Time for Medialisation: Integrating Media and Transcultural Communication within Islamic and Area Studies
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Islamic Cyber-Activism among Students in Indonesia

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New media technologies are omnipresent in the everyday life of Islamic student activists in Indonesia. New technologies provide new opportunities and challenges to frame and disseminate religious ideas and allow for creative forms in translating problem awareness into actual mobilization. This permits an increasingly broad spectrum of people to engage in shaping normative expressions of Islam by bypassing traditional gatekeepers. It is argued that the polarity between deliberative and normative approaches to the impact of media technologies on religious practice needs to be rethought. The public space constituted by the media practices of Islamic activists of any strand of Islam cannot be identified as place for argumentation and discussion or *indoctrination. In this paper, different aspects of how the Internet constitutes religious activism are discussed by looking at the web portal* dakwahkampus.com *that mirrors the agenda of international Islamic organisation Hizbut Tahrir. The Internet with its visual and auditive characteristics allows the creation of dynamic, multi-sensual virtual environments, permitting interested users to immerse in this world. Electronically mediated participation has thus facilitated the emergence of new kinds of highly dynamic mobilization structures. As horizontal ties bind participants together, the peer-to-peer communication allows creating schemata for problem diagnosis resonating with the needs of the target groups. The analysis of this portal is imbedded into insights gained during almost two years of anthropological fieldwork conducted at the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta.*

Recent scholarship on religion and media has examined the constitutive role played by new technologies in forming religious practices through different ways of mediation. The question of how religious movements use media as part of their religious practice, as well as how media constitute the religious individual as well as society, have been subject to debate. The edited volumes of Eickelman and Anderson (1999), De Vries and Weber (2001), Meyer and Moors (2006), Hirschkind and Larkin (2008a), and Meyer (2009a) provide insights into how religious individuals and communities are formed, and emphasise new opportunities to discuss different viewpoints in public due to easier access to electronic mass media, but also due to reduced production costs of print media. This body of scholarly literature has also

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highlighted that religious movements face increasing challenges in their identity construction and presentation, as the public space is becoming more contested.

However, the question of how new media technologies have been altering forms of religious activism has so far received minor attention. In trying to link insights from social movements' theories regarding religious activism, and ongoing debates in the scholarly body of literature on religion and media, I seek to shed light on how new media with at least partly new characteristics alter religiously motivated contention.

Departing from the assumption that religion is not a static essence but needs to be mobilized (Asad 1993; Asad 2003; Hirschkind and Larkin 2008a; Hirschkind 2001a; Hirschkind 2006; Larkin 2008; Mahmood 2005), new media technologies provide new spaces and mechanisms to frame and disseminate religious ideas, but also to awaken and collectivize felt frustrations and grievances. Furthermore they allow for new creative forms in translating problem awareness into mobilization. Especially the Internet, but also lower publication and telecommunication costs, permit an increasingly broad spectrum of people to engage in shaping normative expressions of Islamic belief and practice. The result is an expanded intellectual and discursive space in which a larger variety of actors can become more active than ever before (Salvatore and LeVine 2005). This leads to an increasing fragmentation of religious authority and allows people to have open, but often uneven and contradictory discussions of how Islam should become a "blessing to all" *(rahmatan lil 'alamin)* (Salvatore and LeVine 2005). Salvatore and Eickelman (2004) refer to this phenomenon as "public Islam", that cuts across, challenges, and constitutes governmental as well as oppositional public spheres in a Muslim majority country such as Indonesia.

The constitutive role of modern media technologies on Islamic activism is however not approached in terms of a polarity between what are assumed to be two contradictory processes, the deliberative and the disciplinary, but by viewing the two processes as interwoven, as first suggested by Charles Hirschkind (2001a; 2006). Studies that focus on the deliberative aspect tend to emphasize the possibilities of argument and dialogue and the broader access to information. This is seen as resulting in a democratisation of religious authority. It is argued that religious believers with access to a vast amount of information

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revise and question their religious practices. Especially individuals with liberal thoughts often argue that members adhering to movements promoting strict forms of collective discipline would revise their practices and believe, if they had a better religious education. Prominent examples of scholars emphasizing the deliberative aspect of modern media technology in the Middle East in regard to the democratisation of religious authority and autonomous reasoning that is facilitated by a growing number of individuals engaging with religious texts are Eickelman (1992), Eickelman and Anderson (1997), and some of the contributors to the volume edited by Norton (1995). In Indonesia, Hosen (2008) identifies a democratisation of religious authority due to the process of searching different Islamic websites for personally suitable *fatwas*, Islamic legal opinions.

