocrats, which also resonates with the colonial Dutch's idealisation of the nuclear family, particularly informs the paternalistic features, while the militaristic masculine ideal informs the authoritarian features of the configuration. The most common gender practices associated with this configuration include, but are not limited to, breadwinning, protecting, authoritative patron leadership and heteronormativity. These gender practices are translated in various personalities, institutionalised in various cultural institutions and inscribed on the subjects' bodies in particular ways that are not necessarily uniform across Indonesia. As I will discuss in the next section, *bapakism* was at the heart of New Order's bureaucratic structure. Male senior bureaucrats became patron leaders of official organisations of state employees, civilian and military. *Bapakism* became the culturally idealised configuration of masculinity which embodied the most accepted strategy in the defence of 'the refashioned gender order' (K. Robinson 1998: 67).

The dialectic relations between the New Order and *bapakism* were also apparent. Theoretically, R.W. Connell argues that 'hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual' (2005: 77). The New Order's state power was a resource used to raise *bapakism* to the status of hegemony, and *bapakism* hegemonic masculinity was a resource in the regime's struggle to secure state power (K. Robinson 2015: 52). The

New Order state ensured men's position in the family collectivity. I have already mentioned men's position as heads of households, guaranteed by the Indonesian marriage law. The law, legalised under the New Order, sanctions men's superior position in relation to women in the household. This gender arrangement was also reflected in the state's bureaucracy, where heads of state departments and bureaucratic offices, as well as local governments, generally male, were patrons to the official organisation of wives in their respective institutions, Dharma Wanita (Women's Duties). Members of Dharma Wanita were indoctrinated to become subordinate to their husbands; their main duty as bureaucrats' wives was to support their husbands' duties as state bureaucrats (Blackburn 2004: 152; Saroh and Hasan 2016; Suryakusuma 2011: 18–22). There is no male counterpart of this organisation. The male-dominated bureaucracy and the official organisation of bureaucrats' wives prove the New Order's commitment in sustaining male supremacy, which eventually strengthened the hegemonic position of *bapakism*.

Furthermore, in consolidating and sustaining its power, the New Order also benefited from the cultural exaltation of *bapakism*. For instance, hegemonic masculinity supports the conventional gendered division of labour which relegates men to the public sphere where they become the family's breadwinners, while women are relegated to the domestic sphere where they take care of the unpaid domestic and caring duties. Among the implications of this officially sanctioned gender relations of labour was the murky gender politics of the late 1960s, in which a progressive left-wing women's organisation, Gerwani, that was affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party, was purged following the transition of power from Soekarno to Soeharto's New Order. The purge of Gerwani further resulted in the withdrawal of the mainstream Indonesian women's movement from state politics to the conventional women's domain—the home—leaving the politics to men (Katjasungkana and Wieringa 2003: 64). In the years

that followed, the New Order barely endorsed any women's organisations which undermined its gender ideology. In short, the valorisation of *bapakism* and its accompanying *ibuism* was at the heart of the birth of the power consolidation of the New Order.

Certainly, I do not propose a reified image of *bapakism*. As much as its impact is real and widespread across Indonesia, including in Papua (Munro 2017), *bapakism* is a social construction which could be embodied by only a minor proportion of Indonesian men. Not all Indonesian men are able to be the main breadwinners of their families; not all Indonesian men can be patron leaders of family collectivities; and there are men who do not conform to heteronormative ideals. Indeed, *bapakism* is an ideal to which many Indonesian men aspire. They are its ideal subjects and are complicit to its cultural exaltation. Many men have to negotiate the ideal with their living conditions. For instance, based on her ethnographic research in rural-poor areas in East Nusa Tenggara, Kathryn Robinson (2009: 16) underscores the reality of many poor men in the area. These men compromised their sense of masculinity by taking up domestic work, generally associated with women, in order to cope with their wives' employment abroad. Yet, the men's compromise does not necessarily mean fluidity in the structure of the gender relations of production between them and their wives. Although they were unable to perform the normative feature of hegemonic masculinity, these men were still legally and culturally considered to be the authoritative figures in the family collectivity. It is them, rather than women, who were legally listed as the heads of the families. In such a case, as argued by Madelon Djajadiningrat-Niuwenhuis (1992), men retain the ultimate power in the gender relations. Thus, the hegemony of *bapakism* is sustained. The women's involvement in employment overseas was seen as part of their submission to their husbands and their defence of their husbands' authority in the public sphere.

Reflecting on the official gender order and the hegemony of *bapakism*, it makes sense that the dominant representations of ideal masculinity in Indonesian cinema, as well as other popular-culture products during the New Order period, barely problematise men's roles as family breadwinners and leaders of households. Krishna Sen (1994), based on her study of the representations of women in Indonesian cinema, confirms that the emphasis on women's domestic and reproductive roles eventually supported the idealisation of *bapakism* on screen. The hegemony of *bapakism* is strongly depicted in state-sponsored propaganda films, such as *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The Treachery of G30S/PKI, 1984, Arifin C. Noer). As Intan Paramaditha has explained (2007), the father figures represented by the Indonesian revolution heroes are visual representations of superior authoritative patron leaders not only for their respective nuclear family but also for the nation.

### **The maturing of crisis tendencies in the structure of the gender relations of production**

This section explains how the deep and protracted economic crisis of 1997–1998 sped up the maturation of crisis tendencies within the structure of the gender relations of production. To do so, I argue that the economic crisis exposed more clearly the internal contradictions in the structure of gender relations of production, which positioned men as family breadwinners and women as homemakers. As the economic crisis laid bare the unequal distribution of the patriarchal dividend supporting men's masculine roles as family breadwinners, it triggered a gender-order crisis, which implicated the hegemony of *bapakism*. To unpack my argument, I will first explore the structure of the gender relations of production and the crisis tendencies within it. Then, I will present my assessment on the extent to which the economic crisis implicated the structure and the hegemony of *bapakism*.

The structure of the gender relations of production in Indonesia's official gender order is premised in breadwinning men/homemaking women. Although the patterning is no longer taken for granted in the twenty-first century, it continues to dominate the ways in which most Indonesians imagine the ideal division of labour between men and women. Even in a contemporary urban context, where the male breadwinner ideal has been reworked to accommodate dual-income ideals, husbands still hold the responsibility as primary breadwinners, while wives become secondary income earners (Utomo 2012). The ability to provide for one's family means authority for men. As in patriarchal societies elsewhere, men's economic autonomy generally gives them a secure sense of masculinity (Kimmel and Kaufman 1994: 261). Men who are unable to be providers or are not so inclined are often seen by society as less desirable, as having subordinate masculinity. In fact, as argued by Elmhirst (2007) and Nilan (2009a), many Indonesian men are likely to be frustrated when they are unable to secure employment or when they feel that their breadwinning role is taken over by women.

Prior to the nineteenth century, breadwinning was not a dominant feature of ideal masculinity in what is now Indonesia, and apparently this was the case throughout Southeast Asia. Anthony Reid, describes that the Dutch dealt with Aceh women in tin trades in the seventeenth century (1988: 635, see also Compostel 1636: fol. 1200). It was also the norm for women to trade, including export–import, in other areas of the Netherland East Indies, now Indonesia, such as the Moluccas and Java. In southern Vietnam, women performed many tasks generally reserved for men in the European or Indian context; the tasks included ploughing, harrowing, reaping, carrying heavy burdens, attending shops, brokering and money-changing (Reid 2014: 150).

However, towards the late-nineteenth century, men's economic dependence on women and women's economic autonomy gradually became obsolete in Southeast Asia. In this period, Southeast Asians, especially the middle classes, became fascinated with



the Western model of modernity. Part of the then modern gendered moral vision was encouraging men to be breadwinners and women to be homemakers (Reid 2014). The increasing popularity of this reorganisation of the gender division of labour was partly due to the stronger grip of puritan Christian morality among the urban middle classes in Europe at that time (Locher-Scholten 2000; Reid 2014; Seccombe 1986).<sup>3</sup> As depicted in advertisement pieces published in *Pandji Poestaka* magazines in first quarter of 1940, the middle-class segment of society was inspired to give up their traditional habits and adopt a modern lifestyle in order to be included as ‘cultural citizens of the colony’ partly by adopting the aforementioned gender division of labour (Nordholt 2011). The shifting gender relations of production were further cemented by the Islamic reform movement taking place at the same period. The movement justified that the virtue of Muslim women was primarily vested in their domestication and devotion to their husbands, while Muslim men’s virtue was premised mainly on their capacity to lead their family into Islam, provide a livelihood and protection for their family members (Florida 1996: 210–12).

Under the New Order, breadwinning men/homemaking women became the official ideal gender relations of production. The state’s recognition of men as heads of families strengthened the prioritisation of men in accessing and owning resources. For instance, the New Order’s internal migration program enabled men, rather than women, to access land ownership and other resources because of their status as heads of households and their role as family providers (Dawson 1994). Furthermore, men’s role as breadwinners for the family culturally led men to get better access to education than women, especially in rural areas (Japan International Agency 1999). At school, young boys formally learned the notions of ideal masculinity (Blackwood 2005: 295); they

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, this new conception of gender relations had become pervasive even among the working classes throughout the developed capitalist world by World War I (1914) although total influence was never a reality (Seccombe 1986: 54).

were oriented towards the workplace and pursuit of a career in the public sphere (Parker 1993). In the workforce, men were likely to receive higher wages than women in similar positions (Seguino 2000; Siegmann 2007).<sup>4</sup> In short, Indonesian men as a group received patriarchal dividends to facilitate them to become *bapak*.

Such gender patterning bears several internal contradictions, making the structure of gender relations of production prone to crisis. First, not all men have access to good employment which enables them to be primary, let alone sole, family breadwinners. This crisis tendency was detected during the New Order period. A study conducted by Carol Hetler (1990) in Central Java in the 1980s shows that the double-income household model was prevalent among the poor. In fact, the double income was an important strategy promoted to cope with the economic pressure at that time (Niehof 2004). In female-headed households, which accounted for 14 per cent of the total households in Indonesia in 1990s (Buvinić and Gupta 1997: 261), women filled the role in the absence of male breadwinners. Many women in poor communities shared the responsibility of providing for the family, for instance by collecting food, fodder and fuel for the family's subsistence; yet, these roles were barely recognised formally (Dutt 2006: 216). Moreover, men in poor communities, whose wives worked overseas, had to do the domestic work in the latter's absence (K. Robinson 2009: 106). In short, the unequal distribution of access to employment made many men unable to fulfil the role of primary or sole breadwinner for their families during the New Order period.

Second, certain industries and professions which favour women more than men have made women's involvement in formal economy inevitable. As the country's economy shifted from oil and construction to the manufacturing of consumer goods, retail and services in the early 1980s, the entry of women into the formal economy was

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<sup>4</sup> In 1986, women's hourly wage was 58 per cent of their male counterparts. Although in 1997, this figure had increased to 65 per cent the gender pay gap was still stark (Feridhanusetyawan and Aswicahyono 2001, quoted in Siegmann 2007: 118).

inescapable (K. Robinson 2009: 90). This trend continues into the twenty-first century. In 2001, more than 15 per cent of the female workforce was accommodated in manufacturing and 25 per cent in wholesale and retail trades (Siegmann 2007: 118). Even before the shift to industrialisation, certain professions, albeit those regarded as the extension of women's domestic roles, also favoured women's labour. Such included midwives, pre-school teachers, nurses and domestic assistants. Consequently, the New Order state also encouraged women to take part in the burgeoning industrialisation, despite this encouragement contradicting the dominant patterning of the gender relations of production.

The wider opportunities for women to pursue higher education also became a significant crisis in the official structure of the gender relations of production. It is strongly evident in Indonesia, as in other developing countries, that spending more years in education has the tendency to delay marriage among young women (Buttenheim and Nobles 2009). The burgeoning new economy since the early 1970s opened up better access to higher education for women. In general, the pursuit of higher education also opens up opportunities for class mobility; in fact, as stated by Wendy Minza (2015) and Suzanne Naafs (2018), for a great many young Indonesians, diplomas of higher education have been tickets to a better future by allowing them to become urban professionals. As a result, the pursuit of higher education among women has led to an increase of women in formal paid work, especially in urban areas. Culturally, this phenomenon has contributed to shifting images of ideal femininity in Indonesia. Along with the development of the second wave of feminism globally, affluent working women have become key signifiers of Indonesian modernity since the 1980s. As demonstrated by Sen (1998), images of working women proliferated in Indonesian

advertisement pieces in printed magazines in the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> However, we should not expect that the established ideal of femininity was entirely uprooted. In fact, as reflected by their representations in Indonesian cinema and print media, Indonesian women were still expected to prioritise their reproductive and domestic roles despite their increasingly significant involvement in the economy, politics and culture (Brenner 1999; Sen 1994).

Under the New Order, the above-mentioned internal contradictions were offset by state and non-state actors through various strategies. First and foremost, there was a constant campaign of the discourse of *kodrat wanita* (women's nature) through policies and popular culture that was justified by the official religions. The discourse basically promoted women's reproductive roles as mothers as the key defining feature of ideal femininity. These roles must be maintained at the expense of women's career pursuits in the public sphere (Brenner 1999). In turn, *kodrat wanita* reinforced women's stereotypical role as 'the companion of their husbands', which made women's status as workers subordinated to their status as housewives (Ford and Parker 2008: 9) and their contribution to the family income was secondary to that of men (Utomo 2012). Moreover, the Ministry of Women's Affairs successfully created a profile for working women as bearing 'dual roles', encompassing paid work and domestic responsibilities in the early 1980s (Blackburn 2004: 182). To cope with the dual responsibilities, economically affluent career women often reallocated their domestic caring responsibilities to female (usually older) relatives or female domestic servants (Elmhirst 2005). These practices compensated for the necessity and increase of women's involvement in the public sphere without necessarily transforming the gender order.

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<sup>5</sup> According to Gabriel Griffin (2017) in the online version of the *Oxford Dictionary of Gender Studies*, second-wave feminism, which flourished from 1965–1985, is associated with identity politics and campaigns for gender equality at the workplace, women's bodily autonomy, abortion on demand, economic recognition of domestic work, as well as the acknowledgment and prosecution of gender-based violence. The movement which began in the US and the UK soon spread globally.

Consequently, the hegemony of *bapakism* was sustained during most of the New Order period.

Considerable shifts in the macro economy due to the 1997 Asian economic crisis forced major changes in Indonesia's gender order. The macro-economic outlook at the onset of the crisis in 1997 and 1998 had strong gendered and class-segmented implications at the micro level.<sup>6</sup> The decline of the currency value significantly affected economic institutions reliant on foreign-investment, which apparently employed a high proportion of the male production (Smith et al. 2002) and had been responsible for creating Indonesia's emerging middle classes (Poppele, Sumarto and Pritchett 1999). Consequently, middle-class men, especially in urban areas, suffered the biggest income shock during the crisis (Smith et al. 2002: 173).<sup>7</sup> This condition was complicated by the upward spiralling of the price of commodities in the first quarter of 1998 (Thomas and Frankenberg 2004: 518–19).<sup>8</sup>

Eventually, the sudden economic reversal of fortune exposed more clearly the abovementioned crisis tendencies within the established gender relations of production. Many men (no longer only poor men), found it harder to be breadwinners at that time. Male government employees and export-commodity farmers, while exempted from wage cuts, were not excluded from the double impact of soaring prices and high inflation (Chen 2010: 301). Declining wages also made it more difficult to be able to afford the services of domestic assistants for middle-class families (Elmhirst 2005:

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<sup>6</sup> At the macro level, Indonesia's GDP shrunk by almost 14 per cent (Betcherman and Islam 2001: 5), and in 1999 there was an increase of only 1 per cent (Bank Indonesia 2000). For a country whose Gross National Product (GNP) had grown around 4.5 per cent per annum from the mid-1960s to 1998, a contraction of this magnitude meant a substantial readjustment (James P. Smith et al. 2002: 164). Indonesia also experienced an 80 per cent currency depreciation, and a 50 per cent inflation rate (The World Bank 1998: 1).

<sup>7</sup> While the overall real wages declined by 41 per cent on average (Betcherman and Islam 2001: 14), and affected both men and women, for urban middle-class men: 'the single year shift in the wage distribution virtually wiped out all wage gains made since 1986 ... but ... [women] have maintained some of the wage gains since 1986' (J.P. Smith et al. 2002: 173).

<sup>8</sup> Food prices rose by about 20 per cent more than the general price index.

254).<sup>9</sup> The reliance on women's contributions to the family income was also clearer during the crisis. This led to impending changes in their relations with the men in their households (Hancock 2001). The notion of *kodrat wanita* and *pendamping suami* could no longer counterbalance the internal contradictions of the structure of the gender relations of production. Crisis of the gender order at the turn of the millennium was inevitable.

The crisis within the gender order implicated masculinities and the social relations producing them. On one hand, it triggered frustration among men who lost their capacity to be breadwinners. As observed by many scholars, including Elmhirst (2007), Noorhaidi Hasan (2016), Stein Kristiansen (2003) and Pam Nilan, Argyo Demartoto and Alex Broom (2013), frustration and violence were common masculine responses to the changing economy which had taken away many men's ability to earn enough income and thus undermined their masculinity. Between January and March 1998, the economic disempowerment triggered men in at least 23 locations in Indonesia to sporadically loot shops and food warehouses: 266 shops and warehouses were reportedly looted, destroyed and burnt; 79 vehicles burnt; and five people died (Tadjoeddin 2002:16).<sup>10</sup> Emasculation among men also manifest in widespread sexual violence in several cities in Indonesia in 1998 (Wandita 1998).<sup>11</sup> This scale of violence motivated by economically driven emasculation indicates the erosion of the hegemony of *bapakism*, which was premised partly on male breadwinning practices. Violence was

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<sup>9</sup> According to Elmhirst, the increasing involvement of women in formal work in the 1980–1990s was facilitated more significantly not by the state or men, but by paid domestic workers. Consequently, the shifting relations of labour were not accompanied by reconfigurations of domestic responsibilities between men and women. Middle-class Indonesians, the segment hit hardest during the economic crisis, continued to employ domestic assistants although they had to make financial adjustments in order to deal with their own aggravating economic insecurities (Elmhirst 2005: 254).

<sup>10</sup> This number is based on the incidents reported in media; 15 incidents took place in Java (Tadjoeddin 2002: 16)

<sup>11</sup> The victims of raids, looting, and sexual violence that took place in 1998 were mostly Indonesian of Chinese descent. While acknowledging that the economic crisis exacerbated the existing social conflict, the ethnic dimension of the crisis and its aftermath is beyond the scope of this thesis.

apparently one of the prominent ways for men to reclaim the hegemony of *bapakism* at the onset of the economic crisis.

In addition, the gender-order crisis triggered by the sudden reversal of economic fortune, which was complicated by political chaos, led to stronger structural attempts to defend the hegemonic configuration of an ideal masculinity. In the post-authoritarian era, structural movements within Indonesia's legal system and culture designed to limit women's involvement in the economy became more visible. For instance, women had to face night curfews prescribed in newly enforced regional bylaws, enabled by the decentralisation policy that had been in place since 1999. Andi Yentriyani, head of the Public Participation Subcommittee of the National Commission on Elimination of Violence against Women, explained in a press conference (14 September 2012) that until 2012, there were at least 38 regional bylaws which limited women's participation in the public sphere through the implementation of night curfews and the requirement for women to be accompanied by male family members when going out at night. Such limitations reinforced the stereotypical image of women as the weaker gender, who must be protected while navigating certain spaces which are not normally part of their feminine domain. Furthermore, the limitation also implied time restrictions for women who were pursuing careers in the public sphere.

Islamic rhetoric was deployed by various interest groups to highlight the Islamic nature of the male breadwinning norm that was strongly characterised in *bapakism*. In 2003, a heated public debate on polygamy took place and involved various segments of Indonesian society. Devoted polygamy practitioner and wealthy businessman, Puspo Wardoyo, contextualised the necessity for rich Muslim men to take more than one wife. For Puspo Wardoyo, polygamy, among other reasons, ensured that more women could enjoy comfortable lives (Suryono 2003). Implicit in this statement of purpose behind his support for the pro-polygamy campaign is the reassertion of men's role as family

breadwinners, and their normalised obligation to keep women bound to the domestic sphere.

In the second decade of the third millennium, the public debate on gender roles became increasingly heated as new media platforms augmented its visibility. In 2013, a series of controversial tweets on how to be good Muslim women and perform ideal Muslim femininity were made by a prominent young Muslim preacher, Felix Siau. In a tweet dated 28 May 2013 he lashed out at working women: ‘When a mother spends 3 hours with her children and 8 hours at work, is she a mother or an employee?’ The tweets represented an attempt to restore a certain form of femininity—one that supported the construction of hegemonic masculinity. They also represent his support of the restoration of hegemonic *bapakism*. The tweet and his other tweets on women and gender immediately developed into a heated public debate, albeit mostly online (Hestya 2013).

The gender-order crisis also opened up opportunities for a fiercer struggle to emerge around attempts to reconfigure the hegemonic ideal masculinity. The complex process of democratisation in the post-authoritarian era significantly contributed to the flourishing of alternative forces attempting to uproot *bapakism* from its hegemonic position. These forces included feminist and women’s movements, as well as men’s movements for gender equality. The growing feminist and women’s movement supported women’s increased involvement in the public sphere, including in formal paid work and politics. Breadwinning was no longer a practice which was to be exclusively associated with masculinity at this given time. Moreover, the involvement of men in the feminist movement gave birth to a pro-feminist men’s movement such as the Aliansi Laki-laki Baru (LLB, the New Men’s Alliance), which campaigned, then and now, for a reconfiguration of masculinities to support gender equality. Their work also challenged the obsession over the breadwinning role (Hasyim 2009). Furthermore,



discussion on the decreasing significance of men's breadwinning roles and the possibilities for compromise were prevalent in the print media at this given time (Yulindrasari and McGregor 2011). These forces in turn directed their energy to speeding up the decomposition of the gender order, inclusive of hegemonic *bapakism*.

In addition to the above strongly opposing voices around the structure of the gender relations of production, there are myriads of in-betweeners. The most commonly encountered group comprises those who acknowledge that women's contribution to the family income is an inevitable consequence of modernity, yet this group consistently reinforces that women's financial contribution is secondary to that of the men (Utomo 2012). They are the proponents of the New Order's jargon on women's dual roles (Blackburn 2004: 182). The 2006 World Values Survey for Indonesia shows that among Indonesians, 54 per cent generally held that men should have more rights to employment when jobs are scarce (Hosen, Faizah and Hosen 2006).<sup>12</sup> The same population sampling provided strikingly discordant responses to other division-of-labour-related questions, such as whether men make better business executives than women and whether becoming a housewife is a fulfilling career for women (Hosen, Faizah and Hosen 2006). This data implies that although it is becoming more acceptable for women to be involved in paid work, men are still socially constructed as the primary breadwinners for families. Thus, men should have better opportunities to access paid work in the event that employment is scarce. In other words, for certain segments of Indonesian society, a compromise is inevitable in navigating the changing landscape of gender relations in the twenty-first century, but there are limits.

To conclude this section, I maintain that the economic crisis has exposed more clearly the crisis tendencies of the established structure of the gender relations of production, and it eventually led to the erosion of the legitimacy of *bapakism* as the

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<sup>12</sup> The survey was administered using 100 random samples in 30 provinces in Indonesia.

hegemonic form of masculinity. It removed the conditions for many men to perform their breadwinning role—a normalised, if not naturalised, masculine gender practice. The violence committed by men partly out of economic frustration represents the dysfunction of the dominant patriarchal patterning of gender relations of production, as well as the eroded hegemony of *bapakism*. The ensuing public debate on gender relations of production showed the reinvigorated struggle in gender politics towards reconfiguring gender and gender relations.

### **The maturing of crisis tendencies in the structure of the gender relations of power**

This section maps the crisis tendencies within the structure of the gender relations of power. In it, I describe the trajectory of the crisis tendencies within this structure of gender relations. Then, I examine how these crisis tendencies matured and eventually deepened the gender-order crisis in twenty-first-century Indonesia. I argue that the democratisation processes in the post-authoritarian era has facilitated the maturation of crisis tendencies within the structure of the gender relations of power. Democratisation has facilitated the flourishing of the progressive women's movement and increased women's participation in politics and economy. Women's authority in these arenas threatens the legitimacy of the authoritative male-patron leadership norm—a legitimacy that underlies the structure and promotes hegemonic *bapakism*. Eventually, as the crisis tendencies matured, they deepened the gender-order crisis previously triggered by the economic crisis.

Crucial to the patterning of the gender relations of power in Indonesia is the hierarchical and paternalistic nature of the relations between the male authoritative figure, or *bapak*, and his subjects, comprising women, minors and other men subordinate to his position. As a patron, a *bapak* was expected to be wise, provide guidance and maintain order (Suryakusuma 2011: 5–6). *Bapakism* thus became the most

socially acceptable masculinity configuration in defence of the patriarchal gender order. It subordinated or marginalised other masculinities which did not support men as paternal leaders of the family collectivity. It, for example, subordinated any masculinity that valued singlehood, or that tolerated men's subordination to women, and it marginalised masculinity which accommodated homosexual relations.

During the New Order, the arrangement of gender relations of power was central to the overall social ordering in Indonesia. I mentioned how the New Order stipulated the ideal power relationship between husband and wife in the 1974 Marriage Law. The male authoritative patron leadership was also reflected in the structure of the state's bureaucracy. Throughout the New Order period, cabinet ministers were predominantly male.<sup>13</sup> Soeharto was the father figure, whose guidance and instructions were to be sought and followed by his ministers and other subordinate bureaucrats, regardless of whatever ideas and opinions the latter had (Shiraishi 1997: 81). As argued by Ken Ward and David Bouchier, the New Order state was clearly preoccupied with order, obedience, patronage as well as a father-knows-best type of leadership (Ward 1974: 187–88; David Bouchier 2015: 161). Also, state policies and regulations concerning families clearly hailed men as patron leaders of their nuclear families.<sup>14</sup> Such patterning of the gender relations of power in turn created gendered legal subjectivities intended to (re)shape the broader social order (O'Shaughnessy 2009: 32), in this case particularly reconfiguring the gender order.

The patterning is sanctioned by the major religions operating in Indonesia, especially Islam. The dominant teaching of Islam endorses a husband's authority over and patronage towards his wife and other female and junior family members. In fact,

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<sup>13</sup> Under Soekarno's administration (1945–1966), there were five women holding ministerial posts. Yet, under Soeharto's administration (1966–1998), women entered cabinet ministry only later in 1978, when the state established the Junior Ministry of Women's Affairs.

<sup>14</sup> See the previous section for a brief explanation on the internal migration program as an example of the wide range of policies.

since the Islamic revival period in the late-nineteenth century, as discussed above, men's authoritative patron leadership over women has been one of the issues emphasised in the gendered teaching of Islam in Indonesia. Growing up a Muslim during the New Order, I frequently attended Muslim weddings, in which religious preachers were likely to give advice to the newlyweds and the attending audience that a wife's ticket to heaven is her submission to her husband. While alternative interpretations of Islamic teachings regarding gender relations of power have been emerging since the early 2000s, men's authoritative patron-leadership norm continues to be reinforced in the dominant teaching of Islam in Indonesia. At my own wedding reception in 2004, the religious preacher invited by my family to provide a sermon also reminded me, as a wife, that I had to obey my husband's orders, in addition to taking care of the domestic work and caring duties.

The internal contradictions of this patterning partly stem from women's involvement in paid work. Not all men can be leaders at work. In many cases, many men had to negotiate their sense of masculinity to accommodate becoming the subordinates of women at work. In fact, since the surge of women into paid work post the oil boom in the early 1980s (Dhahani, Islam and Chowdhury 2009: 8), career-pursuing women who could juggle domestic and public-sphere roles had become established images of alternative ideal femininity by the 1990s (Sen 1998). Moreover, with more opportunities opening up for women to pursue higher education, as discussed in the previous section, affluent and educated women were more likely to be involved in paid work in the public sphere. The direct implication of women's higher position in the workplace is that men's normative patronage leadership in the public sphere was brought into question. At the household level, as women's contribution to the family's income increased, generally they gained elevated positions in decision making (Elmhirst

2007; Hancock 2001; K. Robinson 2009). In such cases, reorganisation of the gender relations of power was more-than-likely required.

During the New Order period, these internal contradictions were counterbalanced primarily by emphasising that women's primary role was motherhood. While women were encouraged to play dual roles, the state and Indonesian society reminded them that their place was behind their husbands. The wives of male bureaucrats, military and police were organised under state-endorsed women's organisations and constantly reminded that they were first and foremost loyal companions to their husbands (Suryakusuma 2011: 16).<sup>15</sup> The organisation itself was under the patronage of senior male bureaucrats and the organisational structure mirrored that of the male-dominated bureaucracy.<sup>16</sup>

The New Order also cautiously implemented policies and strategies, which contradicted the established patterning of the gender relations of power. For example, it established a ministry to deal with women's empowerment in 1978. Due to domestic and international pressures to deal with gender inequalities, the regime created the Junior Ministry of Women's Affairs, an event that also marked women's first entry into cabinet, albeit with minor co-ordinating roles and budgetary authorities (Blackburn 2004: 26; Martyn 2005: 153). Furthermore, it signed the *Convention on the Elimination*

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<sup>15</sup> Dharma Wanita has been the vehicle that advocates the five duties of women. The duties are inscribed in the organisation's visions: 1. women as loyal companions of husbands; 2. women as procreators for the nation; 3. women as educators and guides of children; 4. women as regulators of the households; 5. women as useful members of society (Suryakusuma 2011: 16).

<sup>16</sup> The leadership of Dharma Wanita and other women's organisations of the same sort, such as Persit Kartika Candra Kirana, which accommodates wives of military officers, as well as the grassroots Program Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK), which organises wives in general, is not democratically appointed nor based on meritocracy. For example, the wife of the male bureaucrat leading a particular government office is the leader of the Dharma Wanita at that office. The wife of a village head will automatically be the head of PKK in the village.

These organisations share a similar rhetoric regarding what constitutes ideal femininity—women as managers of households and companions to their husbands (Wieringa 1992). These organisations generally received more support from the state compared to the progressive women's movement that struggles for gender equality (Parawansa 2002). Discursively, the spectre of sexual politics which led to the elimination of the progressive women's movement, Gerwani, during the transition to the New Order still works to marginalise the progressive women's movement under the New Order (see Katjasungkana and Wieringa 2003; Wieringa 2003).

*of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) on 29 July 1980 and ratified it on 24 July 1984 with *Act No 7/1984* (Indonesian Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1997). Consequently, the state must ensure the securing of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil and any other field, as well as the elimination of any form of gender-based discrimination against women (Milasari and Tangka 2013).

The New Order policies to encourage women's participation in politics also developed crisis tendencies. The participation of women in Indonesian politics was especially low during the time of the New Order regime. The highest participation rate of women in state politics under the New Order was reached in 1987 with women occupying 13 per cent of the total 500 seats in parliament (Parawansa 2002). And the presence of women in the cabinet ministry was maintained, even if they were limited to the Ministry of Women's Affairs. This meagre participation is arguably due to the state's gender politics which discouraged women from becoming progressively political by sexually slandering members of the progressive women's movement (Katjasungkana and Wieringa 2003) and the intensive campaign and policing of women's motherly duties (Brenner 1999). Overtime, the Ministry of Women's Affairs became a 'Trojan Horse' within the New Order bureaucracy, as some of its staff brought in new ideas on gender equality, often conflicting with the state's gender ideology (K. Robinson 1997). Moreover, the women's movements, outside the state-established organisations, became a fertile ground for movements for gender equality (Women's Research Institute 2013). They built up pressure to influence the New Order's state policies and programs to advance women's rights (Sjarifudin 2009). They were not always successful.

The New Order administration detected these crisis tendencies which threatened its own legitimacy as well as the legitimacy of the male-patron leadership patterning of the gender relations of power. Thus, mechanisms were deployed to counterbalance the

crisis tendencies. The women appointed as ministers and elected to the parliament were likely to have close relationships with male party elites (Parawansa 2002). Soeharto carefully appointed his ministers over the years to ensure that his authority was not contested (Robertson-Snape 1999). Thus, to avoid conflicts of interest, the ministers of Women's Affairs and other women legislators were never from the progressive women's movement and mostly had close ties with high-ranking male bureaucrats or politicians. The third minister for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Mien Sugandhi, for instance, was a wife of an army general, founder of a wing organisation of the state's party, Musyawarah Kekeluargaan Gotong Royong (MKGR). Both Mien Sugandhi and her husband were close to Soeharto.

The euphoria following the transition to democracy engendered high hopes for establishing gender equality. The newly democratised public sphere enabled a bolder public struggle of gender politics to advance women's status and rights. In 1998, after a long and gruelling political struggle by various women's organisations, the new government established the National Commission on Eradication of Violence Against Women (KOMNAS Perempuan) (Anggraeni 2014). The establishment of this commission was overdue in dealing with discrimination and violence against women. In 2004, Megawati Soekarnoputri's administration passed the law on the elimination of violence against women after a long struggle led by progressive feminist movements. The law criminalised acts of violence, generally perpetrated by men against women or other subordinate members of the family, which were previously tolerated and normalised. It challenged men's absolute authority in the household as certain measures of control, in this case violence, were no longer tolerated by law.

Furthermore, it was within this period that the women's involvement in state politics remarkably increased. Megawati was sworn in as the fourth president, the ultimate symbol of state power in 2001. The former vice-president rose to the

presidency after President Abdurrahman Wahid was impeached by Indonesia's Upper House in June 2001.<sup>17</sup> Megawati's rise to top-level state leadership was accompanied by a fierce public debate about whether a woman could be a president (N. van Doorn-Harder 2002).<sup>18</sup> In the following years, the number of women who held ministerial offices and other high bureaucratic posts also increased. Under President Joko Widodo, there are nine women out of a total of 34 ministers in his cabinet—the highest number since Indonesian independence (B.P. Siregar 2016). In addition, the affirmative regulation for a political party to allocate at least 30 per cent of its nomination to female legislative candidates has elevated the involvement of women to 11.3 per cent in parliament and 27 per cent in the senate in the 2004–2009 period (Parawansa 2002; Wardani 2009). The affirmative action exposed more clearly the marginalisation of women in Indonesian politics and the immediate need to address it.

During the heightened Islamisation in the post-authoritarian moment, the pressure to legitimise alternative interpretations of religious texts, which accommodate women's perspectives, also emerged. Since the early 2000s, Musdah Mulia, a former expert counsel to the Minister of Religious Affairs, led a revolutionary counter legal draft movement to contest the Islamic Law Compilation, partly due to its gender biases. According to Mulia:

The compilation is very conservative ... For instance Article 79 specified that a husband is the leader of the family and a wife is a homemaker ... This article normalises women's domestic roles ... and men's public roles. Men are naturalised as leaders and women are subjected to their authority (in Abdala 2003: n.p.).

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<sup>17</sup> Megawati was the first female president of the Republic of Indonesia and the sixth female to lead a Muslim-majority nation in the world (for more details on female state leaders in Islamic majority countries, see Bennett 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Nelly Van Doorn-Harder provides a thorough account of the debate, in which Islam played a major role.



Although the movement has not been able to convince the government, parliament and Muslim religious leaders, it has created a lasting controversy. The opposition of this movement generally argues that the movement is being overly progressive. The then Head of Fatwa commission of *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Ulema Council, hence abbreviated as MUI) said, 'I am up for a progressive movement; I don't like *jumud*. But everything has to go by the rule' (cited in Karni 2004). Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, also a strong opponent of the Gender Equality Bill, views the movement to contest Islamic Law compilation as anti-Islam (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia 2010).<sup>19</sup> Implied in the opposition view is anxiety over the decreasing authority of men and the increasing power of women; the increasing participation of women in the public sphere and thus the potential domestication of men.

In concluding this section, I point out that the increasing participation of women in politics, culture and economy undermined the established gender relations of power. The rise of women to key decision-making posts in the state bureaucracy, parliament and private sectors, as well as the bolder movements for gender equality obviously exposed more clearly the crisis tendencies of the established patterning of the gender relations of power. The increased participation of women in the abovementioned sectors also exposed more clearly that the state had been implementing policies contradictory to the gender patterning which previously sustained its patriarchal legitimacy. Such policies have provided inconsistencies which movements have used to overturn the established gender order. Eventually, the maturation of the crisis tendencies in the structure of the gender relations of power not only deepened the existing crisis of the gender order but also implicated *bapakism*.

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<sup>19</sup> *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) is the Indonesian branch of the international pan-Islamist political organisation, which promotes the re-establishment of an *Islamic Caliphate*. In Indonesia, the organisation mostly operated underground; it developed its base in universities through Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (Campus Proselytisation Organisation) from the early 1980s, before it was disbanded in 2017 (Ahnaf 2017).

## **The maturing of crisis tendencies in the structure of the gender relations of emotion**

In this section I explore the crisis tendencies undermining the established structure of the gender relations of emotion and its trajectory to crisis. I examine the development of these crisis tendencies. I then scrutinise the implications of the maturation of the crisis tendencies on *bapakism* during the period under study. I argue that the bolder political movements in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) in the first 15 years of the twenty-first century has deepened the gender-order crisis. It has considerably undermined the heteronormative structure of the gender relations of emotion. On one hand, the struggle has exposed more clearly the marginalisation of non-heteronormative individuals and their expressions of gender and sexual identities. On the other hand, the intensifying struggle has also triggered backlash, mostly led by conservative religious groups. Indirectly, the backlash against the growing support for LGBTIQ reinforces heteronormativity and the idealisation of heteronormative gender ideals, including the *bapakism* hegemonic masculinity.

The dominant patterning of relations of emotion in Indonesia is heteronormative. It emphasises an assumed coherence between sex, gender and sexuality. An individual born male is culturally expected to assume a masculine gender identity and to desire a heteronormative sexual relation with a heterosexual feminine woman. Since the colonial period, the state has formally recognised only heterosexual unions and families. Compulsory heterosexuality increasingly became ‘the norm’ of the gender relations of emotion since the intervention of colonialism. Deviation from heteronormativity outside the culturally recognised niches, such as rituals, entertainment and the informal economy, have generally resulted in discrimination and/or marginalisation (Blackwood 2005). Heteronormativity is significant to the hegemony of *bapakism*. A man can be an ideal authoritative patron leader only in the social units organised within the heterosexual family order. Consequently, masculinities not supporting

heteronormativity are subordinated or in many cases marginalised. To date in Indonesia, there has not been any openly gay man who is publicly idealised as a representation of ideal masculinity.

Under the authoritarian regime (1966–1998), the heteronormative patterning of sexual relations became increasingly dominant as the state formally supported a patriarchal gender order. Although the New Order state did not criminalise homosexual unions, it did not take a clear stance to support them either. Given that the state's Marriage Law of 1974 recognises only heterosexual marital unions, the New Order state barely took any legal precautions to criminalise non-heterosexual unions. Yet, the New Order's policies and programs, especially concerning families, were clearly designed with heteronormative assumptions. This is despite the long history and cultural significance of non-heteronormative individuals in many Indonesian societies since the pre-colonial era (see Blackwood 2005; Davies 2010), and despite the prevalent presence of transgender individuals, including those in popular culture (see Murtagh 2017) and the informal economy (Boellstorff 2004b) at that time. It might indeed sound contradictory that the then President Soeharto invited a transwoman entertainer, Dorce Gamalama, to several events at his presidential palace.<sup>20</sup>

This internal contradiction between officially recognised heteronormativity and the reality of everyday LGBTIQ identities overtime developed into a crisis tendency within the structure of the gender relations of emotion. Indeed, theoretically the impending legitimacy of homosexuality is a fundamental crisis tendency within any heteronormative structure of the gender relations of emotion. According to Sara Ahmed (2014: 144), non-heteronormative arrangements of gender relations of emotion threaten

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<sup>20</sup> Dorce Gamalama completed her transition to becoming a woman in 1980s and has since been reportedly engaged in romantic relationships with men (Noviandi 2013). Dorce, in her biography, claims that she had performed live in front of five presidents of the Republic of Indonesia (Gamalama and Gunawan, 2005: 80–86). She had performed for Soeharto, Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Soekarnoputri, and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono by the time her biography was released in 2005.

the only legitimate way of reproducing life—in the form of future generations—as well as reproducing culture as they destabilise the specific arrangements for living, in this case ‘family’ (ibid.). Since the 1980s, activism for the support of non-heteronormative relations of emotion has been visible. The establishment of Lambda Indonesia in 1982 marks the increasing prominence of activism in support of this marginalised group. After being disbanded in 1986, Lambda Indonesia metamorphosed into GAYa Nusantara in 1986, whose operations focused mostly on publication and advocacy against AIDS (Oetomo in Ikawati 2015: n.p.).

The crisis tendency imposed by the increasing visibility of non-heteronormative individuals and communities was discursively counterbalanced by the state. In addition to naturalising heteronormativity through the Marriage Law and other regulations and policies, the New Order state discursively constructed homosexuals and transgender people as belonging to the primary risk groups for developing HIV/AIDS (Oetomo 2000). In doing so, the state discursively constructed homosexuality as bearing substantial health risks, as opposed to the legally sanctioned heteronormative gender relations of emotion. In addition, the consistent naturalisation of gender roles through promotion of heteronormative nuclear families and ideal femininity contributed significantly in controlling gender and sexuality (Blackwood 2005). The state regulation on child adoption favoured heterosexual couples; in fact, since colonial times, as prescribed in *Staatsblad* (129/1917), adoption has been the sole privilege of heteronormative couples. In short, the New Order state was aware of the growing crisis tendency lurking beneath the heteronormative structure of the gender relations of emotion, yet it did not take direct legal precautions to outlaw this gender practice.

The post-authoritarian moment in Indonesia engendered high hopes for changes to the overall patterning of gender relations, including that of emotion. The euphoria regarding possible changes also triggered bolder political movements in support of non-

heteronormative groups. Activism for transgender rights, which started around 1960, and gay and lesbian activism, beginning in the early 1980s, became more noticeable publicly and gained more substantial traction post-1998. One of the major milestones was the daring move to host the International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transexual and Intersex Association (ILGA) in Surabaya in 2010. Yet, the event was eventually cancelled on the day of the conference due to a violent protest led by conservative Islamists. According to Hartoyo, the founder of Suara Kita (Our Voice), a not-for-profit organisation focusing on advocating LGBTIQ rights:

In post-1998, LGBT organisations began to show their identities more publicly.

Discussions on discourses of sexualities and genders started to be more seriously fostered by several social organisations. Even LGBT groups started to build intensive dialogues and communication with religious groups (2015: 81).

The movements for LGBTIQ rights also attracted support from public figures. In fact, some religious figures and organisations openly declared their support for LGBTIQ rights. Among them were Ulil Absar Abdala, the founder of Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL, Liberal Muslim Network) (Hadiansyah 2016) and Musdah Mulia, a notable Muslim feminist activist. Although their controversial views subjected them to harsh criticism and multiple threats of violence, they continued to provide support for the recognition of non-heteronormative individuals and communities.

In addition, the post-authoritarian moment opened up new political avenues for the struggle for LGBTIQ rights. Dede Oetomo, an openly gay man and the founder of GAYa Nusantara, was nominated by a minor leftist political party, Partai Rakyat Demokratik (PRD, People's Democratic Party), as a legislator in the 1999 General Election (Oetomo 2006).<sup>21</sup> In 2012, Oetomo passed the first selection process in an effort to become a commissioner of the Human Rights Commission (KOMNAS HAM),

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<sup>21</sup> The party itself while standing in the 1999 general election, only won 0.07 per cent of the vote. It has not stood in any subsequent elections.

although he eventually failed in the ‘fit and proper’ test conducted by the legislative members. This information was reported in ‘Inilah tujuan aktivis gay ingin jadi komisioner komnas HAM’ (This is the goal of a gay activist’s bid for a seat at the National Commission for Human Rights) in *Liputan 6* (11 October 2012).<sup>22</sup> Although he did not make it to the parliament or to KOMNAS HAM, his nomination proves the increasingly visible activism supporting the rights of non-heteronormative individuals and communities. The involvement of openly gay men in state politics was unthinkable in the previous era.

In a much later development, responding to the heightened public debate on LGBTIQ and the intensified global pressure to legalise same-sex unions since 2014, the views of cabinet ministries were no longer in unison towards marginalised groups and individuals. Although none of them asserted their support for the legalisation of non-heteronormative union, the ministers’ views ranged from the need for the state to ensure their safety and rights, all the way through to the need to raise awareness of the apparent dangers of LGBTIQ and the need to criminalise LGBTIQ individuals (Ikawati 2015).

The abovementioned daring movements exposed more clearly the internal contradictions in the established structure of the gender relations of emotion. They revealed more clearly the social and cultural marginalisation and discrimination, which so far had been largely tolerated. In addition, they exposed more plainly the ambivalent position, as well as absence, of the state in terms of legal recognition and protection, discrimination, threats of violence towards these marginalised groups and individuals (Khanis 2013). They also highlighted the involvement of the state and its apparatus in the ensuing criminalisation of LGBTIQ individuals since 2004. For instance, the persecution of Hartoyo in Aceh in 2007 (as a result of the enforcement of the anti-

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<sup>22</sup> A part of the selection process is commonly called the ‘fit and proper’ test, in which the candidate has to face a panel of legislators. The candidate has to answer the questions given by the legislators. The legislators will then determine whether the candidate is suitable for the position.

LGBTIQ bylaw) spread virally through global social media networks. It spurred controversy and gained attention from international human rights organisations (Hartoyo 2015).

The movements in support of LGBTIQ rights and the changes they inspired further implicated the relations of masculinities in the gender order. They exposed more clearly that the hegemony of *bapakism* was at the expense of the marginalisation of masculinities and of non-heteronormative men and women. The movements revealed that the cultural exaltation of *bapakism* had inspired the tolerance of bullying and prevalent discrimination against other masculinities which were considered unfit in the patriarchal gender order. The idealisation of culturally exalted heteronormative masculinity was no longer taken for granted. Its hegemony was further eroded.

As the movements in support of LGBTIQ rights further eroded the legitimacy of the dominant patterning of the gender relation of emotion, as well as the deeply entrenched culturally exalted masculinity, they eventually triggered a backlash. Islamisation provided a platform for the struggle to restore the hegemony of heteronormativity and *bapakism* masculinity. Tom Boellstorff (2005a: 575) asserts that many Muslim public figures, mostly men, continued to discriminate against homosexuality in their public sermons. Some of them increased their vitriol. A series of violent protests, led and populated by mostly men, had taken place against LGBTIQ individuals (Boellstorff 2004a; Liang 2010), and against the activism and social media campaigns of the LGBTIQ rights movements since 1999 (Lestari 2015). In 2010, the Indonesian Islamic Clerics Council (MUI), the official fatwa-issuing organisation in Indonesia, and the Islamic Defender Front (FPI) protested against the Q!Film Festival because homosexuality was considered against the religion and social norms (Gus/Ken

2010).<sup>23</sup> In January 2015, MUI formally issued a fatwa condemning especially gays, lesbians and transgenders and suggesting the state rehabilitate individuals contacting the ‘disease’ and capitally punish those caught performing homosexual activities (Hidayana 2015).

