

# Introduction

Historically, the Wests have been seen as the locus of modernity by both Western and non-Western societies. The latter, in contrast, have typically perceived themselves, and in the Wests still are perceived as, pre-modern, traditional and peripheral. In consequence, modernization has been seen as a typically occidental process that non-Western societies could embrace only by abandoning their own 'traditional' cultures (Galland and Lemel 2008: 153). However, the idea of modernity or modernization is today the subject of extensive debate and has been subjected to rapidly changing political, economic, social and intellectual climates, both globally and regionally. The evidence of global diversity is now leading to questioning the nature of Western 'ownership' of modernity, and indeed is generating different understandings of it. This study extends this discussion by re-examining the idea of modernity in relation to perceptions of center and periphery within the context of postcolonial Indonesia where the notion of a homogenizing Western modernity is actively challenged by the heterogenic nature of the country's societies.

Typically, the discourse on modernities has largely relied on the perspectives of social science theories and has been less grounded in empirical findings. Firstly, contemporary arguments have generally been based on the debate concerning the ownership or the special significance of European modernity, thus typically overemphasizing a Western interpretation of world history. Secondly, debate exists on the chronological sequence of modernity, which also gives precedence to the European West as this typically privileges the Industrial (technological) Revolution that occurred in Europe from 1780 onwards. While not claiming to be comprehensive, this ethnographic study joins the growing and vibrant academic discussion on multiple modernities by relating it to ideas of center and periphery. It adds to the existing literature based on contemporary empirical engagement with and experience of multiple modernities (including Western modernity) in the everyday world and is particularly relevant to the scholarship of contemporary modernities and contemporary social theories more broadly. Given the scope and the descriptive and interpretative nature of the

research, there are no hypotheses to prove in this study; the methodology of this study is ethnographic. It aims to provide a comparative case study of the perceptions and experience, the framing and the contestation of multiple modernities by different social groups in urban and rural areas of two selected regions in Indonesia: Manado in North Sulawesi province and Yogyakarta on the island of Java.

Manado, a predominantly Christian region and the provincial capital of North Sulawesi, is selected because it offers a focus on a significant region outside the Indonesian 'center', constituted by the island of Java which is generally regarded as the center of political policy making as well as of modernizing influences. Manado also boasts a distinct history of modernization and political autonomy and is known for its close relationship with the Wests predating the creation of Indonesia as a modern nation-state. Its self-concept and sense of modernity have been tightly affiliated to the Wests, particularly through its identification with Western Christianities. Yogyakarta was selected as it is considered to be a significant cultural and educational town in Indonesia (*kota budaya dan pendidikan*). It is one of the foremost cultural centers of Java, as well as the home of almost one hundred tertiary institutions with countless students and intellectuals from different ethnic and regional backgrounds. This makes the city a major cultural melting pot of Indonesia. The region was designated by the national government as a special administrative area (*Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, DIY*) due to its central role during the struggle for Indonesian independence. Yogyakartaans are proud of the role they played in the formation of the modern nation and their local cultural traditions while simultaneously upholding the cultural diversity of Indonesia.

As in other postcolonial nations, the current cultural, ideological, political and economic debates in Indonesia continuously engage with broader questions about the direction of the future, the place of traditions, and the nature of modernity or modernities. In an attempt to understand the nature and complexities of these debates, the dissertation focuses on how such questions are framed in these two selected regions. Specifically it aims to investigate the following questions: What does modernity mean to research informants and how is it expressed on an everyday basis? In which way is modernization perceived? What operates as the Indonesian center in framing the attitudes of research informants? What operates as the West(s) and global center(s) in framing the attitudes of research informants and how do these play out in

their daily lives? These questions are to be investigated in this study, and in order to avoid predetermining what was to be observed or what kind of information was to be elicited from research informants, I undertook the study without an *a priori* hypothesis. Instead, combining the findings from my participant observation as an ethnographer, this study investigates the emic perspective: the narratives provided by ordinary people or the research informants themselves in order to allow space for them to express their individual perceptions and experiences of modernity or modernities as well as ideas about center and periphery. The study will demonstrate both the particularity and the complexity of everyday cultural knowledge and practices as well as the tacit rules of behavior for Indonesians in relation to modernity or modernities in plural.