Scholars emphasizing the disciplinary functions of religious media, on the other hand, stress the ideological aspect over the dialogic one. In this view, media technologies enable an extension of an authoritative religious discourse. In this case, the resultant public is less a sphere of discussion than a site of subjection to authority. This is seen as part of an endeavour aimed at promoting and securing a uniform model of moral behaviour. Examples of studies that mainly put the ideological or disciplinary aspect of modern media technology forward in the context of Islamism are Roy (1996), Sivan (1990), or, for the Indonesian context, Lim (2005) or Bräuchler (2003).

In this paper I argue that every Islamic organisation perceives the public arena within which they are active as a deliberative space of argumentation between different individuals and, *at the same time,* as a normative space for spreading their own visions of Islamic virtues. The public space constituted by the media practices of Islamic activists of any strand of Islam can, therefore, not be identified as either a place for argumentation and discussion *or* indoctrination (Hirschkind 2001a, 2006). All activists take public deliberation as one of their modalities, trying to convince others of their visions and ideas by argument. The struggle to promote their own vision starts as a point of difference, rather than one of commonality.

In earlier seminal studies of Islamic student activism in Indonesia, the role of media receives minor attention. Prominent scholars working on the topic of Islam in Indonesia have emphasised the pioneering role that students have been playing in shaping Islamic debates,

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paying however more attention to their ideologies than how it was mediated and translated into actual mobilization. Scholarly attention has particularly been paid to the multilayered role that Islamic student activists played in the forefront, during and after the fall of Suharto in 1998. Seminal studies were conducted by Aspinall (1995; 1999; 2005), Hefner (2000), Kraince (2000), Madrid (1999), Miichi (2003) and van Bruinessen (2002). In recent years, however, scholarly interest in Islamic student activism seems to have been declining. Sastramidjadja (2006) claims in her study that the importance of student activists as actors of change is declining. In this paper I conversely argue that Islamic campus activism is not declining or even vanishing, but is instead taking on partly new patterns as ways of mediating ideas and mobilizing students have altered with the advent of new media technology, especially electronic media.

The Internet has enabled new means of transmitting information and communication. This has facilitated the development of new kinds of communities and identities. As all mobilization depends on communication, new kinds of Internet-based social activism have, to a large extent, specific characteristics (Langman 2005). Earlier generations of Islamic student activists have depended mainly on face-to-face communication, print media (reaching from books, to newspapers, magazines to pamphlets), radio and even the television. The Internet, which is now for most students easily accessible, has to some extent different characteristics.

One typical characteristic of the Internet is that it facilitates the creation and maintenance of "virtual communities" where like-minded people share their interests (Naughton 2001). These virtual communities can spread widely across the archipelago, but they are more dense in the urban centres where the Internet is easy accessible. As the Internet provides relatively low-cost, easy-access and far-reaching networks, it has become possible to decentralize communication and create cyber-meeting places where people and information intersect in virtual communities. Information exchange across communication networks has become increasingly easy possible allowing a large number of individuals to interact (Langman 2005; Rheinglod 2002).

Nowadays in the realm of Islamic activism, significant struggles are mediated across electronic networks. Although contemporary Islamic student activism does not owe its

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existence to the Internet, this technology has nevertheless enabled new forms of activism. Langman uses in this context the term cyber-activism (2005: 44).These emergent "virtual communities" are however not regarded as detached from "real communities", which are place oriented, but are rather analyzed as embedded in, and part of, "real" communities of activists. The two realms of activism are entangled. Consequently, it is argued that forms of religious cyber-activism need to be viewed in the larger context of politics, religion, and media (De Vries 2001).

To discuss different aspects in how new media technologies constitute religious activism, this paper focuses on a web portal administered by Indonesian Islamic student activists. The role of this web portal is seen in the larger context of Islamic student activism in Indonesia. The analysis is imbedded into insights gained during almost two years of anthropological fieldwork between 2005-06 and 2008-09 conducted at the biggest and well renowned Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. This analysis is further integrated with material I collected during the stints of fieldwork. I collaborated with Islamic student activists representing different strands of Islam, attended seminars and workshops they organised around different topics, and participated in education training sessions for members. Furthermore, I collected a large number of media releases in the form of pamphlets, posters, magazines, stickers and books published by the activists themselves, as well as reference and course books used by different organisations.