The force to restore the heteronormative gender patterning of emotion, as well as its heteronormative masculinity ideal—*bapakism*—eventually culminated in the criminalisation of homosexuality since 2004, albeit in a few regions. While the national law continued to be silent in regard to the legal status and citizenship rights of LGBTIQ people, the decentralisation policy provided opportunities for local governments in several sharia-compliant regions, such as Aceh, Padang Panjang and Tasikmalaya, to criminalise homosexuality (Arivia and Gina 2016; Ichwan 2013). In Aceh, the punishment for committing homosexuality is 100 lashes (Arivia and Gina 2016: 8). Other legal mechanisms, which discriminate against homosexuality, include, among others, *Law No. 44/2008* on Pornography,<sup>24</sup> and *Government Regulation No 4/2007* on adoption<sup>25</sup> (Muthmainnah 2016).

The increasing visibility of movements in support of LGBTIQ rights and the mounting pressure to formally criminalise non-heteronormative relations were strong indicators of a deepening crisis in the patriarchal gender order. The support for LGBTIQ rights indicated an increasing distrust of the established patterning of the gender relations of emotions. However, the mounting pressure to restore ‘order’ was a very strong indicator of the growing awareness of the eroded legitimacy of the heteronormative patterning of the gender relations of emotion and more specifically of

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<sup>23</sup> Greg Fealy (2004) categorises the FPI as part of the burgeoning Islamist movement seeking to dramatically change Indonesian society and politics through the implementation of a comprehensive sharia law. FPI is best known as a vigilante group for its violent approach to enforcing Islamic law.

<sup>24</sup> Article 4 criminalises the production, procurement, distribution of pornographic materials, including those on ‘deviant sexual intercourse’, which further partly specifies as lesbian and homosexual sex (see Muthmainnah 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Article 13 clearly states that homosexual couples cannot adopt children.



hegemonic masculinity. What was considered as something that it was not necessary to regulate in formal legal terms began increasingly to be seen as a threat requiring special attention from, not only religious and community leaders, but also lawmakers. The struggle for hegemony was thus more intensified at this moment in history.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explained the socio-economic and political background that triggered the renewed struggle for hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia in the first 15 years of twenty-first century. I have demonstrated that the period was marked by a deep gender-order crisis, initially triggered by the sudden reversal of economic fortunes in 1997–1998. It was then complicated by the transition to democracy and a series of social and political changes that included an intensifying Islamisation in the wake of the authoritarian regime's demise. The gender-order crisis eventually implicated masculinities. On one hand, it triggered strong attempts to defend the hegemonic ideal masculinity of *bapakism*. On the other, it inspired bolder movements to undermine it.

In this chapter I have set the scene for a deeper discussion on Indonesian commercial filmmakers' struggles to reconfigure what constitutes a cultural ideal masculinity in the ensuing chapters. Commercial cinema is an arena where the hegemonic position of masculinity is to be won or lost. It was during the gender-order crisis that the struggle for hegemonic masculinity in Indonesian cinema became increasingly visible, compared to the period when the crisis tendencies had not yet erupted into a full-blown crisis. As my chapters unfold, I shall demonstrate that hegemonic *bapakism* was deeply entrenched in Indonesian cinema especially during the New Order period. It was reflected in the structure of Indonesian cinema—filmmaking was very much a male-dominated arena. Thus, as also suggested by Sen (1994), it was not surprising that the gender representations in Indonesian cinema at that time reflected the patriarchal patterning of gender relations. The hegemonic position of *bapakism* was

barely contested. Yet, the major shifts that occurred in social, political and economic arenas off-screen at the turn of the millennium have forced changes within the structures of gender relations and the ways in which gender ideals are depicted in Indonesian cinema. Partly, filmmakers were involved in an intensified political battle for hegemonic masculinity. They tapped into the events, fears, fantasies and hopes of the period in their innovations and experimentations of alternative ideals. Yet, their struggle was not always successful and it could not avoid inevitable biases.

In this chapter, I have also defended my position regarding the concept of ‘crisis’ in the studies of men and masculinities. I have elaborated my opposition to the concepts of ‘masculinity in crisis’ or ‘crisis of masculinity’ as deployed by many scholars working on masculinities, including in the context of Indonesia. I have demonstrated that the concept has failed to capture the complexity of the process of change within the gender order. I propose to use ‘gender order crisis’ (R.W. Connell 2005), instead throughout the thesis, to better map the trajectory of crisis and shifting relations among masculinities. I have demonstrated that the crisis within the gender order developed over time, instead of accidentally. Accidental events, in this case the economic crisis, political crisis and social change did, however, contribute to speed up the maturation of the respective crisis tendencies of the structures. In the case of Indonesia, these accidental occurrences exposed more visibly the crisis tendencies of the gender relations of production, power and emotion. Eventually, the accidental events sped up the maturation of those crisis tendencies and led them into a deep gender-order crisis in the twenty-first century.

## **Chapter 3**

# **The Gender-Order Crisis on the Silver Screen**

In this chapter I discuss the broad implications of the gender-order crisis for Indonesian cinema. In the previous chapter, I mapped the trajectory of the crisis within the three structures of the gender relations that support Indonesia's official gender order. In this chapter, I provide a broad overview of how the gender-order crisis crept into the structure of Indonesian cinema and forced changes in the cinematic representations of gender and sexualities. How did, on one hand, the crisis open up new avenues for filmmakers to engage in innovation and experimentations with alternative gender ideals on screen; and on the other, it restrain the filmmakers' political endeavours to offer such alternatives on screen? I essentially argue that the gender-order crisis permeated Indonesian cinema during the period from 2000 to 2014. In fact, Indonesian cinema became a contested territory in which various interest groups took part in a political endeavour either in support of or in challenge of official gender ideals. I identify two major forces significantly shaping the directions of gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema amidst the weakening of official gender ideals. They are Islamisation and women's cinema. I shall demonstrate that while they developed into strong forces of change within the structure of Indonesian cinema as well as the cinematic representations of genders and sexualities, they also deepened public anxiety and moral panic concerning gender and sexualities.

Islamisation in Indonesian cinema is an extension of its off-screen phenomenon in the country at any given time. Islamisation is a series of processes involving certain measures and campaigns, regardless of the identity of the advocates and their motives, which call for the establishment of what are considered to be Islamic doctrines in legal, political and social systems (Salim 2008: 45). This phenomenon has been the most visible feature of Indonesian politics, economy and culture. Islamisation in

contemporary Indonesia, indeed, is a complex set of processes. As argued by Ariel Heryanto, it involves a set of multiple processes with multiple directions, in which various Muslim-affiliated groups, which do not necessarily hold shared views, are involved, and none of the groups holds control over the trajectory of the process. Islamisation is even more complex with the involvement of non-religiously affiliated groups and individuals as well as other factors, including post-authoritarian politics, the expansion of global capitalism, and the development of information and media technology. In popular culture, the phenomenon manifests partly in the explosion and celebration of products which are deemed by the Indonesian community as reflecting Islamic values (Heryanto 2014: 26).

I shall demonstrate that during the period under study, Islamisation in Indonesian cinema manifested partly in the explosion of films promoting Islamic values—popularly known as *film Islami*. Films under this category provide a rich site of innovation and experimentation with alternative gender ideals, femininity and masculinity, which foreground Islamic piety. I will also show that Islamisation has been significant in shaping film censorship in Indonesia, both official and unofficial censors. Muslim protests against films, while not new to twenty-first-century Indonesia, have been much more visible when compared to the period under the authoritarian regime. Cinematic representations of alternative gender ideals have mostly been produced, censored and circulated in ways that anticipated or prevented unwanted protests which could have led to the withdrawal of films from distribution or even to their banning.

The second major force shaping the trajectory of gender politics in the first 15 years of twenty-first-century in Indonesia is women's cinema. I define women's cinema as an institution and a set of practices in which women filmmakers and women's issues

are central to film production, representations and distribution.<sup>1</sup> Indonesian women's cinema is an extension of the flourishing feminist women's movement off-screen. Women's cinema is an avenue for women filmmakers to voice their concerns and protests against unequal gender relations that sustain the gender order in Indonesian cinema and beyond. As argued by Fatimah T. Rony (2012), films made by filmmakers who are critical of gender issues can be seen as political interventions aimed at raising viewers' awareness of gender issues in their society at a particular time. I shall demonstrate that during the 2000 to 2014 period, a vibrant women's cinema in Indonesia not only challenged the taken-for-granted male dominated cinema, but also triggered an intensive search for alternative gender ideals—femininities and masculinities. Yet, at the same time, these 'vulgar' cinematic challenges often annoyed various interest groups who supported official gender ideals. Thus, women's cinema also deepened public anxiety around the possibility of impending moral decay.

While not specifically addressing the feminist women's movement and Islamisation in the previous chapter, I did mention that they played major roles in shaping the trajectory of gender politics off-screen. I suggested that both have contributed to the maturation of crisis tendencies in each of the structures of gender relations. For instance, I emphasised the role of the feminist women's movement in forcing changes to the Indonesian legal system to criminalise acts of domestic violence. I also underscored their role in advocating for changes to the Compilation of Islamic Law to address gender biases. In addition, I also highlighted the role of radical Islamists in mobilising forces to curb non-heteronormative expressions of gender and sexuality.

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there are films made by men which reflect feminist ideologies very well, yet I consciously limit the definition to exclude such films. For instance, I will include Lucky Kuswandi's *Selamat Pagi, Malam* (Good morning, Night, 2014), although Kuswandi is a man. The film is produced by a renowned feminist producer, Sammaria Simanjuntak and problematises the life choices of lesbians in Indonesia. The feminine perspective offered in this film questions the normalised practice of marriages of convenience among Indonesian lesbians. Yet, I will exclude Hanung Bramantyo's *Kartini* (2017) as part of women's cinema because it is his auteur work despite problematising women's issues, such as rights to education.

This chapter paves the way for deeper scrutiny of filmmakers' struggles in undermining the hegemony of *bapakism* through screen representations. Its exploration of the rejuvenated struggle of gender politics behind and around the silver screen will help us to understand the opportunities as well as the limitations that filmmakers encountered in staging their public gender politics through commercial cinema. Not all innovations of alternative gender ideals are able to be represented, let alone idealised, on the screen in a particular cultural and historical setting. While some alternative ideals successfully appeal to the viewing public, others are banned, censored, protested about or withdrawn from circulation. This chapter explores the forces which on one hand fostered intensive search for new alternative gender ideals, and on the other limited such innovations within Indonesian cinema. Understanding these forces will help us comprehend why filmmakers were driven to promote certain forms of masculinities, while suppressing or even avoiding taking sides on others in their films.

We have witnessed certain depictions of gender ideals in commercial films that have been publicly protested about or badly censored. For instance, the idealisation of Muslim men and women who promote religious pluralism in Hanung Bramantyo's ? (2011) was heavily criticised by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Indonesian Muslim Clerics Council (MUI); the protests caused the film to be temporarily suspended from circulation for re-editing (Afrisia 2015b). *Brokeback Mountain* (2005, Ang Lee) was not exempted from state censorship before its release in Indonesia in 2006. Assuming that the film promoted same-sex relations, the state censorship board cut many scenes in the film, to the point that it disturbed the flow of the story (Detik Hot 2006). Consequently, staging political protests against established gender ideals through commercial cinema requires careful assessment of the intersection between politics and the economy. The political dimension apparently extends from off-screen (see Chapter 2) to within the structure of cinema itself. Such assessment is important in

order to create representations which are not only relevant but also potentially marketable. Eventually, political and economic considerations, independently or together, leave traceable consequences in the range of cinematic representations of gender ideals on the silver screen.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the Islamisation of Indonesian cinema. It examines how this most telling phenomenon shaped the trajectory of the political battle for official gender ideals in Indonesian cinema. I begin by describing the emerging film category which foregrounds Islamic piety—a category that became a rich ground for innovation and experimentation with alternative ideals of masculinities and femininities. While Islamisation inspired an intensive search for new gender ideals, it also posed limitations in the process through its intervention in film censorship—both official and otherwise. Islamisation contributed significantly to determining what could and could not be represented, let alone idealised, on screen at that time.

The second section of this chapter is dedicated to exploring another major force shaping the trajectory of gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema—women’s cinema. A newly emerging genre with barely any precedence, women’s cinema has been a powerful force of change in Indonesian cinema. This section begins with an explanation of the exponential increase in women filmmakers in Indonesian cinema. I will underscore the implications of such an increase for the structure of Indonesian cinema as well as the production of cinematic representations of gender ideals on the silver screen. Then, the discussion shifts to the moral panic and anxiety triggered by the flourishing of women’s cinema. Due to supposedly ‘vulgar’ and confronting depictions of gender and sexualities, women’s cinema was often linked to pornography. This chapter concludes with a reflection on the political–economic dimension of commercial cinema and how the production of cinematic representations of gender ideals is shaped.

Considering the intricate relations between politics and the economy in commercial cinema, we can expect that filmmakers must carefully negotiate their personal political views with off- and on-screen gender politics as well as the pressure to make a profit.

### **Islamisation: New alternative gender ideals and the evolution of censorship**

In this section, I shall demonstrate that during the period under study, 2000–2014, Islamisation significantly shaped the trajectory of gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema. On one hand it triggered an intensive search for alternative gender ideals: masculine and feminine. Through the flourishing of *film Islami*, Islamisation inspired the emergence of alternative gender ideals which foreground Islamic piety. On the other hand, as Islamisation emerged as a powerful force in the heated debate about public morality, it shaped the trajectory of state and public censorships onto a more conservative track. Consequently, Islamisation left telling marks in determining which representations of gender ideals could and could not be shown, let alone idealised in Indonesian cinema at that given time.

The seed to the burgeoning Islamisation in twenty-first-century Indonesia can be traced back to the 1990s. Under the authoritarian regime, while being allowed to flourish, Islam was mostly distanced from state politics and reduced to its spiritual aspects and as a means of controlling public morality (Hefner 2000: 58–59). Yet, towards the end of the 1980s, the regime began to wane as the friction within Soeharto's immediate circle and power base had reached a breaking point and threatened to overturn his three-decade dictatorship (Heryanto 2014: 29). During 1990s, there were several noteworthy historical milestones that reflected the regime's inclination towards Islam in order to strengthen its power base. They included the establishment of Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI, Association of Indonesian Muslim Scholars) in 1990 by the state, President Soeharto and his family's nationally televised Hajj



pilgrimage in 1991, and a more relaxed attitude towards wearing religious symbols, particularly the headscarf for Muslim women (Heryanto 2008b).<sup>2</sup> As a result, Islam has been growing into a powerful force in Indonesian politics, economy and culture.

Although none of the Islamic-based political parties has ever secured enough votes to win the majority seats in the parliament and pass the presidential threshold, Islam has been a strong force in Indonesian politics in the wake of the New Order's demise. Islam has been intensively used by politicians—Muslims and non-Muslims alike—to garner votes.<sup>3</sup> Political Islam has also permeated secular political parties (Baswedan 2004; Tanuwidjaja 2010).<sup>4</sup> Candidates for the position of Indonesian President in the past three direct presidential elections must show their support to the religion of the majority of the Indonesian population.<sup>5</sup> Non-Muslim candidates have also been using Islam to garner votes.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Islamic symbols, such as the headscarf for Muslim women, have been deployed by politicians to bolster their

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<sup>2</sup> Under the reign of the New Order, the adoption of religious symbolism was largely confined to religious occasions. Until 1991, the government prohibited veiling in public offices and state schools (Smith-Hefner 2007: 397).

<sup>3</sup> To date, there have been five general elections held in Indonesia, and in the last four, Indonesian voters were also asked to elect a President, in addition to electing representatives to the upper and lower houses of the parliament. The elections were held in 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. In all these elections, none of the political parties which declare Islam as their basis has ever won the majority of votes. Moreover, since the substantial increase of the presidential threshold in *Law Number 42/2008* (Republic of Indonesia 2008), none of the Islam-based political parties has ever been able to achieve the lowest number of votes to nominate a president without joining a coalition. The law prescribes that nomination of a presidential candidate can only be done by a party or a coalition of political parties which can secure at least 20 per cent of the total number of parliament's seats or by winning 25 per cent of votes in the general election prior to the presidential election (Article 9).

<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, political Islam refers to movements using Islam to attain political power.

<sup>5</sup> For example, part of the strategy to win the votes for his presidential bid in 2014, Joko Widodo with his family went to Mecca to perform *Umrah* close to election day (Primandari 2014). Considering the massive campaign undermining his religiosity (ibid.), his pilgrimage was a bold political strategy strengthening his image as a pious Muslim.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, the former governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Christian, tried to maintain his political standing by allocating funding for the welfare of mosque caretakers (Rikang 2014). In his second bid for Jakarta's governorship in 2017, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama pledged before Nahdlatul Ulama leaders that he would allocate funding for 3,000 mosque caretakers to go to Saudi Arabia to perform the *umrah* pilgrimage (Sasongko 2017).

careers.<sup>7</sup> Last, but not least, Islamisation in contemporary Indonesia has facilitated the emergence of organised vigilante groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and the Forum of Islamic Society (FUI), which do not shy away from using violence in disciplining public morality (Bamualim 2011; Munabari 2018).

In gender politics, Islam has also emerged as a powerful contender. Despite its internal diversity and contradictions, Islam has been a strong alternative force amidst the weakening hegemony of New Order gender ideals. First and foremost, the decentralisation policy has also paved the way for many local governments to establish sharia by-laws, many of which are gender biased and target women (see Bush 2008; Noerdin 2002; Wieringa 2006).<sup>8</sup> Second, Islam has also played a major role in almost all public debates on gender issues, including those surrounding the female presidency, polygamy, pornography, public morality and gender equality debates (see Chapter 2). Indonesian Muslims do not necessarily hold the same views regarding those gender issues. In many cases, Muslims' opinions have been sharply divided, for instance on the polygamy and public morality debates (Brenner 2006; Nurmila 2009). Indeed, organised vigilante groups, such as FPI and FUI were behind many public protests and raids aimed at disciplining public displays of gendered morality. For instance, these organisations mobilised a massive protest against the Lady Gaga concert in May 2012. They considered Lady Gaga, renowned not only for her songs but also for the controversies surrounding her appearance and live acts, as a threat to the nation's morality and to Islam (Saputra 2012). Although the concert tickets had already been

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<sup>7</sup> I have shown elsewhere that Joko Widodo's wife adorned the headscarf during her husband's campaign for presidency, but she took it off once he won the election (Eliyanah 2016).

<sup>8</sup> In the absence of official figures Robin Bush (2008: 174) provided a statistical illustration on regional regulations based on sharia—there are 78 regional regulations enforced in 52 districts/municipalities of the total 470 districts/municipalities in Indonesia. Fourteen of these regulations indirectly target women by regulating the way they dress. For example, in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, based on *Bylaw No. 5/2003* (Regional Government of Bulukumba 2003), all women accessing public services are required to veil. In Aceh, veiling is also an imperative gender practice justified by the province's *Bylaw No. 11/2002* (Provincial Government of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam 2002) Violation of this regulation can result in punishment, which is decided by the Islamic court (Article 23).

sold (Hari 2012) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs did not object to it (Liauw 2012), the Indonesian Police cancelled the permit due to enormous pressure from Muslim groups (A. Setiawan 2012). In short, Islam, despite its internal diversity and contradictions, has been a strong powerhouse in shaping the trajectory of gender politics in Indonesia in the twenty-first century.

The pervasiveness of Islam in cinema triggered the emergence of a new category: *film Islami* (Islamic films), or *film bernafaskan Islam* (films which breathe Islam).<sup>9</sup> The same trend in mainstreaming Islam in popular culture products can also be seen in literature, music and television programs.<sup>10</sup> Films in the *film Islami* genre tend to foreground religiosity in their title and content, in some cases involve clerics preaching about Islam as the solution to the life problems faced by the characters (Imanda 2012: 92–93). James Hoesterey and Marshall Clark (2012: 208) argue that films under this category are part of a wider artistic movement which attempts to articulate forms of aspirational piety that resonates with the contemporary anxieties, desires and frustrations of Indonesian Muslims, albeit mostly from the middle class. Indeed, films which promote Islamic values are not new in Indonesian cinema, yet they have never been as pervasive as they are in the twenty-first century. In fact, many films under this category are in the top ten best-selling films and have become part of the contemporary film canon in Indonesia. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love, 2008, Hanung Bramantyo) which raked up more than three million viewers and the *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (When Love Glorifies God, 2009, Chaerul Umam) duology which attracted almost five million viewers collectively (Film Indonesia 2013). Watching *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, the then

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<sup>9</sup> I am using *film Islami* in this thesis as it is the most commonly used terms among scholars working on Indonesian cinema.

<sup>10</sup> In literature, fiction promoting Islamic piety has emerged as an alternative literary genre. In music, Islamisation has led to the emergence of a genre of *musik bernafaskan Islam* (music that breathes Islam) (see Capwell 2011). In television, it has led to the popularity of *sinetron religi*, or religious soap operas (see Subijanto 2011).

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono shed tears and encouraged the production of more such films which show the softer side of Indonesian Muslims (Hasits 2008; Wijoseno 2008).

Islamisation in Indonesian cinema has also been brushing up against contemporary gender politics. The phenomenon has opened up avenues for the search for new alternative gender ideals which foreground Islamic piety. As I have argued elsewhere (Eliyanah 2016), *film Islami* is a rich site for innovation and experimentation with Muslim versions of alternative ideal femininities and masculinities. Films such as *Kun Fayakun* (Be and so it is, 2008, Guntur Novaris), *Ayat-ayat Cinta, Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman with Keffiyeh, 2009, Hanung Bramantyo), *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* and many others of a similar kind offer ‘visual guides’ to becoming ideal Muslim masculine men and feminine women (Eliyanah 2016; Hoesterey and Clark 2012; Izharuddin 2017; Lücking and Eliyanah 2017).<sup>11</sup> In terms of masculinity, *film Islami* first and foremost defies the secular version of the hegemonic cultural ideal, *bapakism*. Although *bapakism* was sanctioned by the dominant interpretation of Islam in Indonesia, Islamic piety was not promoted explicitly as part of the gender practices configuring the cultural ideal. Instead, it was subtly implied. As Islamisation intensified, Islamic piety has become explicitly foregrounded in the depiction of ideal masculinity, especially in *film Islami*. I will discuss more about these Muslim versions of an alternative ideal masculinity in Chapter 5.

Just as there is a plurality of Islam off-screen, films under this category do not offer a singular form of gender ideal. The visual interpretation of what it takes to be ideal Muslim masculine men and Muslim feminine women are far from monolithic in Indonesian cinema. In terms of masculinity, I agree with Alicia Izharuddin (2017) that

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, films under the category of *film Islami* operate within a heteronormative world view. Globally, heteronormativity governs Muslim societies in gender and sexuality. The latter three films: *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, the *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* duology and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* are adaptations of popular novels of the same titles.

most cinematic depictions of ideal masculinity represent the characters as aspiring to be rich and pious. Yet, they also bear many differences. For example, in the film *Kun Fayakun*, the character representing the ideal Muslim man promotes being the sole breadwinner for the family as the conventional masculine role. To do so, the male protagonist shoulders the economic responsibility on his own; he even prevents his wife from working for financial gain during the family's hardest time. This representation of ideal masculinity is challenged by the film versions of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* which, to varying degrees, encourage women to pursue public-sphere careers and men to share the breadwinning responsibilities with women.

We can also trace the influences of a burgeoning women's cinema and the off-screen movement for gender equality in the production of some alternative gender ideals in *film Islami*. Some filmmakers behind *film Islami* are idealist Muslim women filmmakers. For instance, Nan T. Achnas, the director of *Pasir Berbisik* (Whispering Sand, 2001), has collaborated with her director husband, Nurman Hakim to produce a number of films that critique radical Islamists and stereotypical Islamic gender practices. In *Khalifah* (2011, Nurman Hakim), for example, the husband-and-wife team problematizes, not only the controversial face-veiling practice among Muslim women, but also the absolute authority of a husband over his wife, which extends to regulating her appearance in the public sphere.<sup>12</sup> In the film, the female protagonist, who has not adopted veiling prior to her marriage, takes up veiling on the instruction of her husband. The husband, the representation of a member of a radical Islamist group, believes that face veiling is required of Muslim women to preserve their chastity. Although the female protagonist eventually finds liberty in adopting face veiling, the film problematizes the extent to which a Muslim man holds authority over his wife's body.

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<sup>12</sup> In this film, Khalifa is the name of the protagonist.

*Film Islami* has also been an important platform from which to respond to contemporary public debates concerning gender issues. *Film Islami* has also been a rich site of political contestations that focus on the depiction of particular political stances in certain debates on gender issues. Control of cinematic representations of gender issues comes with the power to shape the trajectory of gender politics. This political contestation was highly visible on screen during the period under study. For instance, the filmmakers behind the adaptation of the *Ayat-ayat Cinta* novel took dramatic licence and extended the narrative's polygamy scene. Instead of toning down the polygamy scene as in the novel, the filmmakers provided a much longer scene to show the complexity of a polygamous household. As Hanung Bramantyo explained to me:

The (novel's) logic is too simplistic: when she is in comma, Fahri's voice or touch will awaken her. To get that touch, Maria and Fahri should be married ... But where are the women's rights? ... The (novel) writer was so cruel to Maria. We could only provide a little happiness which is righteous for Maria. The polygamy scene was specifically Gina's request because she pitied Maria (Personal interview with Bramantyo, 21 April 2014).<sup>13</sup>

As expected, the scene became one of the most discussed parts of the film. It revived the public debate on polygamy (Yumiyanti 2008), which had never entirely died down since the early 2000s. It has arguably been one of the most important arenas for

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<sup>13</sup> Gina refers to Gina S. Noer, one of the scriptwriters of the film. The novel does not problematise the polygamous household led by the male protagonist. As for the film, the polygamous scene is extended to show how difficult it is for a man to treat his multiple wives equally and the jealousy between the co-wives as a humane reaction towards unequal treatment. In the film, the male protagonist, Fahri, takes a second wife, Maria based on his first wife's request in order to save him from the death penalty. Previously, Fahri is convicted of rape. He cannot prove his innocence unless he can make Maria testify for him. Maria, who is gravely ill with a heart condition and depression due to her unrequited love for Fahri, is in coma. Doctors advise the family that it is only Fahri's voice and touch that can ease Maria's depression, and in turn help her recover. The only way that Fahri can touch Maria is for them to marry because a Muslim man cannot touch a woman who is not in his immediate family. Fahri needs Maria to testify for him; Maria needs Fahri to recover from her illness; and the pregnant first wife, Aisha, needs Fahri free and alive to be with her to raise their child. Polygamy is the only option. Fahri weds Maria on the hospital bed. After he kisses her, Maria gradually regains consciousness. Finally, Maria can testify in Fahri's trial and he is free. The happiness however is short lived. Upon returning home, Fahri, Maria and Aisha live under the same roof. This is when the polygamous household becomes complicated. Aisha is jealous of Fahri's treatment of Maria. Fahri is confused and finds it difficult to be fair towards his two wives. The conflicts culminate with Aisha running away from home to seek consolation from her family.

legitimising an alternative ideal masculinity—a masculinity which encourages men to take more than one wife. For men, the polygamous practice is considered to be a heroic act towards protecting women. After 2006, when disappointment towards A'a Gym (a famous Muslim televangelist) escalated due to his decision to take a second wife, the debate seemed to go under the radar. Yet, the release of the movie *Ayat-ayat Cinta* revived the debate with Muslims again being widely divided.

In addition to opening up new avenues in which to reconfigure new gender ideals, Islamisation has also shaped the trajectory of censorship in Indonesia during the period under study. Earlier, I mentioned the significant role of Islam in the ongoing debate about public morality. Part of the control of public morality is contingent upon securing control over which forms of gender ideals can and cannot be represented and idealised on cinema screen. In the following discussion, I shall demonstrate that Islamisation has contributed to shaping the direction of state and public censorship. Islamisation has contributed to the strengthening of conservatism in state censorship; it has also emerged as a strong force of public censorship in its own right. During the period under study, we saw many films being censored, withdrawn from circulation, or even banned due to protests from various Muslim pressure groups because of alleged 'inappropriate' representations of gender and sexualities as well as blasphemy. In many cases, public protests altered the decisions made by the state censorship board.

Although many layers of state censorship regulations under the New Order have been scrapped, the Film Censorship Board (LSF) still holds a prominent role in determining what can and cannot be screened in Indonesian commercial cinemas. The LSF, a state-funded body, is the legacy of film regulation under the colonial government. It is responsible for censoring and classifying films. The most recent Law on Film, *Law No. 33/2009* (Republic of Indonesia, 2009) stipulates that every film and film trailer produced domestically and internationally, intended to be distributed

through the commercial market in Indonesia must pass censorship (Article 57). The censorship board is a powerful state-funded body which assesses each film's 'appropriateness' for legal distribution in Indonesian cinema theatres or in the DVD/VCD formats (van Heeren 2012: 178).

During the 2000 to 2014 period, it was clear that many decisions the board made regarding film censorship were shaped by Islamisation. The supposedly independent body seemed, on many occasions, to be intimidated by public protests that were staged by various Muslim pressure groups. In 2004, it controversially cancelled its approval for *Buruan Cium Gue!* (Kiss Me Quick! 2004, Findo Purwono) after massive and highly publicised protests led by A'a Gym.<sup>14</sup> The film which had already obtained approval from the LSF was criticised by A'a Gym for containing pornographic content and advocating pre-marital sex among youths, thus endangering the nation's morality. Basing his judgement only on the film's title, A'a Gym made the accusation during his live television sermon on 8 August 2004, three days after the film was released (Detik News 2004).<sup>15</sup> Quickly gathering support, including from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), A'a Gym led an entourage to visit the LSF to have a dialogue about films and the nation's morality (Fransambudi and Wahyudi 2004). After the meeting, the LSF claimed that it might have made a mistake by passing the film. Thus, the LSF cancelled its approval and demanded that the film be withdrawn from theatres. The producer finally withdrew the film from distribution and ordered a re-editing to abide with the protestors' demands (ibid.). This incident relating to the censorship board's reversed decision on *Buruan Cium Gue!* demonstrates the immense pressure caused by

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<sup>14</sup> The televangelist's name is Abdullah Gymnastiar. But he is more popularly known as A'a Gym (Brother Gym).

<sup>15</sup> The narrative of *Buruan Cium Gue* revolves around two high school students who have been dating for two years. They are each other's first love. The girl, Desi, somehow expects that her boyfriend, Ardi, will kiss her on her lips. She has never had the experience before, while her female friends have. However, the guy tends to wait until the right moment to do so. Calling in to a live radio program, Desi lies about having been kissed by her boyfriend. Listening to the confession, Ardi wonders who kissed Desi before him. After all of the misunderstandings are cleared up, they eventually kiss.



the intensifying Islamisation on the structure of Indonesian cinema and especially on the censorship board.

The recall of censorship approval for *Buruan Cium Gue!* should be understood in the context of the gender-order crisis. The gender-order crisis occurred during a period of profound changes, in which the hegemonic bases of official gender ideals were substantially eroded. It was during this period of crisis that Islam emerged as a powerful alternative force in the contest for gender hegemony. The public protests against the film followed by the recall of approval and the withdrawal of the film from theatres were political strategies staged by Muslim pressure groups to secure gender hegemony. They struggled to control what could and could not be screened in Indonesian cinema at that given time because they were fearful of the perceived negative excesses of films. The provocative title and the alternative gender ideals offered by the film in question did not sit well with the pious ideals promoted by these groups. In other words, the public persecution of *Buruan Cium Gue!* was a reaction towards the film's challenges of an ideal passive feminine sexuality and the new aspiration of becoming pious Muslim subjects. Although kissing scenes were not new in Indonesian commercial films, this film happened to catch the attention of a high-profile Muslim cleric (A'a Gym) who garnered substantial power by inspiring the Muslim public at that time.<sup>16</sup> By gathering support from various Muslim pressure groups, the cause against *Buruan Cium Gue!* was finally able to influence the official body that held the legitimate power to censor films.

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<sup>16</sup> Prior to *Buruan Cium Gue!*, another teenage romance *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* (What's Up with Cinta? 2002, Rudy Soedjarwo) also featured a kissing scene between the two teenage protagonists at an airport. This earlier film did not attract a similar reaction from the Muslim pressure groups. Thus, according to van Heeren (2012: 168) Muslim protests against films have at best been random in contemporary Indonesia. Yet, in my opinion, among this randomness, there is a loose pattern emerging in relation to Muslim protests against films. Protests tend to target films which allegedly contain sexually explicit scenes, LGBTIQ, blasphemy and communism. The definition of each of these content topics can be very broad and highly subjective.

Prior to the incident involving *Buruan Cium Gue!*, in 2003 a heated debate on pornography and morality was triggered by a popular female *dangdut* singer—Inul Daratista. Her trademark dance move, the *goyang ngebor* (drill dance) became controversial as she began to be featured on national television.<sup>17</sup> Many senior *dangdut* musicians, led by the notable Rhoma Irama, also an icon of devout Muslims, criticised her and accused her of smearing *dangdut* with immoral dance moves. It was during his row against Inul that Rhoma Irama coined the term '*porno-aksi*' (porno-action). The gyrating hip movement of the dance was considered by Rhoma Irama and his proponents to threaten the nation's morality, and thus it should be banned from being shown in public. Certainly, such row between a junior and a senior artist, a devout Muslim and a Muslim who was considered immoral, soon received a lot of media attention, which led to a public debate on public morality. In the debate, Inul garnered support from other Muslim leaders, especially Nahdlatul Ulama and former President Abdurrahman Wahid. The debate set in motion a stale discussion in parliament about regulating pornography and porno-action in the Indonesian public sphere. Reading the case of *Buruan Cium Gue!* against this precedence alerts us to the increasingly significant role of Islam, regardless of its internal frictions, in regulating public gendered morality during the period of a deep gender-order crisis. It aspired to regulate what could and could not be shown in the Indonesian public sphere.

Among the filmmakers I met during my fieldwork in 2014, LSF was notoriously described as becoming more conservative due to the intensified Islamisation. As described by Nia Dinata, 'Previously, the censorship board worked for an authoritarian regime. But now, it works to please organised groups bearing the name of religion' (Personal interview, 28 May 2014). The case of *Buruan Cium Gue!* has clearly proven

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<sup>17</sup> Prior to her popularity on national television, she was a popular off-air artist. She had popularised her dance move before securing television popularity (Heryanto 2008a).

this allegation. The actual content of the film does not contain any graphic sexual scenes or pre-marital sex. Yet, the censorship board succumbed to the pressure of Muslim pressure groups and cancelled its initial censorship decision. Consequently, it is necessary for filmmakers to negotiate their political struggles around state censorship as well as potential public protests, especially those mounted by certain Muslim pressure groups. For example, in an article that appeared in *Kapan Lagi*, ‘Nia Dinata siapkan banyak bonus dalam DVD “ARISAN 2”’ (Nia Dinata has prepared a lot of bonuses for ‘ARISAN 2’ DVD), Nia Dinata said that one of their biggest concerns in her collaboration with director Lucky Kuswandi in *Madame X* (2010, Lucky Kuswandi), a transgender superhero comedy, was censorship:

I can’t deny that we are worried (that the film might not pass censorship). But we are used to making films which are out of the box. As long as we have positive messages to offer and we believe in what we are doing, I believe all of the worries will be gone (14 June 2012).

*Madame X* experiments with a superhero genre by offering a trans woman as the heroine. The film is a critique of the social bullying of non-heteronormative individuals, polygamy and corrupt public officials. Making a non-heteronormative individual into a hero could easily be translated as the glorification of LGBTIQ, which was a risky subject matter at the height of the gender-order crisis (see Chapter 2).<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the censorship board was generally known for being conservative and its decisions were at best arbitrary (van Heeren 2012: 179). There has never been any clear definition of what constitutes ‘inappropriate’ screen content. Both the 1992 and the 2009 film acts broadly mention that films must not contain content that:

1. inspires viewers to commit violence, or partake in drug or substance abuse,
2. promotes pornography,

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<sup>18</sup> In Chapter 2, I showed that the development of movement in support of LGBTIQ sped up the maturation of the internal crisis tendencies within the structure of gender relations of emotion. It threatened the heteronormative patterning of emotional relations which have become hegemonic.

3. provokes conflict between ethnicities, religions, races or other groups,
4. is blasphemous or offends religious values,
5. inspires law violation,
6. degrades human dignity (Art 6, *Law No. 33/2009*, Republic of Indonesia).

As a result, these categories are open to subjective interpretation by members of the censorship board.

The more conservative censorship institution is inseparable from the increasingly prevalent public protests against films staged by various Muslim pressure groups. Indeed, incidents of Muslims protesting against films are not new in Indonesia. Both during the authoritarian period and after its demise, Muslim protests have led to the banning, withdrawal from distribution, reversal of censorship decisions or even cancellation of production.<sup>19</sup> In both periods, Muslim protests against films have been able to influence the decisions made by the LSF. However, I agree with Katinka van Heeren that protests against films launched by various Muslim groups were never as loud, or as violent as during the post-authoritarian period; neither did they garner as much media attention (2012: 157). At that time, there was an increasing significance of Islam in politics, including gender politics, and a greater exposure of Islam in the media. Amidst a heightened Islamisation, it was easy for public protests against films or other products of popular culture staged in the name of Islam to get substantial media attention (*ibid.*). Wide media coverage about events, and voluntary individual posts on various social media platforms, eventually multiply the echoes of such protests, which in the previous era might not have generated the same level of media attention.

In addition to public protests against *Buruan Cium Gue!*, two other infamous cases involved public protests and controversies. These were *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *?*. Both were directed by Hanung Bramantyo, who also directed *Ayat-ayat*

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<sup>19</sup> Van Heeren (2012: 169) has listed a number of protests against films conducted by various Muslim pressure groups during the New Order period. They include the protest against *Bagi-bagi Dong* (Share, please, 1994, Tjut Djalil) due to the alleged pornographic content. The protests were likely to have been instigated by allegations that the films contained pornographic material.

*Cinta. Perempuan berkalung Sorban*, which revolves around the life of a progressive Muslim woman who challenges patriarchal gender relations in a Muslim setting, was heavily criticised by many Muslim pressure groups, including MUI and Islamic-based political parties, such as the Justice Welfare Party (PKS) for offending Muslims by depicting Muslim clerics and traditional Islamic boarding schools in negative lights (Dewi 2009). While gaining support from Muslim feminists, such as Musdah Mulia, the film was unable to escape the controversy and the pressure to withdraw it from theatres (Yunita 2009). I will discuss the alternative ideal masculinity promoted in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* in Chapter 5. The same fate also befell ? in 2011. This film explores religious pluralism in Indonesia. Through its protagonists, the film promotes tolerance among different religious believers. MUI and FPI were among the most vocal Muslim pressure groups in the public protests against the film. In their view, the film offended Islam by glorifying religious pluralism.<sup>20</sup> In both cases, although the censorship board did not alter their censorship decision, the controversy certainly hampered the film distribution and sales. While another *film Islami* released around the same time as *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* earned more than a million viewers during its theatrical release, this film was able to attract only around 600,000 moviegoers (Film Indonesia 2013). According to an article in the *Jakarta Post* entitled, 'FPI pulls scalpel on Hanung Bramantyo's plurist film "?', the television station cancelled the screening due to protests by the FPI in front of SCTV which planned to screen ? on the eve of Idul Fitri in 2011 (29 August 2011).<sup>21</sup>

The increasing visibility of public protests staged by Muslim pressure groups also led to major distribution chains becoming more selective in screening films. Cinema theatres are the immediate distribution channels for commercial films.

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<sup>20</sup> In their view, Muslims must believe that Islam is the only one true religion.

<sup>21</sup> Idul Fitri is the Islamic festivity marking the end of Ramadhan. In Indonesia, this festivity is the biggest Islamic event celebrated every year on the first day of the tenth month of Islamic lunar calendar.

Consequently, they hold substantial power in determining which films they can screen and which ones they reject. Even when they agree to screen a particular film, they have the power to determine how many screens are allocated and in which theatres the screening can be done. Amidst rampant public protests by Muslim pressure groups between 2000 and 2014, cinema theatres were likely to avoid screening films which potentially triggered protests and controversies. In turn, this attitude towards a particular film could limit the varieties of representations of gender ideals in commercial cinema. Not only do such attitudes limit what can be accessed by viewers, but they can also limit the extent of innovation and experimentation of gender ideals that can be done by filmmakers should they want their films to be screened in major theatres. Nia Dinata's *Arisan!* (The Gathering, 2003) was almost rejected by a major cinema theatre franchise due to its representation of gay masculinities (Dinata cited in Baumgärtel 2012: 206). After a tough negotiation, the film exhibition company finally agreed to screen it in a limited number of theatres in Java. The case faced by Dinata proves the important role of distribution channels in determining what kind of film and also what kind of gender representations could be made available to Indonesian film audiences. In addition, the film distribution companies also determine the size audience and the reach of film distribution.

In conclusion, during the period under study, Islamisation played a major role in shaping the gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema. Not only did it motivate and open up avenues for filmmakers to innovate and experiment with alternative gender ideals which foreground Islamic piety, but it also contributed to the conservative turn of state and public censorship. I have shown in this section that Islamisation facilitated the flourishing of *film Islami*, which became a rich ground for such innovation and experimentation. Several films under the category of *film Islami*, such as *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* have successfully facilitated the legitimacy of non-

hegemonic masculinities and femininities as alternative ideals. However, the heightened Islamisation in Indonesia, made public protests against films in the name of Islam more visible. In many cases, such public protests were able to influence the decisions made by the film censorship board and the distribution channels. Islamisation and public protests against films indirectly also limited the extent of innovation and experimentation with gender ideals in cinema.

### **Women's cinema: Exposing gender inequalities, undermining *bapakism***

In this section, I examine the roles of the women's cinema in shaping the trajectory of gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema from 2000 to 2014. Twenty-first-century Indonesia has witnessed the flourishing of women's cinema. It has become a rich site for critical responses towards the patriarchal patterning of gender relations in Indonesia. I shall demonstrate that on one hand, women's cinema became an inevitable force of change in challenging male dominance of the industry and in promoting feminine perspectives in cinematic representations of gender and sexualities; on the other, it deepened public anxiety and moral panic.

The flourishing of women's cinema in twenty-first-century Indonesia has been facilitated partly by the gender-order crisis. The hegemony of the New Order's gender ideals has weakened, and gender politics have been rejuvenated due to the gender-order crisis (see Chapter 2). Gender issues have been openly discussed and debated in Indonesia's public sphere. They have become an increasingly important arena of power contestation in the post-New Order period (K. Robinson 2015: 52). In fact, symbolic control over what constitutes ideal femininity and masculinity does come with power (Brenner 2011). For example, as I mentioned in the previous section, the interest group(s) able to secure control over how people should dress in public comes with the power to regulate the public sphere, such as through the implementation of sharia

bylaws. As a result, older gender ideals, such as *bapakism* and *ibuism*, have been strongly contested, and new alternative ideals have been intensively sought.

Women's cinema has been an important platform for women filmmakers to take part in such heightened gender politics. Progressive women filmmakers tailor their perspectives on gender equality on their films, both for commercial and independent cinema markets. According to Nan Triveni Achnas, a senior filmmaker in Indonesia, women's cinema is a statement of challenge against 'the politics and culture which impose restrictions on women established by the state' (cited in Syahrul 2002). Moreover, with the flourishing feminist movements, some of the new generation of Indonesian women filmmakers, such as Nia Dinata, have been working closely with feminist activists to advocate for gender equality on- and off-screen.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the roles of women's cinema in shaping gender politics in Indonesian cinema cannot be disregarded.

Many films made by progressive women filmmakers, such as *Pasir Berbisik* (Whispering Sand, 2001, Nan. T. Achnas) and *Berbagi Suami* (Love for Share, 2006, Nia Dinata) have become new canons in contemporary Indonesian cinema. They promote diverse feminine perspectives of certain social and gender issues, and offer alternative gender ideals. The representations of plural feminine perspectives over the hotly debated topic of polygamy are visible in *Berbagi Suami*. The film, which was produced amidst the rejuvenated public debate on polygamy in the early 2000s (see Chapter 2), offers different perspectives of women living in polygamous households. The film is not simply a black-and-white verdict of whether polygamy is a justifiable

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<sup>22</sup> Nia Dinata is a good example of filmmakers who are also activists. She has been working closely with Kalyana Mitra and Jurnal Perempuan, non-government organisations for women's empowerment, to establish Project Change. Project Change is a filmmaking master class run biannually to mainstream women's perspective in filmmaking. Dinata also worked with the two organisations to organise the V Film Festival—an international film festival to showcase films made by women about women's issues and employing women's perspectives

<sup>22</sup> In short, women's cinema has been playing a pivotal role in challenging the official patterning of gender relations in Indonesia.



masculine gender practice. Some of the women portrayed are tricked into polygamous marriage, but some enter it with consent. Some of them choose to stay in the relationship, but others choose to leave for various reasons. This kind of exploration of plural perspectives of women towards gender issues is scarcely ever found outside women's cinema.

The backbone of women's cinema is certainly the women filmmakers who are aware of gender issues and feminist struggles for gender equality. They are agents in the political battle to undermine the dominant patriarchal gender order in cinema. As suggested by Flavia Laviosa, women filmmakers whose works are provocative are advocates for women's problems and their films are expressions of 'cultural challenges, political advocacy and artistic commitment' (2010: xvii) for women's collective experiences of struggle. Indonesia has seen a surge of women filmmakers into decision-making positions in Indonesian cinema. Novi Kurnia estimates that there were at least 25 women directors<sup>23</sup> of a total of 184 directors working in commercial cinema between 1998 and 2010 in Indonesia (2014: 8, 61, 237–38).<sup>24</sup> Women in other roles such as producers, scriptwriters, editors, designers, and other film-production activities have also increased significantly (Kurnia 2013: 33). Quantitatively, this is unprecedented compared to women's involvement prior to the twenty-first-century in Indonesia. Between 1926 and 1999, there were only four women directors who worked under the supervision of their superior male counterparts (Michalik 2013: 17–18; Sen 1994: 135).<sup>25</sup> Although this numerical data does not convey the whole gamut of the

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<sup>23</sup> Kurnia mentions that of the 25 women directors during the period, 22 of them started their film directing career in post-authoritarian Indonesia (2014: 8).

<sup>24</sup> These women directed 51 commercially distributed feature films. This number constitutes around 12.5 per cent of around 400 feature films that were released during that period (Aartsen 2011; Kurnia 2013: 35).

<sup>25</sup> According to Krishna Sen (1994) and Yvonne Michalik (2013), generally these women filmmakers worked under the supervision of their male counterparts, some of whom happened to be their spouses or close kin. This family-connection pattern was likely to make women filmmakers unable to liberate

development of Indonesian women's cinema prior to the twenty-first century, it at least points to the sheer number and significance of women and women's perspectives in Indonesian cinema during the previous eight decades.

