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Individualization and LGBTI - A New Topic for Political and Religious Discourse in Indonesia

I. Indonesia Between Tradition and Modernity

Due to its history and natural conditions, Indonesia is a nation of diversity. The country is an archipelago nation that consists of more than 400 tribes over 17500 islands; 200 languages are spoken, the people are devoted to 60 traditional religions and beliefs - although formally only six of them have been recognized so far - and seven major ethnic groups constitute a country with a long tradition of coexistence in diversity for more than 1500 years. Thus various traditions, cultures, religions, beliefs, ethnics, tribes and languages were united when the Republic was founded. At that time, diversity also characterized Indonesian politics. Competing ideas, concepts and ideologies such as Nationalism, Islamism, Communism, Socialism and Liberalism had its followers within Indonesian societies. Cooperation across these political boundaries influenced essentially the dynamics of the fight for independence. Based on the historic experience that unity within given heterogeneity was the key factor for success, Indonesia's founding fathers showed strong efforts in uniting the existing diversity and political currents under the national concensus *'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika'*, Hindu-Sankrit words meaning *unity in diversity*, based on five national basic principles outlined in the concept of *'Pancasila'*. Inclusiveness, coexistence in harmony became national credo and guideline for politics.

Based on Pancasila and the spirit of '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' as political common denominator, nation building took place as a secular state, leaving people their individual beliefs with a muslim majority of 86%, 12% catholic and protestant Indonesians, and 2% others. Consequently national law, mechanisms of governance and political considerations followed the concept of Indonesia as a secular nation-state[1]. Indonesian societies exist within in a secular social structure and political framework, while people follow their respective religious convictions, related values and norms in private. This framework provided the basis for Indonesia as an open country that integrated itself into the international community, and that showed openness for influences from the outside, for example on conceptualization of democracy, liberal policies such as freedom of association and press, as well as the idea of individual human rights. Overall, Indonesian societies have shown themselves adaptive towards influences of modernization.

Recent waves of globalization gave severe impact on all world societies, and thus also Indonesian people experienced their strong influence. Globalization has led to encounters with new concepts of individual freedom, heterogeneous cultures and social relations; they challenge social traditions and traditional institutions. Neoliberal economic order dominates the way of thinking. Today's capitalism forces the individual to increase productivity and speed of life[2], to focus on work (as hard as possible), to become specialist in order to contribute to a modern economy based on division of labor, to be output oriented and to fulfill targets on time. In Durkheim's words, the new spirit of capitalism has strong impacts to individual lifes, on social ties, relations, norms and aspects of morality. Growing individualism leads to dwindling relevance of collective values and social bonds. Sense of community and related ideas of collective identity are declining towards cultural anomie (Elwell, 2003).

As a result, young people, for example, turn away from traditional norms and moral standards. They develop individual ideas of family and relationship (including sexual relations) instead. Indonesian societies are entering a new era

[1] An exception is the region of Aceh, where sharia law has been introduced under a special regulation due to its historical background as a region of conflict that was striving for independence from Indonesia.
[22] On increasing speed as phenomenon of our times and its consequences: Hartmut Rosa (2009).

of social lives. Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim has analyzed such a change: when a society enters transition towards modernity, a fundamental transformation of both institutions and way of life starts. Traditional social relations, bonds, beliefs and moral standards decline; they get replaced by individualized lifestyles. Individuals will gain freedom, new options and choices. But this does not mean that individualization will lead to a situation without rules and order (Beck-Gernsheim, 2013). The process of 'becoming individual', in Scott Lash' words, rather marks a new stage of modernity; Ulrich Beck used the label *second modernity* or *reflexive modernity* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In the second modernity, individuals re-arrange individual life in a society, where increasing personal freedom and choices meet traditional norms. Consequently, social tensions are triggered and may lead to conflict. Attempts to re-define concepts of family and social relations are part of this modernization process; examples we find in discourses about gender, life styles and sexual orientations.

