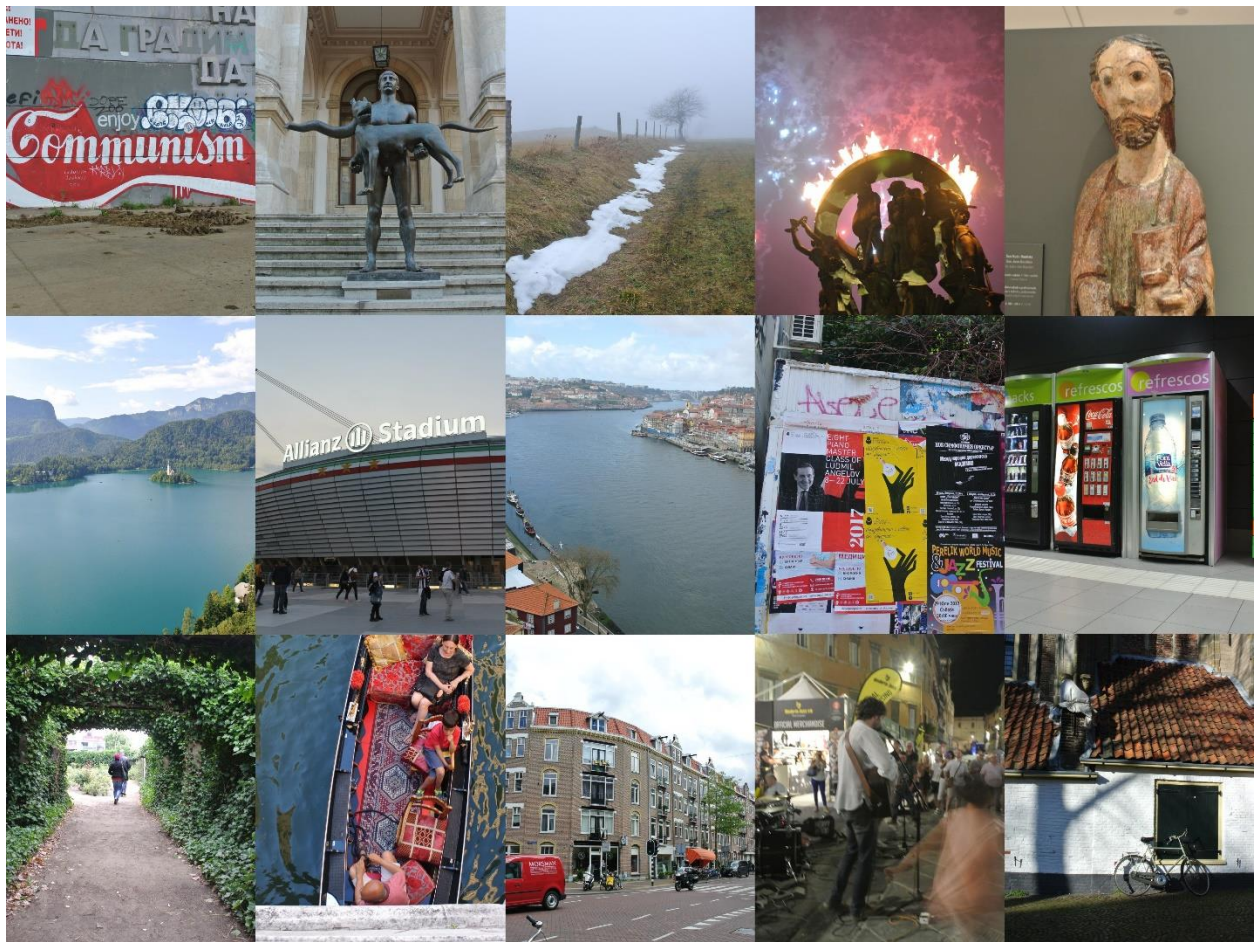


The Others are Framing Back

Narrating Indonesian students' photographs in the West



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MSc Leisure, Tourism, Environment

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The Others are Framing Back:
Narrating Indonesian Students' Photographs in the West

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It was Christmas Day of 2015. We sat in a fancy cafe in Semarang and played a kind of 'question-answer' game. I still remembered one of the questions: Who do you want to be if you reincarnate, but you cannot be the one you are in this present life? Chandraditya Kusuma, a good friend of mine, responded with sentences I will never forget. "I don't care to be whoever, but I want to be born in developed country. I am tired of always jumping. You know, we are in the third world are cursed to be always jumping, to be on level with first world citizens. I am tired."