The virtual community DK.com

The web portal dakwahkampus.com was launched in 2009. On the portal it is referred to as DK.com. Currently around 11'000 people have become a Facebook fan of DK.com and it registers around 600 – 700 daily visits. It is the online communication organ of the Coordination Body of Campus *Dakwah* Institutions (BKLDK - *Badan Koordinasi Lembaga Dakwah Kampus*), but it addresses a larger public than just the members of different Campus *Dakwah* Institutions. The web portal currently counts around 200 Campus *Dakwah* Institutions (LDK – *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus*) as members, including those of the most

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respected universities in Indonesia. A Campus *Dakwah* Institution (LDK) may be defined as an intra campus student organisation with the primary aim to call fellow students to follow the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, the sayings and deeds of the Prophet. LDK's are formally linked to the university and often receive funding from the university as well as office space, usually in the campus mosque. The Coordination Body of these campus institutions is not a hierarchically superior institution with decision power over the local LDKs, it has instead emerged from a desire of LDK activists to coordinate local *dakwah* activities.

The term *dakwah (*ar. *da'wa),* as in the name of the portal, encompasses historically a broad range of meanings, literally it means "summon" or "call" (Hirschkind 2001a; Wiedl 2008). *Dakwah* in Indonesia is however commonly interpreted as Allah's call, transmitted and exemplified by the Prophet, addressed to all humans to live their lives in accordance with His will. In the Quranic reference the necessity of discussion when differences occur is stressed in *sura* 16:125: *"Call towards the path of your Lord with sound planning and good advice, and debate with them in the best possible way; indeed your lord well knows him who has strayed from His path, and He well knows the guided"*[1]. Also *sura* 3:104 and 3:110 support this interpretation of the concept of *dakwah*. The aim of the Islamic call is to promote spiritual as well as material prosperity for all human beings and make Islam become a blessing to all (*rahmatan lil 'alamin)* (Abdullah 2008). A *dakwah* activist may thus be defined as someone who is active in transmitting Allah's call to mankind.

This broad definition is supported by texts that we find in on the portal. In an article entitled *"Attitudes towards differences and frictions between Campus Dakwah Movements"* the author Zamroni Ahmad, a high ranking member of Hizbut Tahrir, deals with the question of how to handle differences between different *dakwah* movements active on the campus, each competing for members and influence. Even though he defines also the others as *dakwah* activists, he states that what they are doing only smells like *dakwah (berbau dakwah)*. He writes that these other activists, who are merely prolongations of political parties, socialist movements or even of liberals in Islamic dresses, need to be brought back to the right path and need to be considered as objects of *dakwah (objek perlu didakwahi)*. Ahmad

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[1] Translation by Ahmed Reza Khan.

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subsequently provides a list covering thirteen points of how to reduce frictions and power struggles occurring between different groups on the campus. They all aim at convincing Islamic groups promoting a different understanding of Islam of the in his eyes only true understanding (Ahmad 2010). What Islamic ideology the portal promotes will be outlined below. In my paper, I will not follow Ahmad's idea of ultimately only seeing one part of all activists as "real" or "true" *dakwah* activists. I promote a more inclusive understanding of what a *dakwah* activist is and consider all Islamic activists as *dakwah* activists, which engage actively in calling people to Islam, regardless of whether they promote for example human rights, democracy and pluralism, or whether they struggle for the implementation of the *Sharia.*

The second word in the name of the portal, *kampus,* simply refers to a university campus. It refers thus both to the current occupation of the activists as a students and to the place where *dakwah* is mainly conducted. In the profile description of DK.com written by an anonymous administrator of the portal, the focus on students is justified. In this text, she or he argues that students are smarter than the average of the population. Because of their intelligence and high education, they are likely to become the future elite of the country. The choice to focus on them is therefore a strategic one. The author of the article assumes that they will hold important positions in society and therefore be able to play a crucial role in changing society in an Islamic way (Dakwahkampus.com 2009).