The weakening of traditional family relations in Indonesia is documented by recent social data (Supreme Court, 2015). Also in Indonesian context, the sketched development has become visible first in metropolitan areas. Modern information technology plays an important role in the dynamic further extension beyond urban areas - and also has become a part of the new scenario. As young people move to cities for economic reasons or to pursue a career, face-to-face contacts with parents and with the family of birth are replaced by communication through social media. While traditional families are used to a living together across generations, an increasing number of parents now lives without their children. Also the number of divorces is increasing. Divorce initiated by wives due to economic problems or "marital disharmony" has reached a number of 60% out of the total number of divorces in Indonesia between 2010 and 2014. This indicates growing individual expectations of women and an increasing willingness to draw consequences, if individual expectations in a partnership are not fulfilled. To be referred to oneself and challenged to shape an individual life beyond familiar patterns of life - these new realities are experienced by many people as a shock. They cause feelings of social disintegration, of a loss of security and excessive demands to adjust.

The experience that traditional forms of living together and intimacy are eroding due to the challenges of work life under the conditions of capitalism

with its pressure for availability and mobility apart from the community of origin (*kampung* and family) forces families to adapt with the individual conditions of life. Gerardo Meil showed this pressure to adapt in his studies about Spain, Kalmijn and De Vries for Austria, Germany, the UK and the USA. The dynamics of today's economic system and of individualization does not make humans less social beings. But the frame conditions and thus the social practices are changing, and with it the need to invest time and energy in learning how to re-organize intimacy and living together with others (family), as well as to acquire the necessary social skills (Meil, 2011).

For many Indonesian families it is crucial to shape a concept for family life that is able to match economic imperatives. I argue that the strongest impact on family intimacy we will see over the next years in families with low income. People are increasingly forced to leave traditional surroundings in order to guarantee a minimum living wage for themselves and their families. In addition they will need to allocate more resources to fulfil primary needs such as housing, food and education for children, and - due to their precarious economic situation - to cut down at the same time costs for social life (f.e. for travelling to their home villages, for communication by phone calls or internet connection). It is unlikely that their income situation will improve significantly because of a high competition on job markets. Standard salaries in Indonesia will remain on a very low level that hardly allows to fulfill minimum needs of individual physical life.

While a part of Indonesian societies continues to refer to traditional models of life and aims – under increasing pressure - at stabilizing them despite economic challenges, others try to adapt their lifestyles to the changing living conditions and to develop new forms of solidarity, of social community, partnership and intimacy. The second modernity and today's capitalism lead to a heterogeneization. Richard Sennett (1998) has conceptualized transformation of traditional perceptions, particularly on roles of women and men, and on arrangements of intimacy and living together towards flexible concepts. Discourses on Gender play an important role in this context. They not only contribute to deconstruction of ideas of a homogenous, naturally given order, but ask public recognition and for equality of heterogeneous concepts as consequence of pluralization. The gender mainstreaming approach is the global

framework for public policies in this context[3]. A lot of attention is given in public debate also to different sexual orientations. Long lasting same sex partnerships have become visibile and a lesbian and gay community (abbreviated LGBTI) was established in the public sphere. Thus sexual desire that exists throughout all times and cultures is transformed under the impact of modernity into new forms of individual and collective identity. Alternative concepts to heterosexual marriage and traditional family have become possible and livable. From perspective of inflexible world views and humans socialized under conditions of conformity, this is perceived as a threat[4]. But such arguments have no empiric basis as same sex relationships are not questioning traditional life styles of the majority. They occur as a result of the same global developments that challenge everyone to adapt or to find new arrangements for partnership and intimacy.

From a perspective of human rights, the legitimacy of self determination for each human includes the aspect of sexual orientation and living in partnerships. This issue step by step has entered public recognition and public discourses in Indonesia, backed up by mass media since 1998. But people who perform their 'coming out' and those who advocate understanding or empathy on LGBTI issues, so far experience little support, yet often harsh negative reactions, particularly from traditionalistic and religious communities that see a diversification of forms of partnership and sexual orientation as Un-Indonesian or sinful. Despite the emotional debates, the efforts of civil society organizations and LGBTI activists to claim equality from a political perspective of citizenship is stimulating academicians and policy makers to open a new landscape of discourses on the future of Indonesia's societies.