Thus, I dedicate this thesis to all my friends who have been jumping together with me on these long, tiresome processes of living in the unequal world.

Until we meet again in decolonized life, comrades!

Disclaimer

I want to make disclaimer on two things. First, the photo-collage in the cover page is from collection of my photographs. They were taken during my travels, within period of 2016 to 2018, in several European places: Buzludzha, Bucharest, Schauinsland, Malmo, Santiago de Compostela, Bled, Torino, Porto, Sofia, Madrid, Hamburg, Venezia, Amsterdam, Perugia, and Deventer. I put them in the cover page as a remembrance of my time in Europe and as a proof that we are framing back.

Second, I will follow Connell's (2007: 212) free use of different ways of naming global divisions. They include North-South, West-East, metropole-periphery, developed-developing, first world-third world, and so forth. I know each of them has its own point of reference, but they often overlap. I hope the readers will not be confused by my free use of them – as I do not feel confused anymore by such fuzzy terminologies.

Acknowledgment

"All writers are vain, selfish, and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery [...] One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand. For all one knows the demon is simply the same instinct that makes a baby squall for attention." (George Orwell)

The idea of this thesis is like a baby who constantly squalls for attention. It came during the first semester of my study in Wageningen. Many months later, it was still there: asking to be written. If I did not write this time, it will stay tomorrow. And tomorrow. And tomorrow. Endless tomorrows. Therefore, amid other options, I went back to this 'demonic baby' who cries for my attention for almost two years. Now it's done, baby.

In this occasion, I would like to thank those who have helped me stopping this 'baby's squall'. First and foremost, I thank Trista Lin who has given me enough freedom to develop this idea and enough care to patiently respond to my questions/confusions. Then, I would like to deliver my special thanks to my fellow Indonesian students abroad who have inspired the initial idea of this thesis; especially those whose photographs I 'borrow' here; and those who have shared this two-years academic/postcolonial journey with me in Wageningen and Holland.

Last but not least, I want to thank Ibu – my beloved mother. The image of her has always been pushing me to finish this thesis... to go home.

Finally, I am going **home!**

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1. Setting off

Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an object script for you that you are silenced? (Gayatri Spivak)

1.1. Tourists from the South

This thesis began with two unrelated events. First, I watched documentary ‘Framing the Other’ (Kok & Timmers, 2011) in a *Sustainable Development* class, circa November 2016. Second, I was scrolling my Facebook timeline when I suddenly noticed various travel photographs of fellow Indonesian students studying in Western Europe and United States. I was awestruck with a single question in my head: what if ‘the Others’ are framing back now?

The problem statement I want to offer is rather simple. Many accounts have recorded the ways Western tourists see and frame non-Western world, but not the opposite. ‘Framing the Other’ documentary, for instance, is about encounter between Mursi tribe and Western tourists. It shows how Dutch tourists traveled to Ethiopia to see and photograph ‘unusually adorned natives’, as Mursi women ‘are known for placing large plates in their lower lips and wearing enormous, richly decorated earrings’ (Synopsis, n.d.). Moreover, an academic article with same title recounts how young British’s overseas gap year travels have reproduced the established discourse on ‘the Other’ as exotic (Snee, 2013). Indeed, ‘exotic’ is the most common representation of non-Western people, cultures, and places.

Now, the question is: are tourists always Western? What often makes me wonder about contemporary tourism studies is the rare analysis of non-Western as tourist/traveler. Seemingly, there is still a binary of ‘Western as tourist’ and ‘non-Western as touree’ (Cohen & Cohen, 2015a: 13). Winter (2009: 23-34) points out, “Given that the paradigm of tourism has in large part been constructed around an analysis of west-to-east, north-to-south encounters, rooted in ideas of globalization as a process of westernization, our tourist has been silently conceived as white (and male)”. Thus, it should be unproblematic to regard tourism studies as Eurocentric, Western-biased, and colonial (Cohen & Cohen, 2015b; Alneng, 2002; Chambers & Buzinde, 2015).