While acknowledging the role of the gender-order crisis in facilitating the development of women's cinema in Indonesia, the global trend of women's cinema in the twenty-first century is also an important factor to be taken into account. In Hollywood, Martha Lauzen (2014) documented that women made up 17–19 per cent of total filmmakers involved in the 250 top grossing films between 1998 and 2014. In South Korea, according to Anchalee Chaiworapon (2007), the increased involvement of women in filmmaking began to be recognisable in the late 1990s; the rise of South Korean Women's cinema was part of the national struggle for democratisation in the post-authoritarian era, just as in Indonesia.<sup>26</sup> In India, the increased involvement of feminist filmmakers since the 1990s, particularly in documentary films, has made national women's issues more visible; these filmmakers used films as political tools to voice their concerns and appeal to their fellow citizens (Sinha 2010). The rising involvement of women filmmakers in Indonesian cinema is inseparable from this global trend and also from the increased awareness of gender inequalities. In fact, according to Achnas:

Globalisation and information flow have triggered changes within our society. The women's movements which originated from outside Indonesia have raised our awareness of women's roles and rights. And along with this development, women who used to work as copy writers, creative directors in various advertising agencies and production houses, have tried to break into cinema (cited in Syahrul 2002).

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themselves from men's perspective in filmmaking, in order to survive and obtain recognition in the male-dominated creative condition (Sen 1994: 135).

<sup>26</sup> Under the New Order, independent cinema was relatively absent.

The emergence of Indonesian women's cinema occurred simultaneously with growing interests among Indonesian youth in exploring themes of genders and sexualities in other forms of popular culture. In Indonesian literature, for example, scholars have widely discussed the emergence of young women writers whose works no longer shy away from challenging the established patriarchal patterning of gender relations. Many of their works, categorised under *Sastra Wangi* (Fragrant Literature), rose to prominence and received high recognition in national and international literary circuits (see Downes 2016; Hatley 1999, 2002, 2007; Marching 2007). In theatre performances, Barbara Hatley (2008) underscores the increasing prominence of gender issues and women's participation since the early years of the twenty-first century, that are reflective of the narrative changes in Indonesian society and performance since the 1970s. In cinema, Aristo indicates:

In fact, the most powerful producers in Indonesian commercial cinema now are women. Many of them are unique and maintain their independence. Name them! Shanty Harmayn, Mira Lesmana, Nia Dinata, Lala Timothy ... Joko Anwar made *Modus Anomali* and *Pintu Terlarang* with Lala Timothy. Shanty Harmayn and Mira Lesmana have produced films with unique themes (related to gender). Nia Dinata was the first filmmaker who could speak about polygamy in her film in such a relaxed way. While the male producers tend to be on the industry side of cinema (Personal interview, 11 April 2014).<sup>27</sup>

Aristo's statement highlights the formidable role of Indonesian women filmmakers, especially producers in forcing changes in Indonesian cinema. This growing interest in gender reflects increasingly active gender politics in popular culture during the gender-order crisis.

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<sup>27</sup> These arthouse thrillers, *Modus Anomali* (Ritual, 2012) and *Pintu Terlarang* (The Forbidden Door, 2009), directed by Joko Anwar received rave reviews nationally and internationally. *Pintu Terlarang* received the Best of Puchon award at the 2009 Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival. *Modus Anomali* enjoyed its World Premiere at the 2012 SXSW (Martin 2012).

However, having more women involved in cinematic production does not necessarily translate into recognition of women's perspectives in cinema. Krishna Sen (2005) also doubts that the involvement of women filmmakers directly leads to recognition of women's perspectives, especially in the context of commercial cinema. However, as suggested by Barbara Quart (1988) and E. Ann Kaplan (2003), the involvement of women filmmakers can at least open up women's world on the screen; women can now define themselves instead of being defined by men, and women can also contribute to shaping the representations of other genders, sexualities and gender relations. Based on a study conducted by Lyle Friedman, Matt Daniels and Ilia Blinderman (n.d.) on over 200 Hollywood films produced from 1995 to 2015, a film production team that has gender diversity in the crew (writer, director and producer), tend to provide less sexist representations of women. In Indonesia, women's cinema has increased the visibility of feminine dimensions of ideas, images, values and wishes (Michalik 2013). Women filmmakers have contributed to the blurring of gendered moral ideals and gender boundaries (Sen 2006) as well as creating strong and independent female characters (Imanjaya and Citra 2013; Monteiro 2013). In short, the burgeoning of women's cinema has provided high hopes for change in the prevalent male perspectives in representations of gender and sexualities.

In fact, Indonesian women's cinema provides a rich critique of cultural ideals of masculinity. As films in this category undermine the established cultural ideal of femininity, they also problematise the hegemonic masculinity ideal of *bapakism*. They do this by depicting *bapakism* as making men violent, victimising women, and pressuring other men who are unable to attain the ideal. *Berbagi Suami*, a film that I mentioned earlier, also problematises unequal power relations within marriage. It questions the men's authority as heads of their families. The men tend to blindside their first wives when they decide to take more wives into the marriage. Such decisions tend

to lead the family into conflict and misery. In such instances the family is not necessarily broken up. Another example is *Pasir Berbisik*. The film also problematises the social construction of *bapak* as the legitimate provider and authoritative patron leader of a family.<sup>28</sup> It problematises the significance of *bapakism* in making a man into a good father. The film suggests that the inability to perform the gender practices associated with the *bapak* ideal tends to place a psychological burden on men, which potentially leads to frustration and violence. In such a damaging situation, women and children have a tendency to become the victims of men's violence. In short, as films under women's cinema mainstream women's perspectives on the silver screen, they also scrutinise the hegemonic masculinity ideal.

The critical acclaim received by Indonesian women's cinema at national and international film circuits, makes their challenges even more formidable. As Marijke De Valck and Mimi Soeteman (2010) argue, festivals act simultaneously as indicators of changing norms, and forces that can drive, shape and legitimise change. The recognition of women's cinema in international film festival circuits partly indicates that the films' subjects matter: feminism and gender issues are relevant and deserve cinematic exploration at this particular moment in history in Indonesia and globally. The issues brought up in women's cinema certainly are not limited to women and femininities. Women's cinema also critically tackles issues concerning men and masculinities, as I illustrated in the case of *Pasir Berbisik*. Nationally, *Pasir Berbisik* was nominated for multiple awards at the Asia Pacific Film Festival in 2001, including Best Film and Best Emerging Film Director. Domestically, the film also received multiple nominations at the 2004 *Festival Film Indonesia* (FFI), including Best Actress in the Leading Role, Best Cinematography and Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Film Indonesia 2010).

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<sup>28</sup> *Pasir Berbisik* is a film in one of the new canons in contemporary Indonesian cinema. It is 'the first work directed and produced by women with a conscious feminist agenda' (Paramaditha 2013: 75). The film is about a mother protecting her daughter from the abuses committed by her own father, other men and the masculinist regime.

The international recognition that *Pasir Berbisik* received legitimised the issues it explored as national and global concerns: women's empowerment, violence against women, trafficking, state violence and masculinities. This recognition of issues on men and masculinities explored in women's cinema thus highlights their significance and relevance and subsequently allows them to be cinematically explored by other filmmakers beyond women's cinema.

Women filmmakers, who consistently tailor their progressive gender perspectives into their works, have inspired many of their colleagues to be more aware of gender issues—within and outside their own networks. Most of the filmmakers I met referred to women filmmakers and/or their films as being inspiring and providing role models, especially when it comes to representations of gender. Lucky Kuswandi, a prominent young director, called Dinata his 'mentor' and has been working closely with her on various projects for commercial and independent cinema (Personal interview, 28 May 2014). Kuswandi worked with Dinata on *Madame X* (2010)—a satirical comedy about a transgender superhero who deals with homophobia, human trafficking and corrupt politics. Kuswandi directed and Dinata produced the film. A prolific scriptwriter, Aristo, named Shanty Harmayn as his 'most critical writing counterpart and producer' especially when it came to creating gender representations (Personal interview, 11 April 2014).<sup>29</sup> A prominent director Riri Riza also claimed that his interest in exploring gender issues was inspired by his colleague Mira Lesmana. In an interview with Hera Diani, of the *Jakarta Post*, Riza stated that:

If you notice, the main characters in most of my films are women ... It just happened. My mother has played a huge role in my life. I also work with Mira Lesmana. I may make several other films about mother-child relationships because, for me, it's very

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<sup>29</sup> Aristo worked with Harmayn on a number of films, including the blockbuster *Sang Penari* (The Dancer, 2011, Ifa Isfansyah).

personal. And in this male-dominated and predominantly Muslim society, those issues will not be seen critically (12 May 2002).<sup>30</sup>

In short, progressive women filmmakers in Indonesian cinema have contributed significantly to the ways that their colleagues think about and represent gender and gender relations.

Riri Riza's experience working with Mira Lesmana and Prima Rusdi in his first feature film, *Eliana Eliana* (2001) is a good example of the role of progressive women filmmakers in shaping the representation of masculinities. The road movie explores mother–daughter relationships against a backdrop of grim and gloomy areas of urban Jakarta during the economic crisis in 1998.<sup>31</sup> While focusing on the difficult relationships between a mother and a daughter, the film also carries a strong critique of hegemonic masculinity. None of the male characters, be they physically present or implied from stories told by the female characters, represents an ideal *bapak*, the authoritative patron leader of a family collectivity who provides a livelihood and protection for his family members. In the film the men's inability to adopt the gender practices of hegemonic masculinity eventually leads to their destruction and they became a burden to the women in their families.

Aside from providing optimism regarding gender transformation, the flourishing of women's cinema has also triggered public anxiety and moral panic. Many films in

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<sup>30</sup> Among 11 feature films that Riza directed between 2000 and 2017, 10 feature strong and independent female protagonists.

<sup>31</sup> Riri Riza became Mira Lesmana's business partner at Miles Films in 1998. They have been working at the company ever since. Riri Riza had previously been a producer in *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* (What's up with Cinta? 2002, Rudy Soedjarwo). Prima Rusdi wrote the script for *Gie* (2005) and the sequel of *Ada Apa dengan Cinta 2* (2016, Riri Riza).

Riza and Lesmana made the film as part of their film activism in the ISinema (independent cinema) movement, in which young filmmakers in the early twenty-first century challenged the established filmmaking practices and the institution, which in their opinion allowed no room for innovation (Barker 2011: 96). *Eliana Eliana* follows a journey towards reconciliation between the titular character and her mother. Eliana escaped an arranged marriage and went to Jakarta; her mother visited her after five years. The film presents a non-judgemental perspective of the seedier side of the metropole and its inhabitants; moreover, it offers a strong depiction of a woman—who may have fallen in with a morally ambiguous crowd, but she herself retains her own values, to the credit of her strong-willed mother (Sharpe 2002).

this category have been well received, such as *Pasir Berbisik* and *Berbagi Suami*. However, many others have been caught up in a heightened public debate on morality and Islamisation due to their confronting visual depictions that challenge the official patterning of gender relations. Films made by idealist women filmmakers who chose to be bold in challenging taboos related to gender and sexualities were often targets of public and state censorship, especially when they received substantial media coverage. Such films were considered by their opponents, including members of the censorship board, to harm the nation's morality or to be blasphemous. During the period from 2000 to 2014 many of the films made by progressive women filmmakers that explored issues of gender and sexualities were badly censored by the state censorship board. They were also heavily protested about by various pressure groups and not circulated in any film markets (including commercial ones) in Indonesia.

One of the notorious cases of state censorship against women's cinema was that of *Perempuan Punya Cerita* (Chants of Lotus, 2008, Nia Dinata, Fatimah T. Rony, Upi Avianto and Lasjah Fauziah). The film was an omnibus of four short films: *Cerita Pulau* (Story from an Island, Fatimah T. Rony), *Cerita Yogyakarta* (Story from Yogyakarta, Upi Avianto), *Cerita Cibinong* (Story from Cibinong, Nia Dinata), and *Cerita Jakarta* (Story from Jakarta, Lasjah Fauziah). These stories generally explored the experience of Indonesian women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking in women, and gendered social stigma. The films included scenes of sex, abortion and violence. In defending her cinematic representations of rampant sexual relations among teenagers in *Cerita Yogyakarta*, Upi Avianto stated that those scenes illustrated that most Indonesian teenagers were not well equipped with sex education. Thus, they tend to make uncalculated decisions regarding their sexuality (cited in Erlin 2008). While well contextualised and important to the narrative, the scenes irked the increasingly conservative censorship board. The board eventually cut about 90 metres from the



film's reel to remove the scenes they deemed inappropriate. The cuts included a veiled female teenager smoking a cigarette. A group sex scene was also cut to make it appear as if the girl had sex with only one boy, while the film actually wanted to show that the girl had been doped before having sex with multiple boys (Rony 2012: 162).

The censorship of the film was embroiled in a heated debate about public morality and there developed a growing pressure to abolish film censorship at that time. The debate surrounding the film and public morality was triggered by the massive protest and censorship reaction towards *Buruan Cium Gue!* (see previous section). The debate was deepened in late 2007 by the highly publicised proposal for a judicial review of the *Indonesian Film Act of 1992*. The proposed judicial review was the culmination of many years of political struggle led by film workers organised under the Indonesian Film Society to reform Indonesian cinema. One of the review points being proposed was the abolishment of the state censorship board because it had been limiting the freedom of expression of artists (Shanty, Riza, Dewi, Amriradhiani and Saroenggallo 2007).<sup>32</sup>

In an newspaper article, 'Anggota FPI Hadiri Uji UU Perfilman' printed in *Kompas*, it was reported that the censorship board and its proponents, including right-wing politicians and the hardliner-organised vigilante groups bearing the name of Islam, such as the Islamic Defenders Front, refuted the proposal because of threats to the nation's morality (30 April 2008). The film *Perempuan Punya Cerita* was at the centre of the debate when it reached the Constitution Court in December 2007 and January 2008. At a hearing for the judicial review, Anwar Fuady singled out *Perempuan Punya Cerita* to show that some films contain inappropriate scenes—rampant premarital sex among teenagers—and portray a supposedly pious Muslim girl, wearing *hijab*, in a

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<sup>32</sup> In the fifth point of the appeal, the Indonesian Film Society argued that film censorship was against Indonesia's constitution and also against the human rights to freedom of expression.

negative light (*Perempuan Kisah Dalam Guntingan*, Women and Censorship, 2008, Ucu Agustin, 00.41.00–00.42.40). Supporting Fuady's remark in a press conference after the court hearing, the then chief of the censorship board, Titie Said, defended the removal of 'inappropriate' scenes from the film.

You asked about *Perempuan Punya Cerita*. Indeed, we significantly censored it by cutting many scenes. The scenes which we cut were those potentially triggering public unrest, as well as pornographic ones. What is pornographic? Showing sexual activities is categorised as pornographic. If you want to make a sex education film, you can make such a special film for students at the medical department, not for the general public (ibid. 00.42.40–00.43.30).

The pro-censorship arguments eventually prevailed. *Perempuan Punya Cerita* was unable to show its whole message when it was released in selected theatres in Java in January 2008. Moreover, in April 2008, the judicial review proposal was rejected by the Constitution Court. Several members of FPI were reportedly present at the final court judgement for the judicial review; they exclaimed 'God is Great!' upon the declaration that the censorship board should maintain its function and protect Indonesian society from (morally) harmful audio-visual entertainment forms (Bambang 2008). Thus, censorship, including censorship in the name of Islam, remains rampant to the time of writing.

During the period from 2000 to 2014, some women filmmakers decided not to screen their films in Indonesian theatres for fear of triggering negative reactions. Nevertheless, as with the *Sastra Wangi* category in literature, some films in Indonesian cinema have not shied away from exploring female sexualities and sexual trauma. Women's films which were not shown in Indonesian cinemas but screened overseas included Djenar Maesa Ayu's *SAIA* (2009). Djenar Maesa Ayu, a writer and film director, is no stranger to visual explorations of female sexuality. Her co-writer for *Mereka Bilang Saya Monyet* (They Say I'm a Monkey, 2008), Indra Herlambang,

describes Ayu as ‘a household name for films about sex and violence’ (cited in Detik Hot 2009). Being aware that *SAIA* would not pass censorship and would only create an uproar in Indonesia at that time, Ayu did not release the film in Indonesia but screened it at several international film festivals abroad (L. Siregar 2016).

Despite its powerful depictions of sexual violence and trauma which resonate with gender-based violence in domestic settings in Indonesia, the director was fully aware that the sexually explicit scenes could have easily been taken out of context by the censorship board and conservative viewers. The film narrative revolves around a female protagonist’s trauma when witnessing, on a daily basis, acts of sexual violence committed by her neighbour on his female partner. The horrid scenes of sexual violence are repeated daily without any intervention from anyone, including the onlooker. According to Ayu, the 80-minute experimental drama is a critique of the rampant domestic sexual violence in Indonesia, to which many people seem to be oblivious and consume without guilt (cited in L. Siregar 2016). Yet, given the heightened Islamisation and rampant censorship, such a strong critique with explicit sex scenes would most definitely not make it into Indonesian theatres. The prevalent controversies and protests against films which challenge the official patterning of gender relations led Ayu to self-censorship her film. *SAIA*, instilled an awareness that graphic challenges to normalised domestic sexual violence in Indonesia must not be screened. On a broader scale, as I have discussed in the previous section, filmmakers were discouraged from producing subversive challenges to official gender ideals.

In conclusion, this section has shown that during the 2000 to 2014 period, the burgeoning women’s cinema became a strong force for many contemporary Indonesian filmmakers through which to challenge established patterns of gender relations. Not only did women’s cinema challenge male domination in Indonesian cinema, but its feminine perspectives on social issues contested the hegemonic masculine perspective

which had previously been taken for granted. Especially in terms of representations of ideals of masculinity, women's cinema problematised hegemonic *bapakism*. Thus, women's cinema put pressure on the need to reconfigure a new cultural ideal of masculinity. Furthermore, women's cinema not only exerted its influence within its own genre, but it also inspired changes in commercial cinema. The burgeoning of women's cinema within Indonesian cinema has increased the awareness of filmmakers—men and women—of the importance of creating equal representations of gender and sexualities on screen. However, in this section I have also demonstrated that, in many cases, the confronting challenges promoted in films under the rubric of women's cinema did not sit well with the political atmosphere at that given time. The increasingly conservative and rampant public censorship, especially during the heightened Islamisation process, posed a threat to artists' freedom of expression. To a great extent, censorship and conservative public opinion limited the extent to which critiques of dominant gender relations could be visually depicted on screen.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explained how the gender-order crisis crept into Indonesian cinema. I have demonstrated that intensified gender politics took place behind and around the silver screen during 2000–2014, a period marked by a deep gender-order crisis. In Chapter 2, I explained that the gender-order crisis triggered fierce struggles in defence or in challenge of official gender ideals—hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. This fierce struggle was also pursued in cinema. In fact, the control over which representations of gender could be shown and idealised on cinema screens afforded power to steer the trajectory of gender politics off-screen. Thus, the struggle around gender supports my premise that cinematic representations, even in commercial cinema, are highly political. The examples that I have provided in this chapter clearly demonstrate a link between on- and off-screen gender politics.

In this chapter, I identified two major forces which were significant in steering Indonesian gender politics through cinema in 2000–2014: Islamisation and women's cinema. I showed that these forces provoked an intensive search for new alternative gender ideals. Islamisation, which facilitated the burgeoning of *film Islami*, led to intensive innovation and experimentation of femininities and masculinities which foreground Islamic piety. Certainly, considering the plurality and internal contradictions within Islam in Indonesia, we could expect to see complex and plural Muslim alternative versions of gender ideals. Furthermore, the burgeoning feminist women's movement off-screen contributed to the flourishing of women's cinema, which became a rich site of critique of the official gender ideals, but also of the overall patterning of gender relations.

Nevertheless, Islamisation and women's cinema posed limitations on the extent of innovation and experimentation of gender ideals that could be achieved in cinema. Islamisation contributed significantly to conservative state and public censorship. I demonstrated that public protests against films that were staged by various Muslim pressure groups were rampant and more visible in the newly democratised public sphere in Indonesia. In many cases, such protests led to films being withdrawn from circulation, re-censored or re-edited, or even not being produced at all. They also discouraged many filmmakers from subversively experimenting with gender ideals. As to women's cinema, their confronting challenges of official gender ideals, and the gender order more broadly, provided the benchmark of what constitutes gender subversion. In the case of *Perempuan Punya Cerita*, the censorship board singled it out as promoting premarital sex and pornography. The internalisation of such a benchmark also led filmmakers to self-limit which direction they wanted to steer through their cinematic representations of gender.

I would like to end this discussion with a reflection on the political dimension of commercial cinema. Unlike films which are not intended to compete in commercial film markets, the production, circulation and consumption of commercial films are significantly shaped by the intersection of politics and the economy. Filmmakers can enjoy relatively more liberty when making independent films which are solely intended for festivals or private art-house cinema theatres. In such instances these filmmakers do not need to worry that some scenes are missing due to censorship or certain interest groups are protesting about some of the film's content. These same filmmakers do not have similar privileges when working in commercial cinema.

In this chapter I showed that while politically filmmakers were required to produce representations of gender ideals relevant to the era, they were also compelled to factor state and public censorship into their creative endeavours. In addition, commercial cinema is also significantly driven by a profit-making logic. To Janet Wasko, profit-making is the primary driving force and the guiding principle for commercial cinema as an industry (2003: 3). Commercial film investors, unlike non-commercial film funders, are willing to finance a film's production with a certain expectation of profit. Thus, filmmakers must work towards this goal, while responding to politics.

Yet, as I claimed in Chapter 1, the intense pressure of profit making does not necessarily discount filmmakers' agency in channelling their progressive perspectives on gender, which might well defy the official gender ideals and undermine the overall patterning of gender relations. In fact, this intricate intersection of the economy and politics is at the crux of negotiations. Filmmakers must negotiate their political views regarding gender at almost every step of the way in order to ensure that the representations of gender ideals portrayed in their films reach the wider audience.

In the following chapters, I will scrutinise how filmmakers negotiate the pressure to innovate on relevant, relatable gender ideals while, at the same time, creating marketable films. Indeed, compromise is inevitable. As I mentioned in the discussion on Islamisation in Indonesian cinema, it would be suicidal to make films portraying Muslims in strongly negative lights. Doing so would be like a direct call for confrontation against not only the censorship board, but also Muslim pressure groups, such as the FPI. In Chapter 7, for instance, I will discuss in more detail on how filmmakers compromised in promoting a form of gay masculinity as an alternative masculinity ideal in *Arisan!*.

As will become clear in subsequent chapters, Chapter 3 has provided invaluable background for understanding the internal gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema and the conditions faced by filmmakers intent on undermining the hegemony of *bapakism* through commercial cinema. It has furnished the rough ideas of not only what major forces shape the direction of gender politics, but also the forms of gender representations which were able to be produced, distributed and consumed during 2000–2014, a period marked by a deep gender-order crisis.





## **Chapter 4**

### **Filmmakers' Reel 'New Man' and the Gender Relations of Production**

This chapter examines Indonesian filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemony of *bapakism* in terms of the gender relations of production in commercial cinema between 2000 and 2014. I unpack the negotiations and potential compromises employed by commercial filmmakers in staging their gender politics designed to replace *bapakism* with an alternative masculinity ideal, namely the 'new man'. The 'new man', unlike *bapakism*, does not emphasise the breadwinning role. As I explained in Chapter 2, the deep and protracted economic crisis towards the end of the twentieth century sped up the maturation of crisis tendencies within the structure of the gender relations of production. Rapid and profound changes within the structure rendered the breadwinning men/homemaking women arrangement obsolete. Consequently, the cultural exaltation of *bapakism* is no longer taken for granted. By exploring the filmmakers' struggles in promoting the 'new man', in this chapter I extrapolate how the filmmakers attempted to redefine the official gender order and to what extent their endeavours succeeded.

This chapter is guided by the following questions. How did progressive commercial filmmakers engage with contemporary gender politics as they intentionally attempted to undermine the hegemony of *bapakism* and the gender relations of production in their films? How did they deal with the political–economic pressures of commercial cinema in doing so? What can the filmmakers' struggles inform us about transformations in Indonesia's gender order at this time? To this end, I focus my investigation on the texts and the production politics of two films: *7/24* and *Hijab*. I select these films mainly because they emphasise the renegotiation of the gender relations of production at the household level in their narratives and character development. Both explore how husbands and wives must adapt to the changing

dynamics of the gender relations of production as the wives' careers in the public sphere flourish and they bring more income into the family. Yet, unlike many other contemporary films and others before them, these films do not resort to reproducing the officially sanctioned gender relations of production. They do not force the wife to return to the confines of the domestic home and reinstate the husband's role as the sole and rightful breadwinner of the family. Instead, these films make the husbands adopt an alternative masculinity which helps them navigate with their wives the changing landscape of the gender relations of production.

I argue that the filmmakers' struggles to promote the 'new man' as an alternative ideal indicates that there is new hope for the presentation of an alternative ideal masculinity—a hope that has fostered more fluid and equal gender relations of production. Yet, such a fight for change pursued on screen was riddled with middle-class biases. In the filmmakers' struggles to legitimise the 'new man' as an alternative ideal masculinity through *7/24* and *Hijab*, they attempted to break away from *bapakism's* rigid and unequal gender relations of production. The filmmakers did so by defying men's normalised role as the families' sole or primary breadwinner—a notion that is central to the definition of *bapakism*. Instead, they favoured portraying men's involvement in day-to-day domestic and caring duties, while not encouraging men to entirely give up their paid work. However, we cannot help but notice that the filmmakers' struggle was largely focused on the interests of Indonesian middle-class professionals, rather than lower-class men. By doing so, the filmmakers ignored the constant struggles of lower-class men in negotiating their masculinities with the official and popular ideals. The filmmakers were also biased towards middle-class men's interests in maintaining paid work, albeit negotiated, as a marker of gender and class. Apparently, the filmmakers were not yet open to idealising full-time stay-at-home fathers/husbands as representations of the ideal 'new man'.

Why do representations of the gender relations of production at the household level matter in the struggle for hegemonic masculinity? As suggested by Micaela di Leonardo (1987: 441) and Carla Jones (2004: 511–12) the household is a locus of the private political struggle to negotiate conditions of gender and class inequalities, that have resulted from the official prescription of the gender relations of production. This private struggle matters significantly because it is often at this private level—in household spaces—that men and women constantly negotiate such inequalities. Undoubtedly, the official arrangement of the gender relations of production has much wider implications beyond the household level. It shapes what type of jobs and how much time is considered fit and proper for work and for which groups of men and women. Furthermore, it shapes the meanings associated with women's and men's work for the family as well as for the nation. It also affects who should be prioritised to benefit from certain government programs, or who should have access to certain public facilities. Yet, while women may be able to break through the glass ceiling and achieve the highest career position available in the public sphere, they must continue to negotiate with gender and class inequalities that take place in the private sphere. In Jones's research (2004) on middle-class households in Yogyakarta, for example, middle-class wives who pursued careers in the public sphere continued to shoulder the emotional burden of domestic and caring responsibilities. While these women tended to delegate the day-time caring and domestic duties to live-in domestic assistants, they still had to manage and oversee the assistants' work. Their husbands were liberated from this responsibility because of their role as breadwinners. Indeed, Indonesian men and women constantly have to negotiate these inequalities of gender and class in their private, household spaces. Cinematic representations open up avenues for such private struggles to be visible in the public sphere. The cinematic representations of gender and

gender relations at the household level are popular imaginings of how such negotiations are engaged with in real life.

This chapter unfolds with the following structure. The section immediately following this introduction situates the filmmakers' struggles in promoting the 'new man' as an alternative ideal in *7/24* and *Hijab*, to the long-running tradition of representations of ideal masculinity in Indonesian cinema. Drawing from textual analysis, I contend that aesthetically the filmmakers try to break away from the hegemonic idealisation of *bapakism*. They do so by subverting the cultural significance of male breadwinning practices and instead promote men's active involvement in day-to-day domestic and caretaking duties—duties generally associated with femininity and women. Supporting the argument laid out in the textual analysis, the second section discusses the filmmakers' motives and their negotiation with the political–economic dimensions of commercial cinema as they seek to undermine hegemonic masculinity around the gender relations of production. Drawing from interviews with filmmakers and media releases, I argue that the promotion of the 'new man' in *7/24* and *Hijab* is a political intervention engaged by politically conscious filmmakers who are intent on addressing the unequal gender relations of production that have been sustained by *bapakism*. However, as I indicated earlier, this political intervention is situated in the crucible of middle-class bias. The third section demonstrates that the commercial filmmakers' alternative ideal, as seen in *7/24* and *Hijab*, is in the interest of middle-class professionals. The chapter concludes with a summary and a reflection on the political dimension of various screen representations of ideal masculinity.

### **Reel 'new man' of *7/24* and *Hijab*: Overturning the cinematic tradition of *bapakism***

This subsection analyses the narratives of the two films I have chosen and situates their representations of an alternative masculine ideal, the 'new man', within the tradition of

ideal masculinity as it has been represented in Indonesian cinema. I demonstrate that the innovation waged by the filmmakers behind *7/24* and *Hijab* departs from the hegemonic idealisation of *bapakism* on Indonesia's silver screen. By punishing breadwinning-obsessed professionals and idealising men who are actively involved in day-to-day domestic and caring duties, the alternative ideal promoted by the filmmakers in both films indicates a possibility of more equal gender relations of production.

*7/24* is a romantic comedy which revolves around the life of a Jakarta-based young married couple in their thirties, who struggle to find a balance between career and family. The couple, Tyo and Tania, have been married for five years and have a daughter. They are successful in their respective careers. Tyo is an award-winning film director and Tania is a successful banker. Unlike the common practice among middle-class couples who are both working full time in the public sphere, Tyo and Tania do not employ domestic assistants to help them with the household chores.<sup>1</sup> Instead, they benefit from the on-demand assistance provided by their female family members—such as Tania's mother and a female cousin—in managing the day-to-day domestic and caring duties. Tension builds up as their careers take off, and the reorganisation of the gender relations of production at home becomes inevitable as they strive to cope with the increasing demands. With his directorial career on the rise, Tyo can barely spend any quality time with his family, let alone help with domestic and caring duties. The couple struggles to find a new balance between work and family.

The story reaches the climax when Tyo falls ill and has to be hospitalised. Tania, who is eyeing a career promotion, has to juggle the domestic and caring work at home, caring for her husband at the hospital and her own increasing work demands. Unable to physically cope with these demands, Tania eventually falls ill too. At the hospital, she

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<sup>1</sup> Employing a domestic assistant is common practice among middle-class families not only as a marker of class but also as a way to cope with women's involvement in formal paid work (see Elmhirst 2005; Jones 2004).

shares a suite with her husband. The conflicts sharpen as they begin blaming each other for their misery. Tania blames Tyo for not having time to do his share of the domestic and caring duties. Tyo blames Tania for being a workaholic and obsessed with her career's progression. They are on the brink of separation because Tania feels that Tyo cannot be an equal partner at home. The conflict is finally resolved by Tyo apologising to Tania and negotiating his work demands so that he can share the day-to-day domestic and caring responsibilities with Tania at home.

I now turn my attention to the second film I have chosen. Also a comedy, *Hijab* follows four young urban-educated Muslim middle-class couples as they struggle to renegotiate gender relations—especially power and labour—when the women's careers take off. The three married couples are Sari and Gamal, Bia and Matnur, and Tata and Ujul. Gamal, of Arab descent, is a public servant at a Jakarta tax office. Matnur is a famous actor who spends most of his days on a film set. Ujul is a successful photographer who also spends most of his days outside the home. The single woman, Anin, acts as an observer and a reminder to the others of women's premarital independent selves. Her boyfriend, Chucky, is an award-winning progressive independent filmmaker. He is the critical voice which questions the normative arrangement of the gender relations of production adopted by the three married couples. It eventuates that the women secretly establish a business venture to prove to themselves (and presumably their husbands) that they can be economically independent.

Conflict builds up when the women's collective fashion business develops exponentially. The women find it more and more difficult to juggle their domestic and caring responsibilities with their growing business. As expected, the conflict affects the married couples more than the dating couple. As I mentioned, Chucky has a progressive view of gender and has no reservations about his girlfriend being economically independent. Neither is he worried about a husband and wife sharing the daily domestic

and caregiving duties. However, the married couples arrange their gender relations of production based on the official structure. As the husbands' careers dwindle or stagnate and their wives' business flourishes, the men feel emasculated. Their roles as family breadwinners are threatened by the financial success of their wives. They accuse their wives of abandoning the family. Except for Sari and Gamal, the domestic conflict is finally resolved by a renegotiation of the gender relations of production. The husbands recognise the significant financial contribution of their wives and become willing to share the day-to-day domestic and caring duties. Gamal, however, the representation of a conservative Muslim, is persistent and makes his wife withdraw from the business venture. He believes that it is his religious obligation to provide for her. His wife agrees to pull out to respect her husband.

Both films, instead of pressuring women to return to their normalised gender division of labour, place the onus on men to change their attitudes to the gender relations of production. The men in both films, who are open to change, must reconfigure their masculinities in order to accommodate the changes in the gender relations of production in their households. These men must abandon their complicity with the hegemonic ideal, *bapakism*. Drawing from discourses of gender equality, these men reinvent their masculinities to establish more fluid gender relations of production within their households. They do so by negotiating their breadwinning roles and by being involved in the day-to-day domestic and caring duties. It is, however, left unclear in the films what they have to do to fulfil the new role. Nevertheless, the change in attitude allows them to take pride in not being the primary or sole breadwinners for their families, instead of feeling pressured, subordinated and frustrated. Furthermore, it makes them more desirable and worthier in the eyes of their wives and family. In short, these two films render breadwinning as less important practices in defining ideal masculinity.

The idealisation of the ‘new man’ in *7/24* and *Hijab* was offered to Indonesian men to help them better navigate the changing landscape of gender relations of production through a reconfiguration of masculinities portrayed in popular culture. In fact, like the cinematic ‘new man’, most of the alternatives offered in magazines and tabloids introduce more fluid gender relations of production at the household level. Men’s lifestyle magazines published in Indonesia during this period, such as *Emporium*, *FHM Indonesia* and *Playboy Indonesia* all highlighted alternative ideals which encouraged men to accommodate women’s involvement in the public sphere (Handajani 2010). Parenting tabloids, such as *Ayah Bunda*, promoted a ‘New Father’ masculinity which encouraged men to be more involved with caring responsibilities (Yulindrasari and McGregor 2011). Women’s lifestyle magazines, such as *Femina*, also took part in the debate about an ideal masculinity in contemporary Indonesia. Towards the end of 2014, the premium year-end edition of the women’s lifestyle magazine, *Femina*, explored contemporary ideal masculinity in Indonesia. While not offering definitive features of a contemporary ideal masculinity, the discussion in many of the articles in the edition highlighted the friction between Indonesian men and women—especially the middle classes—about what constituted an ideal masculinity in contemporary Indonesia. In short, with the proliferating alternative ideals that were promoted in various popular culture media, the emphasis on breadwinning in defining an ideal masculinity was no longer taken for granted.

The involvement of men in caretaking duties, especially caring for their own children, has recently attracted the attention of the state-funded body which deals with family planning, the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN). Through parenting seminars, the board has been encouraging men to renegotiate their sense of masculinity in order to accommodate their roles as active child caretakers (Anwar 2016). Elly Risman, a frequent consultant to BKKBN and renowned



psychologist, emphasised in one of the BKKBN-sponsored parenting seminars, *Menjadi orangtua hebat dalam mengasuh anak* (Becoming great parents in raising children), that was reported by Anwar in *Detik Health*:

One of the solutions to preventing juvenile delinquency is returning fathers to 'the home'. A father's role is not merely breadwinning because when he dies, God will ask him not only about his good deeds, but also about his responsibility to his wife and children. The best father is the one who care most about his family (14 September 2016).

Drawing on an alternative interpretation of Islamic texts, Risman highlights the shifting discourse surrounding the ideal father in contemporary Indonesia. Represented by Risman, the BKKBN has acknowledged the unequal burden of parenting on women as prescribed in the official gender relations of production. Under the New Order, the BKKBN was the primary campaigner of the regime's family planning programme, which heavily rested on women's reproductive roles. The campaigns held by the institution tended to target women, rather than men. In this way, the family planning program reinforced the construction of women's citizenship based on their difference as mothers (K. Robinson 2009: 79). Presented in the context of a state-funded event held by a state-funded institution used to support women's citizenship based on their reproductive role, Risman's statement encouraging the transformation of an ideal masculinity indicates a deeper tension between the official and the popular discourses of ideal masculinity.

Indeed, we can trace the emergence of alternative ideal masculinities (which justify men compromising their breadwinning role and involvement in the day-to-day caring and domestic duties in Indonesian cinema) back to the early 2000s. Rangga, the protagonist of *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* is a proto 'new man'. Unlike his rival, Rangga is more emotionally sensitive and emotionally expressive; he is keen on cooking. In fact, as suggested by Ariel Heryanto (2006), Rangga's cooking skills, in addition to his

poetry writing, appeal to the contemporary film audience. Furthermore, the controversial film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* offers a pious and gentle Muslim man, who negotiates his masculine gender identity in his relations with his economically independent and educated wife. Intended partly as a challenge to the conservative perspective on gender relations of production among Indonesian Muslim communities, the protagonist of this latter film is very hands-on in undertaking domestic and caring responsibilities. However, it is in *7/24* and *Hijab* that the renegotiation of the gender relations of production become the central driver to the narrative and also to character development. The negotiation which takes place in the household is the site of tension between the official discourse of the ideal gender relations of production and the everyday reality faced by the characters in both films. The characters develop as they negotiate their gender identities with the changing roles in their families.

Situating *7/24* and *Hijab* amongst their predecessors in Indonesian cinema, especially those made and circulated prior to 2000, it is clear that the two films challenge the normalised idealisation of *bapakism* on the silver screen. As I constantly reiterate, representations of gender in cinema cannot be separated from gender politics off-screen. The hegemonic *bapakism*—officially sanctioned by the New Order—features strongly in films produced during the period from 1966 to 1998. Ideal masculine men were unquestionably depicted as having the capacity to provide for the family. Even when they were incapable of accomplishing this role, they were generally depicted as complicit with this social construction of ideal masculinity. Krishna Sen (1994) detects this valorisation of economically productive men in Indonesian commercial films produced and circulated during the 1970s and 1980s. According to Sen, breadwinning is represented as men's natural and culturally proper role in the Indonesian films of this generation (1994: 138). In fact, according to Sen, at least until 1991, none of the films winning the most coveted categories in the FFI deviated from

the established gender relations of production prescribing men's ultimate role as the family breadwinner and protector, and women's roles as the procreator and homemaker (1994: 148).

The breadwinning men/homemaking women arrangement of the gender relations of production is prevalent not only among state-sponsored films, but also in other commercial films. State-sponsored propaganda films, such as *Pengkhianatan G-30S/PKI* clearly exemplify this official structure of the gender relations of production and glorify *bapakism*. The military male heroes are the heroic father figures who protect the nation from the communists in both public and domestic spheres (see Paramaditha 2007). In terms of the gender relations of production at the household level, these military heroes are depicted as their family's sole breadwinners and their wives are full-time housewives. Furthermore, at least until the late 1980s, the most common resolution to the conflict stemming from the gender relations of production offered by films is the restoration of the breadwinning man/homemaking wife sustaining *bapakism*. The award-winning *Di Balik Kelambu* (Behind the Curtain, 1982, Teguh Karya) explores the psychological burden on a man due to his inability to financially provide for his family.<sup>2</sup> The frustrated man tries extremely hard to prove that he is a worthy husband, father and son-in-law by working at multiple jobs; he even forbids his wife from being involved in paid work. In the 1990s, there was a slight shift in the way conflict over the gender relations of production was resolved in films. Responding to the increasing number of women in formal paid work, *Sesal* (Regret, 1994, Sophiaan) explores the relations of labour between a diplomat wife and her writer husband. The film depicts the man as being emasculated and, as a result, becoming verbally violent towards his wife. Although the film does not reinstate the woman as the ideal full-time housewife ideal, it

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<sup>2</sup> *Di Balik Kelambu* received multiple awards in the 1983 Festival Film Indonesia, including the Best Film, the most coveted award category, which implies recognition of the cultural acceptance of the narrative.

emphasises men's position as the primary breadwinner, and women's as the secondary breadwinner. It also idealises the wife who bears the multiple burdens of working in both the domestic and public spheres, and it maintains the man's status as head and bearer of power in his household. Consequently, by comparing the representations of masculine ideals in *7/24* and *Hijab* with *Di Balik Kelambu* and *Sesal* it can be seen that the former provide breakthrough examples. They do not resort to restoring the official structure of the gender relations of production to resolve the conflict; thus, they defy the significance of breadwinning as a defining gender practice of ideal masculinity.

Let us now shift to contemporary films. Around the time of the release of *7/24* and *Hijab*, few other films whose narratives were driven by men's helplessness and frustration at economic hardships were made and released to the commercial markets. However, other films in this genre were likely to reproduce the breadwinning men/homemaking women gender relations and valorise *bapakism* masculinity. Of the notable examples are *Mengejar Matahari* (Chasing the Sun, 2004, Soedjarwo) and *Sembilan Naga* (Nine Dragons, 2006, Soedjarwo). According to Marshall Clark (2008, 2010), these films highlight widespread violence among Indonesian men in the post-1997–1998 economic crisis. Indeed, male violence is their masculinist response to the emasculation and frustration that occurs in the wake of economic and political crises.

Furthermore, the flourishing of Islamisation in Indonesian consumer culture in the twenty-first century provided religious overtones to the cinematic representation of men's responses to their emasculation in the wake of the 1997–1998 economic crisis. Alicia Izharuddin (2017) asserts that stoicism and spiritual devotion are central to providing a solution to Muslim men's economic problems in the commercially successful *Kun Fayakuun* (When God Wills It, So Be it, 2008, Guntur Novaris) and *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* (Mother Desires to Go on a Hajj Pilgrimage, 2009, Aditya Gumay). However, as I indicated earlier, the solutions offered by these films barely

challenge the established gender relations of production and the cultural exaltation of *bapakism* masculinity. The economically disempowered men in the films restore their masculinities by reinstating their roles as the families' breadwinners.

Unlike the previously mentioned films, *7/24* and *Hijab* offer an alternative solution for their male protagonists who are socially pressured when they are unable to be their family breadwinners. The films *7/24* and *Hijab* promote 'new man' masculinity as a solution to the disempowerment of men and the increasing economic independence of women in contemporary Indonesia. The 'new man' masculinity, which does not place primacy on male breadwinning, liberates men from feeling helpless about their inability to provide for their families, and in many cases also justifies their financial reliance on their wives or other female family members. By allowing men to be absolved from the role of sole or primary breadwinners, and by encouraging men to be more involved in domestic and caring duties, the cinematic 'new man' in these films challenges the hegemonic *bapakism* masculinity. Male frustration, let alone violence, is considered an undesirable masculinist response to both the economic downturn and the increasing significance of women's contribution to the family's finance.

Through a critical reading of film texts which promote the 'new man' as an alternative masculine ideal, we can discern that the hegemony of *bapakism* in Indonesian cinema has been under serious threat. As seen in the narratives of *7/24* and *Hijab*, the obsession over 'breadwinning' in defining a cultural ideal masculinity has been undermined by the emergence of the 'new man' as an alternative. The idealisation of the 'new man', as seen in the narrative and character development of the two films, shifts the onus of coping with changes to the established gender relations of production from women to men. Men have to negotiate their masculinity in order to better cope with the shifting gender relations of production. From my discussion in this section, it can be inferred that the 'new man' is a political intervention to transform the long-

running tradition of idealising *bapakism* on- and off-screen amidst the profound changes occurring within the structure of the gender relations of production.

### **Behind the scenes of *7/24* and *Hijab***

This section reinforces the previous section's argument by providing a discussion on the behind-the-scenes politics engaged by the filmmakers of *7/24* and *Hijab*. It scrutinises the filmmakers' negotiations with the political-economic dimension of commercial cinema in staging their critiques through the cinematic 'new man'. I argue that the filmmakers' innovations surrounding the 'new man' are political interventions designed to steer the official gender order towards accommodating the changing roles of men in the domestic sphere and redefining ideal masculinity.

Innovation in the cinematic 'new man' was about shifting the onus from women to men to cope with the profound changes occurring in the gender relations of production. The films suggest that men have to rethink whether the official masculinity ideal is relevant given the increasingly significant roles played by women in the economy and their contributions to the family income. As I explained in the previous section, the narratives of *7/24* and *Hijab* refrain from portraying women as those who are at fault and promote instead that men refashion their masculinities to cope with the conflicts emerging from the shifting gender relations of production. The films do not attempt to draw women back into the domestic sphere or idealise a super woman who can perfectly juggle between domestic and public-sphere roles. Instead, the films make their male protagonists reflect on and negotiate their sense of masculinity to accommodate their spouses' careers and do their own share of the domestic and caring workload on a day-to-day basis.

Why was such a cinematic representation of an alternative ideal like the 'new man' significant in a period marked by profound changes in the structure of the gender relations of production? I argue that it was to redress the situation, in which women had

been bearing a disproportionate moral burden in the shifting structures of the gender relations of production in Indonesia. Various groups interested in restoring the established breadwinning men/homemaking women to the gender relation of labour, and thus the hegemony of *bapakism* masculinity, waged struggles to reinstate women's reproductive and domestic roles. These interest groups sought to limit women's involvement in the public sphere, including in the economy and politics. In Chapter 2, I discussed several paths that were taken by proponents of the official structure of gender relations of production in an attempt to restore *ibuism*. The struggle to restore *ibuism* necessarily implies the restoration of the hegemony of *bapakism*, which facilitated men's authority in the public sphere. Thus, the production of images of alternative ideals in *7/24* and *Hijab* was part of the filmmakers' struggle to redress this problem by making men reflect on the social construction of an ideal masculinity.

Behind the production of *7/24* is a noteworthy filmmaker, Lukman Sardi, who has been involved in off-screen gender activism by promoting an alternative ideal masculinity. Lukman Sardi, the creative producer of *7/24* has been actively engaged in the global fatherhood campaign MenCare+, also known as Laki-Laki Peduli in Indonesia. He has been the celebrity champion of the campaign since 2013.<sup>3</sup> At the heart of the campaign is an effort to engage men in establishing gender equality and preventing domestic violence. Getting men to actively participate in everyday domestic and caring duties is one of the most important campaign strategies of MenCare+

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<sup>3</sup> MenCare+ is a global fatherhood campaign funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and managed by two multi-national not-for-profit organisations: Promundo and Rutgers. The campaign is run in four countries: Brazil, Indonesia, Rwanda and South Africa, whose rates of domestic violence against women are relatively high. We can trace the influence of White Ribbon in this global fatherhood campaign. Initially established in Canada in 1991, currently White Ribbon is the world's largest effort of men and boys working towards eliminating violence against women and girls. In 2011, White Ribbon operated in 60 countries across the globe and had been working with the United Nations to engage men in addressing issues of gender inequalities and gender-based violence (White Ribbon Canada 2017: 2). The cofounder of White Ribbon, Michael Kaufman, also served as a fellow providing advice to the administering of the campaigns (Promundo Global 2014). White Ribbon believes that transforming ideal masculinities can be a primary prevention strategy—to prevent the reproduction of violent men (White Ribbon 2017).

globally. The campaign expects to inspire more harmonious and equal gender relations between men and women, thus preventing toxic and violent relationships (Rutgers WPF Indonesia 2015: 22). Apparently, the campaign resonated with Sardi's personal concern that men must not merely position themselves as breadwinners; instead, men should be more caring and share the domestic work and childrearing roles equally (Antara Lampung 2014). Sardi, in a talkshow 'Ayah Masa Kini: Membangun Kedekatan Emosional dengan Anak' (Modern Dad: Building Emotional Bonding with Children), implies that men who are involved in the day-to-day domestic and caring duties are progressive.