In the following I will summarize the emerging LGBTI movement, its perception in and its contribution to public and religious discourse as an examplaric battlefield in the ongoing struggle within Indonesian society around the question of balancing tradition and modernity. I will show that the second wave of modernization leads to a reinterpretion of traditional reference frames such as religion, particularly in Islamic context, and to approaches that aim to bridge the gap between changing social reality and religious teaching.

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[3] For details on Gender Mainstreaming see the article by Britta Thege in chapter 4.
[4] Christoph Behrens has elaborated on this aspect in chapter 1.

II. LGBTI Movement in Indonesia

Nowadays, the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- and intersexual people (LGBTI) in Indonesia is characterized by discrimination, harassment, and other social distinctions. In national laws LGBTI are nonexistent while in several local regulations LGBTI persons as labeled as abnormal and sinful - although their rights as citizens are fully guaranteed by the constitution. Socially, problems of acceptance and open rejections are experienced, particularly from religious activists from radical Islamic, Catholic and Protestant groups. They try to fight public presence of LGBTI activists and their efforts to organize their interests, work for support of LGBT rights based on Indonesia's constitution and the principles of human rights, to influence public policies and decision making. UNDP (2013) summarizes:

"Although 'being LGBT' in Indonesia is not criminalized, expressing itself in public as LGBT person in societies will meet rejections and alienations because of opposing dominant interpretation of religious values of Islam by the majority."

The big majority of LGBTI persons are muslims at the same time, who keep their sexual orientation a secret. Discussions take place only in protected environment, aside of the religious community. These gays and lesbians recognize Islam as their religion, but experience their sexual identity and Islam as 'ungrammatical' (Boellstorff, 2005-B). In contrast, 'waria' (transsexuals) experience more acceptance in Indonesian societies; they can, for example, appear in public or assemble easier (Boellstorff, 2005-A). LGBTI in Indonesia started to organize themselves in 1969 when several activists established 'Wadam' (abbreviation of 'Wanita Adam' or Adam's Women), a community for 'waria' or transvestite persons, in Jakarta. The establishment of Wadam increased self confidence of its members and inspired the founding of similar communities in other cities (Yogyakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Bali, Medan, Manado). Experienced social pressure and rejection at that time was very strong, waria were perceived as 'abnormal'. But the founding was backed and supported by Jakarta Governor, General Ali Sadikin. In fact, the organization

was not limited for *waria*, but became an organizational frame for all LGBTI. Public activities at that time were conducted extremely carefully.

In Soeharto Era, when democratic movements were under pressure by military force, also for LGBTI activities narrow space was left. Soeharto's regime promoted heterosexual marriage and a family planning programme, '*Keluarga Berencana*', based on a conservative understanding of family and intimacy. Together with radical Islamist groups such as *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Front), Soeharto's regime tried to suppress LGBT activities through tight control of activists. Despite these circumstances, LGBTI established on 1 March 1982 *Lambda Indonesia*, the first Gay organization in Indonesia and even in Asia. Founded in Solo, Central Jawa, soon after its establishment various similar groups came up, for example in Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Surabaya[5].

A milestone of LGBTI struggle for their rights was reached in 2006: 29 experts and activists from 25 countries around the world joined in an international meeting in Yogyakarta from 6 until 9 November 2006. In this conference the final draft on a paper was adopted that outlined an application of existing international human rights law on sexual orientation and gender identity. The paper got international recognition under the title *Yogyakarta Principles*. The Yogyakarta Principles should have a triple function: firstly, to draw a clear picture of human rights violations experienced by people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity; secondly, to outline clearly the necessary practical application of existing international human rights law to these experiences; and thirdly, to define in detail what action the national states have to take to fulfill their obligation to protect human rights (O'Flaherty and Fisher;