Some accounts have provided relieved break from such monotony in tourism studies. For example, Peters and Higgins-Desbiolles (2012) attempt to de-marginalize tourism research by discussing indigenous Australians as tourists, not as object of (Western) tourist gaze – which is more common in tourism studies. They identify several modes of travel among indigenous Australians, such as visiting/returning to ancestral homelands, collecting remains of Aboriginal people ‘exhibited’ in colonialist museums, etc. Besides, Li (2015) studies the practice of photography among Chinese tourists when visiting various destinations in UK. He attempts to de-Westernize and reconceptualize John Urry’s tourist gaze by putting Chinese outbound tourists as epicenter. Still, both studies are merely tiny rebellions under dominant discourse of tourists-are-

Western. Simply put, non-Western tourists are 'still very much ignored' (Alneng, 2002: 134) albeit the rise of non-Western travel, especially from Asian regions.

Winter (2009: 27-28) argues, "The ongoing growth of non-Western forms of travel are the empirical impetus for cultivating new approaches and perspectives". Indeed, non-Western tourism/travel is empirically abundant but theoretically poor. Hence, Cohen and Cohen (2015b: 157) call for 'paradigm shift' to address that problem. They suggest incorporating tourism studies into mobilities paradigm, which they claim 'is free of Eurocentric assumptions'. For Winter (2009: 27), pluralism should be the starting point. He calls for an approach which 'geographically, politically and epistemologically plural' and 'a multi-centered analysis'. In short, he invites us to 'seriously question the universalisms at the core of tourism studies'.

So, empirically, tourists are not always Western. But, the non-Western ones are very often silenced, ignored, overlooked, and/or forgotten. I locate this thesis as a response to this silence and ignorance within knowledge production in tourism studies. As a student-cum-tourist from the South, I am tempted to write with 'a certain degree of rage' (Spivak, 1990: 62) and 'from my very inner being [...] from where it burns' (del Arco, 2017: vi) against the ignorance that has silenced the voices from South all this time.

1.2. Case study

Indonesian students and their photographs in the West

In this thesis, the 'voice from South' will be represented by Indonesian students' photographs in the West. They will be treated as a case study, in order to understand the reverse framing of South-to-North (or East-to-West) tourist encounters.

My choice on student-as-tourist is also an attempt to challenge Eurocentric/Western-biased tourist discourse 'where other journey-makers are discredited' (McRae, 2003: 243). Cohen and Cohen (2015a) notice that studying abroad plays important roles in Asian travels to the West. Discussing Thai long-haul travel, they say that "it was mainly selected students, rather than tourists, who, until the last one or two decades, visited the West" (2015a: 29). Furthermore, they say that 'the embroilment of sight-seeing with studying abroad is also increasingly common' and 'international students tend to integrate leisure trips with their studies' (2015a: 32). In short, studying abroad offers opportunities for Asians to travel to Western countries.

Indonesian students who study in Western countries will be viewed as 'tourists from the South'. The next question is: they must be framing the West, mustn't they? That is where photograph becomes relevant. As I stated earlier, through Facebook, I found lots of photographs of Indonesian students studying in the West. Actually, and perhaps unintentionally, those photographs might point out, depict, and frame what 'West' is for Indonesian students/tourists. They become a 'research site' for me. I sense potential 'data' within them which, I thought since the beginning, can tell Indonesian-projected narratives about West.

Furthermore, I treat the issue of 'photograph' or 'visual image' as a gap that I would like to fill through this thesis. Within tourism studies, some accounts have narrated about image of

West for non-Western tourists. Bui et al. (2013), for instance, investigate the imagination of West among young Asian travelers. However, their study only relies on narratives from in-depth interviews. Besides, studies on image of West in Indonesian society have also been done (Nertz, 2014; Schlehe, 2013; Atmaja & Budiastuti, 2012). Still, they also capture the issue through spoken narratives derived from interviews. Meanwhile, image of non-Western destination for Western tourists have been studied through visual analysis (Caton & Santos, 2008; Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Albers and James, 1988). Therefore, in this thesis, I rely on photograph as visual texts through which I aim to understand image of West for non-Western tourists.

In sum, this case study is basically about tourist encounter – virtually/visually – between Indonesian students/tourists and Western countries/destinations. Because it is concerning East-West/South-North relationship, I will theoretically approach my case study through postcolonial thinking (discussed in ch.2). Besides, I will employ semiotics as methodological and analytical tools to deal with visual materials used in this thesis (discussed in ch.3).

1.3. Research questions

There are two objectives in this thesis: framing/talking back and self-reflection. I want to understand how Indonesian students frame the West through their photographs. Such framing can be understood by paying attention to what are represented in their photographs. Then, to provide self-reflection for Indonesian students – which myself included, I want to comprehend what kind of postcolonial narratives lie beneath Indonesian students' photographs in the West. Therefore, this thesis aims to respond to following research questions:

Main research question

How do Indonesian students frame the West through their photographs?