The self declared aim of the web portal DK.com is to coordinate the campus *dakwah* movement in general, and more specifically the different *Dakwah* Campus Institutions, active on Indonesian universities. The portal is designed as a platform for communication and coordination, and it contains articles covering international, national and local news reporting from different Indonesian campuses. It furthermore provides information on planned actions, such as demonstrations or other events taking place in different cities. Besides information, one finds consultation rubrics discussing different issues related to the every day life of *dakwah* activists. These questions range from Islamic law, to methods to motivate fellow students or to handle conflicts and difficulties within the *dakwah* team. A special rubric is dedicated to female activists, featuring questions on how to convince a friend to veil or how

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to reconcile fulfilling the felt moral obligation to be an active *dakwah* activist with becoming an excellent student.

The online portal is however not an open space where everyone can upload documents. It is hierarchically structured with a head of redaction, a head of administration and staff responsible for handling contributions from local partners. Contributions to the portal are welcomed such as reportages, opinions, campus news or other kinds of articles as well as videos, photos and audio files. All authors are asked to provide their full identity. Members of LDKs as well as non-members are theoretically able to contribute, but as all documents have to pass the verification process of the editorial team. Only contributions that support the ultimate goal of the board and respect quality standards are published on the portal. It is however possible for anyone to comment on articles or also on the web portal DK.com in general. Hitting "share on Facebook" links the user to the Facebook community of DK.com, where one can share personal views on, for example, the latest Israeli attacks or on Barak Obama's planned visit to Indonesia. It is furthermore possible to read the comments of other users and interact with them.

The main ideological aims of DK.com are most clearly stated in the student's pledge that was read out in the first Indonesian Islamic Student Congress (KMII – *Kongres Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*), which was held October 18, 2009. This pledge can be downloaded from the web portal, read on photos uploaded on the page, or listened to on video as the national coordinator of the BKLDK, Erwin El-Jundi, reads it out, allowing breaks after a few words for the audience to repeat.

1. *With all our soul, we believe that secular systems either capitalist democratic or socialist communist, are sources of people's deprivation and endangers the existence of Indonesia and other Muslims countries.*
2. *With all our heart, we believe that absolute sovereignty is reserved solely to Allah - the creator of the universe, humanity and life - to decide the future of Indonesia and other Muslim countries.*

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3. *With all our soul, we will continue to relentlessly fight for the enactment of the Sharia under the caliphate as the ultimate solution to the problems of Indonesia and other Muslims societies.*

4. *With our soul, we declare to all that our struggle is verbal and intellectual, and not violent.*

5. *With our soul, we declare that our struggle is not a consequence of historical demands, but is instead a consequence of deep faith to Allah. (BKLDK 2009).[2]*

No competing interpretative frameworks can be read or viewed on DK.com. No articles can for example be found that outline that democracy and Islam are compatible or that criticise the envisaged methods to establish the caliphate, or that challenge the assumption that the enactment of the *Sharia* and the establishment of the caliphate will ultimately solve the problems that Indonesia is facing. No critical discussion can be found on the promoted solutions.

Competing for hegemony

As declared in the student's pledge and oftentimes re-iterated in the published articles, the agenda of this portal mirrors the ideology of the international operating Islamic organisation

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[2] 1. Dengan sepenuh jiwa, kami yakin bahwa sistem sekuler, baik berbentuk kapitalis-demokrasi maupun sosialis-komunis adalah sumber penderitaan rakyat dan sangat membahayakan eksistensi Indonesia dan negeri-negeri muslim lainnya.

2. Dengan sepenuh jiwa, kami yakin bahwa kedaulatan sepenuhnya harus dikembalikan kepada Allah SWT – Sang Pencipta alam semesta, manusia dan kehidupan – untuk menentukan masa depan Indonesia dan negeri-negeri muslim lainnya.

3. Dengan sepenuh jiwa, kami akan terus berjuang tanpa lelah untuk tegaknya syari'ah Islam dalam naungan Negara Khilafah Islamiyah sebagai solusi tuntas problematika masyarakat Indonesia dan negeri-negeri muslim lainnya.

4. Dengan sepenuh jiwa, kami menyatakan kepada semua pihak bahwa perjuangan yang kami lakukan adalah dengan seruan dan tantangan intelektual tanpa kekerasan.

5. Dengan sepenuh jiwa, kami menyatakan bahwa perjuangan yang kami lakukan bukanlah sebatas tuntutan sejarah tetapi adalah konsekuensi iman yang mendalam kepada Allah SWT.

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Hizbut Tahrir. Interestingly, this organisation is mentioned nowhere on the portal, neither are the prominent authors or speakers, which are visible in videos, identified as members of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), as this is otherwise often the case. By "googling" their names, their affiliation with HTI becomes explicit. Furthermore, on pictures and videos the logo as well as the flag of Hizbut Tahrir is clearly visible.