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[5] *Lambda Indonesia* published a bulletin for a selected audience, *G: Gaya Hidup Ceria* ('G: Happy Life Style') from 1982 until 1984. The impulse of Lambda Indonesia inspired activists in Yogyakarta to established *Persaudaraan Gay Yogyakarta (PGY)* (Yogyakarta Gay Solidarity) in 1985 that published its bulletin '*Jaka*' ('Young Man'). PGY was transformed into *Indonesia Gay Society (IGS)* in 1988. In Eastern Java, successful efforts were taken by activists to establish *Kelompok Kerja Lesbian dan Gay Nusantara* ('Task Force for Gay-Lesbian Nusantara') on 1 August 1987. The name Nusantara was chosen as it has the specific meaning to describe multicultural societies in Indonesia. Famous became their bulletin '*GAYa Nusantara*', a major contributor to public discourse about gay and lesbian issues at that time. Because of the popularity of the '*GAYa Nusantara*', the name was adapted for the task force as well. GAYa Nusantara got a mandate to coordinate Indonesian Gay-Lesbian Networks for the First '*Kongres Lesbian dan Gay Indonesia I*' (KLGI-I, Indonesian Gay-Lesbian Congress) in Yogyakarta, 1993.

2008). On this background, the text formulates guidelines for governments and other actors to stop discrimination against LGBTI people, to end abuse, violence and harrasment, and to ensure full equality in all countries. Details are elaborated in 29 points, such as prevention of rape and other forms of gender-based violence, extra judicial executions, torture and other forms of inhuman treatment, medical abuse, repression of free speech and assembly, discrimination in education and at work, issues of health and housing, access to justice, as well as questions of immigration (Yogyakarta Principles; 2006). The Principles were mapped as a guide for the United Nation Commission on Human Right and targeted to formulate on national level a legal framework and executive action to put the principles into effect in all UN member countries in order to guarantee full rights for LGBTI worldwide. The Yogyakarta Principles were presented at the UN Human Rights Council's session 2007 in Geneva, and to the UN General Assembly in New York in the same year.

The spirit of The Yogyakarta Principles and their recognition in international forums such as the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly Session motivated LGBTI organizations and activists in Indonesia to become more offensive in generating activities, in establishing and expanding networks. The use of internet and new social media supported campaigning and LGBTI organizations grew rapidly. Among new emerging institutions were the *Ardhanary Institute*, *Arus Pelangi*, and *Institute Pelangi Perempuan* (Women Rainbow Institute). Since 2008, *Arus Pelangi* played a leading role in Indonesia's LGBTI movement. Networking got internationalized and in partnership with international institutions, *Arus Pelangi* focused on public discourses on LGBTI issues, an advocative function, and networking.

In 2008, the LGBTI movement played an important role in the national coalition against a Bill on Pornography; it received for the first time support by a political party, by the Indonesian Democratic Party PDIP (Arus Pelangi Report; 2008). The Bill on Pornography was a highly controversial issue, as it aimed to outlaw by a broad definition of pornography "man-made sexual materials in the form of drawing, sketches, illustrations, photographs, text, voice, sound, moving pictures, animation, cartoons, poetry, conversations, and gesture". This was perceived by many groups as an assault on the diversity of Indonesia's regional cultures, an attempt to limit the freedom of arts and of expression, and to ban sexuality from public. Restrictions formulated in the bill

included a dress code for women and limitation of their activities during the night (IGLHRC; 2009). Overall the bill was an attempt to enforce a definition of what was to be seen as "Indonesian" – based on a narrow conservative muslim definition of morality – in contrast to deviant and thus Un-Indonesian behaviour[6]. The coalition of human rights groups and activists[7] continued their struggle against the bill also after its adoption by parliament and asked for a judicial review by the Constitutional Court in March 2009. Under strong pressure from Islamic fundamentalists[8], the Constitutional Court decided in the judicial review to reject the legal appeal by Human Rights and LGBT activists in March 2010. Since the struggle on the Pornography bill, Indonesia's LGBTI movement is facing increasing pressure from Islamic fundamentalists.