Supporting research questions

What are represented in Indonesian students' photographs in the West?

What are the underlying postcolonial narratives of Indonesian students' photographs in the West?

2. Literature review

My literature review consists of four discussions: postcolonial thinking, occidentalism, images of West, and tourist photography. They are important as theoretical groundwork to make sense of my case study. Furthermore, I try to think of and connect all of them in postcolonial perspectives to make my flow of thoughts coherent. First, I discuss on postcolonialism as metropole-periphery relationships and as political projects, by using orientalism as a sample of unequal postcolonial realities. Second, I frame occidentalism as condition of talking back to orientalist kind of postcolonial relationships. Third, I explore Indonesia's images of West as a result of occidentalism and its talking back. Finally, I focus on tourist photographs as potential manifestation of the images of West/East in this postcolonial life.

2.1. Postcolonial thinking

As I began this thesis with the issue of 'the Other', then of West-East/North-South encounter, I naturally found myself in the 'jungle' of postcolonial thinking. I moved between various writings which I regarded as 'postcolonial literature' or 'related to postcolonial'. This section contains my understanding of what 'thinking postcolonially' means.

The domination of West toward the rest of the world does not automatically vanish along with the end of direct colonialism (Samuel and Sutopo, 2013: 294). Instead, its existence lingers in manifold aspects of life. Many scholars put this situation within the term 'postcolonialism', which entails not only a matter of after-colonialism but also anything related to colonialism beyond colonialism (Nurhadi et al., 2011: 4). Following Connell (2007: viii), I am particularly interested on seeing postcolonialism as relationships – hegemony, negotiation, appropriation, resistance, and so forth – between metropolises and peripheries. I put 'relationships' in plural form to indicate that postcolonialism is 'resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates' (Ashcroft et al., 1995: 2).

Postcolonialism, as Young (2012: 20) argues, is not just a disciplinary field or theory. It involves various political objectives to de-/re-construct Western knowledges, reorient ethical norms, and turn world's power structures upside down. He adds that "the postcolonial has always been concerned with interrogating the interrelated histories of violence, domination, inequality, and injustice" (ibid.). So, as an intellectual movement, postcolonialism positions itself with specific ontological and epistemological standpoints. It lies around the notions of inequality, deconstruction, and power relation; and concentrates on the divides and relationships of west-east/north-south/metropole-periphery/colonizer-colonized. In addition, Bhabra (2014: 15) notes that postcolonial thinking tends to focus on cultural realms.

One of the angles to see and understand postcolonialism – as relationships – is through what Edward Said (1978) calls orientalism. In essence, orientalism is the creation of 'Oriental Other' – and reflectively of 'European/Western Self'. Said defines it as "a style of thought based

upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” and “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (1978: 2-3). What should be emphasized in the orientalist kind of relationship between West and Orient is: it is hegemonic.

“Orientalism operates in the service of the West’s hegemony over the East primarily by producing the East discursively as the West’s inferior ‘Other’, a maneuver which strengthens [...] the West’s self-image as a superior civilization. It does this principally by distinguishing and then essentializing the identities of East and West through a dichotomizing system of representations [...] with the aim of making rigid the sense of difference between European and Asiatic parts of the world.” (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 39)

Thus, orientalism portrays an unequal relationship between West and ‘the Other’.. It is West – and only West – who speaks and articulates. Consequently, ‘the Other’ is made unable to speak of and represent itself. Said (1978: 57) says: “Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant [...] It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes.” It is a sort of one-way interaction. However, there should be ‘the possibilities of dialogue’ (McRae: 2003: 236), of two-ways interaction.

Opening up possibilities of dialogue is crucial in postcolonial thinking; because it is a form of resistance, and resistance is always at the heart of postcolonialism. For Kasiyan (2003: 79), such resistance essentially means to ‘celebrate the awareness of difference’, because truths of human civilization are ‘scattered everywhere’ and not the monopoly of West. For example, Said’s *Orientalism* – as one of the founding literatures of postcolonial studies – should be read as an act of resisting West’s hegemony and provoking two-ways dialogues. So do other postcolonial works. They resist by, firstly, deconstructing the unjust nature of postcolonial realities and relations; then by pushing the space for dialogue, for ‘the Other’ to talk back.