It should be noted, however, that this book is not structured by a systematic comparison. The structure of the book is in fact inspired by and grounded in the issues and concepts that I was confronted with in the fieldwork. It proceeds in seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, I will provide an overview of Indonesia's national history followed by regional kaleidoscopic accounts on each of the regions under study. In this historical overview, I will emphasize and highlight the distinct trajectories in the regional historical accounts of Manado and Yogyakarta. In the section on Manado, I will provide a description of the history of Christianity in the region, as Christian ontology was central to the experience of modernity there. The historical survey also describes Manado's regional history, which highlights its peripheral role in the narrative of Indonesia's national history. The kaleidoscope of Yogyakarta indicates another extreme. Here the study draws attention to its glorious pre-colonial history as a Javanese kingdom, as well as to its central role in the national history of Indonesia, which has significantly shaped the cultural confidence of its inhabitants.

The second chapter discusses the conceptual framework of this study. Here, I briefly outline the classical concept of modernity followed by the conceptual framework on which this study is based. This has been strongly inspired by various contemporary alternative perspectives on modernity that attempt to account for global and local differences. These include the concepts of 'multiple' (Eisenstadt 2000), 'entangled' (Randeria 2006; Therborn 2003), 'alternative' (Taylor 2001), and trans- (Dussel 2002) modernities. Rather than pointing out the differences between those alternative perspectives, I group them

as one category emphasizing their shared similarities. These critical perspectives are concerned with interrogating notions that assume the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms of modernity. By emphasizing the emancipatory and relational perspectives and peculiarities of other cultures, those alternative perspectives offer the potential for a fuller understanding of the characteristics of different settings of sociocultural life. I draw on these alternative theoretical concepts to support the argument of this study that modernity needs to be perceived as qualitative. However, this qualitative notion of modernity is not to suggest the end of modernity nor that modernity or modernities mainly belong to empirical categories. In fact, this study still points out that modernity, with its prism concept of change, remains a significant analytical scholarly category.

I base my conceptual framework of center and periphery on the work of Kevin Platt (2011) and Ulf Hannerz (1989). Platt argues that the binary categories of center and periphery index degrees of significance, create and reflect distributions of power, and articulate standards and deviations. This concept offers a dynamic pattern that can be repeated on many different levels (Urry 2000: 199) and realms, including cultures and modernities. Hannerz argues that the twentieth century has been witness to the growth of a global ecumene of culture, an organization of diversity structured by center-periphery relations (1989: 200) which are heavily asymmetrical (1992: 29). These theories lead me to examine my empirical findings which suggest that the shift from a Eurocentric definition of modernity towards a more transnational understanding reflects the dynamism of center and periphery relations.

Chapter III presents the ethnographic methodology employed in this study. A participant observation-based study, backed by extensive interviews with research informants from various backgrounds, was developed to investigate how people view and express modernity in their daily lives. Besides applying these classical ethnographic methods, I also take advantage of applying certain new methods, namely multi-sited ethnography recommended by George Marcus (1995), and the tandem design approach coined by Judith Schlehe (2008). In my project, multi-sited ethnography combines offline and online interviews, as well as observation featured as part of a tandem design approach, which in this case combines the efforts of a German and Indonesian researcher. Both approaches form innovative methods that

emphasize critical self-reflexivity, produce richer ethnographic data and provide more complete pictures of the societies under study.

Chapters four to six present the empirical findings of the study. Chapter four takes a closer look at the realms of everyday life, religion, migration, patterns of consumption and social celebrations in order to explore the discursive nature of modernity in its wider anthropological sense among the Manadonese. Chapter five discusses the experience of multiple modernities and traditions in Yogyakarta. Here I discuss Islamic modernity followed by the demonstration of Asian mass culture and Western modernity. It becomes obvious that the co-presence of traditions and modernities have contributed to the regional pride of the Yogyakartaans. Chapter six extends this analysis to demonstrate how ideas of center and periphery operate amongst both the Manadonese and Yogyakartaans. In chapter seven, I will conclude with summarizing remarks on the relationship between various and overlapping perceptions on center and periphery in connection to the perceptions, experience and the framing of modernities in both regions.