A lot of attention was attracted in 2012 by the support for one of the prominent leaders of LGBTI movement, Dede Oetomo, founder of *GAYa Nusantara*, and Yulianus Rettroblaut, a transsexual, for their candidacy as members of the Indonesian Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM; 2012). Intensive lobbying took place among politicians in parliament and PDIP. Dede Oetomo formulated a for Indonesia revolutionary political vision focusing among others on the issue of same sex marriage – a key demand of LGBTI movement worldwide. Islamic fundamentalist groups joined their efforts to fight Oetomo. His candidacy failed at the end, but the attempt itself was a milestone in the development of Indonesia's LGBTI movement. It demonstrated willingness to

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[6] In paragraph 4 (1) the bill states that, "Deviant sexual intercourse is understood as, among others, intercourse or other forms of sexual activity with corpses or animals, oral sex, anal sex, lesbian and homosexual sex." Although the coalition against the bill failed to prevent its adoption by parliament, the case highly influenced public perception of LGBTI rights and got a high international resonance. *Arus Pelangi* lobbied among others at the conference of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexual Association (ILGA) in Chiang-Mai, Thailand in 2008, as well as in the also ILGA World Conference in Vienna, Austria, in November 2008.

[7] Part of the coalition were namely The Wahid Institute Foundation, Ardhanari, Arus Pelangi, Yayasan Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI-Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation), the Institute of Social Advocation (ELSAM), Persatuan Gereja Indonesia (PGI-Indonesia Church Unity), and several individuals, among them many artists, e.g. Butet Kertaradjasa, Ayu Utami, Mariana Amirudin and Lidia C. Noer.

[8] The bill was supported by Islamic goups such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesa (HTI-Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir), Islamic Defender Front (FPI-Front Pembela Islam), and Islamic political parties namely Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS-Justice Party), Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP-Development Unity Party).

fight for citizenship rights, and a self perception of gays and lesbians as Indonesian under the national concensus '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*'.

A lot of hope for LGBTI activism marked the year 2014, when Joko Widodo ("Jokowi") ran for presidency as candidate of PDIP. Jokowi had supported before LGBTI programs and initiaves for LGBTI rights. In March 2015, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), highest Islamic Clerical Council in Indonesia consisting of the largest Islamic traditional organization *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* as modernist Islamic movement, issued a *fatwa*[9] that proposed punishment for individuals accused of homosexual acts, ranging from imprisonment to death. Initiated by conservative forces within MUI, Homosexuality was claimed to be a serious disease that could be cured like other illnessess (Jakarta Globe; 2015). A *fatwa* is not legal binding under Indonesian secular law; but it supports polarization of public discourse and can encourage Islamic fundamentalists to increase their pressure for discrimination and exclusion of LGBTI people. It thus confirms widespread homophobic sentiments. In his function as a leader of the Advisory Council for LGBTI movement, Dede Oetomo pointed at the lack of courage in the government and in ruling political elites, including political parties, to step against such attempts to disrupt social harmony and to defend constitutional rights of citizens against attempts of discrimination and exclusion (CNN Indonesia; 2015).

The struggle for LGBTI rights in Indonesia has seen over the recent years a polarization, the efficacy of the *clash regime*, as Behrens has outlined it[10]. Indonesia's democratization process brought along an ongoing struggle for power. Those who were powerful in the past aim at defending their influence and priviledges, based on dominating, often religion based narratives. Islamic fundamentalists or traditionalists feel challenged by social change in context of modernization. They refer to an ortodox interpretation on Islamic teaching, present their offensive strategy as defensive efforts to preserve traditional values and – literally - to defend Islam, searching for support among those who feel insecure in times of change. Political elites meanwhile follow strategic political considerations. They often peer to short termed political advantage instead of

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[9] A Fatwa is a legal assessment of an issue, referring to interpretation of Quran, issued on request by a religious authority.

[10] See Chapter 1.

taking their responsibility to guarantee the rights of all citizens and social harmony.

I want to focus in the following on a more sober perspective on the issue of homosexuality that is instrumentalized in political competition, and on counter narratives to the orthodox perspective: a modern understanding of Islam.

III. A Different Perspective on Homosexuality

While traditional muslims strictly reject homosexuality as a lifestyle or identity, at the same time variations of homosexuality are social practice in traditional Islamic context. For example in Islamic boarding schools ('*Pesantren*'), Students ('*santri*') experience sexual activity both between male *santri* and between female *santri*, labeled as '*mairil*' or '*alaq dalaq*'. Curiosity and comparison of own sexuality with others during puberty and separation from the outside world in a closed space with little social control provide an environment that allows to gather sexual experiences. (Khairina and Abraham, 2010; Syaefullah 2008). Research in Madura and Jombang (East Java) has shown that homosexual practices are common, and noticed well by the heads of Islamic boarding schools (Syarifuddin, 2005). *Mairil* and *alaq dalaq* are not new phenomena due to modernization. The existence of a 'free space for trial' is rather a part of traditional setting. The research in Jombang showed that homosexuality occurs in traditional as well as in modern pesantren (Dzulkarnain, 2009).