Lastly, I need to clarify two nuances of postcolonialism I use here. First, postcolonialism as a matter of relationships between (former) metropolises and peripheries which still persist after era of direct colonialism. Second, postcolonialism as intellectual and political attempts to shift those relationships. In line with this thesis’ objectives and research questions, understanding both nuances of postcolonialism is significant.

2.2. Occidentalism

For non-Western bodies, occidentalism might provide the condition for talking back. Schlehe (2013: 500) regards occidentalism as “stereotypical, homogeneous imaginations, ideologies and representations of the West by non-Western people”. While Nertz (2014: 102) treats occidentalism as “the projected image of the Western world enjoyed by representatives of ‘the Orient’”. Furthermore, Ahiska (2003: 378) notes that ‘occidentalism is perceived as a means of reversing Orientalism’ by some scholars. In this sense, occidentalism can produce discourse where West reversely becomes ‘the Other’. In the beginning, I shared view with those viewpoints, but I slowly wondered whether occidentalism is another project of West.

Carrier (1992: 199) defines occidentalism as an essentialist rendering of the West by Westerners. Later, Venn (2000) sets out more critical trajectory to understand occidentalism. He links it with the notion of modernity and discusses it in relation to 'the becoming-modern of the world and the becoming-West of Europe' (2000: 19). In this context, occidentalism falls into the hegemonic West's project of modernity, through which the West articulates, defines, and represents itself as modern, developed, and greater civilization. This view is closely linked to orientalism. Following Schlehe's (2013: 500) reading on Carrier (1992) and Coronil (2002), occidentalism is "the implicit Western construction or self-invention of the Occident which is implied in the orientaling of the Other/the Orient."

Thus, there are two views about occidentalism based on the issue of authority (who is authoring?). The first claims that non-Westerners articulates the West, the second argues it is Westerners who construct the West. In this divide, I try to locate myself somewhere in the middle. I follow Bonnett (2005: 508) who says, "'the West' can be seen as having multiple sites of creation: there is no urtext of occidentalism". I believe that non-Western bodies play their own parts in authoring of occidentalism, through lived practices of negotiation, resistance, appropriation, hybridization, or else.

Still, it is not easy to escape from narratives of occidentalism produced by the West – Nertz (2014: 102) calls it 'auto-occidentalism'¹. Even in the increasingly decentered world, Western/Eurocentrism still exists in great degree. Writing on Westoxication in Iran, Al-e Ahmad (1982: 121; quoted in Connell, 2007: 120) argues that many non-Western people are 'westoxicated' by depending too much on 'what orientalist see' – not only seeing the Orient but also the Occident. Ahiska (2003: 368) notices that while occidentalism is 'an answering practice to the constructions of the West' and 'may produce a resistance to Western power', it operates within West's discursive terms and may counter-productively endorse West's hegemony. Thus, considering unequal power relation between Occident and Orient is vital to comprehend occidentalism in critical manner.

Furthermore, I argue that occidentalism is very complex. It is entangled with orientalism, self-occidentalism, and self-orientalism. All of them are linked and inseparable, because they refer to double and mirror-like construction of Self and Other. Said (1978: 1-2) writes that Orient has helped West to define itself, 'as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience'. In reverse, West is helpful in defining Orient's Self. For instance, in Indonesian context, Schlehe (2013: 498) argues that 'concept of an Indonesian Self has been affiliated with ideas of the West'². So, when Orient occidentalizes the West (as the Other), it reflectively self-orientalizes its Self. Then, that Oriental Self has possibly been (re)constructed through processes of orientalism and self-orientalism – the latter inherently also reflects Orient-projected occidentalism.

¹ Personally, I prefer to use the term 'self-occidentalism' to refer to self-construction of Occident by Westerners; and 'self-orientalism' to self-construction of Orient by non-Westerners.

² In Indonesian society, we have what we call '*adat ketimuran*' (eastern custom). Whatever it means, it tends to be in opposition with western custom, values, and norms.

Lastly, I need to talk about essentialism. I am conscious that an attempt to understand what West is, or occidentalism, may lead to essentialization of West. Therefore, I follow Carrier (1992: 207) who argues: "The problem, then, is not essentialism itself. Instead, the problem is a failure to be conscious of essentialism, whether it springs from the assumptions with which we approach our subjects or the goals that motivate our writing." Since the beginning, my aim is not to essentialize West, but to grasp and narrate one or two possible understandings of (idea of) 'West'. Bonnett (2005: 507) thinks that occidentalism is politically, historically, and geographically heterogeneous, while Mamadouh (2006) argues that the concepts of West are geopolitically plural. Thus, this thesis celebrates such heterogeneity and plurality.