Taqiyyudin An-Nabhani founded the nowadays internationally active organisation Hizbut Tahrir in Jerusalem in 1952. Its aim is the reestablishment of a global caliphate *(khilafah)* under implementation of S*haria* (Mayer 2004; Taji-Farouki 1996; Taji-Farouki 2000). Its ideas reached Indonesia in 1982, the organisation was at that time still clandestine due to political repression under president Suharto (Muhtadi 2009). The ideas gradually started to reach university campuses. According to personal communication with Dwi Condro Triono, a prominent member of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the first study circle at the Gadjah Mada University was formed in 1991 (see also Budiarti 2009). In Indonesia, Hizbut Tahrir became a legal organisation in 2005 and is most prominently demanding the establishment of the caliphate.

The reasons for not naming Hizbut Tahrir on the portal, or explicitly identifying authors or speakers as members of this organisation may be diverse. The most important ones might however be that the different *Dakwah* Campus Institutions (LDK), which are members of DK.com and coordinated through the Coordination Body of these Institutions (BKLDK), are supposed to be neutral, this means not officially affiliated with any specific strand of Islam, much less with a particular organisation. LDKs are supposed to be open to Muslim students of all Islamic orientations. In recent years, many LDK are however dominated by *tarbiyah* activists, which draw their main inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood, and by Hizbut Tahrir activists. According to personal communication with the President of the LDK Jamaah Shalahuddin of the Gadjah Mada University 2008-2009, Edi Nugroho, these two groups dominate most LDKs at Indonesia's secular universities. The main difference between the two movements is the approach they choose to establish an Islamic society. Whereas the *tarbiyah* movement engages in political activities and participates in the democratic system, Hizbut Tahrir refuses to participate and rejects democracy as non Islamic (Aziz 2006; Rathomy 2007). In various matters the two groups can however reconcile their differences

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and collaborate. The major part of topics discussed on DK.com might be appealing to different Islamic groups, even though there might be different perceptions on how to achieve these goals. Also, the establishment of a caliphate and the implementation of *Sharia* law are not opposed to the vision of the *tarbiyah* movement, although their formulation of the aim might be different, focussing on the gradual education of Muslims.

A second important reason might be of a strategic nature, and is closely linked to the inclusive character of the Internet. By not clearly stating an affiliation, the virtual community stays more inclusive to interested, like-minded people strengthening horizontal ties among sympathizers. All are invited to participate in events and conduct *dakwah* in their environment, and no vertical affiliation to any organisation is a precondition to become active. The line between who is and who is not a *dakwah* activist is therefore blurred and dynamic.

Electronically mediated participation has facilitated the emergence of new kinds of highly dynamic structures of mobilization, which by default become less hierarchic. The emerging fluid networks are more open and inclusive than organisations whose ideology they reflect. Hizbut Tahrir for example has exclusive mobilization structures, as it has strict criteria for membership(Hafez 2003). To become a member of HTI demands profound knowledge of at least three of their central books, as well as high personal involvement to the cause of the movement (Budiarti 2009). Members are required to dedicate a great amount of commitment and time to movement affairs. Becoming a member of HTI extensively permeates all sections of a member's daily life. It is a precondition to share the set of beliefs and meet the demanding standards of conduct. DK.com may thus be considered as an informal vehicle through which people engage in collective action with HTI members and familiarize with its ideology. As I have tried to demonstrate, in contrary to the formal organisation, DK.com, although promoting the same ideology, is an inclusive organisation in character as defined by Zald and Ash Garner (Zald and Ash Garner 1987 (1966)). Its criteria for membership are unrestricted. Joining this virtual community demands a minimum level of initial commitment, and everyday life activity is not permeated by organization goals (although it is the aim of the administrators to reach a high level of commitment and a behaviour permeated by their understanding of Islam). To analyse phenomena such as the web portal DK.com, I argue that

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the mobilization process of organisations as HTI needs to be imagined in a dynamic way, not in a dual model of member and non-member, but rather as a set of concentric circles, which grow in circumference as the level of involvement decreases. Such an approach might be more suitable to grasp its influence beyond the limits of official organisational membership and account for phenomena such as electronically mediated forms of participation.