Within traditional Islamic surroundings these social practices are accepted by silent recognition, which is communicated nonverbally and in social interaction. Also longer homosexual relationships start in *pesantren* and continue after graduation, as interviews with *santris* in Jember (East Java) showed. They defined themselves as a 'couple' (without using the labels 'gay' or 'lesbian'). Later partners in traditional marriage understand about the 'special relations' of their husbands and wives; families of origin have knowledge about it; '*silaturrahmi*' (family connection) gets strengthened continuously. Intimacy between a same sex 'couple' in pesantren thus can lead to an alternative family constellation. The example shows that homosexual activities that start with a

sexual desire, become relationship oriented, if a frame is provided to establish relationships and to integrate them into social context.

How does traditional pesantren rationalize the argument to allow same sex sexual activities? A head of a pesantren in East Java referred to the roots of the expression '*mairil*': '*mar-ah fil lail*', an Arabic term that means 'wife in the night'. He argued that '*mairil*' is not a sexual orientation (such as like 'gay' and 'lesbian'), but a temporary sexual expression in order to reach physical satisfaction. It doesn't affect the general interest in a heterosexual orientation. The imagination connected to '*mairil*' therefor refers to a sexual activity with the other sex, not with the same sex.

While teaching of Islam basically requires muslims to abstain from sexual activities and to manage the own sexual desire, it is socially accepted that this is "too hard", particularly for young boys and men. They are confronted with sexual desires at young age (before marriage) during their time in pesantren, but cannot enjoy sexual activities without being married, as this is regarded as sinful. To avoid sinful activity, the principle of '*fiqh*' is applied according to Islamic law. The meaning of the original Arabic term '*irtikabu akhaffu dhararain*' is: 'to do something at a smaller risk'. As sexual activities without being married to the other person is sinful, practicing '*mairil*' is the lesser evil from the perspective of Islamic law. It is just a 'small sin'. Muhyidin has described this pragmatic approach to deal with human nature as common practice in boarding schools where boys and girls are separated – in Islamic schools as well as in Christian priest seminaries or in boarding schools for Buddhist Monks (Muhyidin: 2013). Traditional Islam, as well as other religions, thus established a (silently) tolerated form of social interaction as a compromise between religious imperative and existing reality. Critical is not seen sexual desire towards the same sex, but the formation of a related individual identity, which is challenging traditional order.

Also for other institutions, research on LGBTI is showing the presence of homosexuality aside official public and institutional framework. Lesbians and Gays build informal networks, create togetherness and social interaction on an informal level. One example are LGBTI among the students on the campus of Islamic Universities; they also use existing student groups as a platform to interact. The number of people is significant (Communication Department

UMY, 2015), but so far only a few of them proceeds to have a 'coming out', to go public with their sexual orientation. At Universitas Indonesia Jakarta, a first open social group of LGBTI recently attracted broad public attention[11]. Different to the social practice in *pesantren*, the step in direction of shaping an individual LGBTI identity and forming a social group is often already done at universities. While both in traditional communities and in modern institutions, 'silent recognition' is still a common fact, modern institutions such as universities, even with Islamic background, are a step ahead regarding organization – and possible politization – of LGBTI[12].

A last example for existing LGBTI communities is an Islamic boading school for '*waria*' (transsexuals) in Kota Gede, Yogyakarta. '*Pesantren Waria*' can be quoted as a successful experiment that muslim waria persons perform their religious activities within an Islamic boarding school. Controversial in the beginning, Yogyakarta societies have accepted them as a part of community. The *pesantren* meanwhile got opened not only for *waria*, but for all LGBTI (The Jakarta Post, 2014; Zwaan, 2012). The advisor of the project, Kyai Muhaimin, leader of the interfaith forum in the Special Province of Yogyakarta, has initiated an inclusive approach that recognizes muslims with a different sexual orientation as part of the community and provides a safe environment for them to practice their religion.