Men should not be embarrassed for doing domestic work, which is stereotypically feminine. In the previous era, these men might have been categorised as *cemen* (less masculine) by other men, but these days men no longer care with such gender labels ...

Men have to be more caring, more than just breadwinning (in S. Setiawan 2014: n.p.).<sup>4</sup>

In so saying, Sardi acknowledges the changing landscape of the gender relations of production in contemporary Indonesia which requires men to redefine the dominant norm of masculinity. A more caring and emotionally engaged masculinity, in place of a masculinity that is obsessed with breadwinning, has been the most prevalent alternative.

As a creative producer at MNC Films, the film company that produced *7/24*, Sardi was responsible for exploring new film ideas for the company. As soon as he was appointed to MNC Films, Sardi was interested in following up idea for a film about husband-and-wife gender relations—previously this had been a stale project at MNC Films. Sardi took the male protagonist role in the film. According to his colleague,

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<sup>4</sup> *Cemen* is a colloquial adjective commonly used by Indonesian youth to describe someone who lacks courage or an action which does not require much courage to carry out. The term is an abbreviation for *cetek mental* which literally means shallow mentality. When used to describe a person, *cemen* means timid and weak. When used as a rhetoric of gender, especially in relation to masculinity, in my opinion, *cemen* means less masculine, or unmanly. In this context, it is a strong culturally derogatory term which indicates a man's inability to exhibit bravery, generally expected of his gender.



Affandi Abdul Rahman, the executive producer of the film, in an exclusive interview with Kania Kismadi in Jakarta in 2014:

(Lukman Sardi and I) would like to tell a story of relationships ... of husband–wife, parents–children, son-in-law–mother-in-law, collegial relationships ... We'd also like to explore gender issues. Primarily it is because most of us (Indonesians) still think that women should not be this or that way, and men should not be this or that way ... It [the film] is inspired by my boss's experience. We (at the MNC Pictures) did talk about the possibility of filming it but it had never gone further than a mere discussion. Until Lukman (Sardi) came, we brought up this theme again and we decided to produce it.

Sardi and Rachman developed the film's synopsis, narrative and characterisation. The director, Fajar Nugros, in an interview with Reino Ezra of Muvila, mentioned that he was hired when pre-production was in its final stage and ready for filming (cited in Ezra 2014). In this sense, the producers' vision of the narrative becomes more poignant in determining the narrative and character development of the film. With this gender activism background, in *7/24* Sardi revived the previously stale discussion on a gender-relations themed film project, and simultaneously produced *3 Dara* (*3 Ladies*, 2015, Ardi Octaviand), about three hyper-masculine men experiencing a temporary gender dysphoria.<sup>5</sup>

The MenCare+ campaign is quite visible in *7/24*. The male protagonist of *7/24*, played by Sardi, certainly strives to become the MenCare+ masculinity ideal. He regrets his obsession with becoming a family breadwinner and placing too much of the burden of domestic and caretaking duties on his wife. The film does not force the female protagonist to preserve the marriage by returning to her domestic confines. Instead, the film places the onus on the male protagonist and his sense of masculinity. The male protagonist, instead of being career obsessed, has to resume the roles of father and a

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<sup>5</sup> In this film, the three hypermasculine and sexist men have to experience becoming women who are often assaulted and discriminated against due to their gender.

husband who is caring and actively engaged in day-to-day domestic and caregiving duties. By doing so, the protagonist recognises his wife's contribution to the family and supports her career endeavours.

Moving on to *Hijab*, there are two prominent filmmakers who played crucial roles in shaping the narrative as well as the representations of gender in the film. They are Hanung Bramantyo (director) and Zaskia Adya Mecca (producer, costume designer, casting director and the actress playing Sari). They are husband and wife. Prior to directing *Hijab*, Bramantyo had provoked controversy around representations of gender in several of his films. I previously discussed his controversial decision to extend the polygamy scene in his adaptation of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* in order to problematise the much-debated masculine practice. Bramantyo was also behind the controversial *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* which challenges male dominance as well as the status and treatment of women in conservative Islamic communities in Indonesia (see Chapter 6). As to Mecca, besides being a famous actress, she has been an important player in the growing Muslim fashion economy. By the time *Hijab* was produced in the second quarter of 2014, her business had grown exponentially—from hiring only three employees, using a focused-only sales method and producing about ten pieces a day in 2013 (Nurdiansyah 2017)—to a fashion empire that produced around a thousand pieces a day and which had expanded to direct sales with four boutiques in July 2014. The changing gender relations between husband and wife inspired the production of *Hijab*.

Like *7/24*, *Hijab* is a response to the increasing involvement of women in paid work. Yet, it specifically zooms in on the increasing roles of women in the creative economy of Muslim retail fashion. Wearing a headscarf (more popularly termed *jilbab* or *hijab*) took on a whole different level during the intensified Islamisation that

occurred in twenty-first-century Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> The increasing popularity of wearing a headscarf facilitated a burgeoning market for Muslim fashion like never before (Amrullah 2008; Jones 2007). According to the Ministry of Industry of Indonesia (Viva Life 2012), the market for the Muslim fashion business increases at least 7 per cent every year—one of the biggest in the wake of the economic crisis of 1997–1998. Women apparently are the major players in this business segment. Moreover, the advancement of communication and information technology which has revolutionised retail business globally has opened up opportunities for women to be engaged in creative economies without necessarily being physically away from home (Beta 2014).

Many women, including Zaskia Mecca herself, have found incredible success in the burgeoning market of Muslim fashion in contemporary Indonesia. In fact, like Mecca, many women eventually earn more than their husbands with their successful Muslim fashion businesses. While not specifically mentioning a number, Bramantyo confirms that he earns way less than his wife and consequently they have had to renegotiate their gender relations of production (Personal interview, 21 April 2014). In a patriarchal society, which valorises the male breadwinner norm, a high-income wife can pose a serious challenge to her husband's sense of masculinity. In such a patriarchal society, being a good provider is central to a man's, rather than a woman's gender identity (Brennan, Barnett and Gareis 2001: 171). Indeed, breadwinning is central to a man's definition of self and his self-worth. Thus, in such a cultural context, when men earn less than their wives, there is a likelihood that the men will feel incapable and insecure. In Indonesia particularly, a wife's higher income is often cited as a reason for an unhappy marriage (Rachmayani and Kumala 2016) and divorce (Edo/ASP 2016).

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<sup>6</sup> As I indicated in Chapter 3, the seed to increasing the popularity of headscarf-wearing among Muslim women in contemporary Indonesia can be traced back to the early 1990s. This was when the then authoritarian regime began to have a more relaxed attitude toward the personal public display of religious symbols, especially the headscarf.

*Hijab* addresses the changing dynamics in the gender relations of production at the household level when a wife earns more income than her husband. When questioned by a journalist for his motive in making *Hijab*, Bramantyo implied that he was concerned by masculinist responses towards the spousal income gap: 'I think it is only in Indonesia that a wife's higher income is seen as a problem' (Subkhan 2015a: n.p.). Despite his hyperbole, Bramantyo's view of the spousal income gap has substantially shaped the film's call for men not to problematise the husband-wife wage gap and instead positively respond to it by supporting their wives' careers and sharing the domestic and caring duties. The male characters in the film who problematise women's higher income, are frustrated because of it, or make it into a reason for curbing women's economic activities in the public sphere, are strongly criticised and made undesirable. Ultimately, the film makes the hegemonic *bapakism* irrelevant and unsuitable in navigating the changes, both within the household and the larger structures of the gender relations of production. In short, like *7/24*, *Hijab* was intentionally made to shift the onus onto men to cope with the changes occurring within the gender relations of production.

A politically loaded film, *Hijab* is also a critique of the conservative Islamist approach to women's increased participation in paid work. In the previous chapter, I mentioned the persistent attempts to reinforce women's reproductive and domestic roles that were led by certain Islamist groups and individuals. The attempts included the curbing of women's mobility in the public domain through regional bylaws (Wieringa 2006), public protests against deliberation of the Gender Equality and Equity Bill (Fadjar 2012; Kafil 2012), as well as social media campaigns that criticised working women as irresponsible mothers (Hestya 2013). By reinforcing women's reproductive and domestic roles, this conservative Islamist approach liberated men from taking part in negotiating potential changes. Through Gamal, a stereotypical conservative Muslim

man, who is persistent about making his wife a full-time homemaker due to his religious belief, the film demonstrates that barring women from pursuing a career is old fashioned. According to Bramantyo,

Through this film, I would like to challenge the conservative Muslims' perspectives on gender but in a funny way. I would like to specifically poke fun at their viewpoint which prohibits women from getting involved in paid work (cited in Subkhan 2015b).

Contrary to this conservative approach, Bramantyo and the team of filmmakers behind *Hijab* shift the onus for change onto men.

Although allowing room for difference, *Hijab* promotes the transformation of masculinities as a strategy to navigate the changing landscape of the gender relations of labour. The film supports those men who do not claim authority by being breadwinners. They do not feel intimidated by the changes in the gender relation of labour, and make necessary adjustments to their lives, including to their breadwinning practices. Chucky, the model of the 'new man' form of masculinity, convinces Ujul and Matnur to embrace the 'new man' and not be obsessed by breadwinning. The male characters who refashion their masculinity are rewarded with the reunification of their families. These men prove to be worthy husbands to progressive women. Gamal, the conservative Muslim, remains part of the group but obviously his masculinity is not idealised, and it is subordinated to the other men's 'new man' masculinity. Although Gamal continues to be a vocal advocate of his conservative masculinity, his conventional Islamist views on gender and gender relations are rendered irrelevant by the other men. The other three characters, who are also Muslim, do not share his views and are not convinced by his religious justification.

Both *7/24* and *Hijab* did not have any difficulty in passing state censorship. Mainly, this was because they included no sexually explicit scenes or other scenes which are legally prohibited under the new *Film Act of 2009*. There are hardly any scenes involving passionate personal displays of affection, violence between characters

or same-sex romance—the most common targets of state censorship (see Chapter 3). In terms of film casts, none of the actors and actresses was considered particularly controversial. They were not porn stars.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, prior to their releases, the marketing strategies of both films were focused on selling the films as romantic comedies about young married couples. The promotional synopsis shared by Dapur Films, the film company producing *Hijab*, for example, highlights the spousal income gap between the couples in the film (Ichsan 2014). Thus, *7/24* and *Hijab* easily passed the state censorship board and secured distribution deals with major cinema theatre chains in Indonesia. *7/24* was released on 27 November 2014 and *Hijab* was released on 15 January 2015.

The only concern held by the films' team was the possible reaction from conservative Islamists who may disagree with the representations of Muslim men and women in *Hijab*. By the time of the release of *Hijab* in Indonesian theatres, Hanung Bramantyo was known as a controversial filmmaker famous for challenging the dominant construction of ideal Muslim men and women, through his cinematic works. Earlier in this section I mentioned some of his controversial films. His previous film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2009) was vigorously protested against by leading Muslim figures and organisations. They were concerned that Bramantyo's depictions of Islam were overly conservative in terms of gender (see Chapter 5). Based on this precedence, Bramantyo was aware that the stereotypical representation of a conservative Muslim man in *Hijab*, albeit presented as a comical character, could

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<sup>7</sup> Around the same period, several Indonesian films cast porn stars—such as the famous Japanese adult film stars Maria Ozawa a.k.a. Miyabi (in *Menculik Miyabi*, Kidnapping Miyabi, 2010, Findo Purwono HW) and Sora Aoi (in *Suster Keramas 2*, Evil Nurse, 2011, Findo Purwono HW). The production and distribution of films featuring foreign porn stars soon received substantial media attention and a negative reaction from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and other Muslim Pressure groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) (Solo Pos 2009; Taufiq 2010). The films, while passing state censorships, were heavily protested against by a number of Muslim pressure groups, including FPI and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in several cities in Indonesia (Hidayatullah 2010; Nu2/HKM 2011). Maria Ozawa and Sora Aoi are both porn stars from Japan.

potentially offend Indonesian Muslims. Moreover, the representations of Muslim women and their commitment to wearing and selling *hijab* were not typically based on religious piety. None of the women wore a headscarf due to her commitment to Islam.

Aware of the potential controversy, Bramantyo and his team intensively promoted the film as a comedy, instead of a *film religi*, or *film Islami*, although the title refers to an iconic Muslim fashion item. As I have argued elsewhere, in twenty-first-century Indonesia, the headscarf has become an important marker of religious piety and ideal femininity for Indonesian Muslim women (Eliyanah 2016). According to Bramantyo in a press conference to announce his new film project:

*Hijab* is based on Zaskia's experience in establishing a *hijab* fashion business. It is not easy for a woman to be an entrepreneur, especially in this business segment. There are a lot of funny moments. The film might sound religious, but it is actually about our everyday lives (cited in Triyanisya 2014).

As argued by James Hoesterey and Marshall Clark (2012), *film Islami* is often expected to provide visual guidance on how to become pious Muslim men and women. Consequently, by not categorising *Hijab* as an Islamic-themed film, we can infer that the filmmakers tried to influence the expectations of the potential audience. While criticising conservative Muslims' attitudes towards women's participation in paid work and contribution to the family income, the film does not offer Islamic texts to justify certain solutions.

Unfortunately, by reflecting on the reception of *7/24* and *Hijab*, I conclude that the films were not powerful enough to steer the gender order to accommodate more fluid and equal gender relations of production at this given time. The cinematic representations of the 'new man' as an alternative ideal of masculinity did not gain adequate media or audience attention so as to create any public debate, such as in the case of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* or even *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. Instead, *7/24* received more appreciation because of the return of Dian Sastrowardoyo, a famous actress who

previously had been on leave after her marriage and the birth of her children, and the ability of the director to sustain the film's drama in such a small setting, the hospital suite. *Hijab*, furthermore, was embroiled in controversy over its representation of Muslim women after a notable female writer, who also happens to be the daughter of a famous Muslim politician, wrote a negative response to the film on her social media page.

However, like many other cases of political engagement, not all struggle can lead to immediate change. The fact that such representations were able to be produced and circulated without attracting excessive negative reactions also means that change in that particular direction is possible. Men not being family breadwinners, as promoted in *7/24* and *Hijab*, was not as socially confronting as it would have been in the 1970s and 1980s. The off-screen struggle to promote the same type of alternative masculinity ideals through magazines, tabloids, as well as the men's movement have not generated any substantial direct opposition. From this we can discern that film is not the only platform where the transformation of ideal representations of masculinity for the sake of equal gender relations of production are presented. These political struggles continue to compete with attempts to restore *bapakism* and its supporting femininity ideal, *ibuism*. For example, in late 2014, the newly elected vice-president, Jusuf Kalla, suggested that the Ministry of Manpower should reduce women civil servants' working hours by two hours every day so that women could perform their domestic and reproductive duties (Wibisono 2014). Due to strong protests from various feminist activists, the suggestion was never followed up (Gabrillin 2014). In addition, the debate on what it takes to be ideal men and women continues to be forged by Indonesians in social media around husband–wife gender relations of production. With their television reruns and reproductions of DVDs, not to mention internet pirated copies, *7/24* and *Hijab* remain



potent challenges to the hegemonic *bapakism* and the official structure of the gender relations of production.

### **Middle-class biases underly the glittering scenes of the ‘new man’ in *7/24* and *Hijab***

Unfortunately, the filmmakers’ struggle to promote an alternative ideal masculinity through films such as *7/24* and *Hijab* is not free from class bias. This section demonstrates that the struggle is cast on and in the interests of middle-class professionals, rather than lower-class men. The cinematic ‘new man’, promoted in *7/24* and *Hijab*, have characters that represent middle-class Indonesians with relatively wider options in negotiating their sense of masculine identity, despite economic hardship and a spousal income gap. The cinematic ideal, regardless of the filmmakers’ intention, excludes the on-going struggle of lower-class Indonesian men in negotiating their everyday reality within the official and popular construction of ideal masculinities. Last but not least, the cinematic ideal is cast in the interests of middle-class men in maintaining their professional jobs as markers of both gender and class.

Clearly, both *7/24* and *Hijab* cast their masculine ideal figures as middle-class professional men. All of these men, and their families, lead a middle-class lifestyle. What I mean by middle-class lifestyle is that they live in formal settlement complexes in an urban neighbourhood in Jakarta, instead of in a *kampung*.<sup>8</sup> The protagonist couple of *7/24* had just moved into a gated neighbourhood as their careers take off and their financial situation improves. In fact, the film implies that moving into the gated community is a symbol of upward class mobility. Unlike an informal settlement such as a *kampung*, a gated neighbourhood in an urban area symbolically offers upper middle-class prestige and lifestyle, in addition to security (Leisch 2002). Likewise, the aspiring

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<sup>8</sup> In Indonesia, *kampung* refers to urban neighbourhoods, as opposed to *desa* which refers to rural neighbourhoods (Yeoh 2010). Robbie Peters (2010) and Evawani Ellisa (2016) characterise *kampungs* in mega cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya as urban low-income areas.

'new man' characters and their families in *Hijab* also live in relatively large private homes in Jakarta. One household is depicted as hiring a domestic assistant, a practice common to middle- and upper-class Indonesian households (Elmhirst 2005; Sen 1998). Moreover, all of these men and their families in both films use private cars as their main mode of transportation, instead of public transport. In addition, they are highly educated and work in formal occupations: as a film director, a mid-ranking bureaucrat, a photographer and an actor. For example, before their careers dwindled, the men in *Hijab* could afford to pay their spouses' monthly *arisan* contributions which amount to Rp. 500,000 (approximately AUD 50), in addition to their other expenses.<sup>9</sup> The amount equals about 20 per cent of Jakarta's minimum wage in 2014 (Kuwado 2013). And the male protagonist of *7/24* can afford first-class private health insurance; a privilege which no lower-class men can provide for their families. Even in their financial hardship, none of these families lives below the poverty line although at some point they have to readjust their lifestyles.

The struggle of lower-class men in negotiating their masculinity around the changing gender relations of production is entirely absent in *7/24* but present, albeit sidelined, in *Hijab*. In *Hijab*, the struggle for the male protagonists to depict alternative ideal masculinity figures is juxtaposed with that of a lower-class man, in this case a parking ranger, who is negotiating his masculinity against the culturally most exalted form.<sup>10</sup> The lower-class man is a representation of a complicit and stoic man who struggles to attain the cultural ideal of masculinity despite his economic disadvantage. His complicity represents the stoicism, if not naïvete, of lower-class uneducated men.

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<sup>9</sup> *Arisan* is a form of rotating saving. Usually, the members of an *arisan* group meet a regular basis to draw a lottery determining which member wins the saving for that period. An *arisan* group is commonly formed by women. Men become members of *arisan* groups generally when the group consists of families, rather than individual members. I will explain more about this gendered cultural practice in Chapter 6.

<sup>10</sup> A parking ranger in Indonesia is a profession which is not formally structured, unlike in Australia or other developed countries. In Indonesia, a parking ranger generally does not earn regular wages. They are not formally employed by companies or government institutions.

Beside this, the choices of the middle-class men, to be more actively involved in the domestic and caring duties, are depicted as a sign of modernity. The parking ranger strives towards the cultural ideal because of his lack of knowledge and exposure to alternatives.

Casting masculinity ideals in middle-class professionals is not only unique to the abovementioned films, other films with the same mission also share the tendency to depict ideal masculinity in middle-class professionals, rather than lower-class men. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 6, for example, the idealisation of the gay 'new man' in *Arisan!* and its sequel, *Arisan! 2*, is also cast in affluent middle-class gay men. They have secure employment which allows them to live comfortably and provides them with relatively more options through which to express their gender and sexual identities. They can afford to live in formal settlement complexes which provide security and relative liberty as they express their non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities with lower risk of public persecution. The gay 'new man' protagonists of the *Arisan!* franchise are unlike their lower-class counterparts who work in the informal sector, such as beauty salons or the streets. The lower-class men tend to live in a *kampung* or urban slum, neither of which provide adequate security measures to protect them from potential violent public protests against LGBTIQ individuals and groups.

Like the protagonists of the *Arisan!* franchise, the comfortable life led by the middle-class male protagonist representatives of the alternative ideal masculinity in *7/24* and *Hijab* provides them with more options as they negotiate their sense of masculinity around the gender relations of production. With their wives' high income and their ethical decision to share the domestic and caring responsibilities with their wives, they do not have to entirely give up their own careers, albeit rearrangement is inevitable. Even then, with negotiated working hours, they can still comfortably maintain their middle-class lifestyle with the double income they earn together. On the

contrary, many lower-class men do not have this double-income option in order to make ends meet.

One prominent case which is barely present in discussions of fatherhood and masculinity is that of Indonesian male migrant workers. In 2013, the total number of Indonesian migrant workers overseas was around 6.5 million (WIJ/DRU 2013). Reflecting on the average number of migrant workers sent every year since 2011 as around 45 per cent male/55 per cent female (BNP2TKI 2015), it is safe to assume that almost three million Indonesian migrant workers are men.<sup>11</sup> Although numerical data on their individual marital status is unavailable, Rutgers WPF Indonesia suggests we can assume that a significant number leave their wives and children behind (2015: 19).<sup>12</sup> Unlike the cinematic representations of ‘new man’ fathers in the films, fathers who migrate for work overseas barely have any choice but to leave their children behind and thus they are unable to participate in conventional day-to-day caregiving duties. For these lower-class men, just as with their Philippine counterparts, breadwinning is often the only gender practice which defines their role as a father (McKay 2015). Certainly, reducing the lower-class men’s negotiation of masculine identities to complicity with *bapakism*, such as reflected in *Hijab*, obscures the structural alienation experienced by these men. They do not have access to high-paying jobs in the country which provide them with wider options in negotiating their roles as husbands and fathers, especially around the gender relations of production.

Furthermore, the idealisation is biased towards justifying the changing roles of men in dual-income, middle-class households. The involvement of men in domestic and

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<sup>11</sup> BNP2TKI recorded that in 2011, Indonesia sent 586,802 workers abroad and men constituted 36 per cent of the number; in 2012, 43 per cent of the total 494,609 workers sent abroad were men; in 2013, men constituted 46 per cent of the 512,168 workers placed abroad; and in 2014, men made up 43 per cent of the total 429,872 workers sent abroad.

<sup>12</sup> These men, as well as women who seek low-skilled employment abroad, tend to be from poor rural areas in Indonesia, especially Java and the eastern part of Indonesia, where paid employment is scarce for landless, low-educated and low-skilled villagers (Rutgers WPF Indonesia 2015: 18).

caregiving duties is not a new phenomenon but making it a defining feature of ideal masculinity is. Before the global campaigns pioneered by White Ribbon in the early 1990s and more recently by MenCare+ and specifically by Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru in twenty-first-century Indonesia, many Indonesian men shared domestic and caregiving duties, albeit not discursively constructed by the state and gender activists as progressive and ideal. For example, in households where mothers migrate for work overseas, lower-class men barely have any choice but to take care of the domestic and caring duties themselves. Based on the same data set as that of the male migrant workers discussed above, by 2014 more than three and a half million women had migrated overseas for work. Although data on the marital status of female migrant workers is unavailable, Rutgers WPF Indonesia (2015) suggests that it is safe to assume that most of them were married, and they left their husbands and children behind. Many studies, such as those by Nurul Inayah (2012), Theodora Lam and Brenda Yeoh (2018), and Tyas Wulan et al. (2018), agree that while in some cases, some households receive assistance from female relatives, left-behind men tend to become the primary carers for their children and primary caretakers of the domestic chores. Although this reality has been prevalent in many migrant worker-sending areas in Indonesia, the idealisation of men who are involved in domestic and caring duties barely became popular until the twenty-first century when such images began to grace popular magazines, tabloids, films and other popular culture products.

How have left-behind fathers of lower-class households been able to justify their shifting gender roles in the absence of their wives? Instead of taking pride in becoming family caregivers, it is common to find left-behind men feeling emasculated as they are confronted with the loss of their conventional masculine role as family breadwinners and the added burden of taking care of domestic and caregiving responsibilities (Lam and Yeoh 2018: 109). Young unmarried men who live in areas where women get more

opportunities to migrate internally or internationally for work also tend to be frustrated by their economic disability (Elmhirst 2007). Unlike the educated and enlightened male protagonists of the films who draw from discourses of feminism and profeminist men's movements, these poor left-behind men tend to justify their changing roles as a rational decision to ease their feelings of masculine inadequacy. Rather than being discursively constructed as progressive, their involvement in caregiving and household chores is a marker of class—they are unable to afford the service of live-in domestic servants, a common practice among middle-class dual-income households. Alternatively, they do not have the power to reorganise their careers in order to accommodate their spouses' endeavours in the public sphere.

Hani Yulindrasari and Katherine McGregor (2011) and Suzie Handajani (2010) also detect the same middle-class-centred representations of alternative ideal masculinity in parenting tabloids and men's lifestyle magazines respectively. Yulindrasari and McGregor (2011) in particular argue that in catering to the need for information on parenting among the Indonesia middle class, parenting tabloids like *Ayah Bunda* promote the expansion of gender roles for fathers from breadwinners to also include complementary caretakers, cognitive enhancers, children's entertainers as well as bravery trainers. These new images of the ideal father are arguably a response to and recognition of women's roles outside the home (Yulindrasari and McGregor 2011). The popular representations of an alternative ideal masculinity in contemporary men's lifestyle magazines are not much different from the tabloids. As shown by Handajani (2010), representations of alternative ideals, apparently also including the 'new man', recognise the increased participation of women in the public sphere. Men and women are depicted as sharing public-sphere roles, albeit to a certain limit.

Why were middle-class Indonesians pressured into reconfiguring ideal masculinity especially around the structure of gender relations at that given time?

Indonesian middle-classes were faced with a pressing urgency to do so partly because of the massive economic shock that befell them at the turn of the millennium. As I argued in Chapter 2, many middle-class Indonesians were among those hit hardest by the decline of real wages, inflation and soaring prices at the onset of the 1997–1998 crisis. Indeed, the economic downturn did not uniformly affect each and every Indonesian, including the plural middle classes. As shown by Lizzy van Leeuwen (2011: 122), some upper-middle-class Jakartans even profited from the soaring value of the US dollar because they had substantial dollar savings or were involved in export businesses. Yet, for many middle-class men who did not work as businesspeople, the economic crisis brought a very big income shock. Jessica Poppele, Sudarno Sumarto and Lant Pritchett (1999) and James P. Smith, Duncan Thomas, Elizabeth Frankenberg, Kathleen Beegle and Graciela Teruel (2002) argue that the declining currency value significantly affected institutions that were reliant on foreign investment. These institutions apparently employed a high proportion of male labour and had been responsible for creating Indonesia's emerging middle classes. In particular, the declining value of the rupiah caused mayhem in the financial sector where foreign-currency denominated loans soared in rupiah terms. These included the construction sector, especially in Jakarta, where businesses put construction work on hold, and the formal manufacturing sector, which was heavily reliant on imported materials (Cameron 2002: 145). The 41 per cent decline in real wages in 1997 virtually eliminated the entire wage gain that had been made by Indonesian middle-class men since 1986. A slightly different reality was experienced by middle-class women who generally maintained some of their wage gains during the same period (J.P. Smith et al. 2002: 173). Consequently, middle-class men felt under the utmost pressure to perform their conventional masculine role as family breadwinners amidst the decline of income. The alternative ideal masculinity which downplays the pressure for men to become family breadwinners and appreciates

men's involvement in domestic and caring duties, such as the 'new man', thus provided solace for middle-class men who were forced to renegotiate their masculinities amidst economic hardships.

The roles of flourishing women's and men's movements advocating gender equality in post-authoritarian Indonesian should not be underestimated in motivating Indonesian middle classes, including commercial filmmakers, to reconfigure ideal masculinity on various fronts. In Chapter 2, I mentioned the flourishing feminist and women's movements whose struggles for gender equality eventually established a pathway for Indonesia's own Aliansi Laki-laki Baru (LLB, New Men's Alliance). I also mentioned the men's movement campaign earlier and how the partnership with Lukman Sardi had inspired the production of *7/24*. These forces encouraged the middle classes to reconfigure ideal representations of masculinity around the gender relations of production (Hasyim 2009). In fact, as stated by Nia Dinata (who partnered with MenCare+ to produce a short film, *Surga Kecil di Bondowoso* (A Little Heaven in Bondowoso, 2013), the involvement of men in domestic and caring duties on an everyday basis is the zeitgeist of new millennium:

Among my generation who got married and had kids after 2000, the fathers never shy away from caring for their children. They hold the babies, bathe them and even change their diapers. These acts are expressions of respect and affection to their wives who had gone through labour. Most men I know do that. Why don't we portray this kind of man which has become more common these days on screen? Why do we have to hide them? (Personal interview, 28 May 2014).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The MenCare+ campaign also worked with a feminist filmmaker, Nia Dinata, and her film company Kalyana Shira Film to produce a short documentary *Surga Kecil di Bondowoso* (A Little Piece of Heaven in Bondowoso, 2013, Dinata) as part of its media campaign. The film documents a model Muslim man who adopts the 'new man' masculinity. It highlights the role reversal between the couple and explains how such changes can be religiously justified. The husband provides the primary care for the children and the unpaid domestic labour. The wife works full time as a school principal. The Indonesian MenCare+ Program itself, according to one of the program's founders, Sri Kusyuniati, was a form of feminist intervention in redefining the dominant norm of masculinity in order to support gender equality and the elimination of violence against women in Indonesia (Personal interview, 11 October 2014). Sardi is one



The men referred to by Dinata in her statement obviously do not refer to lower-class men, some of whom have no choice but to undertake household and caring roles, as I discussed earlier. The men that Dinata, as a filmmaker, perceives as progressive and representative of the spirit of the third millennium are those who do their share in domestic and caring duties for ethical reasons. Choosing to do so has become a new cool thing for men amidst the flourishing movements for gender equality. These movements have provided a new meaning for men doing daily unpaid household chores and caregiving duties.

Interestingly, the idealisation of the ‘new man’ in various parts of the world has paved the way for the idealisation of full-time stay-at-home fathers/husbands as representations of an ideal masculinity. However, *7/24* and *Hijab* and almost all contemporary Indonesian commercial films do not extend the challenge of making a full-time stay-at-home father into an ideal figure of masculinity. All the male protagonists in the films continued to maintain their employment, although they had to renegotiate their working arrangements, especially around timing and workload in order to accommodate their roles in day-to-day caring and domestic duties. The resolution to the conflicts proposed in *7/24* is a clear example that men are not encouraged to give up their careers entirely and be domestic-bound fathers/husbands. The MenCare+ campaign film *Surga Kecil di Bondowoso* also deploys a similar strategy of representation as the abovementioned films. The main subject of the short documentary, a male Muslim preacher who is married to a school principal, does not give up his role as family breadwinner entirely although he accepts the idea that women can pursue their careers in the public sphere and earn more than their husbands, and that men can be the primary caregivers for their children.

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of the program’s appointed celebrity champions who help promote the program and disseminate the idea of transforming masculinity.

Since the late 1990s and into the third millennium, the idealisation of ‘new man’ masculinity has opened up an avenue for the emergence of full-time stay-at-home ‘new man’ fathers/husbands in many other countries. Full-time stay-at-home fathers have become an established alternative norm of masculinity in the US and in European countries. The celebrity ‘new man’, David Beckham, has become a contemporary icon for the ‘new man’ father. Upon his retirement from football, he became a full-time stay-at-home father to four children, while his wife continued to pursue her career in the entertainment and fashion industries. Beckham as a ‘new man’ father is positively profiled in various media and new media outlets. Emily Sheridan in an article that features in the UK’s *Daily Mail*, ‘Retired David Beckham settles into his new life as full-time dad and husband as he accompanies wife Victoria on shopping trip’, portrays Beckham as supportive of his wife’s career and enjoying his new role as full-time stay-at-home father (13 June 2013). In fact, Sarah Gee (2014) states that the masculinity adopted by Beckham reflects a more fluid (re)construction of masculinity which serves to negotiate and extend the boundaries of gender, bend the codes of masculinity, and diversify the available options of masculinity, albeit within the particular context of a global consumerist society. Certainly, we have to acknowledge Beckham’s economic and social status which allows him to maintain his choice of becoming a full-time stay-at-home father. The idealisation of Beckham as a ‘new man’ icon should not obscure the fact that he and his family are financially secure. His financial security and social standing provide him with wider options in navigating his masculinity around the changing gender relations of production in his own household and eventually he is able to become an icon of an alternative ideal masculinity.

Since the 2000s, full-time stay-at-home fathers have become an established alternative norm of masculinity in many Asian countries. In Seoul, for example, the number has increased. In 2011, *Asia Pulse* featured an article entitled, ‘Number of

Seoul's stay-at-home fathers surges 125 per cent since 2005'. It stated that in Seoul the number of stay-at-home fathers 'totalled 36,000 men, which is a 125 per cent increase from that figure in 2005 (25 July 2011). In Singapore, a small but growing number of men are choosing to be stay-at-home fathers to care for their offspring. According to Theresa Tan (2015), reporting for the *Straits Times*, stated that there were more than 10,000 men in Singapore who chose to not be involved in paid work in 2014, which is triple the number in 2006. Ralph Jennings (2017) reported that in Asia, as in Western societies, men who give up their jobs and become stay-home fathers/husbands are generally middle-class and highly educated; they have chosen to offer to care for their children, rather than being economically forced to do so.

The absence of full-time stay-at-home fathers/husbands as figures representing an alternative ideal masculinity in Indonesian popular culture, including cinema, should be understood within the context of country-specific gender politics, which are rife with a middle-class bias. I did mention in Chapter 2 that we can historicise breadwinning as a defining feature of ideal representations of masculinity in Indonesia. It was not until the late-nineteenth century that this particular construction of gender emerged as a significant masculine practice and gradually became constitutive of hegemonic masculinity. The emerging middle-classes of the Netherland's East Indies were prominent actors in the transformation of an ideal masculinity and a refashioning of the gender order amidst modernisation and an Islamic revival at this given time (see Chapter 2). Ideal middle-class households were culturally constructed in popular culture texts, such as magazines, as consisting of a breadwinning father who held a formal office job, and a homemaking mother who was central to the family's maintenance of a good marriage through hygiene and cleanliness (Nordholt 2011: 441). The magazine advertisements reflected the desire of the indigenous middle classes, inhabiting the centre of the late-colonial state but denied political power (ibid.: 440), to be involved

with 'progress', partly by abandoning traditional gender roles. Breadwinning was thus not only a marker of gender but also a marker of class.

Although the increasing significance of breadwinning in defining ideal masculinity never fully transformed Indonesian society at every level, it is clear that the reliance on male breadwinners and the idealisation of domestic-bound femininity became hegemonic during the New Order period. The New Order government solidified the idealisation of a masculinity that featured breadwinning in its gender politics. In part, this was through the discourse of *kodrat wanita* (women's biologically pre-ordained roles). The discourse naturalised the reproductive roles and domesticity of women. Ideal women discursively were constructed as those fulfilling their reproductive and domestic roles. Consequently, women were not naturally obligated to earn a living. Ideally, they would rely on their husbands for income. When women did earn an income, their financial contribution tended to be discursively constructed as secondary to that of their husbands (Utomo 2012). This arrangement of the gender relations of production is deeply rooted in Indonesian society.

The ideal discourse of femininity reinforced by the New Order eventually strengthened the idealisation of *bapakism*, which prescribed its subjects as family (primary) breadwinners. Such idealisation implies the subordination and/or marginalisation of other masculinities which do not comply. Consequently, jobless men, who are unable to provide for their family, are often seen as somehow less masculine, or even a failure. As represented in the commercial film *Zaman Edan* (Crazy Time, 1978, Nawi Ismail), a jobless man who took up domestic and caring duties and a woman who became the family's breadwinner, were a curse, not only to the family, but also to the future generations and society at large. Social stigma dogged men who were unable to perform the stereotypical masculine role. Thus, among double-income middle-class families, the absence of women as primary caretakers is often solved by hiring female

domestic assistants (Sen 1998; Jones 2004; Elmhirst 2005). This takes the pressure off men having to negotiate their masculinity and career to embrace domestic and caregiving roles. Even amidst the rampant layoffs and bankruptcy experienced during the deep economic crisis in 1997–1998, middle-class men who lost their livelihood were ashamed of their incapacity to perform their conventional masculine role. In one of her ethnographic vignettes, Leeuwen (2011: 144) highlights that an affluent middle-class man, who lost his job due to the crumbling construction business he was employed in, would arrive at his friends' offices every morning at around nine o'clock and hang around until five o'clock in the afternoon. Going out of the house during working hours was his way of coping with his loss of livelihood. Consequently, the on- and off-screen idealisation of men who can both keep their career and be actively involved in daily domestic and caring duties is biased towards justifying middle-class men's interests in keeping formal employment—a practice which simultaneously defines their gender and class identities.

This section has shown that the transformation of ideal masculinity around gender relations of production is potent with middle-class biases. Drawing from discourses of gender equality, the screen idealisation of a hybrid masculinity provides an alternative pathway for middle-class men to retain the ideal masculinity amidst the profound changes occurring within the structure of the gender relations of production. However, we cannot help but notice that the filmmakers' struggle in Indonesian cinema is focused on middle-class professional men and excludes lower-class men. The idealisation is biased towards providing justification for middle-class men's limited involvement in domestic and caring duties. It is also biased towards middle-class men's interests in maintaining professional work as a marker of gender and class. Indeed, an ideal masculine man is not pressured to be the sole or primary family breadwinner. Yet, as reflected in the absence of cinematic representation of full-time husbands/fathers, an

ideal masculine man must not abandon his professional job altogether in order to embrace his changing roles in the domestic sphere.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explained the struggles of commercial in undermining the hegemony of *bapakism* through their work in Indonesian cinema. It is through their struggle to promote the ‘new man’ as an alternative ideal that we know that more equal and fluid gender relations of production have unfolded, albeit with biases towards Indonesian middle-class men. In this concluding section, I will present a summary as well as a reflection on the political dimension of cinematic representations of (ideal) masculinity.

The new hope is reflected in the filmmakers’ rendering of breadwinning, a defining gender practice of *bapakism*, as obsolete. As seen in the selected films (*7/24* and *Hijab*), the masculine obsession with breadwinning practices was depicted by the filmmakers as incompatible with the changing landscape of the gender relations of production. The obsession’s limitations on men highlighted the increasing significance of women’s roles in the public sphere and women’s increased contribution to the family economy. The culturally most-exalted masculinity was depicted as putting immense psychological pressure on men who were unable to attain the ideal. This form of masculinity also constrained women in pursuit of their careers. The filmmakers’ proposed alternative ideal ‘new man’ allowed men to take pride in their roles in the domestic and public sphere, instead of emasculating them. From my discussion of the film texts and behind-the-scene politics, we can infer that the politically conscious filmmakers aimed at steering Indonesia’s gender order into accommodating not only women’s increased participation in the public sphere, including in paid work, but also the transformation of the cultural ideal of masculinity.

Yet, we cannot help but notice that the filmmakers’ struggle through commercial films is constructed through the cultural lens of the Indonesian middle classes. As seen

in the selected films, the struggle is focused on middle-class professional men. The characters depicting the 'new man' ideal are also representations of middle-class educated urban young men. These men's financial security and social standing offer them wider options in negotiating their masculine identity amidst the profound changes in the gender relations of production at the household level. Unlike their lower-class counterparts, they have the power to negotiate their career for ethical reasons; in order to accommodate their changing role in the domestic sphere and support their spouses' careers in the public sphere. The old solution of hiring domestic assistants to fill in the absence of women in middle-class households is heavily challenged by the ethical decision made by these educated middle-class men.

Furthermore, I have demonstrated that the struggle is biased towards justifying middle-class men's interests in maintaining paid work as a marker of gender and class. Indeed, while commercial filmmakers strongly challenge the ultimate necessity of men being the sole breadwinner in their films, the ideal middle-class masculine men do not abandon their paid jobs in order to embrace domestic and caring roles. Reflecting on the significance of paid work as a marker of class, encouraging middle-class men to give it up in order to support their spouse's career and fully participate in domestic and caring duties is still unimaginable.

The discussion in this chapter reinforces my thesis arguments that politically conscious commercial filmmakers have made attempts to include their perspectives on masculinity and the gender relations of production in their films. Films such as *7/24* and *Hijab* are political vehicles through which the filmmakers expressed their engagement with contemporary gender politics and attempted to steer the gender order in a specific direction. Through the narrative and character development of the films, the filmmakers carefully instilled their critique of the hegemonic ideal (especially around the gender

relations of production) and promoted an alternative ideal masculinity, albeit still biased towards a certain segment of Indonesian society.

To successfully stage their gender politics in commercial cinema, these filmmakers negotiated their intentions to inspire the transformation of a new hegemonic masculine ideal within the complex political–economic dimensions of commercial cinema. They may have benefited from working within a network of likeminded people. Furthermore, their own financial security that allowed them to partly finance the film, or their position within a film company, permitted the production of an alternative representation of an ideal masculinity possible. Yet, these privileges in production were not necessarily followed by privileges in circulation. The filmmakers still had to negotiate with the state and public censorship in order for their films to find an audience. As I mentioned, due to the absence of controversial elements in scenes and the acting department, the films passed state censorship. Indeed, their takes on masculinity did not lead to substantial public debate or immediate social change. However, the absence of negative sentiments towards the alternative masculine ideal that they proposed in these films implies that such challenging representations were able to be produced and circulated during a time marked by profound changes in the structure of the gender relations of production in Indonesia.



## Chapter 5

# Filmmakers' Reel Muslim 'New Man' and the Gender Relations of Power

This chapter examines Indonesian commercial filmmakers' struggles to undermine *bapakism* around the gender relations of power. The period of 2000–2014 saw major changes in the established structure of the gender relations of power. The changes included a surge of women into key public-sphere roles, especially in politics and the economy, as well as increasingly vocal movements that promoted women's empowerment and gender equality. New policies supporting women's economic and political participation and laws criminalising domestic violence were also legalised during this period. Ultimately, these changes problematised the normalised authoritative patron leadership of men in the public and domestic spheres. The changes triggered a more intensive search for alternative gender ideals, including masculinity. They also, however, provoked stronger attempts to restore the hegemonic masculinity of *bapakism* and to emphasise femininity—*ibuism*. The period also saw the flourishing of Islamisation, which in fact was then, and still is today, the most visible feature in Indonesian politics and consumer culture (see Chapter 3).

How did the filmmakers deal with contemporary gender politics in their pursuit of an alternative ideal Muslim masculinity which fostered equal gender relations of power? In this chapter I unpack the filmmakers' aesthetic strategies, intentions and negotiations, as well as public controversies surrounding the production and distribution of cinematic representations which undermine men's authoritative patron leadership in public and domestic spheres. As this chapter unfolds, I demonstrate that the filmmakers did successfully offer an alternative ideal Muslim masculinity, the Muslim 'new man', which challenged the normalised unequal gender relations of power underlying hegemonic masculinity and more broadly the patriarchal gender order. However, I also

show that their struggle was distorted by middle-class biases. The idealisation of an alternative masculinity relied heavily on men's higher education and training in reformist education institutions as well as their reformist (secular) networks of Muslims. By relying on these 'privileges', the filmmakers 'other' lower-class, less educated men.

To this end, analysis in this chapter is focused on the political struggle waged by several Indonesian filmmakers, mostly Muslim, in offering an alternative ideal masculinity, the Muslim 'new man', through the film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Women with Keffiyeh, 2009, Hanung Bramantyo). This film is one of the key works in the burgeoning *film Islami* genre (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, the principal filmmakers behind this film, including Hanung Bramantyo (director), Gina S. Noer (scriptwriter) and Faozan Rizal (director of photography), were involved in the production of the movie *Ayat-ayat Cinta*.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I will show that these filmmakers attempted to 'correct' *Ayat-ayat Cinta*'s representation of the ideal Muslim man and masculinity through their politically loaded *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. In this latter film, the filmmakers aimed to challenge gender-biased interpretations of Islamic texts which tend to privilege Muslim men and discriminate against Muslim women. Upon its release, the film stirred a major controversy because of the representation of Islam, (male) Islamic clerics, and the traditional Islamic education institution, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) (Afrisia 2015a). Considering the film's significance, I focus my investigation on the filmmakers' struggle to reconfigure hegemonic masculinity around the structure of gender relations in this film.

There are two arguments I propose in this chapter. First, I would like to demonstrate that, as seen in the filmmakers' struggle to promote the Muslim 'new man' as a legitimate ideal through *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, there were attempts by

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<sup>1</sup> *Ayat-ayat Cinta* is a film adaptation of a novel of the same title, written by Habiburrahman Elshirazy. The novel was released in 2004, and the filming took place in 2007. The film version was produced by Manoj Punjabi and Dhamoo Punjabi for MD Pictures.

Indonesian commercial filmmakers to promote an alternative ideal masculinity which fosters equal gender relations of power both in public and domestic spheres. The filmmakers offered screen representations of a religiously justifiable alternative ideal masculinity that encouraged men to treat women as equal partners in both public and domestic spheres. Unfortunately, as my second argument shows, the filmmakers' struggle was biased towards middle-class Muslim men. The idealisation of the alternative masculinity heavily relied on a male Muslim protagonist who was urban-based, and highly educated in a modernist Islamic education in Indonesia and abroad, while othering rural-based, less-educated men graduates of traditionalist religious educational institutions.

This chapter will unfold as follows. Initially I offer a textual analysis of the representation of the Muslim 'new man' offered in the film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. This is followed by a discussion of the situatedness of the narrative, in which I unpack its significance amidst arguments associated with contemporary gender politics. These two sections generally show the blossoming hope of being able to represent an alternative ideal masculinity on the silver screen. However, as I shall demonstrate in the penultimate section of this chapter, middle-class biases are apparent in the filmmakers' political take on hegemonic masculinity. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by summarising my points and establishing linkages to the grand argument of the thesis.

### **Muslim 'new man' of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban***

In this section, I offer textual analysis of the film, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. I then situate the film among its contemporaries and also films produced during the New Order period. This section unpacks the filmmakers' aesthetic strategies in undermining *bapakism* and promoting an alternative ideal in a commercial film. I discuss the film's point of view, characterisation and plot to understand how the filmmakers depicted the

Muslim strand of the ‘new man’ as a critique against the hegemonic ideal, *bapakism*. I also discuss how the film departs from the long-running tradition of representing men as authoritative patron leaders in Indonesian cinema. I argue that, as shown in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*’s narrative elements, progressive Indonesian commercial filmmakers attempted to offer a religiously justified alternative masculinity to simultaneously challenge the deeply rooted hegemonic *bapakism*, and the intensive invocation of a literal interpretation of Islamic texts in its defence.