Schemata for interpreting the world

The structure of the student's pledge mirrors in a condensed form the interpretative schemata to make sense of the world and offer a language for argumentation. The social movement theorists Snow and Benford (1988) speak in their seminal study about *framing*. This term is used to describe a process of meaning construction (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow 1986; Williams and Benford 2000). These *frames* are important for the creation of meaning and the dissemination of the ideas and interpretations of a movement (Wiktorowicz 2004: 15).

In this pledge, three core frames can be identified that shall lead to efficient mobilization, as outlined in the Snow and Benford's seminal study examining the effective translation of ideology into actual participant mobilisation (Snow and Benford 1988). According to these authors, it is firstly necessary to create frames that diagnose a condition as a problem, which needs to be solved. In this pledge this is done in the first point where the secular systems, namely the capitalist democratic, and the socialist communist system are claimed responsible for people's deprivation and thus endanger the existence of Indonesia and other Muslim countries.

Secondly, according to Snow and Benford (1988), it is necessary to give a solution to the identified problems and specific tactics and strategies on how to establish justice and ameliorate the situation. According to the pledge as well as well as to several articles that can be read on DK.com, the solution to all the problems would be to return the sovereignty to Allah, hence enact the *Sharia* and re-establish the caliphate, the tactics and strategies being a

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relentless struggle by means of intellectual challenge, and not violence. Especially in the rubrics *"Inspiration and Motivation for Dakwah", "News from Campus"* and *"Student's opinion",* the advantages of the caliphate, the Quranic references as well as methods to struggle to achieve it are discussed regarding different contexts and circumstances. Whereas problems on the way to reach the caliphate are addressed, it is not discussed whether the caliphate is the best solution. This is regarded as not open to deliberation, but as a consequence of really understanding Islam (Ahmad 2010). Therefore, other Islamic movements are not regarded as equal counterparts, but need to be "called to the right path".

Finally, motivational frames need to be offered to convince potential supporters to actually participate and become active. This is often seen as the most critical point that determines whether grievances and frustrations are translated into actual activism or not (Snow and Benford 1988). In the pledge this motivational frame is foremost offered in the fifth point where it is emphasized that this struggle is a consequence of deep faith in Allah. Here the concept of *dakwah* is framed as a moral duty for every Muslim and as an articulation of worship and deep faith. *Dakwah* thus becomes the conceptual site wherein the concerns, public duties and virtues of an activist Muslim citizen are elaborated and practiced. Its performance is being defined as a condition for the vitality of the Muslim collective. In this contemporary usage, *dakwah* defines a kind of practice involving the public use of a mode of reasoning whereby the correctness of an action is grounded and justified in face of error and indifference of counterargument (Hirschkind 2001a). Practice is woven into daily activities.

All the three core frames are elaborated in different articles on the portal, in consultation rubrics but also in videos, audio files and music that can be found on DK.com. The Internet with its specific characteristics allows for various creative ways to frame ideologies. Creating interpretative schemata that resonate with potential participants and possibly trigger collective action is of utmost important for successful mobilisation. Frameworks of understanding must be appealing to its target group, in this case university students. In the scholarly literature on social movement theory the term "frame resonance" is used to discuss the ability of a movement to translate mobilization potential into action (Meijer 2005; Wiktorowicz 2004). In the process of frame production, media play a crucial role. In regard to the target group, the students, the Internet has major advantages in the process of framing.

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The web portal DK.com may be appealing to some students because it is tailored to their needs as mostly peers have created the whole virtual environment themselves. The schemata they offer to understand problems that Indonesia is facing respond to the felt concerns and frustrations of students. Furthermore, the language used and offered to discuss specific problems is appealing. In regard to language it is interesting to note that only few Arabic terms are used and if they are used, they are explained. This makes the argumentation lines well understandable and accessible to people with only basic Islamic education. Furthermore it offers terminology to discuss topics with a wider public.

The topics that are taken up to diagnose problems and offer solutions are equally appealing to students and are directly relevant and applicable to their daily realities. The topics of Western Imperialism and the decline of Islamic values are for example framed in discussions about the celebration of Valentine's Day. Taking current issues with relevance to students as a starting point, the general ideas and solutions are framed. In this context Valentine's Day is seen as just one among many expressions of mimicking western practices, potentially leading to prenuptial relationships and causing the decline of Islamic values, eventually harming the whole society.