2.3. Images of West

In essence, occidentalism produces the images of West. Here, I will mainly discuss about 'West' as image/concept/construct which is (re)constructed by non-Western bodies, especially by Indonesians in this literature review. This sub-section is to support my argument that non-Western people play active roles in authoring occidentalist narratives (of West). They demonstrate that talking back and two-ways dialogue are possible.

First and foremost, West is considered as 'symbol of modernity' for Indonesians (Nertz, 2014: 100). However, that is not the only image of West. In Indonesian everyday settings, as Schlehe (2013: 512) recounts, 'West' carries contradictory, ambiguous, and ambivalent meanings. Such ambiguity and ambivalence basically reflect what Indonesians desire and reject in relation to 'the modern West'. For example, Indonesians tend to admire West in terms of economic strength and wealth, advance technology, discipline (a sense of order and punctuality), and so on. On the other hand, they are cautious about West's materialism, social disintegration, secularization, moral decadence, and so forth (Schlehe, 2013: 504).

The ambivalent nature of images of West in Indonesia is more salient in terms of individualism and liberalism (Nertz, 2014; Schlehe, 2013). On positive light, individualism is understood as independency, autonomy, and self-reliance of subjects; and liberalism as human rights, gender equality, and religious freedom. On negative light, individualism is equated as isolation, loneliness, egoism, selfishness, and anonymity; and liberalism as 'free sex', indecent female clothing, alcohol and drug consumption, and morally decadent. In general, Indonesians tend to believe that "West is more advanced in every respect – except in the realm of religion, spirituality and morality" (Schlehe, 2013: 503).

So, broadly speaking, there are two Indonesian occidentalist narratives: the good and the bad. Indonesians do not passively consume Western-projected occidentalism narratives (or self-occidentalism). They acknowledge that West is superior in some aspects, but inferior in others. Occidentalism a la Indonesians is not a 'mere reproduction of the stereotypes of passivity and inferiority' (Schlehe, 2013: 508). Instead, what Indonesians do is a 'practice of filtering' (Nertz, 2014: 103); that is a mode of interrogating Western ideals and its conditions for modernity, along with identifying the good/bad of Western values and norms.

Another way of knowing Indonesia's images of West is by exploring on 'bule'. It is a term that Indonesians use to refer to Caucasian, coming from Europe or North America, and/or white (Atmaja & Budiastuti, 2012: 22)³. Pratamawaty et al. (2018: 701) add that bule is identical with 'Western people' ('orang Barat'). In their study, Atmaja and Budiastuti (2012:22) argue that Indonesians generally construct bule as desired Other. According to their account, being and befriending with bule comprise 'prestige' and 'very high value', because you can be 'recognized as somebody who has something more than what society has'.

However, this desire over Westerners (as Other) is contested by 'antithetical evaluation about whiteness', that is the dislike of white skin (2012: 23). Informants in Atmaja and Budiastuti's study regard white skin as 'pale' and consider sawo matang⁴ (sapodilla brown) and racially mixed color are better than white. In this sense, the element of white – which is strongly associated with Westerners – might be used as means to negotiate and resist the discourse of 'bule as desired Other'. This finding supports previous discussions on the ambivalent nature of Indonesian-projected occidentalism.

Bule is associated with 'smart', 'clever', or 'intellectual', too. Studying on native English teachers in Aceh, Al Auwal (2016: 417) finds that (Indonesian) students believe that their Western teachers 'look smarter and more knowledgeable', compared to the Indonesian counterparts. Assumption that Westerners are smart is noted by Nertz (2014) as well. Indonesians tend to project Western people as clever, eager to learn, read a lot, studious, and inquisitive. These images are linked to positive attitude toward high-ranking Western education (2014: 100-101) and to construction of bule as desired Other (Atmaja & Budiastuti, 2012: 22-23).

Particularly relevant to this thesis, desire toward Westerners can be translated into highly valued prestige of having friendship with them. I follow Bui et al. (2013: 139-140) who regard friendship with Westerners as a form of (Western) cosmopolitanism and, subsequently, as sought-after cultural capital. That can be one of the reasons why having Western friends is prestigious in Indonesian society. It makes Indonesian looks cosmopolitan, so she/he has valuable cultural capital. Simply put, friendship with Westerners may perform and convey symbolic form of (Western) cosmopolitanism and internationalism.