The film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is an adaptation of a novel of the same title. The novel was written by a progressive female Muslim writer, Abidah El Khalieqy. Like other works written by El Khalieqy, the novel was known for its strong critique of the patriarchal patterning of gender relations in Indonesia, especially among the Muslim community.<sup>2</sup> According to Tineke Hellwig, the novel *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* criticises:

the patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender roles that treat women as sexual objects and inferior beings, at the same time [it] endorses women’s activism and solidarity to advocate gender equity and social justice based on modern interpretations of Islamic texts (2011: 28).

The novel *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, along with many other works written by progressive Muslim women writers, has been known as a ‘canon counter-discourse’ in depicting a multitude of Muslim women’s identities and Muslim women’s struggles to either maintain or challenge their prescribed gender roles (Arimbi 2009: 85).

The film, as indeed the novel, revolves around the trials and tribulations of its female protagonist, Annisa, the daughter of a *pesantren* leader and a notable Muslim cleric in East Java. The story is set between the 1980s to the late-1990s and follows the

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<sup>2</sup> El Khalieqy’s other works include *Geni Jora* (Jora’s Flame, 2003), which won the Novel Writing Competition held by the Jakarta Art Council in 2003. According to Wiyatmi (2010), this earlier novel of El Khalieqy’s problematises the rights and position of women in conservative Muslim communities.

development of Annisa's character, from childhood to adulthood. The key driver of the narrative is Annisa's struggle to challenge the gender-biased interpretation of Islamic texts which privileges men and discriminates against women. Annisa challenges the gender-biased interpretation of religious texts which strengthens her father's authoritarian leadership over other family members, especially women. She also challenges the conservative Islamic institutions which are responsible for teaching a younger generation of Muslims the gender-biased interpretations of Islamic texts. Such teaching ultimately relegates women as subordinate to men and tied to the domestic sphere—a situation which hides domestic violence from the outside world. The cost of her struggle is a damaged relationship with her father and brothers, as well as her eviction from her parents' home. Annisa finds support in Khudori, her love interest who later becomes her second husband. Khudori is the representation of the ideal Muslim man, a modernist adopting an alternative ideal masculinity, which I call the Muslim 'new man'. Unlike Annisa's father and first husband, Khudori supports Annisa's pursuit of higher education and a public-sphere career. He is hands on with day-to-day domestic and caring responsibilities, and respects Annisa as an autonomous and agentic individual.

Through the film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, the filmmakers offered a different point of view of gender and gender relations within Muslim communities in Indonesian cinema. The filmmakers use the feminine perspective. In this case, the filmmakers make the viewers see the gender issues: discrimination and violence against women, from a Muslim woman's experience of living in a conservative Islamic community. This is unlike most *film Islami* during this period, including its contemporaries: the *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and the *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* duology (2009,

Chaerul Umam), which are anchored in the male perspective.<sup>3</sup> Set in Java in the 1980s and 1990s, the film, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, chronicles Annisa's rebellion against the gender biases in the dominant interpretations of the Islamic texts. The gender biases, in Annisa's view, have afforded men more power at the expense of women. In her pursuit, she has to face her own father, a notable Islamic cleric, her teachers at the *pesantren*, and more widely her conservative Muslim community, in which patriarchal arrangements of gender relations are normalised. Annisa problematises women's subordinate status and rights, men's privileges, as well as the rampant discrimination against women by virtue of their gender.

The woman-centred narrative of *Perempuan* thus becomes important in the filmmakers' attempt to legitimise an alternative ideal masculinity which supports women as autonomous agents. Khudori, as the cinematic representation of the Muslim 'new man', emerges—but not as a superior figure in his gender relations of power to other characters, especially to Annisa. Khudori is promoted by the filmmakers as a counter image to other Muslim men who righteously position themselves as superior in their power relations with women. In the film, the superior Muslim men are represented in the figures of Annisa's father, brothers, male teachers and first husband. Decentring Khudori in the film's narrative thus highlights Annisa's agency and autonomy. Not being overshadowed by Khudori's exemplary personal qualities, Annisa's character arises as a solid representation of a strong, agentic and autonomous Muslim woman who challenges the male patron leadership norm. Khudori is not a hero who saves Annisa from her abusive husband. Annisa is her own saviour. Thus, Khudori is unlike

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<sup>3</sup> Both *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* are also film adaptations from novels of the same titles, written by a prolific male Muslim writer, Habiburrahman Elshirazy. The plots of these films generally revolve around the male protagonist's search for an ideal wife. Both protagonists are Indonesian students at Al-Azhar, Cairo. It is through their quest for the love of their life that their version of ideal Muslim masculinity is represented as a legitimate alternative ideal.

Fahri of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, who is a patron saviour to all women around him.<sup>4</sup> Khudori is unlike Azzam of *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* who is the didactic voice and patron for women around him.<sup>5</sup>

The filmmakers' struggle waged through the idealisation of the Muslim 'new man' in this film matters because the alternative ideal challenges the hegemonic *bapakism* mainly by fostering equal power relations with women. Mainly, it encourages men to recognise women's autonomy and agency. This alternative ideal is represented as more compatible with the emerging alternative ideal Muslim femininity, represented by Annisa. Annisa exhibits strong self-determination and responsibility for her own life choices. Annisa rejects her subordinate position in her power relation with her abusive first husband as well as her authoritative father and teachers. Annisa criticises the conservative interpretations of religion which maintain gender discrimination and inequality. While Annisa's alternative ideal femininity is considered threatening by the conservative pious men around her, it gains support from the progressive alternative masculine protagonist, Khudori. Adopting a 'new man' masculinity, Khudori validates Annisa's right to pursue higher education and establish a career in the public sphere, equal to men. He also validates her autonomy of her own body and sexuality. Unlike Annisa's first husband, Khudori is never shown demanding her submission. In short, the 'new man' represented in Khudori overturns the male authoritative patron-leadership norm, strongly featured in *bapakism*, by supporting women as autonomous agents.

The strength of the filmmakers' critique against *bapakism* also lies in the invocation of Islamic teaching to justify the alternative ideal masculinity promoted

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<sup>4</sup> Fahri saves the American women from the verbally abusive Arab Muslim man during the train scene. Fahri also saves Noura from his abusive father. Most of all, Fahri saves the sinking image of Islam post-9/11 and in post-authoritarian Indonesia by becoming an ideal Muslim masculine figure who is a counter image to violent radical Islamists.

<sup>5</sup> Azzam is a representation of an ideal Muslim man who becomes the reference for everyone in his surroundings—men and women—on Islamic teaching. Moreover, he is the patron leader and breadwinner for his family in wake of his father's death.

through Khudori. Around the production of the film, including *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, invocation of a textual interpretation of Islamic texts was prevalent in almost all public debates about gender relations (K. Robinson 2009: 7). Literal interpretations of Islamic texts was likely be used by proponents of the patriarchal gender order to maintain the male patron leadership norm. To counter this gender-biased interpretation of religion, the filmmakers, through Khudori, also used alternative interpretations of Islamic texts to justify alternative ideal masculinities and femininities.

For instance, in the scene describing the intersection of sexual and power relations between Khudori and Annisa, it is clearly shown that an ideal Muslim man, represented by Khudori, should respect women's rights and autonomy in relation to their own bodies. Annisa is still trying to cope with the trauma of marital rape committed by her first husband. When Annisa rejects his sexual advances, Khudori, citing a verse from Surah An-Nisa in the Qur'an, reinforces that he is willing to wait until she is ready.

**Annisa:** (sobbing) I am sorry I cannot be a perfect wife for you.

**Khudori:** It is not your fault. *Istighfar* (ask forgiveness from God), Nisa. *Istighfar*. *Mu'asyarah bil ma'ruuf*. A husband-and-wife relation must be grounded on kindness. In this relationship, you also have rights. And we don't have to do it if you are not ready. Right, honey? (*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* 1:14:40–1:15:45).<sup>6</sup>

The reference to the primary source of Islamic teaching and laws not only shows Khudori as a religious authority who is aware of gender equality in marital relationships, but also confirms that Islam recognises an equal power relation between a

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<sup>6</sup> Literally this Arabic verse (*Mu'asyarah bil ma'ruuf*) means the relationship between a husband and wife must be grounded on kindness. This verse is taken from Surah Annisa 19. An Indonesian progressive Muslim thinker, Hamka, in his interpretation of the verse states that the verse as a whole is to challenge the tribal traditions of treating women as possessions which can be inherited and includes physical as well as psychological violence against women (1970: 1136). Specifically, the sentence cited by Khudori in this scene, is interpreted by Hamka, citing a Hadith, as '(men should) offer them (women) good friendship, provide them with appropriate clothing and food' (1970: 1136–137). In other words, Muslim men must treat their wives with kindness, instead of violence.



husband and wife. Annisa's former husband forces her sexually. The conservative Muslim teacher in the *pasantren* taught that it is a wife's obligation to serve her husband sexually anytime because it is his right. However, Khudori acknowledges a woman's rights in deciding whether and when to have a sexual encounter with her husband.<sup>7</sup> The deployment of Islamic injunctions in the negotiation of power in the context of the domestic sphere, thus, emboldens the legitimacy of both the alternative ideals of masculinity and femininity which may not agree with the dominant prescription of the gender relation of power.

The film's stance against *bapakism* and the intensive use of literal interpretations of Islamic holy texts to defend the male patron leadership norm is eventually strengthened by introducing an alternative representation of ideal masculinity—in the figure of Khudori, a modernist authority in Islamic knowledge and law. Like most of its contemporary cinematic representations of alternative ideal Muslim masculinities which emphasise piety, a cosmopolitan world view and intellectuality, Khudori is a highly-educated and pious Muslim man. He received training in Islamic studies from Islamic boarding schools in Java and at Al-Azhar, Cairo, the world's oldest university that focuses on Islamic studies. In terms of knowledge of Islam, Khudori is equal, if not superior to other religious leaders depicted in the film. Khudori's academic background represents his licence of authority in Islamic studies. Upon his return to Indonesia, it is apparent that his foreign education does more than enhance his piety but also provides him with knowledge of Islam and gender equality. Thus, his adoption of 'new man' masculinity can be seen as part of his expression of piety and an alternative interpretation of Islamic texts, which is not gender biased.

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<sup>7</sup> Kecia Ali argues that the dominant view in various Islamic texts and jurisprudence does see sex as inherently men's right and women's duty; however, she also notes that this view tends to overlook other hadiths and other scholars' views which promote a wife's sexual rights and husband's obligation to fulfill them (2006: 13).

Now I would like to situate the idealisation of the Muslim ‘new man’ in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and within the long-running tradition of cinematic representations of masculinity in Indonesian cinema, both during the New Order period and into the twenty-first century. I demonstrate that the alternative ideal presented in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* competed against persistent representations of masculinities which emphasise men’s authoritative patron leadership in both the domestic and public spheres.

Placing *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*’s idealisation of a Muslim ‘new man’ against the cinematic tradition of representing *bapakism* in Indonesian cinema during the New Order, the Muslim ‘new man’ overturns the taken-for-granted norm that men are, by virtue of their gender, more superior to women and thus deserve to be the latter’s patrons. In her analysis of Indonesian cinema under the New Order, Krishna Sen argues that ideal masculinity was generally represented by assertiveness, dominance, activity in the public sphere, and certainly economic productivity (1994: 137–38). When *film Islami* began to flourish in the 1990s along with the shifting direction of Indonesian politics, this form of masculine representation was sustained. A notable film, *Nada dan Dakwah* (Melodies and Islamic Preaching, 1991, Chaerul Umam) promotes men’s authoritative patron leadership over women and other men of subordinate social positions. Rhoma, the character played by Rhoma Irama, is the patron to the female protagonist and lower-class villagers who fight against a tycoon intending to take over their land. The cleric, Zainuddin MZ, is the religious authority that Muslims in the film consult on their life problems—including those involving the tycoon. Unlike the autonomous and strong character of Annisa, the female protagonist of *Nada dan Dakwah* eventually turns to these male figures of authority to help her deal with the tycoon.

In other areas of popular culture during the New Order period, the idealisation of *bapakism* and other masculinities complicit with it were dominant. On television, male characters representing the ideal masculinity were likely to dominate the narration of events, represent the voices of wisdom and rationality, as well as embody the perfect personality that hardly ever made mistakes (Aripurnami 1996: 254). In Javanese theatrical performances, according to Barbara Hatley (1990), the male patron leadership norm was persistently preserved through male protagonists who represented wisdom, ascetic spirituality and authority. Moreover, in all these variants of popular culture products, male heroes were the ones who provided solutions. They also disciplined politically and sexually assertive women in an attempt to make them embrace the feminine ideal: passivity, submission, and total devotion to their husbands (Aripurnami 1996: 254; Hatley 1990: 198–99; Sen 1994: 144). Consequently, the valorisation of a strand of a masculinity which encouraged men not only to be more religious but also to abandon authoritative patron leadership qualities, such as those presented in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, undermines the deeply-rooted popular tradition of representing masculinity ideals.

The male patron leadership norm was still a strong underlying pattern in the representations of gender relations of power, especially in the domestic setting, in Indonesian screen culture into the twenty-first century. The shifting representations of ideal femininities which accommodated women's increasing involvement in the public sphere were not necessarily followed by the legitimacy of more fluid gender relations of production (see Chapter 4) and more equal gender relations of power, especially in the domestic sphere. Indeed, female characters that held high-level corporate positions, and in some cases were financially more affluent than their male partners or love interests, were prevalent in Indonesian films produced between 2000 and 2014. The new icon of the feminine ideal: Cinta of *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* (What's up with Cinta? 2002, Rudy

Soedjarwo) is a high-achieving teenager of an urban middle-class family who manages the student publication at school. Yet, in terms of her gender power relations with her male love interest, I agree with Hapsari Sulistyani (2006) that Cinta is still dominated by Rangga. Indeed, Rangga is not a stereotypical representation of a young man of his generation. He is emotionally sensitive, poetic and at ease with domestic work. His masculinity is hailed as an alternative ideal. Yet, in terms of the gender relations of power, it is Rangga who holds higher authority in determining the course of his relationship with Cinta.

Representations of husbands who are subjected to the authority of their wives continued to be subjects of comedy during the period under study. The sitcom *Suami-Suami Takut Istri* (Wife-fearing Husbands), produced by Multivision Plus was aired on week nights between 15 October 2007 and 29 January 2010 on Trans TV. As can be gleaned from the title, the central theme is men's submission to their dictator wives—culturally it is expected to be the other way around. In the previous era, such comedy also flourished in Indonesian cinema. In *Perempuan Kedua* (The Second Woman, 1990, Ida Farida), the joke of submissive men and authoritative wives was represented as a part of the daily conversations among men to prove their ideal masculinity. The television success of the sitcom *Suami-Suami Takut Istri* was followed by the success of its silver-screen adaptation in 2008 (Ajo 2008). The film version attracted around 400,000 moviegoers (Anton 2008). The success of the television show and the silver screen adaptation implies the persistent strong appeal of the male patron leadership norm. It also suggests that men's inability to display authority in their gender relations of power with women in the domestic sphere is considered as a defeat of masculinity, which, in many cases, is what makes it comical.

Yet, the persistent representation of *bapakism* and the male patron leadership norm which underlines it in Indonesian screen culture was strongly challenged by the

representations of independent women in domestic and international women's cinema. Feminist filmmakers were likely to offer representation of women as agents who hold full responsibility for their action and determine their own life course, rather than depending on men to make these choices for them. Here are some examples. In the award-winning thriller *Fiksi* (Fiction, 2008, Mouly Surya) the female lead character, a former victim of sexual abuse turned serial killer, is an autonomous agent who is able to decide her own life course. The narrative of the award-winning comedy *Demi Ucok* (For Ucok, 2012, Sammaria Simanjuntak) is driven by an independent woman in her thirties who has the agency to decide to be single despite pressure from her mother and society. Furthermore, the central figure in the documentary *Di Balik Frequency* (Behind the Frequency, 2013, Ucu Agustin), Luviana, is a female journalist unfairly dismissed by her employer (a major television network). She is depicted as an equal partner in her gender relationship of labour and power with her husband. In the early 2000s, Hollywood films with strong women characters, such as *Erin Brokovich* (2000, Steven Soderbergh), written by Susannah Grant, also captivated Indonesian audiences.

Amidst the intensifying Islamisation, an ideal masculinity was also intensively sought and experimented with on screen to highlight religious piety as an important feature of an emerging ideal masculinity. In terms of depictions of the gender relations of power, the analogy of a 'cinematic battle' proposed by Ariel Heryanto (2014) can be useful in illustrating the competing representations of gender ideals.<sup>8</sup> While these films agree that religiosity, compassion, as well as emotional sensitivity and expressiveness are vital gender practices in defining a Muslim man's ideal masculinity, they stake different claims in portraying an ideal patterning of the gender relations of power, especially in the domestic setting. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* is ambivalent in its depiction of the

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<sup>8</sup> Heryanto illustrates that the competing representations of Islam and Muslims in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, were intended as corrections of the former film, *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (2014: 60–61).

gender relations of power between its ideal masculine and feminine figures.<sup>9</sup> Fahri is a dominant figure in his relation to Muslim women characters in the film. Fahri's power relationship with his wife is ambivalent. While the novel version offers clear positioning of women as subordinate to their husbands, the film tends to obscure the gender relations of power by providing fleeting scenes and an absence of solution.<sup>10</sup> *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, while supporting women's pursuit of higher education and careers in the public sphere (Hakim 2013), continues to sustain the dominant interpretation of Islamic texts on the gender relations of power at the household level—that women have to submit to the authority of their husbands. Such positioning is very clear from the beginning of the film.

It is against the consistent valorisation of *bapakism* masculinity and the emergence of various alternative ideals, especially anchored in Islamic piety yet preserving the male patron leadership norm, that the Muslim 'new man' in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* was promoted by the filmmakers as an alternative ideal. The Muslim 'new man' is offered by filmmakers as a solution for men to navigate the changing landscape of gender relations of power in twenty-first-century Indonesia. Eventually, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban's* daring representation of gender discrimination and a normalised male patron leadership norm in religious society, especially Islam, at this time became a loud wake-up call for the majority of the Indonesian population to pay more attention to the use and abuse of religious texts in the maintenance of unequal gender relations of power.

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<sup>9</sup> I have argued elsewhere (Lücking and Eliyanah 2017) that Fahri, the male protagonist of the film, represents not only the face of a more compassionate Islam but also an ideal Muslim masculinity.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Fahri actually opposes living in Aisha's grand mansion because he cannot afford to pay their living expenses. To such a statement, Aisha responds that Fahri's responsibility transcends economic responsibility, but she also reluctantly says that if he insists on moving out, she cannot do anything but submit to his decision as head of the household. No decision is reached in the argument.

## **Tapping into the politics of the gender relations of power**

This section discusses the politics behind and around the production of images of the Muslim ‘new man’ in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. It unpacks the filmmakers’ intentions and negotiations as they tapped into contemporary gender politics to secure a new hegemonic masculinity, especially around the gender relations of power. As seen in the production of cinematic representations of the Muslim ‘new man’ in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, the filmmakers were forced to negotiate their political manoeuvre not only with the normalised unequal gender relations of power but also with the intensive invocation of Islamic religious texts in its defence on- and off-screen. Especially in the case of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, the filmmakers had to challenge the representations of ideal masculinity they themselves had contributed to producing in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*.

The production of the film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* was both political and commercial. Released in January 2009, the film was part of the burgeoning trend of *film Islami* in twenty-first-century Indonesia. Undoubtedly, the producer and filmmakers behind the movie capitalised on the heightened Islamisation that was prevalent at that time and the growing popularity of *film Islami*, especially after the stellar success of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the production of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* cannot be reduced to merely making commercial opportunities out of the political situation. It was politically and economically motivated, to intervene in the popular representations of gender ideals, including masculinity.

Around the period of the production of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, it would have been easier to appeal to Indonesian commercial film markets by reproducing the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ayat-ayat Cinta* broke the ticket sales record at that time with around 3.5 million tickets being sold during its theatrical release (Film Indonesia 2013). Previously impressed by the movie *Ayat-ayat*, Din Syamsuddin, chairperson of Muhammadiyah, one of the major Muslim organisations in Indonesia, strongly encouraged more productions of *film Islami* (Irwansyah 2012).

Islamic romance formula exemplified in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*. At that time, the publication of Islamic romance novels was burgeoning. They offered a fresh narrative approach to the generally secular romantic stories (Rani 2012; Widodo 2008). The novel's formula was successfully translated in the adaptation of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* into a film which earned stellar commercial success with more than 3.5 million tickets sold during its theatrical release. The film eventually generated a generic formula for box-office success—*film Islami*—a melodramatic narrative combined with practical guides for living the Islamic way. Indeed, many later films under the category of *film Islami* which adopted this formula also gained relatively good sales. Such was evident in the release of the duology *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* the year following *Ayat-ayat Cinta*. The duology collectively attracted more than 3.5 million moviegoers (Film Indonesia 2013). An Indonesian film critic, Ekky Imanjaya, observes that copying the previously successful generic formula has long been a common strategy in Indonesian cinema to ensure the commercial success of a film (2006: 35–38). When a film is successful, more films of the same theme and genre will be produced.

Yet, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* did not take such easy route. Instead of choosing a romantic drama, the producer and the principal filmmakers agreed to adapt a highly political novel. As I mentioned earlier, the novel itself had earned rave reviews before the film adaptation was even conceived of in 2008. Like the novel, the adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* has become known as one of the few most powerful films that criticise the deeply rooted patriarchal traditions in Islamic communities in Indonesia. Indeed, adapting *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* into a movie at that time was a daring political move in Indonesian commercial cinema. As indicated by Faozan Rizal, the director of photography of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*:

We at that time agreed to fight through *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* because it was like all of a sudden after *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, an offer to make such a challenging film came



from a producer who dared to do it for commercial cinema (Personal interview, 22 May 2014).

Moreover, offering an alternative interpretation of Islamic texts to justify alternative gender ideals of femininity and masculinity, amidst the intensifying Islamisation could have risked triggering controversy. It has never been easy to promote alternative interpretations of religious texts to support gender equality. A movement led by progressive Muslim feminist, Musdah Mulia, to revisit and amend the compilation of Islamic-based law in Indonesia partly to ensure gender equality has been constantly challenged by conservative Muslims. Alternative exegeses have been accused of being against Islam (Abdala 2003). Several legislative struggles to formally institutionalise gender equality have been suspended because of protests led by conservative groups, despite progress in other areas.

The gender politics that the filmmakers of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* wished to present provided visual representations of the abuses of religion in the maintenance of unequal gender relations, including those of power. Such efforts also risked protests from conservative Islamists. During the theatrical release of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, Bramantyo hinted that he was excited about the prospect of making more *film Islami*, especially those that contained a critical element.

I am excited by the idea of making more Islamic movies. I plan to release two more this year ... *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is based on a novel by Abidah El Khaliqey, who according to reviews of the book, explores the concept of Islamic feminism ... It will be different from *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, which is clean and without controversy. *Perempuan* is more advanced; it will be more critical (Bramantyo in an interview with Evi Mariani 2008).

In other words, the filmmakers were aware of the potential controversies the film adaptation would stir up, but they continued to take their chance amidst the intensifying Islamisation of Indonesia. Certainly, controversy is not always bad for marketing.

Manoj Punjabi, producer of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, categorises controversy as negative and positive; referring to productive and counterproductive controversies respectively (Personal interview, 2 May 2014). Yet, relying on controversy to boost sales is at best a gamble. Based on my interviews with several producers, they are indeed not totally against controversy. Yet, they would rather choose not to stir up sensitive issues such as these that challenge Islam in the period of a heightened Islamisation of Indonesia. Picking controversy that sits at the intersection of gender and religion is always risky. A purely commercially driven film would be much less likely to take such an approach.

The filmmakers' experience motivated them to embark on producing a counter representation of ideal masculinity which is not superior to women in the gender relations of power and which recognises women's autonomy and agency. As I mentioned earlier, the principal filmmakers behind *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* were almost the same people behind the production of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*. Most of the filmmakers, including Hanung Bramantyo (director), Gina S. Noer (script writer) and Faozan Rizal (director of photography) held the same roles in the *Ayat-ayat Cinta* production.<sup>12</sup> Through *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, they intended to offer an alternative ideal masculinity, the Muslim 'new man', in which the man is not as 'superior' as the version they offered in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, especially in terms of his power relations with his wife and other women around him. In separate interviews with me, the director and the scriptwriters indicated that they were not enamoured by depictions of gender ideals and gender relations in the novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* despite their own involvement in the film's production.

Salman Aristo, Gina S. Noer, and I did not have much room to rework the narrative about women in the film (*Ayat-ayat Cinta*). Now look at the novel. The character of

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<sup>12</sup> They were hired by MD Entertainment, led by Manoj Punjabi, for the movie *Ayat-ayat*. They worked with a competitor film company Kharisma Starvision, led by an Indonesian Muslim producer of Pakistani descent, Chand Parwez Servia for *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*.

Maria is wedded to Fahri when she is in coma, and then soon Maria is dead. To me, that is a cruel treatment of a character ... where are women's rights? (Personal interview with Bramantyo, 21 April 2014).<sup>13</sup>

Bramantyo's statement implies his dissatisfaction in working on *Ayat-ayat Cinta* as he had only a very narrow space in which to innovate and present alternative representations of women and men. The ideal Muslim man, Fahri, in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* is represented as having patriarchal privileges by virtue of his masculine gender, including a licence to wed a woman who is badly ill and unable to voice her consent. It is against this representation of the superior Muslim man that the Muslim 'new man' of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is produced as a counter representation that recognises and respects women's agency and autonomy in the gender relations of power. The Muslim 'new man' ideal character of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* not only supports women in their pursuit of career and education in the public sphere, but also respects women's agency and autonomy in the domestic sphere (see previous section).

The controversy accompanying *Ayat-ayat Cinta* bolstered the filmmakers' motivation to embark on a project that produced a counter narrative about Islam and gender ideals. Although the controversy revolved around *Ayat-ayat Cinta*'s depiction of polygamy, it can be gleaned that opposition to the film was concerned with the portrayal of the gender relations of power. Those who opposed the film questioned the rights and position of women in (polygamous) marriages (Hatley 2009; Yumiyanti 2008). Responding to such criticism, Bramantyo has constantly reiterated that the making of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* was a healing experience after his involvement in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*.

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<sup>13</sup> In *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, both the film and the novel, the male protagonist weds the second wife when she is in a coma. Although the woman is previously shown to have had an interest in him, her consent to a polygamous marriage with him is completely circumvented.

Making *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is about paying my dues to women for making *Ayat-ayat Cinta* ... I practically could do nothing in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* ... I could not give women a voice ... Thus, the film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is a healing for me.

Frankly, the success of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* did bother me—seeing people queuing for tickets and they, including my own mother, cried over the film (Personal interview, 21 April 2014).

Apparently, Bramantyo and his colleagues found the commercial success of the movie *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and its evolution into a visual lifestyle guide for the creation of good Muslim men and women disconcerting. Bramantyo and his filmmaker colleagues themselves were not fully convinced by the idealised masculinity and femininity in the film and novel versions of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*.

In addition, the pre-production process of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* strengthened the filmmakers' intentions to stage their political views regarding gender and religion in the film. They were concerned that their views regarding unequal gender relations between men and women were hardly ever explored on cinema screens. Indeed, unequal gender relations were often justified by using literal interpretations of Islamic texts. Gina S. Noer in an interview with me implied that she was very keen to take part in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* because of the many unheard voices of Muslim women who are confined by cultural traditions under the guise of religious texts.

During my research prior to writing the script for this film, I met and talked with the novelist, and she told me about her source of inspiration in structuring the novel's narrative. But as an intellectual, I could not simply believe in her. Then, in one of the discussion forums where I served as a speaker, I met a Muslim woman who confided in me about her personal life in *pesantren*, which I think is comparable to that of Annisa [the female protagonist of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*]... there are indeed many Muslim women who are deprived of freedom by cultural traditions, not religion (Personal interview with Noer, 11 April 2014).

The filmmakers were even more motivated to offer a counter narrative and counter representations of gender ideals when they encountered more stories in which Islam was used to justify discrimination and oppression of women. In fact, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* was the first *film Islami* to critically explore this issue in Indonesian cinema..

Why was challenging the gender relations of power a crucial battle for Indonesian progressive filmmakers during 2000–2014? The answer lies in the situatedness of the struggle in the broader gender politics associated with the securing of hegemonic masculinity. During 2000–2014, Indonesians were witnesses to significant changes in the gender relations of power. During this period, women secured key posts in governments and politics, especially in positions unthinkable during the New Order. They rose to positions of power as the President, cabinet ministers heading departments other than those specially crafted for women, leaders in parliament and of political parties. Gender equality was also strongly advocated for in the state's policies and programs at any level, such as the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in national development.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the enforcement of *Law 23/2004* provided women with legal protection against domestic violence. Despite the many drawbacks and a persistent cultural belief which prevents victims from reporting their cases (Aisyah and Parker 2014), the law has criminalised a form of violence which was previously considered normal. It was viewed as a religiously justified means for men to discipline women. Certainly, these changes gradually diminished men's normalised authority in public and domestic spheres.

Apparently, such conditions were responded to by many pressure groups, especially conservative Muslims, who more intensively invoked the dominant gender-biased interpretation of Islamic texts. In the most-cited literal interpretation of Islamic

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<sup>14</sup> The President issued Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development. It instructs all government institutions at central and regional levels to implement gender mainstreaming into planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their development policies and programmes (Moffatt et al. 2013: 15).

text, Qur'an Surah 4 (An-Nisaa, literally translated in English, Women), verse 34, men are regarded as patron leaders for women. The official translation endorsed by the Department of Religious Affairs under the New Order translated the verse as follows:

Men are leaders for women, because Allah has given the one (men) more than other (women), and because they (men) provide a living. Therefore, pious women are devoutly obedient to Allah and guard themselves in the absence of their husbands like Allah has protected them. As for those women whom you fear to be disloyal, admonish them and refuse to share their beds and beat them. But if they obey you, do not annoy them. For Allah is the Most High, great (above you all). (My translation of the Indonesian translation of the verse. Department of Religious Affairs of Republic of Indonesia, 1996).<sup>15</sup>

This official literal interpretation has become hegemonic since the New Order and it has contributed to maintaining the official patterning of the gender relations of power, and thereby sustaining the hegemony of *bapakism*. Under the New Order, the literal interpretation of this verse supported the state's gender politics to depoliticise women, relegating them to the domestic sphere, and subjecting them to the authority of their male patron leaders in the public and domestic spheres. In post-authoritarian Indonesia, this literal interpretation was deployed by conservative Islamists to question the legitimacy of women's leadership at the level of the state in 1999, and ideas of gender equality in general. The rise of Megawati Soekarnoputri into top-level state power triggered a heated public debate on whether a woman was religiously justified to

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<sup>15</sup> *Laki-laki adalah pemimpin bagi wanita, oleh karena Allah telah melebihkan sebagian mereka (laki-laki) atas sebagian yang lain (wanita), dan karena mereka (laki-laki) telah menafkahkan sebagian dari harta mereka. Sebab itu maka wanita yang shalihah ialah yang taat kepada Allah lagi memelihara diri mereka dibalik pembelakangan suaminya, oleh karena Allah telah memelihara (mereka). Wanita-wanita yang kalian khawatiri nusyuznya, maka nasihatilah mereka dan pisahkanlah diri dari tempat tidur mereka dan pukullah mereka. Kemudian jika mereka mentaati kalian, maka janganlah kalian mencari-cari jalan untuk menyusahkannya. Sesungguhnya Allah Maha Tinggi lagi Maha Besar* (Department of Religious Affairs of Republic of Indonesia, 1996).

lead a nation (see Chapter 2). The debate ceased within a couple of years and more and more women have risen to high-level public posts.

As holding key posts in the public sphere has become culturally acceptable and normalised for women in twenty-first-century Indonesia, the above Qur'anic verse has been more intensively deployed by many religious leaders to save the last bastion of the male patron leadership norm—the domestic sphere. The literal interpretation of the verse continues to formalise men's position as patron leaders of the household, under whose authority wives, children and other junior members of the family are subject. According to Musdah Mulia (2014: 10), such literal readings of the religious texts authorise women's subordination to their husbands, in turn making men the religiously justified key decision makers in the family. The defence of men's authority in the domestic sphere was vital for the sustainability of *bapakism* as the hegemonic masculine ideal. *Bapakism*, which valorises paternalistic power relations between men and women, will gradually disappear as liberal-minded people seek to realise more equal power relations. Furthermore, such a change will require the undoing of various forms of cultural practice, which have become part of the 'common sense' that has sustained hegemony. For instance, it will lead to the need to formally acknowledge women as heads of households, despite the presence of men.

Consequently, the formal and institutional struggles to defend men's authority in the domestic sphere have become more visible, even though they have never gone unchallenged. For instance, several local governments, enabled by the regional autonomy law (*Law No. 22/1999*), established night curfews for women; women are not allowed to travel on their own at night, unless accompanied by their male patrons. Implied in such a regulation, deemed to be based on Islamic sharia law, is the formal reinstatement of the male patron leadership norm by making men authoritative individuals, by virtue of their gender, who can determine women's spatial movement

and without whose consent and protection women cannot exercise their agency to travel at any particular time. Although such a formal way to restore male patron leadership norm has never gone uncontested (Noerdin 2002; K. Robinson 2009; White and Anshor 2008), it implies that the formal and institutionalised struggles to restore the male patron leadership norm, thus also restores the hegemony of paternalistic *bapakism* masculinity.

Street politics to preserve the male patron leadership norm in the domestic sphere has also been intensified. In a much later development, opposition against the drafting of Gender Equality and Equity Bill has often referred to male patron leadership in the domestic sphere as ‘natural’ and religiously endorsed. Conservative Islamists tend to perceive the struggle to subvert this established patterning of the gender relations of power, as well as feminism and gender equality, as a threat to Islam. Dhinar Dewi Kania (2014), a prominent figure in the now defunct conservative Islamist organisation Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, states in her opinion piece published in the national press, that the bill and the ideal of gender equality are against Islam and threaten the fabric of Indonesian society. In her argument, men are divinely sanctioned as ‘*imam*’, leaders (Kania 2014). Thus, she called for the termination of the legislative process of the bill. In 2012, similar arguments were also advocated by various groups of conservative Muslims protesting in front of Indonesia’s legislative offices—both national and regional—to oppose the legislation of the bill. A branch organisation of Forum Umat Islam (Muslims Forum, FUI) in Jombang, East Java, through its representative, claimed that the bill was against Islam. In an article in *Surabaya Pagi*, entitled ‘FUI demo tolak RUU Gender’ (FUI mobilised protest against the Gender Equality and Equity Bill), he argued that it would put pressure on women to be involved in the public sphere, which in his opinion demeaned women’s roles as mothers, who already are important to the education of their children at home (9 June 2012).



Furthermore, the religious justification of male patron leadership in the domestic sphere has also strongly been advocated by women, especially in popular culture. For example, regardless of whether or not they get questions from journalists, Indonesian female celebrities often mention whether they will continue to pursue their careers after they get married. The most common answer is that with the husbands' permission, they will continue to do so in the future. The reverse hardly ever happens: men have never been questioned about whether they would continue to pursue their careers after marriage. Shireen Sungkar, who gained popularity through her acting role in an award-winning television soap *Cinta Fitri* (*Fitri's Love*, 2007–2010, SCTV), and who married her co-star Teuku Wisnu in 2013, said that her husband allowed her to continue pursuing her acting career provided that: 'Most importantly, I have to know my limit. Now I have kids and a husband, and I should not compromise my priority: family' (Shireen Sungkar cited in Rochani 2015). Indeed, it has become culturally acceptable for women to pursue their careers in the public sphere, and it should not be an issue in a marital relationship. Yet, it is also explicitly stated that their husbands' blessings are imperative and women's roles as wives and mothers should be their priority.

More broadly, Sungkar's statement indicates that there is pressure for men to relinquish their patron leadership in the public sphere, but they should rest assured that their authority is preserved in the domestic space. Aafke Komter (1989) argues that major drawbacks to gender equality, in the relative absence of patriarchal laws and legally permitted gender discrimination, usually spring from norms about gender identity, concepts of masculinity and femininity, as well as tacit rules of interaction between men and women. In this case, as men's institutional and formal power has decreased substantially in Indonesia, the struggle to sustain the male patron leadership norm has sprung from the hegemonic norms surrounding an ideal femininity. These norms involve submission to male patron leaders, especially in the domestic sphere.

Thus, men's authority in the private sphere has largely been unchallenged, which makes the representation of an alternative masculine ideal in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* even more significant.

It is interesting that the struggle to maintain the male patron leadership norm is not only fought for by men, as the major interest group, but also by women. I have already mentioned a few influential women who consciously or unconsciously declare their support of the norm, and in turn also of the hegemony of the cultural ideal of masculinity which valorises this norm. Such is inherent in the nature of hegemony—including in gender—that a certain hegemonic notion shall gain support from groups which largely benefit from them and groups which are subjected to them (Gramsci 2000). Women do not see their subordinate status as demeaning. Moreover, they see that men's interest in defending the male patron leadership norm and the hegemony of *bapakism* is also in their own interest. This seeming contradiction is because the gendered interest is presented as a neutral religious issue, rather than a gender issue. Furthermore, R.W. Connell's claim about the emergence of an 'emphasised femininity', which features a configuration of gender practices, personalities and culture fittingly supportive of the hegemonic masculinity is strengthened (1987: 183). Women are likely to take as so much pride in adopting this cultural ideal of femininity that they barely see the unequal social relations, including those of power, produced and reproduced within the official structure of gender relations.

Situating the filmmakers' struggle to subvert the hegemonic norm of men's authoritative patron leadership both in the public and domestic spheres in Indonesia, such as shown in Bramantyo and his colleagues' endeavour through *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, was significant in the broader struggle to transform the structure of the gender relations of power. The struggle was waged against the inevitable decline of men's authoritative patron leadership in the public sphere and the intensifying support

for men's authority in the domestic sphere. Moreover, considering the intensive use of gender-biased Islamic injunctions to restore men's authoritative patron leadership, the filmmakers' offered visual alternatives of ideal masculinities projected to be equally pious but more compatible with the changing landscape of gender relations. The Muslim 'new man' in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* was a counter representation of masculinities which licensed men to be dominant in both public and domestic spheres on- and off-screen.

This section has demonstrated that in undermining the existing hegemonic masculinity around gender relations of power, politically progressive Indonesian commercial filmmakers have had to negotiate their political intentions with both the normalised unequal gender relations of power and the intensive invocation of Islamic religious texts. In *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, the filmmakers had to challenge the representations of ideal masculinity that they themselves had produced in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*. This section has helped us understand that the filmmakers' struggle in this respect matters in the context of their contemporary gender politics, in which the inevitable decline of men's authority in the public sphere is often responded to, by supporters of the patriarchal gender order, with a strong reinforcement of men's authority in the domestic sphere. The alternative ideal that the filmmakers of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* introduced was then significant in unpacking the normalised and religiously justified unequal gender relations of power at the domestic level.

### **An alternative ideal Muslim masculinity at the expense of lower-class Muslim men**

This section examines the middle-class biases of the filmmakers' struggle to undermine the hegemony of *bapakism* through the movie, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. Indeed, they advocated for an alternative ideal Muslim masculinity which subverted the

hegemony of *bapakism* by problematising normalised men's authoritative patron leadership in both public and domestic spheres. Yet, as this section unfolds, the representation was distorted by a middle-class bias. The model of Muslim masculinity was cast in the figure of an urban educated middle-class Muslim man. He experienced religious enlightenment during his journey abroad, particularly to Egypt, for further study. On the contrary, Muslim men whose masculinities allow them to be conservative, authoritative, violent and discriminative against women are cast in male characters—characters who have been educated in rural and traditionalist religious education institutions. Consequently, taking into account the immediate consumers of Indonesian commercial cinema, the filmmakers, regardless their intentions, offer a reassurance to Indonesian Muslim middle-class viewers that unequal gender relations of power are problems endemic in lower-class Muslim communities, rather than systemic in all conservative Muslim communities, transcending class boundaries.

In *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, the idealisation of Khudori's 'new man' masculinity relies heavily on his middle-classness. First of all, Khudori's characterisation as the representation of an alternative ideal masculinity rests heavily on the higher education he received in Cairo and Yogyakarta, instead of the rural traditionalist *pesantren*, like the one led by Annisa's father. Khudori leaves the rural *pesantren* for further study at Al-Azhar, Cairo. Al-Azhar itself is renowned among Islamic communities, including in Indonesia, for offering a reformist approach to education in Islamic studies (Jackson and Bahrissalim 2007: 43).<sup>16</sup> By highlighting the ideal Muslim man's educational background as an Al-Azhar graduate, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* attempts to reinforce the reformist element and distance Khudori's masculinity from traditionalist Islam. Moreover, upon his return to Indonesia, Khudori

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<sup>16</sup> According to Greg Barton (2002: 83), it was in fact through graduates of Al-Azhar that Islamic modernism was introduced to Indonesia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to date, many of Indonesia's stellar Islamic intellectuals were educated at Al-Azhar, instead of universities in Saudi Arabia or other Middle-East countries.

chooses to be based in Yogyakarta, where he pursues his doctoral degree. According to an article in *Bernas* entitled ‘Yogyakarta disebut kota pelajar? Apa alasannya?’ (Yogyakarta is called the students city? Why?), Yogyakarta, is an urban area in Indonesia renowned as *Kota Pelajar*, a student city and home to many universities which attract a substantial number of students from all over the country (23 January 2018). Khudori’s disassociation from *pesantren* education and his membership of the urban-based Muslim reformist class, distance him from the rural *pesantren* graduates who are depicted in the film as mostly conservative and gender biased. Khudori is a man who is enlightened about the social construction of gender and the abuses of using Islamic religious texts to justify the unequal gender relations, including those of power. Annisa finds her relationship with Khudori is liberating, unlike her previous experience with her first husband and also with her father. With Khudori she can make decisions regarding her education and career, and her opinions as a wife are highly valued.

As I indicated earlier, the idealisation of Khudori’s masculinity is contrasted to that of Annisa’s father and first husband, who are products of a rural *pesantren*. Annisa’s father is the representation of an authoritative husband and father who holds ultimate power in his relationship with his wife and children. He decides whether Annisa can continue her study in Yogyakarta or not; he also decides with whom, and when, Annisa must be married. His authority also makes his wife submissive—she never challenges him although she might disagree with him in several issues. Annisa cannot argue against her father, who tends to become emotional when his judgement and decisions are contested. Moreover, Annisa’s first husband, Samsudin is also the product of a rural traditionalist *pesantren*. He is the son of a notable *kyai*, a senior to Annisa’s father. He holds firmly to the gender-biased interpretation of Islamic texts because it provides him with patriarchal benefits. His literal reading of the texts allows him to maintain control over his gender relations with Annisa, forcing her to be

submissive and docile. The same texts afford him licence to physically and psychologically abuse her for his own sake.

The class dimension of this contrast between the idealised Khudori who adopts the alternative ideal masculinity—the Muslim ‘new man’—and the *pesantren* graduates Samsudin and Kyai Hannan, is clearly visible. Khudori’s profile fits that of the typical modernist Muslim who, as suggested by Mun’im Sirry (2010: 66), are better educated, middle-class and urban-based. Greg Barton (2002: 37) and Ronald Lukens-Bull (2005: 18) agree that generally *pesantren* have their roots in rural settings and many of their students are from lower socio-economic levels. Certainly, there are few *pesantren* which attract middle- and upper-class students which are located in urban areas (Lukens-Bull 2005: 18; Nilan 2009b: 221).<sup>17</sup> The filmmakers reinforced these stereotypical images of *pesantren* and their graduates in the film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. Kyai Hannan and Samsudin who are discriminative and tend to be violent are the representations of this traditionalist religious education. Although they are depicted as economically better off than regular *pesantren* students and graduates, they do not hold university degrees, let alone an education from a reformist Islamic education institution abroad. Higher education, as I indicated earlier, is cinematically represented as vital in making a man aware of the gender biases in the interpretations of Islamic texts, which lead to discrimination and violence against women. In other words, the idealisation of Khudori and his Muslim ‘new man’ masculinity, forged by the filmmakers, relies heavily on the othering of less-educated, lower-class Muslim men. In the film, other violent Muslim men whose wives are

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<sup>17</sup> According to Nilan (2009: 221), since the late 1990s, the constituency of Islamic education institutions, including *pesantren*, has broadened from teaching the children of conservative Muslim families, often rural and poor, to the children of middle-class and religiously moderate families, who believe that their children need to learn strong religious values to protect them from the negative excesses of the modern secular (westernised) world. Yet, this expansion of constituency does not necessarily erase the deeply rooted stereotype of *pesantren* as lower class and rural.

counselled by Annisa at her workplace are further negative representations of the urban poor.

The film also deepens the rift between *pesantren* (stereotypically lower-class) and modernist Islamic education institutions (stereotypically middle- and upper-class), by representing the latter as the solution to the gender problem, and the former as the cause of rampant discrimination and violence against women. As I mentioned previously, the teaching of Islamic texts in *pesantren* is singularly depicted as sustaining men's authoritative patron leadership in public and domestic spheres. It is the gender-biased teaching of Islamic classical texts which is represented as underlying Kyai Hannan's restrictive and discriminative treatment, as well as Samsudin's abuses, towards Annisa. Furthermore, the film also reinforces the stereotype that the *kyai*, leader of the *pesantren*, is resistant to change. Off-screen, this stereotype is common. In the context of gender reform in Indonesian educational institutions, for example, *pesantren*'s curriculum and their charismatic leaders are often regarded as responding very slowly to modernisation and change (Srimulyani 2007: 93–94). The opposite applies to Annisa's relationship with Khudori, who is educated in modern religious institutions. His 'new man' masculinity is contrasted with men who are graduates of *pesantren*. Yet, as I argued earlier, this Muslim strand of the 'new man' reflects middle-class Muslim aspirations, such as pursuing higher education in modern institutions either domestically or abroad, having modern occupations, as well as living in urban settings. On the contrary, the *pesantren*, which generally constitutes an important element of Islamic education in Indonesia, is represented as being the cause of most of the life problems experienced by Muslim women like Annisa. It is also the site of the reproduction of patriarchal hegemonic masculinity.

Consequently, it is understandable that the monolithic representation of the *pesantren* and its charismatic leaders as anti-modern, especially in terms of gender

issues, sparked a heated public debate calling for a banning of the film. Muslims who identify themselves with *pesantren* education but consider themselves to be progressive in terms of gender were outraged by the film. A notable Muslim poet, Taufiq Ismail, condemned the film as a disgrace to Islam and *kyai*, traditional male Muslim religious leaders (KabarNet 2010). In addition, Ali Mustafa Yakub, the then Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta, and the then Deputy Leader of the Fatwa Commission of Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI), demanded the film be revised for depicting Islam and *kyai*, as ultra-conservative, especially concerning gender. Drawing from *hadiths*, Ali, in an article entitled *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban menuai kontroversi* (*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* stirred controversy), states that Islam encourages women to pursue education and competitive sport, such as horse riding (Liputan 6, 27 March 2009). This demand for a revision of the film was also supported by Tifatul Sembiring, the then president of the Justice Welfare Party, a conservative Islamist political party (Dewi 2009).