The suggested frames on DK.com for making sense of the world are, as already discussed, not shared by Islamic activists of all strands of Islam, even though the web portal has positioned itself as mouthpiece of all *dakwah* campus activists. In every day reality, different Islamic activists often compete in how and which Islamic values should inform everyday conduct. The embodiment of specific virtues is by certain Islamic organisations perceived as an integral part of being a good Muslim, while to others, this is a matter of individual choice. Distributing veils on the campus, or reminding students to restrain from dating, for example, is not seen by all as making Islam become a blessing to the world *(rahmatan lil alamin)*, but rather as an unwarranted invasion into someone's private sphere. In regard to virtuous conduct, modern media technologies present new challenges to Islamic activism and raise new questions. Currently discussed is for example in how far interactions between men and women are permitted in the virtual world. Perceptions of what is regarded as moral Islamic

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conduct vary between different Islamic groups, as these perceptions also vary in face-to-face interactions.

The Internet does however not only alter mobilization structures and open new ways of framing ideas, but it also allows to bypass gatekeepers of more traditional media such as newspapers of TV by providing information and impressions of organized actions. The first Indonesian Islamic Student Congress (KMII) received for example minor attention in TV and newspapers. The Internet provided the possibility to process information in the aftermath of an event and make it available to a large community of sympathizers and interested people, making these groups partly independent from mass media to pay attention to their organized actions.

"Re-experiencing" the student's pledge for a better Indonesia

The Internet with its visual and auditive characteristics makes it possible to create a dynamic-multi sensual virtual environment, as on DK.com, which allows interested users to immerse in this world. Most of the events that were organized by the Coordination Body of Different *Dakwah* Campus Institutions, but also those organized by local branches are documented on DK.com in articles, photos, but also on uploaded videos. This allows a form of "virtual participation". The so far best documented event was the Indonesian Islamic Student Congress (KMII – Kongeres Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia) with the topic "Uniting and building an intellectual vision for a better Indonesia".

On DK.com, one can watch a ten-minute video that was produced by the organizers in the aftermath of the KMII. It almost allows the viewer to "re-experience" and "re-participate" in the declaration of the pledge. One is introduced to the congress as *"a moment in history, that was attended by thousands of students from all Indonesia, the greatest moment in the history of Islamic student movement that unites and creates an intellectual student vision to make Indonesia a better place, a new direction in the student movement, a pledge will be born"*. This whole introduction in underlined by sound, creating suspense.

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One can than listen to extracts of the speeches delivered by three prominent Hizbut Tahrir Members, namely Fahmi Amhar, Dwi Condro Triono and Fahmi Lukman who rise awareness to problems Indonesia is facing in the field of natural resources, economy, and education, respectively. They address the 5'000 students that convened in the yard of the Senayan Basket Hall, as the police did not allow holding the event inside the hall, as it had originally been planned. The students Felix Siauw, Pariadi Hartono and Adi Wijaya delivered more speeches also emphasising that "Islam is the only solution" and motivating the crowd to struggle for the achievement of this ultimate goal through *dakwah*. Repeatedly the audience was chanting "Caliphate", and repeatedly the speakers shouted "*takbir*" and the crowd responded in chorus "*Allahu Akbar*" (God is Greater), raising their right fist.

By simply watching this video one can almost feel the hot sun and sense the emotional atmosphere. This is emphasised by showing crying and shouting participants. Even though the atmosphere seems very agitated, the crowd remained peaceful and according to their standard controlled, men standing in the front and women wearing veils, well covering their hair and chests, stand at the back. The climax of this video - and most likely also of the congress - was the reading out of the students pledge by Erwin El-Jundi.

Besides this video, one can find six others on You Tube and look at a broad selection of photos. The visualised example of this congress seems to have served as an example for follow up events that took place in the following days. Different *Dakwah* Campus Institutions organized in the following week a public event where this student's pledge was also read out in public. All these follow up events were also extensively documented and the files including articles and photos were uploaded and discussed on DK.com. This sensation of "re-participating" is created and reinforced by visual and auditive characteristics of the Internet, implicating its own aesthetics (Meyer 2006; Meyer 2009b). The combination of photos, videos including sound, articles and personal comments have been creating a dynamic multi-sensual virtual environment on DK.com.