IV. Towards a 'Modern Islam'?

The examples discussed in the chapter before show that an inclusive perspective on Homosexuality and related social interaction exists in Indonesia for a long time already. It is clearly different to attempts from an orthodox perspective that follows a radical exclusive strategy.

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[11] http://nasional.tempo.co/read/news/2016/01/21/079738146/mahasiswa-beri-konseling-lgbt-begini-respons-ui

[12] This is matching the historical development in other western liberal democracies. The LGBTI movement in the U.S. and in Western Europe has strong roots in academic institutions.

A group of Islamic scholars is linking up to these experiences of solidarity within Islamic communities now with modern approaches for a well-grounded contemporary interpretation on Islamic teaching. The Liberal Islamic Network JIL (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*) reads Quran and Sunnah as documents to be reinterpreted for our time, open minded towards new considerations and ideas, including the ongoing diversification of life styles, the idea of Human Rights and the question of LGBTI in this context.

Musdah Mulia, professor on Islamic Philosophy at the Islamic State University Jakarta, sees no reason to reject homosexuals under Islam. She assesses the condemnation of homosexuality by mainstream ulema as based on too narrow–minded interpretations of Islamic teachings. From her assessment, lesbian and non lesbian women are equal, as people are valued based on their piety in the eyes of God (The Jakarta Post; 2008). She also suggests a new interpretation on the Quran verses related to the story of Prophet Luth (Loth): his society recieved punishment from God not because of homosexual practice among the people, but because of sodomy. Thus, there is no definite prohibition of LGBTI sexual orientations.

Ade Armando, a communication expert from Universitas Indonesia has challenged Islamic clerics who see homosexuality as '*haram*' (sinful) by asking about the source of sexual desire. He suggests that all desire and love come from God, and thus also desire towards the same sex must come from God. People can plan a marriage - but not whom they love. Armando argues that homosexuality is not '*haram*', as it is different from sodomy. Therefor the strict ban of sodomy in Islam does not include homosexuality as a natural desire and orientation of love (Armando: 2015).

Also Kyai Haji Muhammad Husein, a moderate ulama and activist on gender equality and women rights, has suggested that the issue of diverse sexual orientations is debatable in Islamic discources. Islamic scholars should show an open mind to discuss sexual orientations including homosexuality, because ulemas have the obligations to provide solution on social problems. Strenght of Islamic teaching, from this perspective, is the capacity to reinterprete Quran and Sunnah in modern times. Such a re-interpretation is principally possible as principles of Islamic law ('*ijtihad*') support such a dynamic understanding. *Ijtihad* (derivation from Islamic law) takes place by *Shar'i hukm* (personal

judgement) and is allowed respectively necessary for any issue, the Islamic scholar or ulama does not find a direct expression for in Quran and Sunnah (Al Islam: 2015). Since the classic Islamic scholars, *ijtihad* has played a significant role in order to come to solutions for social problems. Consequently, *ijtihad* can be used to find productive answers to developments, such as human rights, democracy or heterogeneization of forms of living together and intimacy.

With their revolutionary approaches, Musdah Mulia, Ade Armando and others have gained significant influence on Indonesian Islamic thinking today. This provokes, off course, opposition by traditionalist. And radical Islamists blame them to have abandoned and abased Islam. As Boellstroff (2005) stated: the struggle between conservative and reform oriented Islam becomes highly visible in the debate about the LGBTI community. And it enters a new stage.

In this ongoing debate, Islamic universities and Islamic mass organizations, namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) must play an important role in a re-interpretation of Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as in developing modern forms of social practice. This spirit characterizes explicitely the conceptual platform of Muhammadiyah: the organization is supposed to contribute to modernization of Islam, '*Islam yang berkemajuan'*. Muhammadiyah has the capacity to play this important role*,* to contribute to a new culture of Islamic togetherness in Indonesia, and to a democratic culture in Indonesia. Universities and high schools will be important places for the discourse to shape a Modern Islam. If this vision is realized, new forms of modern family and of intimacy will be discussed in an inclusive way - including issue on LGBTI life styles.

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