However, the film earned support from (Muslim) feminists and critics because it bravely shows the extremely bitter reality of unequal gender relations, including those of power, within Indonesian Muslim communities. Amidst the intensifying demand for a boycott against *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, Musdah Mulia encouraged support for the film as it unveiled a certain social reality, albeit bitter, in which Islam had been abused to justify discrimination against women and superiority of men.

I can claim that the film (*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*) exposes a reality. In fact, we as Muslims should be aware that our religion has been abused by some people to justify oppression of women, which is an obsolete practice. That is a fact, which may not represent the whole complex reality. So, the film should not be boycotted (Mulia, cited in Yunita 2009).

*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* also earned accolades from film critics and observers. Windu Jusuf, a notable Indonesian film critic and editor of one of the key



film criticism websites in Indonesia, *Cinemapoetica*, offers a commendation on the film. He emphasises that the film was daring in problematising the normalised gender inequalities and gender-based violence, often justified by gender-biased interpretations of religious texts, unlike contemporary Islamised melodrama (Jusuf 2013).

The idealisation of the Muslim ‘new man’ as part of the solution to unequal power relations escaped opposition to the film. At a glance, it is easy to accuse the film of representing Islam as very conservative and restrictive of women. However, I agree with Ekky Imanjaya (2009) that the misrepresentation is caused by the monolithic negative representation of traditional religious authority. *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*’s narrative is dominated by challenges staged by Annisa against the established authority of Islamic knowledge, a number of *kyai* and other men and women who share the ultraconservative gender perspective. In fact, not a single *kyai* is represented as opposing the gender-biased treatment of women. In a country, where *kyai* still hold very important roles in people’s religious life, the monolithic negative representations of these religious authority figures soon stirred controversy. The alternative solution offered in the film was hardly noticed.

The idealisation of Khudori’s Muslim ‘new man’ masculinity in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is strengthened by the validation offered by Khudori’s network of urban-based, highly-educated middle classes. An important part of Khudori’s middle-class network is his feminist activist friends who provide support for women victims of domestic violence. The film represents this network as comprising highly educated and mostly secular women feminist activists who deal with women victims of domestic violence. Being surrounded by colleagues who are enlightened about gender equality and the gender dimension of domestic violence, Khudori becomes aware of Annisa’s struggle to overcome the trauma caused by her toxic relationship with her first husband. His network of feminist activists provides Khudori with knowledge and skills that help

him navigate his marital relationship with the traumatised Annisa, herself a victim of domestic abuse. Unlike the people from the *pesantren*, the network of feminist activists around Khudori pushes for men to foster equal gender relations, including those of power with the female members of their family, including their wives. Consequently, by showing that Khudori is surrounded by feminist activists, the film implies that his masculinity has earned approval from a feminist point of view, while the masculinity of conservative Muslim men in *pesantren* is criticised.

In contrast to the feminist network, *pesantren* represents a network of conservative patriarchal Muslim men and women. They turn a blind eye to the normalised gender discrimination and violence experienced by Muslim women, like Annisa. For example, Annisa's teachers, men and women, sustain men's absolute authority over women through their teaching of Islamic classical texts. Samsudin's mother reprimands Annisa for seeking a divorce from her husband after finding out that he has had a child with another woman; she accuses Annisa of being an incapable wife that makes Samsudin seek happiness with another woman. Samsudin's mother's view on a woman seeking divorce provides evidence about how Muslim women in the circle of *pesantren* are depicted as internalising their subordination to men. Once again, the juxtaposition between stereotypically lower-class *pesantren* Muslim men and middle-class highly educated Muslim men accentuates the idealisation of Khudori's Muslim 'new man' as an alternative ideal.

The validation of Khudori's Muslim 'new man' by his network of feminist activists also others urban poor men. The feminist activists are representations of urban-based not-for-profit organisation workers who support women who are victims of violence, mainly by their intimate partners. In spite of the filmmakers' intentions, the film highlights cases in which the perpetrators are urban poor men. Annisa, who also works for the organisation as a counsellor is, for example, shown providing counselling

to a housewife who was beaten by her husband but is financially too powerless to leave him. Such a scene eventually serves as a contrast to the idealised Muslim ‘new man’ masculinity adopted by Khudori. In fact, it is after this scene, that the film shows Khudori pampering Annisa by making her breakfast and taking her for a short holiday. While the urban poor man gets a divorce, Khudori gains Annisa’s trust and affection. Considering that urban poor men’s masculinity is singularly depicted in such violent character who does not deserve a family, the film clearly leads the audience to gravitate towards the masculinity displayed by the urban-based educated middle-class Khudori.

To whom do the urban-educated, middle-class filmmakers communicate this cinematic representation of an alternative ideal masculinity? The immediate consumers are urban-based middle-class Indonesians. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the shifting cinema culture in Indonesia since the 1980s has made cinema going a middle-class lifestyle. Cinema theatres are mostly located in shopping centres in urban areas in Indonesia. Consequently, films aimed at the commercial film market must be able to appeal to urban-based middle-class segment of the Indonesian film audience. A further implication regarding cinema-going as part of the middle-class lifestyle is, as argued by James Hoesterey and Marshal Clark (2012), that *film Islami* tend to be informed by contemporary concerns, frustration, desire and aspirations of contemporary Indonesian middle-class Muslims. *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* thus can be seen as a vehicle through which the filmmakers can communicate their political concerns, frustrations, and aspirations regarding contemporary Islamic gender ideals, including masculinity, to a middle-class audience, presumably mostly Muslims. Consequently, the alternative, ‘legitimate’ ideal Muslim ‘new man’, is targeted at this segment of the audience. The narrative, in which the alternative ideal operates, tends to offer reassurance to middle-class Muslims that gender-based discrimination and violence within conservative Muslim communities are likely to be problems of the lower classes. Therefore, middle-

class Muslims who are more highly educated and socially as well as politically aware, are responsible for correcting the problem.

In other words, the film, regardless of the filmmakers' intentions, has reduced the issues of gender-based discrimination and violence, springing from unequal gender relations of power, to a problem of class, while realities show that these issues are systemic and transcend class boundaries. Indeed, the filmmakers have made a breakthrough in visually exposing gender-based discrimination and violence within conservative Muslim communities in Indonesia. Yet, associating the causes with problems linked to lower-class men and their masculinities and the solution with middle-class men and their 'new man' masculinity obscures the social realities that are inherent in the unequal gender relations of power. This association is responsible partly for the sustenance of *bapakism* and the normalising of gender-based discrimination and violence against women both in the public and domestic spheres. It is systemic as the gender-biased interpretations of Islamic texts dominate the ways of life of the majority of Indonesian Muslims, regardless of their social class. In a research conducted by Lily Munir (2005), the majority of Muslim men in her study tended to defend their dominant position in relation to women, especially their wives, by drawing on interpretations of Islamic texts which afford them privileges over women, despite these readings running counter to Islam's basic principles of justice and equality. The fact that unequal gender relations of power and their grave repercussions on women, particularly in the form of gender-based violence, is also strengthened by the statement made by the Chairperson of the Monitoring Sub-commission of the National Commission on Elimination of Violence Against Women, Indraswari:

When we talk about violence (against women), it is an issue that transcends economical, social and cultural boundaries. It does not mean that the higher the education background, or the socio-economic status, the less likely violence will take place (cited in Putra 2017).

In fact, a recent survey conducted by the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics (BPS) shows that educated, urban Indonesian women are at higher risk of violence. As reported by Max Walden (2017), the survey finds that women living in urban areas and with relatively high educational attainments had experienced violence in the hands of their husbands. Thus, while the filmmakers have visually problematised the normalised unequal gender relations of power in conservative Muslim communities, their political move was riddled with middle-class biases.

This section has highlighted the class biases overshadowing the filmmakers' struggles in undermining the hegemony of *bapakism* around the gender relations of power. The idealisation of the Muslim 'new man', which the filmmakers promoted to replace the *bapakism* hegemonic ideal, heavily rested on middle-class frustrations and aspirations, while othering the lower-classes. I have elaborated on how the film's narrative idealises the urban-based, highly educated middle-class Muslim man as the representation of ideal Muslim masculinity at the expense of the rural-based, less-educated Muslim man. This strategy ultimately obscures the social reality that unequal gender relations of power—which tend to lead to discrimination and violence against women in public and domestic spheres—are systemic issues surpassing class boundaries.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, I would like to offer a summary of my key points and establish linkages to the central argument of this thesis. In this chapter I have discussed Indonesian filmmakers' struggles in undermining hegemonic *bapakism* around the gender relations of power in commercial cinema. As I maintained throughout this chapter, new hope had blossomed—commercial filmmakers took part in the resistance against the consistent idealisation of *bapakism* on- and off-screen. And amidst the heightened Islamisation in twenty-first-century Indonesia, the filmmakers offered a

religiously grounded alternative ideal, such as the Muslim ‘new man’ in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, which they promoted to replace the deeply rooted cultural ideal of *bapakism*. The alternative ideal subverted the normalised men’s authoritative patron leadership in the family. In producing such an alternative ideal amidst an intensified period of Islamisation, the filmmakers had to wrestle with the heightened use of gender-biased interpretations of Islamic religious texts deployed in defence of the norm. These conservative readings of Islamic texts are ultimately responsible for the sustenance of *bapakism* as the hegemonic ideal and more broadly of the patriarchal gender order. In such a way, the filmmakers’ struggle supported the movement pioneered by Muslim feminists, such as Musdah Mulia, who at that time were attempting to offer alternative interpretations of Islamic religious texts, which promote equal gender relations.

Yet, this chapter also shows that the filmmakers’ endeavours were distorted by middle-class biases. For one, the idealisation of the alternative ideal they promoted relied heavily on the middle-classness of the representation. The idealisation clearly positioned lower-class Muslim men, uneducated in reformist education institutions, in Indonesia and abroad, and rural-based, as the ‘other’. As seen in the film adaptation of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, to date one of the few progressive commercial *film Islami* in this regard, educational background and middle-class networks are vital in the making of an alternative ideal Muslim masculinity. They are crucial to the development of the character which the filmmakers used to represent an alternative ideal Muslim masculinity. His experience of being educated at a world’s leading reformist higher educational institution and his network of highly educated and socio-politically aware feminist activists shape his transformation into a Muslim ‘new man’, who fosters equal gender relations of power with his wife and other women. Such life experiences distinguish the ‘new man’ protagonist from his lower-class counterparts, who are rural based and have never experienced formal education in reformist religious educational

institutions. Unfortunately, as I reinforced at the end of the previous section, these class biases obscure the social reality that unequal gender relations of power are systemic and transcend class boundaries.

This chapter has reinforced the central argument of my thesis that new hope for gender equity had emerged, albeit marred by middle-class biases. As the previous chapter also shows, the progressive political movements waged by filmmakers in commercial cinema in Indonesia during 2000–2014 were worth highlighting. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that filmmakers struggled to undermine the hegemonic *bapakism* around gender relations of labour. As indicated in the central argument, the struggle was marred by class bias. In this chapter, I explored the filmmakers' struggles to undermine the 'ideal' gender relations of power. Taking into account the heightened Islamisation in Indonesia, this chapter scrutinised how the filmmakers negotiated their political intentions with the intensified use of Islamic injunctions in defending the hegemonic masculinity ideal, especially through the restoration of men's authoritative patron leadership in the domestic sphere. Yet, as with the filmmakers' struggle discussed in the previous chapter, it was also marred by class bias. This chapter reinforces my thesis's premises by showing filmmakers as political agents who actively engage with contemporary gender politics in their work in commercial cinema. The filmmakers behind *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* negotiated the pressure for commerce and gender politics to create avenues for innovation and experimentation with alternative ideal masculinities, to better equip Indonesian men to navigate through the changing landscape of gender relations of power in a twenty-first-century Indonesia that is typified by Islamisation and democratisation. Eventually, this chapter reinforces that representations of (alternative) ideal masculinities in commercial cinema are irreducible to either purely market demand or politics. Commercial cinema is simultaneously an arena of politics and economy. The images of ideal masculinities circulating in

commercial cinema are products of negotiations between two forces. In the next chapter, I discuss the filmmakers' struggle to undermine the hegemonic *bapakism* around the gender relations of emotion.



## Chapter 6

# Filmmakers' Reel Gay 'New Man' and the Gender Relations of Emotion

This chapter discusses the Indonesian filmmakers' struggle in undermining the hegemony of *bapakism* in terms of the gender relations of emotion. Partly, the structure of the gender relations of emotion deals with the production of heterosexuality and homosexuality and the relationship between them (R.W. Connell 1987: 97). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the structure of the gender relations of emotion supporting the Indonesian patriarchal gender order, strongly accentuates heteronormativity while subordinating and marginalising homosexuality. This structure paved the way for heteronormative *bapakism* to achieve hegemonic status. Yet, the hegemony has been substantially eroded due to the gender-order crisis. Attempts to challenge and sustain the hegemonic heteronormative ideal have been increasingly visible on various fronts. This chapter seeks to understand the tensions, negotiations and compromises behind the public gender politics mobilised by Indonesian filmmakers to challenge the most fundamental base of *bapakism's* hegemony—heteronormativity.

To do so, this chapter deploys Indonesian filmmakers' struggles to legitimise a gay strand of 'new man' masculinity, using *Arisan!* (2003, Nia Dinata) and *Arisan! 2* (2011, Nia Dinata) as my analytical lenses. *Arisan!* was the first Indonesian film to celebrate and promote a gay masculinity as an alternative ideal to *bapakism*. While other films before it, such as *Istana Kecantikan* (Beauty Palace, 1988, Wahyu Sihombing), as well as its contemporary *Kuldesak* (Cul-de-sac, 1998, Mira Lesmana, Nan T. Achnas, Riri Riza, Rizal Mantovani) do show empathy towards the plight of gay men, they do not extend their representations to promoting gay masculinities as legitimate alternative ideals. Thus, the *Arisan!* franchise is important as it subverts the hegemony of *bapakism* even further by suggesting the embrace and idealisation of a gay

masculinity, instead of merely recognising and pitying its subordination and marginalisation.

As I will show in more detail in the following section, the cinematic representation of the gay ‘new man’ is a critique of the hegemonic ideal. It criticises not only the gender relations of emotion, but also the gender relations of production and power that together (re)produce the idealised *bapakism*. The gay ‘new man’ protagonists in the franchise are juxtaposed with characters representing heterosexual men who are authoritative, self-centred, dishonest and irresponsible. One of the gay ‘new man’ characters, Sakti, is also the representation of a caring father figure to a child in a non-conventional family arrangement. Staging such subversive challenges on commercial cinema screens to the deeply rooted hegemonic *bapakism* (which prescribes compulsory heterosexuality amidst the heightened moral panic against non-heteronormative subjects) required careful strategies and aesthetics. This chapter investigates how the filmmakers engaged with contemporary gender politics and dealt with the political–economic pressures of commercial cinema. It also examines what the filmmakers’ struggles can inform us about the transformation of Indonesia’s gender order especially around the gender relations of emotion at this given time.

I propose two arguments in this chapter. First, I argue that aesthetic, narrative and distribution compromises were inevitable in order for filmmakers to be able to stage subversive representations of heteronormativity—the most fundamental hegemonic base of *bapakism*. On one hand, the compromises made by filmmakers indicate that it was possible to stage such strong subversive figures openly in the public sphere amidst the escalating moral panic. I shall demonstrate that filmmakers could work around state censorship and evade public censorship by depicting the gay masculinity ideal as a private matter. On the other hand, the compromises indicate growing anxiety about the increasing visibility and support of marginalised groups; compromises which

overshadowed the production and distribution of certain masculine ideals on screen at that time. Due to the threats of public and state censorship as well as rejection by distribution channels, the filmmakers were unable to extend their struggle to advocate for a formal recognition that would allow gay men to freely express their gender and sexuality. Filmmakers could not just ignore the growing moral panic; they had to negotiate and compromise in order to still be able to stage their resistance publicly, albeit in a limited way.

My second argument is that unfortunately, despite its progressive nature, the filmmakers' struggle is clearly cast in middle-class professional gay men. In legitimising the gay 'new man' as an alternative ideal in the *Arisan!* franchise, the filmmakers' risk being trapped within a class bias. To justify gay masculinity as a legitimate alternative ideal, the filmmakers rely on wealth, consumption and a middle-class lifestyle in order to show that gay masculinity matters. Such a strategy tends to overlook the efforts of lower-class gay men to express their belonging in Indonesian society. Lower-class gay men off-screen may not have equal access to resources to be able to freely express their gender and sexuality, especially during a time of heightened moral panic. The filmmakers did not extend their struggle to imagine that a legitimate gay alternative ideal of masculinity would be class inclusive.

This chapter is structured in the following way. The section which immediately follows this introduction examines the extent to which the *Arisan!* franchise subverts the *bapakism* hegemonic ideal. It also situates the films' narratives in the deeply rooted tradition of representations of ideal masculinities in Indonesian cinema. This section shows that *Arisan!*, and its sequel, did heighten the political struggle to support the recognition of non-heteronormative subjects. It does so by celebrating and offering the gay strand of the 'new man' as a legitimate alternative ideal masculinity. The following section on the behind-the-scene politics around the production and distribution of the

franchise shows that the intensifying moral panic towards non-heteronormative genders and sexualities during the period imposed significant constraints in the filmmakers' efforts. I will explain the aesthetics, narrative and distribution compromises made by the filmmakers in order to be able to stage their public gender politics without attracting too much negative attention, let alone controversy. I reinforce my argument that it is possible to stage subversive gender politics on screen, albeit to a limited extent. In the penultimate section, I discuss the class biases inherent in the filmmakers' struggle. Reinforcing my second argument, I show that the filmmakers cast their efforts exclusively in middle-class professional gay men. The filmmakers used notions of wealth, consumption and an affluent lifestyle to justify the idealisation of gay masculinity on screen. As they did so, they overlooked the everyday struggles of lower-class gay men who continue to be on the receiving end of discriminating treatment because of their non-heteronormative gender and sexuality and also their social class. The final part of this chapter offers a summary of my key points and establishes a linkage between these points and my thesis arguments.

### **The *Arisan!* franchise and the ideal gay 'new man'**

This section discusses the extent to which *Arisan!* and *Arisan! 2* subvert the hegemony of *bapakism* masculinity through their narrative devices, particularly plot and characters. It also explores the situatedness of such narrative devices in the tradition of cinematic representation of ideal masculinity in Indonesian cinema. I argue that the films have strategically escalated the struggle in undermining the hegemony of *bapakism* by offering a gay strand of 'new man' masculinity as an alternative ideal. In the film franchise, the 'new man' protagonists are presented as ideal partners and ideal fathers. However, especially for *Arisan!*, I second Ben Murtagh's argument (2012, 2013) that the idealisation runs the risk of creating a new 'homonormativity' by excluding certain effeminate homosexual men.

*Arisan!*, released in 2003, follows three close friends, Sakti, Meimei and Andien, who are part of an elite *arisan*, a rotating savings group. The film unpacks the secrets behind the lives of these upper–middle-class urbanites and their friends. Although the film aims to explore issues in the respective relationships of each protagonist, the exploration of Sakti’s masculinity and sexuality, and his coming-out arguably occupies most of the screen time. Other relationship issues tackled in this film include women’s infertility and marriage betrayal. The film concludes with each of the main characters finding a solution to their relationship issues. In particular, Sakti can finally come out to his mother and friends. In fact, the non-heterosexual relationship is represented as the only intimate relationship which works in this film.

The sequel, *Arisan! 2*, released in 2011, follows the same urban elite clique but with a different set of issues. The focus slightly shifts to Meimei’s battle with cancer. Meimei’s quest to accept her health condition and to live her life to the fullest becomes the primary plot driver and the uniting factor for the elite clique. The group has expanded to include Lita, Sakti’s cousin, a single parent, successful lawyer and aspiring politician. Sakti’s homosexual love affairs still receive substantial screen time. The film’s exploration of his masculinity and sexuality is more complex and shows heavier political baggage than in the previous film. It is in this sequel that Sakti’s ‘new man’ masculinity is presented as ideal by supporting his role as a father to his cousin’s son. Sakti’s masculinity is portrayed as a caring, involved, and emotionally sensitive father figure.

Indeed, *Arisan!* is not the first commercial film to depict gay masculinity in Indonesian cinema, but it is certainly the first commercial film which promotes it as an alternative ideal masculinity. In Indonesian cinema under the New Order (1966–1998), there were a few films that depicted gay masculinities. Yet, the depictions in these films were likely to perpetuate the marginalisation of masculinities which accommodate non-

heteronormative sexual relations, and thus reinforce the regime's official structure of the gender relations of emotion. Men adopting these marginalised masculinities were likely to be represented as psychologically deranged (*Tinggal Bersama*, Cohabitation, 1977, Bay Isbahi; and *Istana Kecantikan*, 1988, Wahyu Sihombing), a sexual predator (*Remaja Lampu Merah*, Teenagers of the Traffic Lights, 1979, Syamsul Fuad), or a sign of moral decadence (*Titian Serambut dibelah Tujuh*, A Hair Split into Seven Parts, 1982, Chaerul Umam).<sup>1</sup> The shared logic in these films is that eventually heterosexual order is restored and homosexual desire curbed (Murtagh 2011: 397). The recognition of *Istana Kecantikan* at the only national-level film festival in Indonesia, Festival Film Indonesia (FFI), in 1988 can be read as a further endorsement of the film's representation of gay masculinity as destructive and dangerous. *Arisan!* and its sequel definitely overturn these negative portrayals of gay masculinities by representing one as an alternative ideal.

Among films which were produced and released in post-New Order Indonesia, the *Arisan!* franchise is not the first film to offer a challenging portrayal of men adopting non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. Three years before the production of the first instalment of *Arisan!*, *Kuldesak* was released in film theatres throughout Indonesia. This omnibus of four films with loosely related plotlines also presented gay protagonists who were frustrated by their marginalisation in society due to their non-heteronormative gender and sexuality. *Kuldesak* is a critique of the rampant discrimination against and marginalisation of homosexual men in Indonesia. Initially intended for an independent cinema release, unpredicted changes in the political situation enabled *Kuldesak* to be screened in commercial cinema theatres throughout

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<sup>1</sup> The award-winning *Istana Kecantikan* was the first film under the New Order which specifically explored a gay man's subjectivity (Murtagh 2006). However, the film supports the dominant narrative of the marginalisation of homosexuality. Towards the appearance of the credit title at the end of *Istana Kecantikan*, there was a written warning inserted to remind viewers to avoid homosexuality. The film won critical acclaim at the 1988 FFI. It was nominated for Best Film, Best Director, Best Lead Actress and Best Original Script. The film took the trophy for Best Lead Actor at the festival.

Indonesia in November 1998, albeit with the gay kissing scenes having been censored (van Heeren 2012: 54). *Kuldesak* continues to represent gayness as a source of frustration, which eventually leads to the demise of the characters. Their non-heteronormative gender and sexuality is a lifestyle cul-de-sac.

Around the time of the release of the first instalment of *Arisan!*, content about non-heteronormative genders and sexualities also proliferated in media and popular culture in Indonesia, albeit representing various perspectives. As stated by Tom Boellstorff, around 2002 non-heteronormative genders and sexualities began to be incorporated into programs and shown on several television stations with greater regularity (2005b: 75). At the same time media coverage of the lives of non-heteronormative gender and sexuality subjects was also gaining interest. There was also a growing body of literary work written by Indonesians about the lives of LGBTIQ individuals. The proliferation of LGBTIQ content in Indonesia certainly carried diverse perspectives about these marginalised subjects. Such varied perspectives reflected the divided views in Indonesian society at that time regarding LGBTIQ people. Many holding divided views, in fact, maintained the deeply rooted idea that homosexuality was deviant and required correction. *Be A Man*, a reality show run weekly by Global TV between 2008 and 2009, for example, put 18 transwomen into a military camp in order to train them to be more macho and eliminate their effeminate mannerisms. This television program eventually sustained the hegemony of *bapakism* masculinity through its attempts to correct the mannerism of subjects who did not conform to heteronormative expressions of gender. In contrast to these popular representations of non-heteronormative subjects, the *Arisan!* franchise offered more positive representations of gay men and even promoted gay masculinity as an alternative ideal masculinity.

Situated in such a deeply rooted tradition of idealising heteronormative masculinity in Indonesian cinema, the *Arisan!* franchise is a subversion. First and foremost, the films undermine the hegemony of *bapakism* by offering a gay ‘new man’. In societies governed by a patriarchal gender order, heteronormativity is generally more than a world view which promotes heterosexuality as the normative relation of emotions. Heteronormativity is socially constructed as the only way of living. It is the ‘only’ accepted intersection between biological anatomy, gender and sexuality. At the same time, homosexuality is culturally deemed to threaten the reproduction of life—in the form of future generations, as well as the reproduction of culture. Homosexuality is deemed to destabilise the specific arrangements for ‘normal’ living, in this case the ‘family’ (Ahmed 2014: 144).

Thus, as Stevi Jackson argues, in order to preserve heteronormativity, the delegitimation of homosexuality through differentiation and inequality is imperative (2011: 12), including through popular culture. Before the *Arisan!* franchise came along, the deeply entrenched tradition of the idealisation of heteronormative *bapakism* in Indonesian cinema was part of the mechanism to do so. Men who do not conform to heteronormative masculinities are depicted as not normal and deviant. Their masculinities were subordinated and/or marginalised in relation to heterosexual men. Thus, by promoting the gay ‘new man’ as a legitimate alternative ideal, the *Arisan!* franchise, could potentially be considered as a threat to the maintenance of heteronormativity.

Furthermore, the cinematic representation of the gay ‘new man’ ideal undermines *bapakism*’s valorisation of emotional reservedness. By emphasising an alternative ideal, the filmmakers introduce men’s gentleness, empathy and emotional sensitivity. This configuration is depicted as being sought after by men and women in their search for life partners. The gay men who adopt the ‘new man’ masculinity in the



*Arisan!* franchise, Sakti and Nino, are the antithesis of representations of heterosexual men, who are authoritative, emotionally distant, unsympathetic and in some cases abusive. Sakti's emotional sensitivity touches the heart of his best friend Meimei as well as the other members who attend the monthly *arisan* meetings—who all happen to be women. In Meimei's eyes, Sakti is always sensitive to her feelings and her needs. Following is an excerpt from a conversation in *Arisan!* between Meimei and Sakti, in which the former appreciates Sakti's emotional sensitivity.

**Meimei:** No wonder all the ladies at the gathering were attracted when they saw you. But honestly, if it were my first time meeting you, I could imagine myself falling for you too. You are smart, handsome, able to play the piano and sensitive.

**Sakti:** Sensitive?

**Meimei:** Yep! You can feel what other people don't, with empathy. There are not many men like that. You are just perfect (*Arisan!*: 00:28:00–00:28:39).

Meimei is trying to understand why other members of the gathering, most of whom are married women, are instantly attracted to Sakti. Meimei's remark indicates Sakti's extraordinary masculinity, which women search for but hardly ever find in their heterosexual partners. Meimei represents heterosexual women's voices on the kind of masculinity which makes a man an ideal partner in a heterosexual relationship. Eventually, Sakti's gay 'new man' masculinity also earns him the title of a 'Girls' Best Friend'—also validated by his other close female friends towards the end of the film.

Nino's emotional sensitivity also makes Meimei fall for him. Nino provides emotional consolation to Meimei when she is facing divorce. Nino is the antithesis of Meimei's husband, who is emotionally distant and all-too consumed by his career in the public sphere. Nino, like Sakti, is the queer eye for straight men when it comes to relationships with women.

**Nino:** You are working really hard to make him happy, but people call you ego-centric? While he left you without saying goodbye or anything. Isn't he the one who is ego-centric?

**Meimei:** He may not want to hurt me.

**Nino:** NO WAY! It clearly shows that he is a COWARD! He does not deserve to be your husband (*Arisan!*: 1.22.38–1.23.02).

Ultimately, their gentle demeanour, as well as their ability to pick up subtle signs of emotions and to express feelings, characterising the 'new man' masculinity of these gay protagonists, are part of the cinematic strategies to subvert the emotional reservedness and toughness expected from the heteronormative *bapak* masculine man on and off screen. *Bapakism* masculinity valorises emotional reservedness because emotional sensitivity and expressiveness are associated with femininity, thus are believed to be more appropriate for women. Masculine men should be emotionally reserved in order to maintain their rationality. Off screen, it has been 'common sense' that women are more closely associated with tears, indecisiveness and anxiety, as well as being more suitable for emotional labour (see Jones 2004). When men display these qualities, they tend to be socially identified as weak and lacking in masculinity, which eventually makes them less fit to be leaders of the family or, in a much broader sense, the nation. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the president of Republic of Indonesia for the period from 2004 to 2014, was often criticised by his political rivals for expressing his emotional sensitivity in public and on social media. SBY was often referred as *Jenderal Tak Tegas*, a military general who is soft-hearted and lacks decisiveness (Gatra 2013). Consequently, by promoting gentleness, emotional sensitivity and expressiveness the *Arisan!* franchise sought to propose an alternative ideal which is more inclusive and sympathetic.

Through *Arisan! 2*, the filmmakers took subversion against heteronormative *bapakism* to a new level by disrupting the image of the ideal happy nuclear family.

Through the family planning program, the New Order discursively constructed the image of an ideal family—a father, a mother and children, ideally two (Warwick 1986: 457). Under the New Order, this image of a happy nuclear family headed by a heterosexual man was the hegemonic ideal, which partly justified men's exercise of authority over the family collectivity. In the 1980s, this ideal discourse of 'family' was visually campaigned about on the roofs of houses and village gates. In addition, it was firmly embedded into massive family planning campaigns (Blackburn 1999; Dwyer 2000; Hull and Adioetomo 2002). *Arisan! 2* overturns this ideal image of the happy family partly by emphasising that the success of a man's fatherhood lies in his masculinity, rather than his sexuality. At the same time, the film depicts that the reproduction of life does not depend on a heteronormative patterning of the gender relations of emotion. Instead, it partly relies on men's masculinity which can ensure the reproduction of a happy and healthy future generation.

Emotional sensitivity and nurturing strongly feature in the 'new man's' gender practices and personality configuration for both gay and heterosexual subjects. Sakti, regardless of his homosexuality, becomes a father figure who replaces a child's biological father. His 'new man' masculinity allows him to be an emotionally caring father figure to his cousin's son. The absence of the biological father strengthens the film's idealisation of this alternative father figure. It accentuates the low significance of heteronormativity and biological bonding in ensuring the growth of the future generation. The absence of a biological father also highlights that fatherhood is a social practice rather than simply a biological bond. It also foregrounds that the good practice of fatherhood requires men to adopt masculinities which allow them to be emotionally sensitive and directly involved in day-to-day caring duties. In short, masculinity matters more than sexuality in the making of a good father.

*Arisan! 2* undermines the idealisation of the biological father and offers a different insight into fatherhood as a social practice. It emphasises the importance of masculinity in shaping a man's fatherhood. In the film, the search for the biological father is largely absent. The film does provide a hint about the child's biological father, but only in passing. The film even strengthens its position on this issue by allowing the single mother to choose to raise her son (by the missing biological father) on her own outside marriage. She receives help from her close friends and extended family members, including her gay 'new man' cousin. The gay protagonist is regarded by the child as an ideal father figure. Neither the mother nor the child feel the need for the presence of the biological father. Neither do they seek to form a heteronormative household, in which a *bapak* holds the utmost authority. However, the film does not go further to represent a gay household with children. Sakti's fatherhood is still located within the domain of a heterosexual family, albeit one that is modified.

Such an approach to fatherhood, as represented in *Arisan! 2*, contrasts with that displayed in most Indonesian films and other popular culture media before it. In films produced under the New Order, fatherhood is often represented as naturally biological. Indeed, most of the films produced and distributed during this period represent the ideal nuclear family a biological father, a biological mother and children. In some films, this idealisation of the biological nuclear family is used to force, tolerate and even justify the pressure for women to marry their rapists. In the film *Dr. Karmila* (1981, Nico Pelamonia), for example, an educated middle-class woman is forced to marry her rapist for the sake of saving her chastity and the reputation of her family, and also so the child will have a father. The fact that this film was adapted from a best-selling novel, written by a prominent female novelist Marga T. in 1971, and also adapted into a television series in 1998, indicates the prevalence of such an approach to fatherhood during the 1970s to 1990s. Moreover, the book was a best-seller; the film earned two prestigious

awards at the 1982 FFI: Best Actress and Best Director; and the television series not only earned high ratings but it also won the Best Actress category at the 1998 Panasonic Gobel Award. The recognition received by the novel, film and television series, while not intended to legitimise biological primacy in fatherhood practice, reflects the common perspective of fatherhood at the time.

The emphasis on masculinity as a vital element in shaping a man's fatherhood can also be read as a challenge to the stricter legal mechanism preventing openly gay men from becoming legal guardians or foster parents. The state implemented *Government Regulation No. 54/2007*, which legally prevents same-sex couples from adopting children. The favouring of heterosexual couples and the legal exclusion of same-sex individuals from the right to adopt children was not a new approach designed to strengthen heteronormativity in Indonesia. In fact, the legal exclusion also took place under colonial ruling, especially in *Staatsblad* 1917 No. 19. However, amidst the escalating moral panic and widespread hostility towards non-heteronormative genders and sexualities, the new regulation emboldened the state's position in regard to the rights, position and status of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. Indeed, *Arisan! 2* does not specifically tackle this discrimination. However, by highlighting fatherhood as defined more by masculinity, than sexuality, *Arisan! 2* renders the legal regulation discriminatory against marginalised subjects of genders and sexualities. The film also exposes the state's discriminatory treatment of these marginalised subjects. It exposes the fact, as documented by Boellstorff, that many gay men, like Sakti, take comfort in informally adopting their siblings' children or the children of their extended family; they usually take care of the education expenses of these children in order to develop psychological bonds with them (Boellstorff 2005b: 123).

However, the film's struggle to legitimise a non-heteronormative masculinity ran the risk of creating a new 'homonormativity'. In this case, I agree with Murtagh

(2012, 2013) who argues that the first film of the franchise, in addition to another film, *Janji Joni* (Joni's Promise, 2005, Joko Anwar), tends to create a new homonormativity by disavowing a body of Indonesian citizens who were described by David Bell and Jon Binnie as the 'queer unwanted'—queer people who are pushed out of certain spaces and practices of consumption (2004: 1810). Homonormativity is a concept developed by Lisa Duggan (2004) which refers to the privileging of a certain form of homosexuality and excluding others. In this case, the privileging of the gay 'new man' as the more acceptable form of male homosexuality is at the expense of the marginalisation of gay men who are camp, effeminate or limp wristed. These 'othered' gay men are cast as the 'queer unwanted', the unwanted others whose exclusion is necessary so that the proposed normative gay masculinity can be legitimated. This othering is indeed clearly visible in the first instalment of the *Arisan!* franchise. In an interview with me, one of the key filmmakers claimed that the idealisation of gay 'new man' masculinity was primarily to counter the stereotypical depiction of gay men's gender identity in Indonesian cinema.

I personally don't like the stereotypical gay depiction in Indonesian popular culture.

Gay in popular culture tends to be represented as men whose everyday gesture is heavily camp and effeminate. They are *too on your face* in the way they express things ... I don't like that. Thus, I feel the need to create a representation of gay men which is not yet well represented in cinema (Garry, personal interview, 17 April 2014).<sup>2</sup>

When I asked Garry to further clarify what he meant by 'too on your face', the filmmaker said that it referred to 'heavily effeminate mannerism, cross-dressing and overly sexualised' representations of homosexuality (ibid.). This statement indicates a justification for the filmmakers' intention of the exclusion of effeminate gay men in the first film. Arguably after a series of criticisms, the second film presented a more

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<sup>2</sup> A pseudonym. Garry is the only interviewee who requested pseudo-anonymity in this research.

welcoming attitude towards this unwanted gay gender identity, although it was subordinated to the masculinity of the ideal gay ‘new man’.

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated the magnitude of subversion incorporated in the franchise *Arisan!*. These films through their idealisation of a gay strand of ‘new man’ masculinity undermine the heteronormative gender relations of emotion, which had originally paved the way for the ascendancy of *bapakism* masculinity in Indonesia. The films’ idealisation of gay ‘new man’ masculinity is part of the filmmakers’ struggle to reconfigure the relations among masculinities in Indonesia. The idealisation of the gay ‘new man’ renders the strongly heteronormative *bapakism* irrelevant and discriminating against other masculinities which accommodate non-heteronormative gender practices and sexualities.

### **Behind the scenes of the *Arisan!* franchise: A low-key strategy of resistance**

This section reinforces the argument laid out in the previous section. Drawing from public statements and interviews with filmmakers, I examine the politics behind the production and distribution of images of the gay ‘new man’. I explore the tensions between off-screen and on-screen gender politics, as well as the unstable relations of hegemonic and marginalised masculinities. I also situate the screen politics within the discourse of larger public gender politics in Indonesia around the period when these films were produced and distributed in commercial cinema.

I argue that the intensifying moral panic towards non-heteronormative genders and sexualities imposed significant constraints in the filmmakers’ struggle to promote a gay alternative ideal as a critique of hegemonic *bapakism*. The filmmakers behind the *Arisan!* franchise consequently had to make aesthetics, narrative and distribution compromises in order to be able to stage their public gender politics without attracting too much negative attention, let alone controversy. In terms of aesthetics and narrative,

the filmmakers made compromises in the title, setting and camera point of view specifically to create the sense that sexuality is a private matter, in order to evade both public and state censorships. In terms of distribution, compromises allowed the distribution to reach a limited number of film theatres in big cities across Java.

Why were such compromises necessary? The answer lies in the political background against which the franchise was produced and circulated. The *Arisan!* franchise was produced against the background of escalating moral panic against non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. In this case, ‘moral panic’ refers to sudden widespread and amplified anxiety, alarm or fear, often irrational, in response to a certain problem considered as threatening to the values, safety and interests of society in general (Cohen 2002: 1; Garland 2008: 10). The democratisation of the public sphere and the spirit of reform in the post-authoritarian era led to a euphoria of liberation as well as anxieties and uncertainties. The democratisation process partly triggered more confidence among subjects of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities and encouraged them to be present and open about their genders and sexualities in public; it also motivated more vocal public politics in defence of the rights of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities (Khanis 2013). This process strongly undermined the hegemony of a strictly heteronormative masculinity, *bapakism*, and the legitimacy of the larger patriarchal gender patterning which supported heteronormativity as the only way of life. The struggle to reconfigure hegemonic masculinity around heteronormativity soon generated moral panic, resulting in pressure to police non-heteronormative genders and sexualities, be it through legal, ‘curative’, education, or in many cases violent ‘remedies’.<sup>3</sup> Boellstorff (2004a) underscores the

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<sup>3</sup> Since 2002, several local governments at the municipal/regency and provincial level, enabled partly by the decentralisation policy, legally criminalised non-heteronormative sexualities (see Ariyanto and Triawan 2008; Ichwan 2013; Muthmainnah, 2016). For example, in Aceh, the punishment for committing homosexuality is up to 100 lashes, 1,000 grams of pure gold, or 100 months of imprisonment, based on the *Qanun No. 7/2014* (Setyadi 2015). Yet, far prior to the implementation of this sharia bylaw, violence



emergence of the so called ‘political homophobia’ among Indonesian men who are involved in many hostile protests against public gender politics that support non-heteronormative genders and sexualities; these men often declared that they were ashamed of these marginalised groups and could not accept their impending legitimacy. Based on the 2006 World Value Survey, more than 65 per cent of Indonesians indicated that they do not want to have homosexual neighbours (Hosen Faizah and Hosen 2006). In 2016, a survey conducted by the Wahid Foundation in collaboration with Lingkar Survey Indonesia (LSI) shows that non-heteronormative gender and sexuality subjects were top among groups disliked in Indonesia, even compared to ‘communists’ who had been discursively constructed as the common enemy of Indonesians since the 1965 mass killing. This was reported in a *Jakarta Post* article entitled, ‘LGBT people have the right to live equally with others’ (2 August 2016). These surveys, despite their limitations, indicate increasingly negative sentiments among the general public in Indonesia.

The escalated moral panic against non-heteronormative sexualities in 2000–2014 emerged alongside increased public anxiety about and fear of a more assertive female sexuality. During the period, there was a series of heated debates on public expressions of female sexuality. These debates manifested more strongly in the arts and popular culture. Among the triggers were the rise of Inul Daratista with her ‘drill dance’ propelled into fame through her series of performances on national television since 2003 (also see Chapter 3), the exhibition of *Pink Swing Park*, an art installation featuring nude photos of male and female models, in Jakarta’s Second CP Biennale 2005, and the publication of the Indonesian version of *Playboy* magazine in 2006. These debates provided grounds for the legalisation of *Law No 44/2008* on pornography. They

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against non-heteronormative individuals in Aceh had manifested more strongly, for instance in the widely documented case of the physical and psychological torture by state apparatus and the members of the general public against gay activist Hartoyo and his partner in 2005 (Ariyanto and Triawan 2008; Hartoyo 2015).

also led to increasing state and public censorship on forms of art and entertainment as well as the persecution of artists deemed to be promoting more open female sexual expressions particularly in media and popular culture (Pausacker 2012, 2016). Yet, the level of violence involved in the moral panic around this ‘crisis’ was not as severe as the one triggered by the promotion of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities in the same period, in the sense that the latter led to many violent incidents victimising non-heteronormative subjects.

The pressure to regulate non-heteronormative genders and sexualities also indicates the dialectical relation between the struggle to regulate non-heteronormative genders and sexualities and state power. State power has been used by and abused by interest groups. At the same time, the struggle has evidently bolstered the power of various individuals and interest groups in their contest for state power. Such was seen in the increasingly hostile statements made by many politicians and state ministers in condemning non-heteronormative genders and sexualities, and in the relative silence of the state in responding to the widespread moral panic. Furthermore, the decentralisation policy, implemented since 1999, partly enabled certain regions to legally regulate gender and sexualities through regional bylaws. Moreover, the political will to regulate, especially on the grounds of safeguarding the society’s moral values, is often deployed by regional leader candidates in regional elections during and after the period under study.

This contrasts to the era under the New Order, in which President Soeharto appointed a gay minister. Although the late minister never publicly declared his sexuality, it was an open secret. Vice-President, Jusuf Kalla, also recalled this event in his public statement in response to the intensifying public debate and moral panic concerning non-heteronormative genders and sexualities (Tim Viva 2016).

Nevertheless, this did not mean that all gay men had equal political rights with

heterosexual men under the New Order. I elaborated on the New Order's attempt to offset the crisis tendency posed by non-heteronormative genders and sexualities in Chapter 2. Moreover, the strong state power wielded by Soeharto certainly contributed to securing and maintaining the political rights of selective non-heteronormative subjects, while discriminating against others. The appointment of a gay man to an important political position in the 1990s did not create substantial moral panic or lead to a lengthy and polarised public debate. It did not inspire the emergence of legal regulations policing homosexuality. These two facts show that the mechanism to offset the crisis tendency posed by non-heteronormative sexualities in the established patriarchal gender order was still functioning, unlike in the post-2000 era. Appointing a gay cabinet minister after the year 2000 would have been impossible without a harsh political battle, which might include violence.

It was against this heightened moral panic that the *Arisan!* franchise and its gay 'new man' alternative ideal were produced, circulated and consumed. The franchise was the filmmakers' vehicle to foreground their public gender politics in support of non-heteronormative Indonesians. Nia Dinata, a renowned feminist filmmaker was the director for the *Arisan!* franchise. Dinata herself has been consistent in supporting marginalised subjects through her creative works and activism. *Arisan!* is a politically loaded film projects. For Dinata and her colleagues, the intersections of gender, class and sexuality was central to their particular interests. Afi Shamara, Dinata's co-producer in the first instalment of *Arisan!*, recalls:

Nia (Dinata) and I tried to develop a story which was in trend in Jakarta. We also tried to bring up issues which were often kept closeted, such as husband-and-wife relationship issues or sexuality. For us, they are interesting because many people are bound by social norms; so the social taboos are often seen as big life problems by those facing them (2004: 12).

The necessity of bringing up issues on discrimination based on gender and sexuality in *Arisan!* and its sequel began as a personal concern, but the gravity of the issue was nationwide. Dinata mentions that the idea to incorporate gay characters came from her personal experience growing up with gay relatives and having gay friends. Dinata, in an interview with Tilman Baumgärtel, states:

I just thought that these things need to be told through film. Why does this have to be a taboo? I do not really agree with that. I grew up in a family with a lot of gay uncles and a lesbian aunt, and it seemed to be fine (cited in Baumgärtel 2012: 207).

Other principal filmmakers also shared the experience of either having gay relatives or friends or being gay themselves. Kalyana Shira Film, a film production company jointly managed by Dinata and Shamara, under which the *Arisan!* franchise was produced, employs individuals from these marginalised categories, and always supports films concerning gender issues (Ulung 2015). Dinata's co-script writer for the first film in the franchise, Joko Anwar, in an interview with Suseno and Leila Chudori that was published in *Majalah Tempo*, 'Saya dekat sekali dengan dunia gay' (I am very close to the gay world), also claims: 'I am very close to the gay world. So, if any of my films do not include this gay element, it means I have erased one thing which I see on a daily basis' (8 May 2005). As this personal concern was reflected in larger identity politics in post-authoritarian Indonesia, Dinata soon felt the dissonance.

I was and am concerned that our society is moving backwards ... The first instalment of *Arisan!* was relatively well received ... We were more open back then. But after the release of *Berbagi Suami* (2006), I often encountered backlash, including from the educated segment of society, which is surprising ... I find it dangerous for Indonesia. Because, as a diverse nation, the country is supposed to be more tolerant about differences (Dinata, personal interview, 28 May 2014).

Both *Arisan!* and *Arisan! 2* were intended for mainstream commercial cinema despite the potentially controversial content. Scaling up the struggle to reconfigure

hegemonic masculinity around heteronormativity through commercial cinema was not an easy task for filmmakers during the gender-order crisis. I reiterate that commercial cinema is a political–economic institution which involves major financial investment, unlike any other form of popular culture. Consequently, the pressure of generating investment returns and profits is relatively stronger, and in many cases, it triumphs over idealism. Profit-driven producers generally avoid controversial subject matter; censorship is likely to succumb to the majority interests; distributors and exhibitors are often reluctant to take risks fearing hostile protests and financial losses (see Chapter 3). Therefore, independent film production and distribution are the strategies that filmmakers use for films that are intended to undermine the established patterning of gender relations (Hughes-Freeland 2011; Sen 2005). Teddy Soeriaatmadja’s more provocative take on a man who adopts non-heteronormative gender and sexuality through *Lovely Man* (2011), released in the same year as *Arisan! 2*, was independently produced and distributed through national and international film festivals and other alternative distribution channels (Irawan 2016). The *Arisan!* franchise was produced by a smaller scale production house, Kalyana Shira Films, run by Dinata and her business associate Shamara. Both were also executive producers of the franchise’s first film. Relatively a smaller-budget film, the funding to produce the *Arisan!* franchise was generated from personal funds and small investors who were in Dinata’s immediate network (Personal interview with Dinata, 28 May 2014).