Finally, West is not only desired but also imagined. Within wider Asian context, Bui et al. (2013: 131) argue that imagination of West is associated with 'cosmopolitan aspects of the Western world, such as economic development, modern lifestyle, freedom, and richness of cultural heritage'. Relevant to my thesis, architecture plays significant role in imagining the West.

³ 'Bule' is equivalent with 'gringo' in South America. Benedict Anderson (2016) claims he invented and popularized term 'bule' in 1960s. It comes from the word 'bulai', similar to 'albino'. Pepinsky (n.d.) regards 'bule' as semi-derogatory term for white person, akin to 'whitey' in American English. However, Anderson thinks 'bule' is more friendly and egalitarian term, as Indonesians used to call white people/men with 'Tuan' (Sir, Mister/Master, Lord) (Franciska, 2017). In contemporary context, 'bule' has been developed as term to call all kinds of foreigner – with additional adjective, like 'bule Afrika' or 'bule Arab' to call respectively foreigner from Africa or Middle East. Nevertheless, the term is still strongly associated with white, Caucasian, European-descent foreigner.

⁴ Term 'sawo matang' (literally means 'ripe sapodilla') is used by Indonesians to refer the typical Indonesian's skin color; which is not white and black but more of brown, a 'sawo matang' brown.

In general, young Asians perceive European/Western architecture – defined as architectural style originated from and typical of Europe/West – as ‘attractive’, ‘classical’, and ‘benchmark’ (2013: 138). That consequently makes Western destinations desirable. Such argument is supported by Atmaja and Budiastuti (2012: 24) who think that, in Indonesian case European architecture and building are prominent signifiers of Western modernity and civilization.

“Europe is not only worth for visiting, but also worth to be shown to our (Indonesian) people because it has very good civilization and also good architecture buildings [...] Europe is the heart of classical Western culture with well-preserved building [...] European buildings are classic but modern and attractive [...] Europe is part of Western world that has high development in technology, modern society, good architecture and excellent place.” (ibid.)

2.4. Tourist photography

This section explores the relationship between tourist photography and image of place, society, or culture. I will mainly discuss orientalist images of Orient/East/South within Western tourists’ photographs of non-Western places. The opposite is what I pursue with this thesis. Through this section, I aim for justification of using photographs of Western places – taken by non-Western tourists – as potential manifestation of occidental images of West.

Photography and travel have always been good friends. Sontag (1977: 6) says, “it seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along [...] travel becomes a strategy of accumulating photographs.” Meanwhile, Haldrup and Larsen (2013: 23) regards taking photographs as ‘an emblematic tourist practice’. One cannot deny the fact that photography and travel are very much related; and what those practices produce is travel photograph. In this thesis, I am particularly interested on seeing travel photographs as (visual) representation of place. In Jenkins’ words (2003: 306), “visual tourist destination images are a form of ‘text’ used to ‘represent’ the world”. Also crucial in this thesis, photographs are vital in ‘creating and communicating images of a destination’ (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004: 390). Simply put, travel photographs might tell us something about specific place, culture, or society.

If travel photographs represent, construct, and communicate the images of place (or its culture and society), what do they say in the context of North-to-South tourist encounters? Caton and Santos (2008), for instance, investigate photographs taken by US-based study abroad program’s participants (i.e. Western students), who visited seven non-Western countries: Japan, China, Vietnam, India, Egypt, Cyprus, and Morocco. Their photographs reproduce colonialist discourse on ‘the Other’ and show five orientalist binaries: traditional/modern, subject/object, master/servant, center/periphery, and devious-lazy/moral-industrious.

Those binaries indicate images of East/South/Orient. First, it is traditional and unchanged. In this sense, the photographs show intentional silences of any markers of modernity. Places are pictured as ‘exotic, mystical, and past their prime’; and people as ‘traditional’ and ‘ethnic’ (2008: 17). Second, it is object(ified). Most photos consist of hosts (i.e. non-Westerners) posing at camera, without (Western) participants and with traditional/ethnic clothing. This ‘conveys the idea that hosts are exotic objects worthy of the tourist gaze [...] meant to be consumed visually,

not encountered through dialogue' (2008: 18). Third, 'the Other' is servant. This image is expressed by various photographs featuring participants 'being provided a service by a resident of the host country' (2008: 19). Fourth, it is peripheral. When photographs portray host-participant interaction, the latter is in the center of picture (e.g. playing harmonica or replaying video on camera). While hosts surround the Western participant, who is seen as admirable and advanced (2008: 20). At last, 'the Other' is imagined as lazy, unproductive, and devious. This image legitimates colonialist ideas that 'They' need to be civilized and educated (2008: 22).