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Public Islam - Fusion of argumentation and submission

The public arena created by the administrators of this web portal may be identified as a space of argument between different Muslim individuals and at the same time also as a normative space for propagating ideological frames and models for moral behaviour. An important part of the project of promoting and securing a uniform model of societal behaviour and mindset is thus a public sphere open to discussion and deliberation. This is a necessary condition for fulfilling their moral duty of *dakwah* and gradually changing society as exemplified in the Quran and *Sunna* (Hirschkind 2001a; Hirschkind 2006) In this context, the "virtual public arena" is seen as integral part of the "real public arena". As De Vries demonstrates in this seminal article "In Media Res" (2001), electronic media do represent "reality" as a "real, un-coded" experience has never existed.

One aim of DK.com is to train the *dakwah* activists for discussions and disputations with Islamic activists adhering to different strands of Islam. This becomes obvious when reading the articles posted in the rubrics "inspiration and motivation for *dakwah (inspirasi dan motivasi dakwah)*" and "*dakwah* campus consultation *(konsultansi dakwah kampus)"*. In this context it is interesting to note that they do not only follow a dual model of thinking as outlined by Schulze (2008) of wrong or right, or western versus Islamic, but combine for example western scholarly studies with Islamic references. This is for exemplified among others by Felix Siauw in this article about the importance of reading books, where he cites American studies as well as Quranic references (Siauw 2010). As suggested by Hirschkind (2006), *dakwah* fuses thus two models of agency. One form is grounded in the moral comportment based on the understanding of the Quran and the *Sunna,* the other form is embedded in liberal perceptions of the public sphere that accompanies the Indonesian states attempt to fashion a modern political order. In the article about the importance of reading to become a good *dakwah* activist, Siauw assumes the Islamic community as a moral space that needs to be educated.

His way of argumentation is however structured by the normative mode of articulation of the public sphere. The discourse towards self-improvement and towards approximating of what is understood to be correct Islamic conduct is strongly based on persuasion, admonishment and

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argumentation. The public sphere is thus perceived as a place for moral indoctrination and at the same time for public argumentation (Hirschkind 2001a; Hirschkind 2006). Hirschkind introduces the idea of "counterpublic" as a conceptual edifice. This concept seems useful to think about interdependencies of deliberation and discipline, as well as about language and power. For *dakwah* activists who participate in the virtual community of DK.com and engage actively in promoting their understanding of what it means to "enjoy good and forbid evil" *(amal ma'aruf nahi mungkar),* the embodiment of ethical norms are highly dependent upon communicative practices as well as on discursive conventions of the public sphere (Hirschkind 2006: 107).

Conclusion

For Indonesians, Islamic media have become a common part of everyday life. Islamic soap operas can be watched on TV, Islamic films become box office hits, and a wide variety of books promoting Islamic virtues flood the market. Also, the number of Islamic web communities such as DK.com keeps increasing. These Islamic media are not merely a form of pious entertainment, but may be seen as popular techniques, responsive to the needs of their target group, for the fostering of Islamic virtues (Hirschkind 2001, 2006). New media technologies transform religious practices and herewith constitute modes of sociability the transmitted values uphold.

In line with scholars such as Hirschkind (2001a; 2001b; 2006), Hirschkind and Larkin (2008b), Street (Street 1993) or Warner (1990; 2002), I have been arguing that media technologies, as employed by Islamic activists, have created conditions for a kind of 'publicness' grounded in certain classical Islamic concepts which are reformulated in response to a variety of contemporary exigencies. The central idea of strengthening the Islamic community, the *umma,* cuts across the distinctions between state and society, public and private, which are central to the Habermasian notion of public sphere (Habermas 1962). Deliberative and disciplinary moments are inextricably interwoven and interdependent within

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this arena. The public sphere is thus a place for learning, dialogue and dispute, all practices necessary for the moral guidance of the collective Islamic community.

The web portal DK.com can be regarded as just one example of how Islamic student activists contribute to the contestation of norms in public life. By a more inclusive mobilization process, historically novel lines of solidarity with the larger Muslim community are created that challenge state-centric, vertically defined, discourses of social justice (LeVine and Salvatore 2005). This wing of the campus *dakwah* movement articulates a collective identity and creates a public interactive space of mobilisation and contestation. Herewith, alternative models of the relationship between state institutions and local campus communities are constructed, they do not stand in a relation of clear opposition, but their entanglement is more complex and ambivalent. These emergent practices cannot be understood simply as a modernizing turn towards an increasingly individualized form of rational piety; nor can they be seen as tools aimed at strengthening national culture. Instead, these media need to be analysed in terms of a particular articulation of personal and political virtues within contemporary Islamic discourse, which is transnational in character.

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