Furthermore, to be screened in commercial cinema theatres, films have to pass state censorship. Inability to pass censorship will result in films not being distributed in commercial film markets. The reputation of the Indonesian censorship board for being inconsistent and succumbing to the power of the dominant pressure groups is notorious. Thus, many commercial film producers and filmmakers tend to avoid sensitive subject matter so that they do not have to deal with the censorship board. The aforementioned

*Kuldesak* had to lose its important gay kiss scene set in a bus to the state's censorship board. According to Katinka van Heeren, apparently such a depiction was still too revolutionary even amidst the growing spirit of liberation that emerged upon the demise of the authoritarian regime (2012: 54). Soeriaatmadja regretted his decision to distribute *Lovely Man* in commercial cinema theatres as it lost some important scenes during the censorship process. In an interview with Daniel Irawan of *Kinescope Magazine*, Soeriaatmadja explained:

*Lovely Man* was never intended to be screened in commercial cinema theatres. Since the beginning, I was always insistent that my films must not be censored just for sake of screening. Before submitting *Lovely Man* to the censorship board, we did a trial censorship and it passed; yet, at the censorship board, the film was censored, and we did not get a satisfying answer as to why. However, we could no longer back down. So, during the theatrical release in Indonesia, there were some missing scenes in *Lovely Man*. Therefore, I then decided that *Something in the Way* and *About a Woman* would not be screened in commercial cinema theatres. So, not because they were more vulgar or not, but I didn't want to lose the essence of the story (cited in Irawan 2016: n.p.).

*Arisan!* took a different route by facing the censorship process and making compromises. I will discuss this later in the section.

Moreover, around the production and release of the second instalment of the *Arisan!* franchise, there had been increasingly hostile protests against public gender politics that supported non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. I explained the heightened moral panic and its legal as well as social ramifications for the public gender politics earlier on. In cinema, there were several major protests against the screening of films about non-heteronormative genders and sexualities during the period from 2000 to 2014. In 2010, the Indonesian Islamic Clerics Council (MUI) and the Islamic Defender Front (FPI), a vigilante group exploiting Islamic injunctions to justify their hostile attitudes and politics, protested against the ninth Q!Film Festival on the grounds that

homosexuality is against religion and social norms (Child 2010; Gus/Ken 2010). In the following year, the screening of the aforementioned *Lovely Man* at the Q!Film Festival attracted another round of protests from FPI, resulting in the cancellation of the screening. However, hostile protests against films exploring such controversial themes were generally random, rather than systematic, and commonly targeted highly publicised films. The threat of hostile responses was enough to deter the censorship board from passing such films. It discouraged distribution channels from exhibiting the films and forced filmmakers to innovate in negotiating their political struggles, especially around the reconfiguration of hegemonic masculinity.

Reflecting on its potentially controversial subject matter, the filmmakers behind the *Arisan!* franchise made aesthetic and narrative compromises to dodge state censorship, to ensure potential distribution channels, and most importantly to avoid too much negative attention and controversy around their introduction of non-heteronormative masculinity. Aesthetically, they made compromises in the title and the depiction of gay intimacy to render sexuality a private matter. Distribution was limited to a number of film theatres in big cities across Java, instead of nationwide. These compromises indicate the filmmakers' negotiations in their engagement with public gender politics at this particular moment in history.

The first compromise was the choice of a more neutral, if not a more feminine, title. Titling has proven to be a tricky strategy in promoting a film. In Indonesia, there have been several cases in which a film's title, more than its content, provoked controversies which eventually affected the sales and popularity of the films. Certain words may be deemed controversial or offensive at a certain moment in history. Under the New Order cinema, especially around the 1970s and 1980s, words associated with political Islam were likely to offend the state. In the film adaptation of *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* (Under the Protection of Ka'bah) in 1977, the censorship board

recommended a change of title due to the use of the word *Ka'bah*, which was also the symbol of the Islam-based political party, *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (United Development Party) (Imanda 2012).<sup>4</sup> In addition, words associated with communism have been considered highly offensive since 1965. The production of a film adaptation of Achdiat Kartamihardja's novel *Atheis* in 1974, as explained in a *Berita Yudha* article, 'Syuman (Yang Kurang) Djaya dengan "Atheis" Nya' (Syuman (who is not as) Djaya (Indonesian for Glorious) with his 'Atheis', almost did not get permission for production from the censorship board due to the title and content (04 May 1974). The filmmakers arguably wanted to evoke the nation's dark history of the mass killing of communist party members and sympathisers in the 1960s. The film also stirred controversy among religious leaders, especially Muslims, who objected to the way it represented Islam (Said 1991: 239). The film was then retitled *Kafir* (The Unbelievers, 1974, Sjumandjaja). Amidst the intensifying Islamisation in twenty-first-century Indonesia, *Buruan Cium Gue!* (Kiss me quick!, Findo Purwono, 2004) was heavily protested against because the title was thought to be too provocative. Islamic clerics called for a banning of the film, despite it passing censorship. The clerics suggested, despite not watching the film, that the title would likely encourage unlawful sexual relations. The film did not make it into the cinema before the title was changed to *Satu Kecupan* (a Kiss) and re-censored. Thus, the choice of a non-provocative title was important.

The *Arisan!* franchise uses the customary practice of *arisan* among Jakarta urbanites as the setting where Jakarta elites, including the film characters, socialise. Indeed, while *arisan* may not be exclusively associated with women, it is particularly common among them (Papanek and Schwede 1988: WS81). Certainly, *arisan* as a

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<sup>4</sup> The film was retitled *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (Pioneers of Indonesian Independence, 1977, Asrul Sani).



social practice has evolved from a mere economic association into a symbolic institution whose main purpose is to strengthen the solidarity of its members (Hudalah, Firman and Woltjer 2014: 2228). Among the elites, this type of gathering usually takes place at a fancy public venue, such as a restaurant or mall (Roesma and Mulya 2013: 12). The term *arisan*, thus, while stereotypically gendered, does not in any way indicate any relation to homosexuality. Not only did the title not attract negative attention from radical Islamists, but it also helped the filmmakers in their negotiations with the censorship board, such as indicated through the following quote.

So, my film was stuck there for a very long time. In such a case the chair has to make the final decision. After she watched *Arisan!* she called me to her office, and we had a long talk. She said: 'I am new, and I am willing to take the risk.' So, they censored a little bit. She even told me: 'I am glad that the title is *Arisan!*', because this type of meeting is very important in Indonesia ... Everybody is doing it, even myself, in the office, with the neighbours, with the family. She felt it was safe, because with such a title, it would not attract the interest of the Islamist groups and the fanatics (cited in Bäumgartel 2012: 208).

The film eventually passed censorship and was distributed in limited commercial cinema theatres, with its original title.

In addition to the choice of a non-provocative title, the films also render men's homosexuality as a private matter, instead of a public issue demanding recognition or legitimacy. Maimunah Munir has provided useful insights into this particular strategy that was used in the first instalment of the franchise. In her view, the confinement of homosexual intimacy and coming-out to the private sphere is a strategy deployed by the filmmakers in order to evade censorship (2011: 118). Apparently, the same strategy is maintained in the second instalment.

The coming-out narrative, in the first film, is confined to a limited circle of family members and close friends. Moreover, the process of coming-out does not

involve individuals or organisations which represent political interests involved in advancing the rights and legitimating the status and position of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. The coming-out story is kept to the confines of the private sphere: in the psychiatrist's consultation room; at home; among family and close friends. In such a way, a man's sexuality is represented as his private matter. Outside the family and the friendship circle, there is no pressure on the larger society or the state to recognise and legitimate these marginalised subjects. Adi Budiman, a journalist at *Tempo*, reported that Jusuf Kalla, the vice-president of Indonesia 2014–2019, is also a proponent of this private homosexuality strategy (cited in Budiman, 15 February 2016). Homophobic discourses that were circulating amidst the heightened moral panic in twenty-first-century gender politics in Indonesia included: homosexuality is contagious; and homosexual subjects are on the hunt to convert heterosexual individuals to homosexuality.

Furthermore, in the *Arisan!* films, depictions of homosexual intimacy are aesthetically confined to private settings. None of the intimate scenes between the gay couples in either films takes place in the public sphere—a space in which heterosexual couples have relatively more freedom to express their emotions. The much-talked about gay kiss scenes in the first instalment of *Arisan!* take place in private home settings and are never intended to be displayed to a third party. The scenes are not intended to showcase the exploration of sexuality and, correspondingly, were very short (one-second), long distance and off-focus shots. I second Murtagh who argues that such fleeting gay kiss scenes were intentionally crafted to evade censorship—censorship that is not tolerant towards sexually explicit scenes (2013: 116–17). Not only are the two scenes far from being provocative, but they also downplay the homosexual passion of the gay men involved. In the second instalment, there is a scene vaguely suggestive of sexual intercourse between one of the gay couples. The implied sex scene is not

included in the version that was distributed to theatres, but it was included as a gimmick in the DVD version. As such, this strategy implies that such a scene is inappropriate for release in a more public setting like a cinema theatre but is more acceptable for private consumption. In an article published in *Kapan Lagi*, 'Nia Dinata siapkan banyak bonus dalam DVD "ARISAN 2"' (Nia Dinata has prepared a lot of bonuses for 'ARISAN 2' DVD), Dinata explains:

There are a lot of bonuses in the DVD ... There is a scene involving Tora and Pong Harjatmo which we did not include in the movie. It was a bedroom scene, which we initially thought would be cut. But we felt bad disposing of it (14 June 2012).<sup>5</sup>

Another form of compromise being made by the filmmakers behind the *Arisan!* franchise concerns the film's distribution. Intended as a film to be distributed in the commercial film market in Indonesia, the filmmakers had to convince the biggest film exhibition company, Cinema 21. Mainly, the filmmakers had to convince them that the film would generate profit despite the sensitive subject matter provided that the screening was done strategically. This meant picking certain cinema locations where the subject matter would be appealing and attractive to audiences. Cinema 21, was extremely dominant from the late 1980s to 2006. Consequently, the decision makers in this company had a powerful influence in deciding which films could be screened in their cinemas and in Indonesia in general. The dominance of Cinema 21 continues, albeit with a slight decline of monopoly due to the increasing number of competitors.<sup>6</sup> In an interview with Baumgärtel, Dinata explained:

Yes, we have learned how to deal with them (the 21 Cinema). I insisted on making a cut of my first film just for the owner of the Group21 [*sic*], because he controls everything ... when he saw my film *Arisan!*, which is about gays and lesbians, he said, 'You are

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<sup>5</sup> Tora refers to Tora Sudiro who plays Sakti; Pong refers to Pong Harjatmo who plays Geri.

<sup>6</sup> Cinema 21 operated 76 per cent of the 1,088 cinema screens in Indonesia in 2016 (Katadata 2016). Moreover, the cinema theatres operated by Cinema 21 also spread wider in the archipelago, compared to its competitors, such as Blitz Megaplex.

crazy! Nobody will watch this film! You just make eight prints!’ And I said: ‘No, no, no, I want more prints, because I know the areas where there are gay communities.’

After a week he e-mailed me and ordered more prints! (2012: 206).<sup>7</sup>

Implied in this statement is a calculated strategy of filmmaking and marketing.

Dinata was certain of the segment of audience she wished to target—the urban middle-class gay individuals and communities as well as their sympathisers. This is the primary segment that she imagined would have the disposable income and would be willing to spare a fraction of it for cinema-going. Moreover, in Indonesia, cinema-going is closely associated with a middle-class lifestyle, especially in the malls. Most of the cinema theatres are located within these shopping centres and hangout precincts. For gay men generally, malls have become ‘quasi civic spaces’ in contemporary Indonesia because of the private ownership of the businesses and their orientation towards the economically affluent class of society (Boellstorff 2005b: 134). Thus, malls have become less publicly diverse compared to parks or town squares, which are open to almost any segment of society. Affluent gay men who visit malls tend to be inconspicuous in their gender performativity and sexual expression. As Boellstorff reminded us, effeminacy, let alone cross-dressing are seen rarely in malls (2005b: 134). Thus, the filmmakers offered representations which were able to appeal to discreet non-effeminate gay men whose masculinity can also be idealised. Although this kind of representational politics and business calculations do not always work in Indonesian cinema because Indonesian film viewers are at best very unpredictable, it did well for the franchise. *Arisan!* and *Arisan! 2* were screened in theatres in Java and Bali. Her prediction that the film would do well in fact came true, as mentioned by Dinata,

It did well only in big cities, in Jakarta and in Bandung and in Surabaya. When I did a live radio interview to promote the film for a smaller city in Sumatra, the local people

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<sup>7</sup> The lesbian character is featured in *Arisan! 2*.

were really angry at me, because they thought that film was promoting sacrilegious things (cited in Baumgartel 2012: 207–208).

Both *Arisan!* and its sequel were warmly welcomed at the theatres as well as by critics and commentators. In the small but competitive market of commercial films in Indonesia in the early 2000s, *Arisan!* had attracted more than 100,000 moviegoers into its third week of screening in Jakarta alone (Soetjipto 2004). Although the number was unable to beat the sales of *Ada Apa dengan Cinta?* (2002) which attracted more than two million viewers during its theatrical release, the sales of *Arisan!* were still good considering the potentially controversial content. When the first instalment hit Indonesian theatres, many critics and commentators were surprised by the gay kiss scenes in the movie. However, there was no substantial negative attention received by the films and the filmmakers despite the heightened Islamisation and the escalated moral panic against LGBTIQ. Rachel Harvey (2004), writing on the first instalment for the BBC, states that the film was well received in Jakarta and the gay kissing scenes were subjects of discussion among audiences after screenings. Lely Djuhari (2004), writing for the Associated Press, offers an even more hopeful comment saying that the release of *Arisan!* in 2003 was an indication that Indonesia's art scene was gradually liberated from the New Order's authoritarian grip. The first film even received five Citra Awards out of twelve nominations at the 2004 Indonesian Film Festival (Hens 2015). The second film, while not awarded any prizes at the Indonesian Film Festival, did relatively well in cinemas. In the absence of viewer statistics for the second film, I asked Dinata about it during my interview with her. She said that the second instalment was only mildly successful with fewer than five hundred thousand screening tickets being sold at that time (Personal interview, 28 May 2014). A film critic for *Flick Review* magazine, Amir Syarif Siregar (2011), applauds the film for daring to continue to explore the lives of gay men in Indonesia. In other words, the strategy deployed by the

filmmakers to evade state and public censorship as well as to secure a distribution channel was relatively successful.

To conclude, as I have indicated earlier, the compromises made by the filmmakers behind the progressive *Arisan!* franchise were inevitable. It was only possible to stage such subversive political struggles on screen, with compromises being made on several aspects of the films. The *Arisan!* franchise has shown that the compromises have enabled them to reach a wider audience—especially those people who are less likely to access arthouse film theatres, cinema, or other alternative distribution channels. Yet, these compromises imply that filmmakers are limited in offering representations of an alternative ideal masculinity. Recognising the growing anxiety towards non-heteronormative individuals and causes, the filmmakers must compromise their vocal political statements in order to get around state censorship and prevent negative controversy which might potentially lead to the cancellation of their political film projects or their distribution.

### **Beyond the dazzling scenes of *Arisan!*'s gay 'new man': Middle-class biases**

While the filmmakers' struggles to promote gay masculinity as a legitimate alternative ideal are subversive in many ways, we cannot help but notice that the representation of the new ideal is biased towards middle-class gay men. The filmmakers tend to rely on showcasing wealth, consumption and affluent lifestyles to justify their idealisation of gay masculinity on screen. As they do so, they overlook the everyday struggles of lower-class gay men who continue to receive discriminating treatment not only because of their non-heteronormative gender and sexuality, but also because of their social class. This is true especially amidst the heightened moral panic that typified post-New Order politics.

Through the franchise, the filmmakers cast their struggle to legitimise a gay masculinity in affluent middle-class gay male protagonists. Sakti and Nino, the gay ‘new man’ protagonists, are economically well off. They have secure white-collar jobs. Sakti is as a successful self-employed architect. He and his best friend, Meimei, co-own a construction firm. His firm’s clients are elite Jakarta urbanites.<sup>8</sup> In the second film, Sakti and his firm are profiled in a glossy magazine which especially focuses on the lifestyle of Jakarta elites. As for Nino, he is a successful film director. He has a small but thriving film company, which produces films and advertisements. In the first film, it is already clear that Nino is an established name in cinema and advertising. He plans to contract Sakti to renovate his office. In the second film, Nino’s company is being considered by a major political party to produce a campaign film. As owners of thriving business, Sakti and Nino do not have to worry about their job security.

Sakti’s business acumen is his ultimate ticket to a successful coming-out. The *Arisan!* franchise implies that the coming out process for non-heteronormative men will be a less daunting process when they have achieved a certain level of success in their respective public-sphere careers. Maimunah Munir criticises the first instalment of the franchise for suggesting that personal career achievement is a prerequisite for gay men’s survival in Indonesian society (2011: 122). In a serious conversation on coming out, Nino tries to influence Sakti that he should not be afraid of being open about his sexuality to his family and friends because he has a lot of achievements to be proud of. The achievement implicitly refers to his established career as an architect. In Nino’s imagining and experience, society is meritocratic, although not necessarily so off-screen. Boellstorff (2004c) shows that such an emphasis on career-based self-accomplishment to justify gay men’s belonging to family, society and the nation was

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<sup>8</sup> In the second film, through the praises sung by a super-rich Jakarta socialite character, Sakti is an established architect to whom Jakarta elite circles have been trusting with their home renovations. The character says that she has been finding it difficult to secure an appointment with Sakti to discuss her house renovation plans.

prevalent in gay magazines published in 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>9</sup> On screen, the same imagining is granted in the acceptance of Sakti's sexuality by his family, friends and clients due to his career achievements. In the second instalment, the film shows that Sakti continues to enjoy career development, as shown in his being profiled in a glossy magazine as one of the best architects in town and Jakarta's major socialites have to book way in advance for his service despite his sexual identity.

With their jobs and income, these gay 'new man' protagonists are able to maintain an affluent lifestyle which protects them from potential harassment due to their homosexuality. For instance, they can afford to live in private homes in elite neighbourhoods which offer them privacy and security. Sakti lives in a large private home in an elite gated neighbourhood in Jakarta. It is of modern design and has a well-maintained garden, in which Sakti hosts the *arisan* gathering. As for Nino, he converted the second floor of his office into a living space. Commenting on the affluent setting of the first instalment, Chris Berry states that the film is set in what could be Beverly Hills (2005: 304). The gay characters' homosexual intimacy is contained within these private spaces. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the much-talked-about kissing scene between Nino and Sakti takes place in the comfortable and secure private space of Nino's house, which keeps any onlookers at bay.<sup>10</sup> Sakti's intimate scene with his second lover, Geri, also takes place in his private and secure home setting. Furthermore, the gay protagonists navigate the geographical spaces of Jakarta in private cars with dark windows, instead of public transport. According to Murtagh, the cars which ferry them from one luxurious place to another keep the unpleasant reality of becoming gay at

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<sup>9</sup> Boellstorff offers evidence that a Yogyakarta-based gay magazine in one of its 1997 editions mused that the idea of *prestasi*, or personal achievement, would be 'a fortress strong enough to repel those minor tones' (of social disapproval) (2004c: 391).

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the only public display of affection takes place in a tourist island in West Nusa Tenggara, which is frequented by both domestic and international tourists. The gesture is not even a kiss. Sakti and Nino hold each other's hands and then embrace each other briefly.



bay (2012: 9). In short, these gay protagonists can afford to secure their privacy which protects them from forced eviction, public protests by angry mobs or violent public and state-based persecution.

Ultimately, the gay protagonists' wealth, consumption and lifestyle justify the idealisation of their 'new man' masculinity. To be good friends who are sensitive to their best friends' feelings and emotional wellbeing, the gay 'new man' protagonists can negotiate their working schedules and afford luxury vacations. When Meimei is facing a problem with her marriage, Sakti and Nino are almost always there to console her, including during working hours and on weekdays. Sakti takes Meimei to the *arisan* gathering and finally joins it himself on a working day. Furthermore, in showing their attention to the terminally ill Meimei, Sakti and Nino are able to afford to go on vacation to a faraway island at short notice. These are privileges which may not be enjoyed by lower-class gay men. Sakti and Nino have these liberties because they are business owners, instead of general employees. With his income, Sakti is able to participate in the *arisan*. He is initially reluctant to join the rotating saving group as it is stereotypically associated with women and femininity. However, he does so to offer emotional support to his best friend. At the *arisan*, each member should contribute USD100 every month, an amount higher than the year's minimum wage in Jakarta.<sup>11</sup> Sakti's membership in the *arisan* gathering justifies the idealisation of his gay 'new man' masculinity. Meimei sees Sakti's membership as a sign of his emotional nurturing of her. Not only is his emotional empathy with his female friends positively portrayed, but Sakti's emotional sensitivity to his lovers is also shown. He is able to use his affluent artistic sense to pick out a painting which would appeal to his married lover's rich wife.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on data provided by the National Statistics Bureau (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2016), Jakarta's minimum wage in 2003 was IDR 631,600/month. The amount was equal to roughly USD 75/month at that time with the exchange rate USD 1 = IDR 8,400.

In terms of Sakti's 'new man' fatherhood, his affluence provides safety and protection for the single mother Lita and her son, Talu. Generally, in Indonesia, unplanned pregnancy outside marriage is undesirable. As stated by Linda Bennett, women in such a condition tend to face

personal and familial shame, compromised marriage prospects, abandonment by their partners, single motherhood, a stigmatised child, early cessation of education, and an interrupted income and career (2001: 37).

As for the children born outside of marriage, according to Habib Asnawi, they are likely to be socially stigmatised as *anak haram*—children resulting from a sinful sexual relationship, which may impose a psychological burden onto them (2013: 241). Sakti is a buffer for Lita and Talu against these negative possibilities. Instead of sending her back to her own family in Medan, he provides Lita and her son with a safe shelter at his luxurious house in a gated neighbourhood. According to Harald Leisch, residents in gated neighbourhoods mostly do not know and have no contact with each other (2002: 347). Thus, Sakti can protect Lita and her son's privacy by taking them into his house. Furthermore, he supports Lita as she completes her higher education and establishes her career as a lawyer. He also fills in as a father to the boy, so-much-so that the boy no longer longs for his biological father. He makes regular video calls to express his love when the boy is away. Assuming that the film is set in 2010 Indonesia, video calls were not yet as ubiquitous a mode of communication as they are in 2019. Indeed, video calls were a luxury during that period. Not to mention, Sakti can also ferry the boy around in his fancy SUV. In short, his 'new man' fatherhood is idealised through the showcase of wealth and consumption.

The filmmakers' struggle to undermine hegemonic masculinity and promote the gay 'new man' as an alternative ideal is staged in two films which exclude representations of lower-class gay men. Berry argues that the first film in the franchise is part of what he terms as 'the *wedding banquet* effect'—the tendency in Asian films to

visually depict gay men as characters with affluent economic backgrounds (2004: 306).<sup>12</sup> Like Munir (2011) and Murtagh (2012, 2013), I agree with Berry's assertion that the film lacks representations of poor gay men, working-class same sex culture, and local *waria* culture.<sup>13</sup> The absences unfortunately remain true in the second instalment. Thus, it is no surprise that *Arisan!* was received in less welcoming manner by lower-class gay men participating in the audience research conducted by Murtagh (2011) than its predecessor, *Istana Kecantikan*, although the latter provides a tragic end for its gay protagonist.<sup>14</sup>

Responding to such criticism of her film, Dinata defended her decision to represent ideal gay men as a middle-class professional reflection of reality. With the same logic as that used by writers in several gay magazines studied in Boellstorff's research (2004c), discussed above, Dinata, in an interview with Maimunah Munir, claims that gay men who are financially affluent would have more chance of being accepted in a heteronormative society, like Indonesia: 'If you have enough money, a good career and are socially independent, being gay is easier' (cited in M. Munir 2011: 120). Dinata's viewpoint is reflected in Nino's imagining of Indonesia as a meritocratic

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<sup>12</sup> After the success of Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), many Asian films are trapped in building the stereotype of gay men as members of the upper middle class (Berry 2005: 306). In the film, the Chinese American gay male protagonist is a successful entrepreneur who owns a property business in Manhattan. I should extend this argument of *The Wedding Banquet* effect to also criticise the absence of gay men. William Leung (2008) in commenting on the absence of cross-dressing as well as camp gay men in Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* says that the absence makes the film often overlooked as if it is straight despite its revolutionarily queer content. Like *The Wedding Banquet*, the *Arisan!* franchise bears no representations of cross-dressing men, who are more visible in Indonesian public spaces, compared to straight-looking gay men; and the first film tends to subordinate camp gay men to the more straight looking ones, including Nino and Sakti.

<sup>13</sup> I maintain my use of the term *waria* to refer to Indonesian male-to-female cross dressers due to their unique subjectivity. I agree with Boellstorff (2004b) and Nurul Idrus and Takeo Hyman (2014) that *waria* is not easily translated as transgender, in the Western sense of the term, particularly because their goal in adopting feminine mannerisms and dress codes is not to pass as women, but to look like *waria*. Even based on his research, Boellstorff demonstrates that most *waria* do not desire sex-change surgery because they do not consider themselves to be women.

<sup>14</sup> As demonstrated by Murtagh (2011), the lower-class gay men and *waria* were more likely to have ignored the ending of *Istana Kecantikan* and focused more on the discrimination and the pressure needed to establish a heterosexual family, as experienced by the gay protagonist. These gay men and *waria* could relate to the familial and societal pressure in the film, while they felt that the representations offered in *Arisan!*, despite being more positive, were foreign.

society which cares more about one's contribution to the family, society and the nation when it comes to social acceptance. This statement even more strongly substantiates my claim that the filmmakers are trapped in middle-class myopia by excluding lower-class gay men.

The idealisation of a gay masculinity at the cost of lower-class gay men risks sustaining discrimination against them. Boellstorff claims that most Indonesian gay men are of the lower class, and they are likely to learn the concept of 'becoming gay' either from friends or the mass media, instead of from travelling abroad or meeting gay westerners (2005a: 577). The exclusion of gay lower-class men from films, that were created to politically support gay men, can imply that only a certain type of gay man can be socially accepted. As the strategy of exclusion is sustained in the second instalment of *Arisan!*, Murtagh's phrase on the 'queer unwanted' (2012, 2013) is confirmed. M. Munir (2011) also suggests that lower-class gay men are included in the unwanted category. Gay men who are economically affluent and socially independent provide the model, because their masculinity can be legitimated as an alternative ideal. Thus, gay men off-screen must aspire towards becoming like Sakti or Nino, in order to be socially recognised and accepted.

The profile of lower-class gay men certainly is not like that of Sakti and Nino. Lower class gay men, based on a survey conducted by Indana Laazulva, Agus Herwindo Muatip and Pariawan Ghazali) for Arus Pelangi, a not-for-profit organisation supporting the Indonesian LGBTIQ community, are mostly employees earning between IDR1,000,000 to 3,000,000 each month, or roughly USD 87–261 (2013: 33–34). Consequently, they are less likely to be able to afford the services of a psychiatrist who will help them manage their mental wellbeing or pay USD 100/month as an *arisan* contribution—as Sakti does. Furthermore, they are less likely to be able to negotiate their working arrangements and have disposable income to spare for a holiday on a

private island in order to be with a terminally ill friend—as Nino and Sakti do for Meimei. In fact, lower class gay men with relatively insecure jobs, especially those who are effeminate, have to stay closeted at their workplace so that they will not be discriminated against by their employers and colleagues. According to Dede Oetomo et al., in their report for USAID and UNDP, state that although Indonesian Labour Law *No. 13/2003* clearly rules out discrimination at the workplace, discrimination against gay men and other non-heteronormative individuals is still rampant (2012: 34–35). Although, in many cases, those who unfairly dismiss or reject openly gay employees do not cite gender or sexuality as the main reasons (Oetomo et al. 2012: 35).

Moreover, many working-class gay men cannot enjoy the privilege of owning a secure private dwelling place. As indicated by Boellstorff (1999), many gay men who were his research participants in the 1990s lived in rented share houses in lower-class neighbourhoods. In their random sampling survey in Jakarta, Makassar and Yogyakarta in 2011, Indana Laazulva, Agus Herwindo Muatip and Pariawan Ghazali also shows that most Indonesian gay men lived in rented rooms or houses, unlike Sakti and Nino (2013: 36–37). By living in rented accommodation, these gay men are prone to forced eviction at any time if their landlords do not like them.<sup>15</sup> I mentioned the persecution of Hartoyo, a gay activist, in Aceh, in Chapter 2. Hartoyo and his male lover were violently persecuted by an angry mob who claimed to have been offended by their homosexual intimacy, despite it taking place in a private rented house. Certainly, Hartoyo and other lower-class gay men, such as those who took part in Boellstorff's research, did not have the same security and privacy afforded to affluent middle-class gay men, such as Sakti and Nino. As Berry (2005) commented, none of the gay

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<sup>15</sup> In one of the fieldwork vignettes presented by Boellstorff several gay men who lived in a share house were evicted because the landlady did not like their behaviour (1999: 483).

characters in *Arisan!* ends up being violently bashed by an angry mob who are offended by their homosexual relations and displays of affection.

In this section I have demonstrated the middle-class biases exhibited by the filmmakers as they struggled to undermine the gender relations of emotion that bolster hegemonic masculinity. I do not wish to discount the progressiveness of the representation of the ideal that they did promote through the franchise. Nevertheless, it is important for me to highlight the exclusions implied in such screen politics. In short, by not extending their struggle to incorporate the experiences of lower-class gay men, the filmmakers have risked sustaining the exclusion of this particular category of gay men from social acceptance and belonging. The filmmakers did not extend their struggle to contest the rampant discrimination experienced by less affluent gay men in Indonesia.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have shown the complex processes and the biases involved in Indonesian progressive filmmakers' struggles to subvert the fundamental hegemonic base of *bapakism*—heteronormativity. I have shown that on one hand, the filmmakers' struggles can be seen as progressive despite the compromises they had to make. On the other, we cannot help but notice the exclusion of a certain segment of Indonesian gay men in the films intended to challenge the rampant discrimination against them. The compromises and exclusion in turn lead me to question the limited representations of alternative ideal masculinities on the silver screen in Indonesia during the period of the gender-order crisis.

In the first part of this chapter I demonstrated that in terms of cinematic representations of the gay 'new man', the franchise did offer an alternative ideal which subverted the most fundamental base of *bapakism's* hegemony—heteronormativity. Promoting a gay masculinity as a legitimate alternative ideal to the heteronormative

*bapakism* through *Arisan!* and *Arisan! 2*, the progressive filmmakers escalated the struggle to support non-heteronormative subjects in Indonesia. Celebrating gay masculinity as a legitimate alternative ideal on screen was a political move which had previously been unthinkable. Other films before them and their contemporaries might have reflected sympathy towards the marginalised subjects, but they did not extend their support to depicting gay masculinities as legitimate alternative ideals, let alone as ‘the queer eyes for straight guys’ ideal. This is what the franchise did by presenting the gay ‘new man’. Moreover, considering that this progressive move took place during the time of an intensified moral panic against heteronormative subjects in Indonesia, this progressive political move through cinema was particularly daring.

However, the fact that the filmmakers were forced to compromise several aspects of their representations during the production and distribution of the film makes it clear that anxiety was heightened and always lurking behind any experimentation of alternative ideals on the silver screen, and popular culture in general. The political movement to offer an alternative ideal through cinematic representation in commercial cinema, as in the case of the *Arisan!* franchise, proves to be equally as fierce as the public politics pursued in other political arenas. It is important to recognise the importance of the experimentation with alternative masculinities that the filmmakers planned to introduce in their films at a time of heightened moral panic and rampant discrimination against non-heteronormative subjects. The filmmakers were left with few options in terms of aesthetics, narrative and distribution. I have shown that eventually, the filmmakers were able to work around the state censorship and eliminate the potential of public censorship generally by representing gayness as the private matter of the individual.

Unfortunately, as happened in the filmmakers’ struggles to undermine hegemonic *bapakism* in terms of the gender relations of production (see Chapter 4), the

progressive struggle waged by the filmmakers behind the *Arisan!* franchise also shows a tendency towards privileging middle-class professionals at the exclusion of lower-class men. The filmmakers cast their subversion in affluent middle-class gay male protagonists. The filmmakers also justified the legitimacy of the gay ‘new man’ as an alternative ideal through wealth, consumption and lifestyle. They did so to demonstrate that gay men are an important and inseparable part of the Indonesian community and that their masculinity matters. Yet, in doing so, they kept both films sterile by neglecting to include representations of lower-class gay men. They did not extend their struggle to provide a class-inclusive alternative ideal. As a result, they risked sustaining the marginalisation of lower-class gay men.

This chapter has supported my thesis argument by showing that new hope for more inclusive representations of ideal masculinity bloomed in Indonesian cinema during the 2000–2014 period. Yet, it also emphasises that public anxiety and moral panic overshadowed the innovation and experimentation of alternative ideal masculinities. These new masculinities were projected to replace *bapakism* and better equip Indonesian men to navigate the changing landscape of gender relations in the twenty-first century. This chapter has shown that it was possible to provide subversive challenges to the established official cultural ideal of masculinity and the overall patterning of gender relations of emotion in the public political arena. Yet, this chapter has also demonstrated that there were difficult negotiations and compromises that had to be made in order to so.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

This thesis has examined the struggle of progressive Indonesian filmmakers to undermine the hegemonic ideal, *bapakism*, through commercial cinema during 2000–2014, a period marked by a gender-order crisis. Cinema was, and still is, one of the most crucial arenas in popular culture, in which political agents, primarily filmmakers, have sought to legitimise alternative ideals or to reinforce the hegemony of the culturally most exalted form of masculinity. The ‘new man’, that challenges *bapakism*’s valorisation of breadwinning, authoritative patron leadership and heteronormativity, emerged as one of the strongest alternative ideal masculinities on the silver screen. I decided to use it as a magnifying lens, in order to understand the filmmakers’ choices, negotiations and compromises in shaping what could and could not be represented, and what could and could not be idealised in commercial cinema at this given period in time. Combining textual analysis, field research and interface ethnography, I maintain that new hope emerged in terms of the representation of alternative models of ideal masculinity in commercial cinema. Filmmakers struggled to innovate and experiment with alternative ideals which promoted equal and fluid gender relations on the big screen. Yet, at the same time, I also highlight that the filmmakers’ struggle was marred by moral panic and middle-class preconceptions. Clearly shown in my discussion, the representations of alternative ideals promoted by the filmmakers in their commercial films were in the interest of the Indonesian middle-classes.

This chapter concludes my thesis. Here, I first provide a summary of the key points and establish linkages to the central argument of my thesis. I follow up the summary with a reinforcement of my contribution to the existing literature on Indonesian gender politics. In the final part, by taking cues from my research, I offer

suggestions on the direction of future research on the politics required to secure hegemonic masculinity through Indonesian cinema.

## **Summary**

To sum up, my thesis consists of four parts: introduction, discussion on the socio-political background and its ramifications for the structure of Indonesian cinema, discussion of the filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemonic ideal around the three structures of gender relations (production, power and emotion), and a conclusion. I will follow up the summary in this section with a reflection on my contribution to the scholarly discussion of Indonesian gender politics.

In Chapter 1, I explained my theoretical and analytical frameworks, situated my research among the existing scholarly works on Indonesian gender politics and also elaborated my research methods. In this summary section, I highlight my framework. In Chapter 1, I explained that I drew my theoretical and analytical frameworks from R.W. Connell's work on hegemonic masculinity and the three structures of gender relations respectively. Connell's theorisation of hegemonic masculinity has helped situate the filmmakers' struggles to secure a new hegemonic masculinity within the broader field of gender politics taking place in Indonesia. Although Connell's theory does not directly deal with cinema, it helped me shed light on the competing interests and power plays which shaped what could and could not be idealised at a particular moment of history. Ultimately, the struggle to alter Indonesia's hegemonic masculinity is to be won, and the contestation for hegemonic masculinity is the crux for gender politics. Cinema is one of the crucial arenas in which a certain masculinity can be legitimised as the culturally most exalted one. The processes involved in the production, circulation and consumption of cinematic images of ideal masculinities are imbued with politics. As shown in the filmmakers' struggles to legitimise variants of the 'new man' as an alternative ideal through commercial cinema, they tapped into contemporary gender

politics as they innovated and experimented with alternative ideals that represented critiques of the existing hegemonic masculinity. It is the processes by which the filmmakers negotiated with contemporary gender politics—both within and outside cinema—in order to offer an alternative ideal masculinity that interested me. I was also concerned with the products: the films as texts, which became my main interests in this research. I mapped my discussion on the filmmakers' political struggle using R. W. Connell's three structural framework to explain in more detail how they engaged with each of the structures of gender relations (production, power and emotion) which facilitated the ascendancy and sustained the hegemony of *bapakism* as culturally the most exalted ideal. Ultimately, as suggested by R.W. Connell, gender politics follow the broad outlines of social divisions and interests defined in the relations of production, power and emotion (2009: 138).

Chapter 2 mapped the socio-political and economic backgrounds against which the filmmakers waged their political struggles to offer different forms of hegemonic masculinity through commercial cinema. Deploying R.W. Connell's three structure framework, I traced the development of the crisis tendencies born within the structures of gender relations of production, power and emotion during 2000–2014. Despite advancing at different stages, the crisis tendencies within the three structures erupted into an actual gender-order crisis during the period. I demonstrated that profound changes in the economy and politics at the turn of the second millennium sped up the maturation of the crisis tendencies within the three structures. It was during this period, like never before, that the culturally most exalted masculinity, *bapakism*, faced challenges from the emerging alternatives. Thus, my second argument in this chapter shows that the gender-order crisis triggered, on one hand, more fervent opposition to hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, the gender-order crisis also motivated various interest groups to defend the same hegemonic masculinity. I drew substantially

from this chapter, as well as from Chapter 3, as I proceeded to analyse the situatedness of the filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemony of *bapakism* and to offer alternative ideal masculinities.

Chapter 3 explored the broad implications of the gender-order crisis in Indonesian cinema. As I constantly reiterate, the gender-order crisis reinvigorated the struggle for hegemonic masculinity during the period under study. One of the poignant political arenas, in which the struggle to defend and subvert hegemonic masculinity was waged, was the cinema. In this chapter I provided a broad overview of how the gender-order crisis crept into the structure of Indonesian cinema and forced changes in the cinematic representations of gender and sexualities. I argued that Indonesian cinema turned into a contested terrain in which various interest groups waged their struggles in support or in challenge of the official gender ideals. I identified two key forces which significantly shaped the directions of the gender politics pursued in Indonesian cinema during the period—Islamisation and women's cinema. I showed that both forces developed into strong agencies for change, which motivated more intensive challenges against the hegemonic ideal and more rigorous searches for new alternative ideal masculinities in Indonesian cinema. However, they also deepened public anxiety and moral panic concerning gender and sexualities, which ultimately led to censorship. As the discussion in the remaining three chapters unfolds, both forces (Islamisation and women's cinema) substantially shaped what could and could not be idealised in terms of masculinities in Indonesian cinema.

Chapter 4 specifically discussed the filmmakers' struggles in undermining the hegemonic masculinity around the gender relations of production. I demonstrated that there were attempts by progressive filmmakers to offer alternative ideals which departed from the rigid gender relations of production, which compelled men to provide income for the family—a gender practice strongly featuring in hegemonic *bapakism*. Yet, the

filmmakers' struggle was distorted by middle-class biases. As seen in the filmmakers' struggles to legitimise the 'new man' in *7/24* and *Hijab*, the alternative ideal they promoted did encourage men to foster fluid and equal gender relations of production at the household level. However, we cannot help but notice that the idealisation of this alternative was cast exclusively in middle-class professionals. Consequently, the screen representations of alternative ideals projected by the filmmakers to replace *bapakism* tended to exclude the constant struggle of lower-class men. Furthermore, the screen representations offered by commercial filmmakers were biased towards middle-class men's interests in maintaining paid work, albeit negotiated, as a marker of their gender and class.

Chapter 5 examined the filmmakers' struggles to undermine the hegemonic ideal surrounding the gender relations of power. Taking into account the heightened Islamisation, this chapter showed how the filmmakers negotiated with contemporary gender politics in order to promote an alternative ideal which fostered equal gender relations of power amidst the intensive invocation of gender-biased interpretations of Islamic texts in defence of the *bapakism* cultural ideal. Focusing more particularly in the burgeoning *film Islami*, I examined the gender politics engaged by the filmmakers who were behind the controversial *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. This film promotes the Muslim 'new man' as an alternative ideal. In this chapter, I maintained that new hope was fostered as they cinematically presented a religiously grounded ideal masculinity which fostered equal gender relations of power. The alternative ideal promoted by the filmmakers did challenge men's normalised authoritative patron leadership in the public and domestic spheres, central to the definition of *bapakism*. It also undermined the intensive invocation of literal and gender-biased interpretations of Islamic texts in defence of the norm, thus also the hegemony of *bapakism*. Yet, the

alternative ideal was cast in middle-class Muslim men—a strategy that consigned lower-class Muslim men to the position of ‘others’.

Chapter 6 dealt with the filmmakers’ struggles to undermine the hegemonic ideal around the gender relations of emotion. As I have explained so far, heteronormativity is vital not only to the sustenance of *bapakism*’s hegemony, but also in maintaining the patriarchal gender order. The impending legitimacy of homosexuality is thus a threat not only to the cultural ideal but also to the overall patterning of gender relations. This penultimate chapter is interested in the filmmakers’ struggle to promote an alternative ideal masculinity which accommodates men’s homosexuality. I focused my investigation on the filmmakers’ struggle to legitimise the gay ‘new man’ as an alternative ideal through the commercial film franchise *Arisan!*. *Arisan!* and *Arisan! 2* were released amidst a growing moral panic against non-heteronormative individuals. I proposed two arguments. First, I showed that filmmakers had to make substantial compromises, especially in terms of the narrative and distribution of images of the gay ‘new man’. The compromises indicate that it was still possible to stage subversive challenges to the most fundamental gender practice sustaining the hegemony of *bapakism* in an arena where politics and commercial pressures were intricately interwoven. Nevertheless, the compromises indicate the growing anxiety and moral panic which imposed limitations on the extent to which filmmakers could tailor their progressive political views on gender and gender relations, particularly concerning masculinity. The second argument that I proposed in this chapter was that in spite of the progressive take on heteronormativity, the filmmakers’ relied on characters that represented middle-class gay men to voice their progressive political views, while indirectly othering lower-class gay men.

Together these chapters reinforced my central argument that some commercial filmmakers who are actively engaged with contemporary gender politics offer

alternative ideals which undermined hegemonic *bapakism*. As exemplified in their struggle to legitimise the ‘new man’ as an alternative ideal through cinematic representations, there were filmmakers who attempted to offer alternative ideals which departed from *bapakism*. Drawing from feminist discourses of gender equality, these progressive filmmakers attempted to replace the existing hegemonic ideal, sanctioned by the state and major cultural institutions in Indonesia, with an alternative which is relatively liberated from the pressures of breadwinning, authoritative patron leadership and heteronormativity. Furthermore, taking into account the intensified Islamisation on- and off-screen, these progressive filmmakers also sought for alternative interpretations of Islamic texts which justified their resistance to *bapakism* and reinforced the religious foundation of the alternative ideals they promoted. The filmmakers’ struggles in this sense indicate that new hope had emerged in Indonesian cinema. The struggles waged by Indonesian filmmakers in commercial cinema in its opposition to *bapakism* can be seen as attempts to influence the direction of the gender order towards accommodating fluid and equal gender relations. Furthermore, through the filmmakers’ struggles to legitimise the ‘new man’, we can discern that in certain aspects, filmmakers had to deal with intensified anxiety and moral panic which ultimately imposed limitations on what could be represented, let alone idealised on screen. The filmmakers’ struggle to subvert hegemonic *bapakism* around the gender relations of emotion showed that compromise was inevitable, yet worth the work to promote a subversive alternative in such a contested terrain without attracting negative attention. The filmmakers proved that substantial challenges to *bapakism* were possible to be staged the arena of gender politics, in which pressures of politics and commerce are tightly interwoven.

The findings also reinforce my second argument. Despite the progressive nature of the political engagement waged by filmmakers in commercial cinema, we cannot help but notice their middle-class prejudices. Through the filmmakers’ struggles to

legitimise variants of the ‘new man’ as alternative ideals, we can discern that despite their intentions, the representations of ideals they proposed projected the frustrations, concerns and aspirations of a certain segment of the Indonesian middle class. The alternative ideal promoted to challenge hegemonic *bapakism* around the gender relations of production excluded lower-class men who constantly struggle to make the ends meet and barely have the capacity to negotiate their breadwinning practices. The alternative ideal that challenges *bapakism* around the gender relations of power, tends to ‘other’ lower-class men who are rural based and less educated. Last but not least, the alternative ideal promoted to challenge *bapakism* around the gender relations of emotion excluded lower-class men. Indeed, the ‘new man’ alternative ideal may not represent the whole gamut of the burgeoning cinematic representations of alternative ideal masculinities in Indonesian commercial cinema. Yet, as I stated in Chapter 1, the ‘new man’ was and still is one of the strongest alternative ideals sought to be legitimised on- and off-screen. Thus, their silver-screen representations can be said to represent the concerns, aspirations as well as frustrations of a certain segment of Indonesian society.

How do these findings contribute to the existing literature on gender politics in Indonesia? In Chapter 1, I situated my research in the academic field of gender politics in Indonesia. Specifically, joining the existing literature discussing the contestations of gender issues involving various social interests in twenty-first-century Indonesia, my research offers a view from a non-conventional yet poignant political arena: commercial cinema. I filled the gap left by scholars working on this specific field, such as Tom Boellstorff (2004a), Rebecca Elmhirst (2007), Kathryn Robinson (2015), Sonja van Wichelen (2009), Pam Nilan (2009), Nilan and Argyo Demartoto (2012) and Nilan, Demartoto and Alex Broom (2013), by showing that gender politics, especially for the securing of hegemonic masculinity, were intensively pursued in this arena in the first 15



years of the twenty-first century. While the profit-driven nature of commercial cinema is indisputable, I showed that the filmmakers were active political agents who carved their way into gender politics by making negotiations and at times compromises in the processes of production and the circulation of images of alternative ideal masculinities in commercial cinema. Gender politics did permeate the production and circulation of cinematic representations of ideal masculinities, ultimately shaping what could be represented and idealised on screen at that time. My findings also show that the political battle to challenge and defend the existing hegemonic ideal was equally fierce and arguably more visible in commercial cinema during the period. Battles relating to the representations of ideals were seen through comparisons between films produced and circulated at that time, as well as through public debates and censorship that attempted to curb or cut certain representations.

Furthermore, I also contribute to the field of study by examining the class dimension of the political struggle for securing hegemonic masculinity. Among the abovementioned scholars working on the gender politics of masculinity in twenty-first-century Indonesia, even fewer take into account that political expressions, including gender, vary across social classes. Elmhirst (2007) specifically discusses violence as a common political expression of lower-class men in a rural area in Sumatera—men who felt besieged by the increased internal mobility of their female counterparts for the purpose of employment, while fewer opportunities were available for them. Van Wichelen (2009) discusses the shifting ideas of ideal masculinity among many Muslim middle-class men in early twenty-first-century in Indonesia. Burgeoning Islamisation paved the way for the proponents of polygamy to raise the issue and advocate for the custom. My research contributes to this conversation by exploring the political expressions of a certain segment of the Indonesian middle classes. Indeed, Indonesian middle classes are plural, and my research cannot capture the complexity and

contradictions of political expressions of all the members of this category. The progressive filmmakers with whom I engaged in this research are characterised as urban based, highly educated and generally critical of gender inequalities. Some of them have a background in gender activism and their work is known to be loaded with gender politics. The immediate audience, consumers of their films in commercial cinema, are also from the urban middle class. Indeed, their secondary audience is broader, especially when their films are screened on television, sold as pirated DVDs, or hijacked through video-sharing networks. Commercial films are made with a middle-class audience in mind. Consequently, Indonesian commercial cinema is a rich site for the investigation of middle-class political expressions, including ideal masculinity. I have proven that regardless of the filmmakers' intentions, middle-class biases are visible.

My research contributes to offering nuances of their complex political engagement. The middle classes were also besieged by the economic crisis, yet, as I showed in Chapter 4, the urban-based highly educated middle class represented by the commercial filmmakers were least likely to resort to public violence to express their economic frustrations. Instead, they promoted the refashioning of ideal masculinity by drawing from alternative discourses of masculinity which allowed non-breadwinning men to be figures of ideal masculinity. Nevertheless, these filmmakers did not extend their imagining to include jobless lower-class men. In Chapter 5, I showed that the filmmakers criticised (the representations of) polygamous middle-class men by promoting a Muslim 'new man' as an alternative ideal, thus fostering equal gender relations of power between husband and wife. Among the urban-based educated middle classes, represented by the progressive filmmakers engaged in this research, there was a strong pressure to embrace and advocate for the rights of non-heteronormative individuals. In Chapter 6, I demonstrated that progressive feminist filmmakers negotiated with the growing anxiety and moral panic against non-heteronormative

individuals in order to offer the gay ‘new man’ as a legitimate alternative ideal of masculinity on screen. They did have to make compromises to several aspects of their representations—compromises that were inevitable at that time. Yet, they proved that bold moves against the existing hegemonic ideal during a time of moral panic were possible in commercial films in Indonesia.

Through their political struggle to offer alternative ideal masculinities in commercial cinemas, the filmmakers attempted to influence the trajectory of the gender order, albeit in a direction that served their class interests. Borrowing the concept used by van Klinken, I argue that these filmmakers are part of the ‘national bourgeoisie’ who have the cultural capital to impose discipline on the gender order (2014: 5). In the case of my research, they attempted to do so by challenging the configuration of the existing hegemonic ideal of masculinity through cinematic representations. The distinctive role of the national bourgeoisie in Indonesian gender politics has been indisputable ever since the colonial period (see Chapter 2). Their aspirations to become ‘modern’ led them to adopt the industrialised European gender division of labour, which also resonated with that of the Javanese aristocracy. In turn, this gradual change towards modernity facilitated the ascendancy of *bapakism* into the ideal masculine position. The social change at the time drove a great many middle-class women in the Netherlands’ East Indies colony to the confines of the domestic sphere. Men’s breadwinning role was championed as more employment opportunities opened up for them in the colonial bureaucracy. Such chances afforded men power over their family collectivity. During the New Order period, *bapakism* became even stronger and ascended to the hegemonic position, enjoying endorsement from the state and major cultural institutions in Indonesia. A series of profound changes in politics and economy, however, forced changes in the structure of the gender relations that support *bapakism*’s hegemony. In the twenty-first century, these descendants of the colonial national bourgeoisie

intensively challenged the cultural ideal that their ancestors had previously helped to create and maintain.

They criticised the existing hegemonic ideal because being the sole family breadwinner able to guarantee a middle-class lifestyle for the whole family became increasingly difficult, especially in the aftermath of 1997–1998 economic crisis. At this time, deep economic, social and political trauma were felt by the middle classes. The dual-income household has become the new norm among this social category. Moreover, the increasingly vocal feminist women's movement in the post-authoritarian moment has made gender 'equality' a new buzzword for development and political correctness. Such changes have gradually eroded the hegemonic base of *bapakism*, eventually making it obsolete. Indeed, fervent defence of *bapakism* has become politically incorrect especially among highly educated members of the social category. In this social milieu, the filmmakers discussed in this thesis attempted to transform Indonesia's gender order to accommodate the changing landscape of gender relations.

Certainly, the voices of the filmmakers do not represent the whole gamut of the Indonesian middle-class. They did face challenges from their fellow middle-class filmmakers as well as other groups and individuals interested in steering the direction of gender relations in different directions. I would like to underscore that the progressive filmmakers discussed in this thesis were able to stage their public gender politics to undermine the existing hegemonic masculinity on screen despite such challenges. They imagined that a reconfiguration of ideal masculinity would lead to a transformation of the gender order. Yet, in doing so, as I have maintained throughout this thesis, they excluded the lower classes. It is in their interest that the alternative ideal projected to replace *bapakism* remains exclusive.

## **Way forward**

The sense of ‘direction’ is always central to any discussion of politics, including gender politics. As suggested by R.W. Connell, basically gender politics is about steering the gender order at a particular moment of history (2009: 144). So far, I have discussed the way that progressive filmmakers working in Indonesian commercial cinema directed their gender politics onto the silver screen. In the final part of my thesis I would like to suggest ‘directions’ of further research on gender politics in Indonesian cinema that future researchers could undertake. Taking cues from my research, I would like to suggest to two areas: audience and independent cinema.

It is the audience that consumes the images of ideal masculinities circulated through film. I constantly maintain that images of ideal masculinities constitute an important component to the ways that individuals perceive and internalise what it is to become an ideal masculine man. My research investigated how such crucial images were produced and circulated. Further investigation into how images are consumed by an audience is yet to be carried out. Scholarly investigations into how gender politics off-screen shape the ways in which audiences perceive images of ideal masculinities offered in the cinema will provide invaluable insights on the personal level of gender politics. As audiences consume cinematic representations of ideal masculinities, they negotiate their individual ideas of gender with the texts as well as with off-screen gender politics. In this way, personal gender politics can morph into public gender politics when the audience’s interpretations are published in their social media accounts or on media outlets. The process of mediatisation is also the crux of politics in itself. In this case, researchers will be able to explore the nexus between the personal and public gender politics.

Audiences are made up of autonomous individuals but the ways they perceive images do not take place in a social and political vacuum. What they perceive of films’

images of ideal masculinity do not necessarily follow what the filmmakers intended to project. As I discussed, the filmmakers' struggles to offer an alternative ideal Muslim masculinity through *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, was intended as a correction to the previously popular representation of ideal Muslim masculinity depicted in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*. To high-level state bureaucrats such President Yudhoyono, Fahri, the protagonist of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* represented not only an image of ideal Muslim masculinity but also the true teaching of Islam which countered the growing association of Muslims with acts of violence. A great many audience members found Fahri to be a contemporary answer to the growing stereotype that linked violence with Muslim men in the period post-9/11 and the heightened Islamisation in Indonesian politics at that time. Yet, for the filmmakers, the representation of ideal masculinity through Fahri was still too authoritative especially in relation to women. Thus, they were compelled to 'correct' it in their next film, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. However, their correction did not equally appeal to the audiences. Instead, the film drew controversy over its representations of Kyai and *pesantren*. This calls into question, the ways that the audience perceive the representations of ideal masculinity in each of the films. We need to ask why the audience tended to find Fahri appealing as an alternative ideal, while Khudori, intended as the 'correction' to Fahri, easily escaped their attention. Instead, the audience was more concerned about the negative portrayals of Kyai and *pesantren* in the latter film. Such questions beg an investigation on how gender politics during the heightened Islamisation contribute to shaping the ways in which audiences consume cinematic representations of ideal masculinities.

My second suggestion is a scholarly investigation of the gender politics of hegemonic masculinity in independent cinema. Unlike commercial cinema, independent cinema has a different set of practices. For one, the pressure to make a profit is less intense compared to commercial cinema. Generally, independent films do not seek to be

shown in commercial markets. Instead, they tend to aim for private, art house or festival competitions and exhibitions. A direct consequence of this is the relative freedom filmmakers have to explore topics socially considered to be taboo or sensitive.

Independent films, not intended to compete in the commercial film markets, do not have to go through state censorship. Moreover, with generally low-key publicity, they hardly ever attract negative attention or stir up public controversy. Thus, investigations into gender politics waged by filmmakers in this arena can potentially uncover different sets of political expressions. Moreover, with more plural individuals involved in the production in terms of social class status, such investigations will yield rich insights into the competing ideologies underlying the production and circulation of images of ideal masculinities in this particular arena.

Taking cues from my investigation into the filmmakers' struggles to promote gay masculinity as a legitimate alternative ideal through the *Arisan!* franchise, we can imagine that a whole different set of challenges would be faced by independent filmmakers as they attempt to stage their public gender politics through films intended primarily for film festivals and niche exhibitions. As I mentioned, filmmakers such as Teddy Soeriaatmadja, after his disappointment with the state censorship process which cut several metres from his *Lovely Man* reel, decided not to opt for the commercial market with his film, *Something in the Way*. During my fieldwork in 2014, I had the opportunity to watch *Something in the Way* at a private screening in a small arthouse cinema in Jakarta. Graphic sex scenes and a radical critique of ideal Muslim masculinity were the staple visuals in the film—two elements which would potentially face state and public censorships in the commercial arena. The same thing went with Djenar Maesa Ayu's *SAIA*, which challenges the normalisation of domestic violence in Indonesia. An investigation into how independent filmmakers, such as Soeriaatmadja and Ayu, negotiated the contemporary gender politics on- and off-screen amidst heightened

Islamisation in order to make their critique accessible for an Indonesian audience will yield rich insights into the nexus between gender politics and film subculture.

These areas of further investigation will become ever more important as cinema becomes an increasingly heated and contested terrain for the securing of hegemonic masculinity in Indonesia. Moreover, amidst the more heightened Islamisation and the growing anxieties and moral panic against non-heteronormative individuals, Indonesian cinema has become an even more crucial arena in which to contest and defend hegemonic masculinity.



# Appendix 1

## Plot Summary of 7/24

Director: Fajar Nugros  
Scriptwriter: Natatya Bagya  
Release date: 27 November 2014

The film revolves around the life of a young couple that tries to find a balance between work and family. The conflicts spring from the disrupted gender relations of labour and power as the couple's respective careers take off and force them to renegotiate their gender relations. The man, Tyo, is a film director whose career in the domestic film industry begins to shine. He often has to spend long hours on set filming. The woman, Tania, is a successful banker who is eyeing a career promotion to become a Senior Corporate Relations Manager (CRM) at her office. They have a five-year-old daughter. They live in a gated neighbourhood in greater Jakarta. They used to share the domestic and caring responsibilities between themselves without the help of a domestic assistant, with occasional help from Tania's mother and female cousin. With both of them striving for career promotion, the renegotiation of the gender relations of production and power becomes the main sources of conflict between them.

The film opens with an introduction to the characters. Tyo, who is on a tight schedule of filming, passes out on the film set. The film crew is in a panic and take him to the hospital for treatment. The introductory segment also presents Tania as a successful and extremely busy career woman and a mother. Tania tries to juggle between domestic and caring responsibilities on the one side and work responsibilities on the other. The couple used to share the domestic and caring responsibilities. Yet, as Tyo must put more hours at work to finish his film project, Tania has to take care of them herself while pursuing a full-time career. She gets help from her mother to care for her daughter this time. When Tyo is

taken to the hospital, it means she has to also care for her sick husband at the hospital on top of her existing responsibilities at home and in the office.

The film then flashes back to the previous twenty-four hours before the incident. The film shows that in the beginning, the couple tries to make things work between them when their respective careers take off. Tyo is under pressure to finish an overdue filming process for his new film. He has to work overtime. He has not been home for two days. He has not had enough rest. Neither has he consumed a healthy diet in the few days leading up to the incident. As for Tania, it is clearly depicted in the film that she is overwhelmed by the piling responsibilities at home and her office, especially when she has to demonstrate her exceptional qualities to get a promotion. Although they maintain effective communication every day through phone and video conversations, they can no longer care as much to each other or their daughter as before. Tyo can no longer take care of his share of domestic and caring duties, and Tania has to take up all the extra burden created by his absence while she herself is eyeing promotion.

The condition becomes worse when Tania's health deteriorates due to exhaustion. Tania is even busier when Tyo is hospitalised. While receiving help from her mother, Tania is still trying her best to meet her parenthood responsibilities. Returning from work, she prepares dinner for her daughter and puts her to bed. She is also trying her best to be a caring wife. After she puts her daughter to bed, she rushes to the hospital to tend to her sick husband. She leaves her daughter in the care of her mother while she sleeps at the hospital with her husband. This arrangement eventually takes a toll on her own health. She collapses at work. She is infected by the typhoid virus and is taken to the same hospital, where her husband is being treated. As they are treated in the same room, they have to bear with each other for the whole 24 hours over the course of seven days. It is during this period that the conflicts stemming from unequal relations of power and labour become heightened.

Both Tania and Tyo take their work to the hospital to each other's dismay. They are under pressure to make accomplishments in their careers. Thus, they cannot let days pass without doing any work. They think that their careers are at stake if they do not continue working, despite their being treated in the hospital for serious illnesses. Yet, they do not seem to think the same way for their partner. Tania is upset when Tyo is working on his film with his crew while in a hospital bed. Tyo is also upset with Tania not withdrawing from work and even continuing to handle a multimillion-dollar financing bid while she is very sick.

The conflict reaches a climax when Tyo regresses and he becomes a conventional masculine man, a typical *bapak*. Tyo and Tania both argue that their own career is important. It becomes clear that the possibility for Tania to achieve promotion as a senior CRM intimidates Tyo. It threatens his sense of masculinity. He is afraid that Tania will be more successful than him. He is afraid of not being an important person for her anymore. Tania blames Tyo for not being home to help with the day-to-day domestic and caring duties, which makes her so overwhelmed that she finds it difficult to juggle homemaking with her career. Frustrated by the argument, Tyo emphasises that he works long hours for their family. Hearing this, Tania is insulted and becomes even more furious. For her, Tyo's statement implies her career is secondary to his and it is her designated role as a woman to care for their child and do the domestic work. They become cold towards each other. Tania checks out early from the hospital and leaves Tyo on his own.

The conflict is finally resolved when Tyo realises that he has approached the relationship problems with Tania in the wrong way. Tania is a progressive woman, not a typical *ibu* who is domestically bound and prioritises her reproductive duties. As stated by Tania, even her main reason to marry Tyo was because she believed that Tyo was a progressive thinking man. She believed that Tyo would never ask her to choose between

work and family, and that he would always support her in her career endeavours, including sharing the domestic and caring duties with her. Finally, Tyo is symbolically shown to leave his film set and head straight home to meet Tania and his daughter.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Plot Summary of *Hijab***

Director: Hanung Bramantyo  
Scriptwriter: Rahabi Mandra  
Release Date: 15 January 2015

The comedy revolves around the lives of four young urban middle-class Muslim couples.

The first couple is Sari and Gamal. Gamal is of Arab descent and he is the representation of a conservative Islamist masculine man in the film. His wife, Sari, was an aspiring business woman before she got married. But she quit because Gamal will not allow her to work. He believes that a woman's rightful place is at home and her rightful duties are to be a submissive wife and mother. It is his masculine duty to provide a livelihood for Sari and their family. The second couple is Bia and Matnur. Matnur is a budding actor who recently found fame through his part in a successful Islamic-themed television series. Bia was an aspiring designer. She gave up her passion once she got married to Matnur in order to be able to accompany her husband on set, so she could have more quality time with him. The third couple is Tata and Ujul. Tata was an activist before getting married to Ujul, but she gave up her career once they had a baby. Ujul himself is a successful photo journalist. The last couple, Anin and Chucky, is not married yet. Anin, the daughter of a mega-rich businessman, is a French enthusiast. Chucky is an internationally recognised film director whose works are notable for their strong social criticism. Conflicts primarily spring from the changing gender relations of production and power as the women's careers take off, while the men's careers stagnate or decline. The women collaborate to establish a fashion business behind their men's backs. As their business thrives, unfortunately the men's careers either remain stagnant or declines. Conflicts reach a climax when it becomes obvious that the married women contribute more to the family's income than do their men.

The film opens with the women making their first video blog (vlog) to promote their fashion business. The taping is supposed to involve the four women, but Anin is late. So, the other three women start telling their stories without her. The man behind the camera asks why they wear *hijab*, headscarf. It is in this segment filmed in flash back mode that the viewers are introduced to the characters, especially the women and why the three of them wear *hijab*. Bia confesses that she first adopted *hijab* as her fashion style accidentally. She once came to a personal-development seminar, which was apparently religiously based and she was the only female participant who did not wear *hijab*. Realising she had worn the wrong costume, she came the next day wearing *hijab* to the surprise and delight of the instructor and her peers. Her changing appearance was mistakenly taken as improvement in her piety due to the seminar; her story was then promoted on the organiser's website. Since then, she has become known as '*gadis hidayah*' (the girl who received God's guidance). She had been invited as a speaker in various events to share her spiritual journey which led her to changing into a more Islamic fashion style. The story is different for Sari, who adopts *hijab* because her authoritative husband told her to do so in order to comply with Islamic injunctions. Sari did not have any choice but to adopt *hijab* as part of her devotion to her husband and to Islam. Another different story is from Tata. She began to wear *hijab* because she had been having hair-loss problema. She would like to cover her almost-bald scalp. Wearing *hijab* seems to give her solution and makes her look more pious.

The introductory segment is then followed by an introduction to the conflict: unequal relations of production and power. Once Bia, Sari and Tata got married, they gave up their career endeavours as indicated above. They depend on their husbands for financial support. Anin herself has not had the inclination to pursue any specific career and still relied on her parents for financial support. Basically, none of them is economically independent. The married women are full-time housewives who take care of the domestic

and caring duties in their family, while their husbands pursue their careers in the public sphere full time.

During an *arisan* meeting, where all the group members gather, there is a casual discussion about what constitutes ideal gender relations of production between a husband and a wife. When the men are grilling the meat, Gamal also makes a comment about what constitutes a proper masculine man and a feminine woman. One of the aspects he highlights in his comment is the masculine practice of breadwinning and the feminine homemaking. Chucky, who represents progress, disagrees with this strict division in the gender relations of production. Yet, Gamal dismisses Chucky by saying that this division is religiously justified. When everyone has gathered, Gamal makes a statement which eventually motivates the women to change the situation. Gamal says that even though the married women take part in the *arisan*, they actually use the men's money. So, it is actually an *arisan* for men, not for women. For the women, this statement highlights the power held by their men accorded by their financial contribution to the family. It also implies women's disempowered position in relation to men.

After the *arisan* meeting, the women meet among themselves to discuss a potential business collaboration. As they discuss different business options which do not require a large amount of financial investment and can be managed from home, they finally settle on a fashion business. They benefit from Bia's chick designs, Sari's skills at bargaining for materials, Tata's skills of marketing, and Anin's networks for extra investment. They decide to use an online platforms to sell their products so that the married members can still be full-time housewives.

Yet, as their business develops rapidly, it takes a toll especially on the married members of the venture. It becomes even more difficult to hide the business from their husbands. At first, the business takes only a little of their time. They do business

transactions in between household chores and caring for their children. When their husbands are home, they do it discreetly behind their backs. It is becoming trickier when they receive more orders from their customers. They spend more time on their phones every day to manage their business. Consequently, they find it even more difficult to straddle the business and their roles as mothers and wives. It is also more difficult to hide it from their husbands.

Conflict becomes more focused when the husbands' careers either stall or decline as the wives' career takes off. Matnur, the actor, loses his leading role in a television soap. He struggles to sustain his acting career and finds it very difficult to land on a substantial acting role. Unable to provide as much financial support as he previously did, he feels he has turned into an incapable head of the household. Ujul's career as a freelance photographer is also on the decline. He is a quite renowned photo journalist. Yet, he wants to expand his career to involve fashion and beauty. He has made a great deal of financial investment setting up a photo studio. Yet, it has been extremely difficult to compete in this segment of the market. He has not been able to generate income, and his family savings gradually diminish. Gamal, the public servant, has a stagnant career in his office. He has not been able to secure a career promotion for several years, and all the while his family expands. In short, the dwindling or stagnancy in the men's careers has left them feeling inferior; they cannot perform their ideal masculine gender practice—providing for their families. The career decline or stagnancy has emasculated them. They feel even more so when they know that their wives earn more money and contribute more significantly to the family expenses. Their masculinity is shattered.

Matnur, Gamal and Ujul generally react aggressively towards the shifting gender relations. Knowing that Bia has paid all the bills, Matnur becomes angry with his wife and ashamed of himself. He evades his wife. Gamal, who finally reveals that Sari has been



involved in a fashion business without his consent, is extremely irritated and leaves home. He thinks that Sari has challenged his authority as head of the household and has slowly taken over his role as the family's sole breadwinner. Ujul gets even angrier at Tata because their child has to be taken to the hospital due to malnourishment. The shifting gender relations of the married couple apparently has deterred Anin from establishing a committed relationship with men, including with Chucky. Although Chucky has been the voice of wisdom in the group, Anin has not been convinced about taking it further with him. She fears that she will be trapped by strict gender relations which may lead to her to be domestic bound and unable to pursue the career of her dreams.

The conflict is resolved when Matnur and Ujul realise that they have been over-reacting towards their partners' career development. They realise that they have been intimidated, fearing that they would be meaningless when their wives take over the 'masculine' gender role as the family breadwinners. Both eventually apologise to their wives. This leaves Gamal, the representation of conservative Muslim, who chooses to stick to his belief that a wife's womanly duty is to be a homemaker—to do the household works and care for children, and a man's masculine role is to provide for his family. While the other three women continue to work on their fashion business, Sari voluntarily withdraws from the collective business to focus on her family. But she and Gamal continue to be good friends with the rest of the characters. Gamal apparently is awarded a career promotion by the end of the film, which shows that he is committed to his gender role and highly dedicated to his career. Anin is eventually convinced that Chucky is the right guy for her—he will support her career and help her to achieve her dreams.



## **Appendix 3**

### **Plot Summary of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban***

Director: Hanung Bramantyo  
Scriptwriter: Gina S. Noer  
Release Date: 15 January 2009

The film revolves around the struggle of a Muslim woman, named Annisa, against unequal gender relations and the gender-biased religious interpretation of her Muslim community. A daughter of a notable religious leader, Annisa is expected to be the model of Muslim femininity by her family and her community. She is expected to be docile, domestic-bound and submissive to men's authority. Unlike her older brothers, she is not expected to pursue higher education, let alone a career in the public sphere. Instead, she is expected to marry a pious man as soon as she finishes high school. Annisa's father, brothers and teachers justify these discriminatory treatments with literal gender-biased interpretations of certain Islamic texts. So deeply entrenched is the gender-biased interpretation of Islamic religious texts in her community that most people see the discriminatory treatment as the norm. On the contrary, Annisa sees this treatment as discriminatory and has been battling for equal rights. Consequently, she is seen as a rebel by her family and the Muslim community.

The story opens with an introduction to the young Annisa and her Muslim community. The setting is in a *pesantren*, a traditional Islamic boarding school, in East Java in 1985. The *pesantren* is managed by Annisa's family. Annisa is a free-spirited young girl who has passion for reading and horse riding. Yet, her conservative Muslim family, which represents the conservative Muslim community, does not approve of her passion because she is a woman who is supposed to be docile and submissive. When her father finds out that Annisa secretly goes horse riding to the beach, he scolds Annisa in front of other family members. He thinks that she has violated the Islamic gender norms. Annisa fights

back by arguing that there were ample examples of renowned Muslim women who also rode horses. She also questions why her brothers are allowed and even encouraged to be involved in such an activity while she is not. Annisa does not get a convincing answer, other than 'she has to guard her chastity because she is a woman'. The opening scene also shows Annisa arguing against her male teacher at the *pesantren* when he decides to appoint a male class captain despite Annisa winning the vote. These are events which form the foundation of Annisa's struggle against the conservative gender construction in her Muslim community.

Annisa has almost no one to defend her stand. She is challenging the mainstream. Moreover, she is challenging her father, a prominent religious leader among conservative Muslim community. Only one person who quietly supports her is Khudhori, her step uncle.<sup>1</sup> Khudhori teaches her to ride horses and supplies her with books. He shares Annisa's progressive views of gender and her critique against the gender-biased interpretation of religious texts. Khudhori is Annisa's first love. Yet, Khudhori has to leave for Cairo to pursue higher education at Al-Azhar, leaving Annisa to struggle on her own.

Annisa continues to face gender discrimination and conservative gender indoctrination as she grows up. At school, she and other female students are taught to be submissive and docile. Aggression is not a desired feminine quality. Transgression of gender norms is socially shunned. Furthermore, Annisa is barred from pursuing a higher education, let alone moving out of town. While her father is willing to go into considerable debt to send Annisa's brothers to the Middle East to get higher degrees in Islamic studies, he is unwilling to approve Annisa's wish to pursue a university education in Yogyakarta, in

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<sup>1</sup> Annisa's grandfather from her mother side remarried to a widow with a son. The son is Khudhori, who then stays at the *pesantren* managed by Annisa's family. So, technically, Annisa is not related biologically to Khudhori.

central Java, regardless of the full-board scholarship earned by Annisa. Her gender is the main reason for that. Instead, her father arranges her marriage to Samsudin, the son of a notable *pesantren* leader in a neighbouring town. Samsudin's father was senior to Annisa's father when they went to the same *pesantren* during their younger years. Although Annisa protests the decision, the marriage arrangement continues.

Annisa faces a different level of challenge when she is forced to marry Samsudin—a man she barely knows. Following the patrilocal tradition, Annisa moves to her husband's family home, also a *pesantren* compound. In the new area, she has nobody supporting her. Her husband turns out to be an alcoholic and abusive towards her. He verbally, sexually and physically abuses her. He justifies his abusive behaviour by using a literal reading of some Islamic holy texts, which permits him to beat his wife and be authoritative over her. Annisa suffers physically and psychologically in the relationship. Her suffering is made worst when Samsudin has an affair with a woman who becomes pregnant with his child. The woman asks him to marry her. Annisa could do nothing about it because her in-laws support Samsudin's second marriage in order to save the family's name. Annisa has then to share the house with a cowife. Things only get worse from there. Samsuddin becomes even more abusive towards Annisa. She also has to witness him abusing the new wife.

Annisa meets Khudhori again after almost a decade of separation and their love rekindles. One day, Annisa asks permission from her husband and in-laws to attend a special occasion at her family's *pesantren*. There she meets Khudhori. She confronts him about why he stopped sending her letters while he was in Cairo, to which Khudhori says that he never stopped sending her letters. They then realise that Annisa's father confiscated his letters. Annisa finds comfort in Khudhori who has developed more progressive views of gender relations.

The climax is reached when Samsudin finds out that Annisa secretly meets Khudhori at the barn. There, Annisa tells Khudhori about she still loves him and hopes that he will take her away from her husband. She is even willing to sleep with him so that Samsudin will divorce her. Khudhori rejects the idea at the onset. Yet, suddenly Samsudin barges into the barn to find Khudhori and Annisa, who has discarded some of her headcover. Samsudin is furious and accuses them of adultery. He then calls for people to throw rocks at them as a religiously sanctioned punishment. Annisa's mother comes to defend Annisa and Khudhori by saying that only people who never sin are eligible to punish them. Then, the violent crowd is subdued. Shocked, Annisa's father has a heart attack, which leads to his death. After that, Samsudin divorces Annisa.

Upon her divorce, Annisa decides to move to Yogyakarta to live as an independent woman. She is enrolled at a university to get a degree in psychology. She is also involved in activism to support women victims of domestic violence. Around the same period, Khudhori also leaves the *pesantren* and works as a university lecturer while completing his doctoral degree in Yogyakarta. When they meet, they do not quickly rekindle their old flame. Annisa is badly traumatised by her previous marriage to such an abusive man. Khudhori is very persistent in convincing her that he will treat Annisa better. Annisa finally accepts his marriage proposal after dreaming of her father giving her his blessing to marry Khudhori.

Annisa's experience of becoming Khudhori's wife starkly contrasts with her previous experience with Samsudin. Khudhori is a man who is hands-on with domestic work. He is sensitive to her feelings. He patiently waits for Annisa to be ready for sexual relations with him, instead of forcing his way on her. In addition, he is intelligent and supports Annisa's career pursuits in the public sphere. Annisa finds this experience

reassuring and healing. She can finally be more open to Khudhori about her psychological wounds. When she is finally healed, she is ready to establish a fresh start with Khudhori.

Annisa returns to her family home. She is pregnant with her first child. Her pregnancy has been difficult, and her doctor advises her to take a rest from her activities. Khudhori suggests that she should be near her mother who has had more experience of pregnancies. Returning home is not that easy since her brothers have not exactly accepted her life choices and her progressive views. Yet, she does it anyway. At home she teaches the female students about becoming independent and intelligent women. She brings literature, including books that are banned by the state. Khudhori secretly also teaches the female students to criticise the gender-biased interpretations of religious texts. Teaching aside, Annisa also learns that her family has a large debt to Samsudin's family. Samsudin handles the matter with aggression and intimidation. Annisa cannot stand it anymore and demands Khudhori take her back to Yogyakarta. Unfortunately, on his way to get the train ticket, Khudhori is involved in an accident and his life cannot be saved.

Upon her husband's death, Annisa is back on her own struggling for her own cause. She has to raise her son on her own. She continues to struggle with Samsudin who is highly authoritative over her family. She also struggles to change the conservative views of gender and education deeply rooted in her conservative Muslim community, represented by her brothers. She continues to smuggle in books for the female students. She also encourages these students to be more open-minded and to seek experiences beyond the confines of the *pesantren*. Realising the abuses committed by Samsudin and Annisa's struggle to modernise the *pesantren* education, her brothers finally are convinced of the positive influence she has brought to the female students. They then support each other to fight Samsuddin and modernise the *pesantren*.





## **Appendix 4**

### **Plot Summary of *Arisan!***

Director: Nia Dinata

Scriptwriter: Nia Dinata and Joko Anwar

Release Date: 10 December 2003

The film generally revolves around a group of young Jakarta socialites who are trying to maintain their social standing among the city's elite community. The members of the elite community around which the narrative revolves are Meimei, Sakti and Andien. They are young professionals who have been best friends since high school. The conflicts stem from the group members' attempts to conceal certain social identities which threaten their position in the community. Meimei is a successful young interior designer. She has been trying to conceive but has had no success, and she begins to lose confidence in herself and her marriage. Her work partner, Sakti is a successful architect. He is gay. He has not been able to come out as he fears that his family will reject him. The other member of interest is Andien, the wife of a very successful businessman and mother of twin daughters. She previously worked as a secretary to her now husband before they got married. She is trying hard to fit in her new class cliques. Yet, although the film tries to foreground friendship and explore the individual problems of each character, Sakti's coming out dominates the plot. The film's climax is centred on Sakti's coming out story.

The film opens with an introduction to Sakti, the gay protagonist, and Meimei. The camera zooms into his morning routines, comprising morning physical exercise, body grooming and eating a healthy breakfast. After the routine, he leaves for work, where he meets Meimei. On that day, he listens to her complaining about her dull marriage. She feels that her husband is not so interested in her anymore. She blames herself for being unable to conceive. Sakti confronts Meimei and says that the situation is not necessarily due to her

childlessness. He emphasises that not all men are obsessed with having children. Cutting through the conversation, Meimei asks Sakti to accompany her to an *arisan* gathering, but he declines because he has to attend a meeting.

Apparently, Sakti has been plagued by anxiety due to his sexuality. He is aware that he is more sexually attracted to other men. The film also shows Sakti's more feminine mannerism, for instance his meticulous attention to Meimei's makeup, his fondness for body grooming (i.e. body scrub, spa and massage) and his soft hand gestures. Sakti has been seeking help from a psychiatrist. He has also been taking some drugs online, that are proclaimed to 'cure' homosexuality. His psychiatrist has been trying to convince him that homosexuality is not an illness which needs to be cured, and to be gay is becoming increasingly acceptable. Yet, Sakti still insists that he wants to be 'normal' as he fears rejection from his family and society. He comes from an affluent Batak family. As the only son, he is expected to carry on his family lineage. His widowed mother places high expectations on him that one day, he will marry well into another Batak family and give her many grandchildren. Sakti is afraid of shattering her dreams. He has been covering his gayness by developing his muscles and having tattoos done in order to look more macho.

The scene continues with Sakti dropping by the *arisan* gathering which Meimei is attending. There, he meets Andien and other elite young women, members of the *arisan* gathering. Sakti soon becomes the darling boy of these women. He is very affectionate, sensitive to women's feelings, attentive and romantic. He plays a tune on the piano at first to himself but soon to an audience of women. He is even invited to take part in the *arisan* group. On their way back to the office, Meimei mentions to Sakti that his emotional sensitivity has won him the women's attention.

Sakti then meets Nino, a potential client. Nino is a gay film director who is seeking help to renovate his film studio. Apparently, he once met Sakti at the gym. Nino likes Sakti

and suspects that he has a chance at a romantic liaison because, based on his observation, Sakti is possibly a gay too. Nino searches Sakti's contact details and arranges a meeting with him. In their first meeting, Nino confidently tells Sakti that he is gay. Sakti is surprised at how Nino is very comfortable and confident with his nonheteronormative sexuality. Nino encourages Sakti to be honest at least to himself about his own sexuality. The two then date secretly because Sakti is still not ready to tell people about his sexuality, let alone his relationship with Nino.

Nino also begins to be friends with Meimei. After her divorce, Meimei is still heart broken. Although she finds out that her ex-husband had been unfaithful to her, she can't help blaming herself for her situation. When Sakti is on a business trip overseas, Nino steps in to console her. Meimei finds comfort in Nino's companionship. She is unaware of Nino's sexuality, or his relationship with Sakti.

The conflict escalates when Meimei finds out that Nino is gay and in a relationship with Sakti. On Nino's birthday, Andien prepares a surprise. She sneaks into Nino's apartment and brings cake, hoping that Nino would be surprised by her presence. Unfortunately, she has to witness Nino arriving at the apartment arm-in-arm with Sakti. She also sees their romantic kiss. She is very disappointed. In the situation, Sakti is plagued with guilt and shame. Meimei eventually tries to understand Sakti and Nino and accept their togetherness.

The conflict reaches a climax when Sakti has to open up to his mother about his sexuality. His mother has just come from Medan. She brings with her one of Sakti's distant cousins, Lita, who she expects to be wedded to Sakti. Sakti cannot hide his sexuality from Lita for long as she finds some gay magazines in Sakti's room. Instead of rejecting Sakti, Lita supports him to come out of the closet and tell his mother. Sakti is still not confident until the *arisan*, hosted by Sakti at his house. At that time, his mother accidentally hears

him arguing with Nino about their relationship. His mother confronts him with the question and says that she does not mind his gayness. She highlights that she wants Sakti to be honest with himself and his family. The reaction is beyond Sakti's expectation. He is relieved that everyone that matters for him accepts him as he is.

The abovementioned climax makes the conflict faced by Andien—her husband's adultery and her revenge less significant. Andien finally finds that her husband has been cheating on her. As a revenge, she engages in a series of sexual relations with young male escorts. She also falls in love with an art curator, who happens to be a drug addict. One day, while she and her boyfriend are driving home from an art gallery, police randomly stop their vehicle for weapon possession check. Unfortunately, the police find a package of heroin belonging to Andien's boyfriend. They then are taken into police custody. Andien calls Meimei for help. She finally realises that the revenge only hurts herself and her family. She returns to her family.

The resolution offered by the film was 'honesty'. When each character is honest about who they are, life is much simpler and happier. The film closes with Meimei, Sakti and Andien able to accept themselves and each other.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Plot Summary of *Arisan! 2***

Director: Nia Dinata

Scriptwriter: Nia Dinata

Release Date: 1 December 2011

The story revolves around the same main characters, Meimei, Sakti and Andien. In this film, they are almost 40 years old and face different sets of problems. The story carries heavier baggage in relation to challenging homophobia, raising awareness of cancer and different types of family, as well as encouraging women's agency and their participation in politics. The film is narrated by Meimei, the primary driver of the story. We view other characters from her perspective.

The introduction part of the plot is lengthy as the film tries to reintroduce the protagonists, their networks and their problems. The film opens with Meimei reflecting on her recent journey to value time. She mentions about how things have changed around her in the past eight years. She tells the viewers that Sakti and Nino have broken up and each has been dating another man. Andien survives being a single mother and business woman in the wake of her husband's death. Lita was brave enough to raise a son and chooses to stay unmarried. As for herself, Meimei says that she is back being single and learning to value her remaining time in this world.

The introduction then moves forward to introducing the problem faced by Nino and his queer film activism. As we learned in the previous instalment, Nino is a renowned film director. He has been engaged in activism promoting films made by and about LGBTIQ. In this second instalment, we see that the Rainbow Film Festival he organises is heavily protested against by an unknown group of people despite it having been held seven times already. There is a scene showing a demonstration outside the theatre where the film

screenings are held. Although the protesters are not wearing religious attributes, they draw from religious discourses in their oration. Attendees and organisers are condemned by the hostile homophobic protesters as being immoral and supporting pornography. Nino and other protagonists of the film tend to see the public protest as backward and conservative. The festival continues despite the protest and lack of protection from the state. Nino, in particular, sees that the protest might indicate that the country is heading in a different direction considering that it is the seventh queer festival he has held, and the protest has only happened now, instead of years ago.

The story then shifts to Sakti who continues to see his psychiatrist because life as a gay man in a heteronormative society has not been easy for him. Sakti has been keeping his meetings with the psychiatrist from his friends and family. During the sessions, he usually shares his psychological burden with the psychiatrist. This time, he tells his psychiatrist that actually he has not moved on from Nino. He still feels jealous every time he sees Nino and his new partner together, despite himself dating another man. Sakti is also jealous of Gerry's wife although from the very beginning of their relationship he knows that Gerry is not a single guy. Gerry has been keeping the identity of his wife a secret from Sakti. The psychiatrist probes why Sakti seems to be afraid of being a single. The question is unanswered, and the scene moves on to Meimei in Lombok.

Meimei, who is battling Hodgkin's lymphoma, struggles to accept her mortality. She hides her medical condition from friends and family. Having exhausted medical treatment, she chooses to undertake palliative care. She escapes Jakarta to enjoy a quieter life in Lombok, an island east of Bali known for its pristine beaches and mountains. She is being treated by a doctor who is an expert in meditation and herbs. She has been staying on the island for the past two months. She does not tell her friends about her illness and choice of treatment. She lied to her friends that she was taking an extended vacation there. She is

accompanied by Lita's son, Talu, whom she coparents. Overtime, she develops a close relationship with her young healer, Tom, an Buddhist Indonesian of Chinese descent.

The plot then moves on Andien and her network. Andien has maintained her position among the Jakarta elites. She has established a successful event-organiser company after the death of her husband. Her clients are mostly Jakarta socialites. Romance-wise, she has been seen with a string of men, to the dismay of her twin daughters. She seems to be having fun with her current status and her flourishing business. Her elite cliques gossip about her being robbed of her fortune by her recent boy-toy. Yet, Andien seems to care nothing about what people think about her. According to her, there are too many imperfect things in her life, and she wants to take control of her appearance. She has had a series of liposuction operations and quite recently she had an eye-lift procedure. In this scene set in a Moroccan restaurant, in addition to meeting Lita, Nino and Octa, she also meets her *arisan* ladies and her new elite network, consisting of Dr Joy, a famous plastic surgeon, Ara, an art collector and Yayuk Asmara, a successful writer. At a separate table from the *arisan* ladies, Andien is listening to Lita, now a successful young lawyer who is eyeing a seat in parliament. Lita tells Andien and Nino that she has been struggling with the personal profiling campaigns against her. She has been accused of being gay because of her involvement in LGBT activism. Furthermore, Andien also congratulates Nino for the success of the film festival. Once Lita, Nino and Octa leave, Andien joins the *arisan* ladies at another table.

Nino is trying hard to fit into his new boyfriend's world. His friends do not particularly approve of his relationship with Octa because to them, Octa is dependent, clingy, possessive and too obsessed with social media presence. But they respect Nino's decision. Octa suspects that Nino and Sakti actually have not moved on from each other.

Thus, Octa still feels insecure when they meet Sakti. Moreover, the circle of friends expects that Sakti and Nino will get back together.

After keeping her medical condition a secret for quite a while, Meimei does not realise that her secret has accidentally been revealed. Sakti, who is also Meimei's business partner, accidentally finds out that she is terminally ill with cancer. Unintentionally, he receives a report about Meimei's hospital bills from Singapore International Hospital from his employee at the office. Sakti is shocked to learn about Meimei's condition. He calls his circle of friends for a meeting to discuss Meimei's condition. Then, Lita makes a call to Meimei checking on how she is doing, while the others are listening. To their surprise, Meimei's voice sounds very vibrant and healthy. They seem to be confused of what is actually happening to her.

Meimei herself has been enjoying her treatment and vacation in Lombok. The palliative care she has been receiving from Tom has helped to stabilise her condition. But, there are still episodes where her cancer wreaks havoc with her immune system and makes her weak. Meimei meets Molly, a wise bartender also suffering from cancer. Molly comforts Meimei and says that cancer is actually a blessing—they are among the few people who know that their time in this world is going to end soon, so they have to enjoy the remaining time well. Apparently, Molly was previously Tom's patient.

Meimei finally gives in to the pressure of her friends and work. She returns to Jakarta for a brief period. Tom goes with Meimei and Talu her to the airport. While they are catching a flight to Jakarta, Tom is heading to Yogyakarta to attend the Vesak service at Borobudur temple. Meimei and Talu are picked up by Sakti. On their way to Meimei's house, Talu tells Sakti—a father figure—that he has adopted another father, Tom. This conversation gives Sakti a cue that Meimei has a special relationship with her healer. At home, Meimei and Talu are welcomed by Andien, Lita and Nino. No one confronts Meimei



about her illness. They are just happy to see Meimei looking happy and fresh. While Lita is spending the night with Talu, the rest are going to their nostalgic Chinese restaurant.

Meimei is no longer on a diet. She wants to eat everything she has missed for the past nine years. Accidentally, they meet Gerry and his daughter. Andien suddenly realises that Sakti is dating Dr Joy's husband. Sakti himself is a patient of Dr Joy. Andien does not tell Sakti about Gerry's wife's identity immediately.

The next scene is a book launching and fund raising party for flood victims in Jakarta, hosted by Dr Joy and Ara. Andien is the organiser of the event. Despite Andien's persistence, Meimei skips the party and chooses to go to Borobudur to attend the Vesak service with Tom. There she listens to a moving sermon about life and death, which reminds her of her own mortality. At the party, the elite clique meets with other elite networks, including celebrities. By the end of the party, Andien reveals to Sakti that Gerry is Dr Joy's husband. When the party is almost over, Gerry arrives. He meets Sakti who confronts him about the fact he just discovered. Gerry assures Sakti that his wife already knows of their affair and does not mind it.

The next day, Sakti is invited to have breakfast with Gerry and Dr Joy at their mansion. During breakfast, Sakti is offered an arrangement, which is not revealed to the audience. Dr Joy also clearly states that she does not mind their relationship as long as they are discreet. Guessing from Sakti's rejection and decision to break up his relationship with Gerry, the arrangement does not suit him and sounds absurd. Suddenly, Ara joins them for breakfast. Dr Joy exhibits a romantic public display of affection with Ara, who has been her long-time business partner.

Meanwhile, Meimei is back in Lombok. She does not say goodbye to her friends this time. She really wants to enjoy her remaining time without being burdened by the pretentious networks of Jakarta elites. She loves her friends, but she cannot be the person

she used to be because she has limited time. She wants to spend the limited time in a quieter place and find peace. She starts making recordings of her activities. She meets again with Molly at the reggae bar. She asks Tom to join her at the bar one night to dance. There Tom meets Molly, his former patient. Molly asks him to help Meimei deal with her unstable condition. The three of them then spend the night together at Molly's place.

Knowing about Meimei's severe condition, the elite clique decides to visit her in Lombok. They want to comfort her and be part of her healing process. They want to give Meimei a surprise visit. The trip to the island is not as easy as expected for Andien and Octa. They have to take a small boat to reach the island where Meimei is being treated. Once they are there, they have difficulty in locating Meimei's villa. They meet her the day after their arrival. When they meet, Meimei can hardly face them. She just plays a video she has prepared for them. They cry and then offer comfort to her. It is during this trip that Nino eventually breaks up with Octa. Octa is aware that Nino has not moved on from Sakti and the same goes for Sakti. Octa leaves the island after breaking up with Nino. Sakti and Nino rekindle their romance to the delight of their friends. The film ends with the protagonists are enjoying their time together at the beach where they are joined by Tom and Molly.

## **Appendix 6**

### **List of Research Participants**

The following list is made in order of appearance. The date in the brackets is when I conducted interview(s) with the respective participants.

#### **Filmmakers**

Chairun Nisa (08 March 2014)  
Putut Widjanarko (10 March 2014)  
Prima Rusdi (12 March 2014)  
Anggun Priambodo (17 March 2014)  
Ucu Agustin (20 March 2014)  
Tumpal Tampubolon (1 April 2014)  
Jujur Prananto (2 April 2014)  
Riri Riza (10 April 2014)  
Gina S. Noer (11 April 2014)  
Salman Aristo (11 April 2014)  
Imam Tantowi (14 April 2014)  
Garry (pseudonym, 17 April 2014)  
Hanung Bramantyo (21 April 2014, 18 and 19 August 2014)  
Didi Petet (17 April 2014)<sup>1</sup>  
Titien Wattimena (23 April 2014)  
Beta Ingrid Ayuningtyas (23 April 2014)  
Ilya Sigma (27 April 2014)  
Putrama Tuta (27 April 2014)  
Manoj Punjabi (2 May 2014)  
Anirudya Mitra (6 May 2014)  
Priesnanda Dwisatria (9 May 2014)  
Mandy Marahimin (16 May 2014)  
Amelia Hapsari (20 May 2014)  
Faozan Rizal (22 May 2014)  
Nia Dinata (28 May 2014)  
Lucky Kuswandi (28 May 2014)  
DS Nugraheni (22 January 2016)  
Shanty Harmayn (04 April 2016)  
Oki Setianadewi (08 March 2017)

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<sup>1</sup> Didi Petet passed away on 15 May 2015.

## **Feminist activists**

Syaldi Sahude (07 March 2014)

BJD Gayatri (22 September 2014)

Mariana Amiruddin (29 September 2014)

Sabar Riyadi (11 September 2014)

Saeroni (11 September 2014)

Myra Diarsi (1 October 2014)

Sri Kusyuniati (11 October 2014)

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