Some other studies have also touched upon the images of East/South/Orient in tourism settings. Echtner and Prasad (2003) recount that many tourist destinations in Third World have been visually represented, constructed and communicated as unchanged, unrestrained, and uncivilized. In the context of ethnic tourism, Albers and James (1988) find that 'the Other' is commonly homogenized, decontextualized, and mystified in travel photographs. What both studies indicate are actually common strategies in the exoticization of non-Western place, culture, and society; those can be applied in photographs or other medium.

Unfortunately, studies on 'photographic encounter' between non-Western tourists and Western destinations is very rare. Yet, at least, there is Li's (2015) study – which I have indicated in Introduction (ch.1). His account basically interrogates the concept of tourist gaze by complicating it with tourist photography practices of Chinese tourist in British destinations. The study finds that Chinese tourist gaze can be characterized as 'transcendent, imaginative, reflexive, comparative, expressive, interchanging and playful' (2015: 246). As addition, the non-Western tourist gaze – performed by Chinese tourists – is 'de-exoticized' (2015: 261). Those character, then, translate into photographic form.

The studied photographs, in Li's (ibid.) view, show that Chinese tourists seek the elements of pleasure and often compare British destinations they visit/see with their home country. More clearly, they like to photograph historic/old buildings, traditional villages, blue skies, green fields, crystal clear waters, and relaxed local people's everyday life. Those photographic themes fall into 'Chinese tourists' cannon of taste'. Li also finds that Chinese tourists' photographs also indicate the 'desire' toward UK's 'attractive social characteristics [...] that they consider to be advanced' (2015: 247). Such desire is not coming out of place. Chinese tourists 'intentionally gazed on advanced social or cultural aspects of the British destinations, comparing them favorably against their lived experience of contemporary China' (2015: 262).

In accordance with this thesis' objectives, Li's study has inspired that not only non-Western tourists visit, see, and photographs Western destinations they encounter, but also they differ from fellow Western tourists in their tourist gaze and photography practices. Thus, I would like to assume that South-to-North (East-to-West) tourist/photographic encounters might offer us possibilities to understand the occidentalist images of West.

3. Visual methodology

3.1. Semiotic analysis

Aside from conceptual framework, methodological and analytical tools are needed to make sense of case study. I commit myself with semiotics to deal with, read, interpret, and analyze visual materials I use; namely Indonesian students' photographs in the West. I employ two kinds of semiotic analysis. First is Barthian semiotics, focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth. Second is social semiotics, focusing on representational, interactive, and compositional functions/meanings.

Before setting off, I would like to provide general account on semiotics. The most central concept in semiotics is 'sign'; and thus, semiotics is a study of sign. Bal and Bryson (1991: 174) write, "human culture is made up of signs, each of which stands for something else other than itself, and the people inhabiting the culture busy themselves making sense of those signs". To focus more on visuals, semiotics deals with 'the question of how images make meanings' (Rose, 2012: 105) – as each visual image consists of signs which stand for something else. In short, semioticians are interested to know about that 'something else'.

In doing semiotic analysis in this thesis, I apply basic rationale which I borrow from van Leeuwen's principles of social semiotics.

"Social semiotics is not 'pure' theory, not a self-contained field. It only comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems, and it always requires immersing oneself not just in semiotic concepts and methods as such but also in some other field [...] Social semiotics is a form of enquiry. It does not offer ready-made answers. It offers ideas for formulating questions and ways of searching for answers." (2005: 2)

I consider those principles are vital to be comprehended. They provide me with two foundational understandings. First, semiotics cannot work alone. That is why I employ postcolonial thinking as conceptual framework, so semiotics mainly works as methodological tools. Second, semiotics is more a mode of asking, than of answering. In this sense, I ask (i.e. 'interrogating' photographs) through semiotics and (hope to) find the answers through postcolonial thinking.

Finally, I want to make notes on the importance of context. Photograph should be seen as (visual) text. Then, every text has context. Collier (2001: 38) thinks that understanding contextual information is important in reading photographs. He argues: "A 'good' photograph is not necessarily good data if it lacks the necessary contextual information [...] Good research images contain complexity, they record associations and relationships, they are often unremarkable at first glance and take time to read". Thus, the attentive process of reading/interpreting visual image based on contextual information becomes important. Paying attention to context may lead us to understand the remarkableness, complexity, and associations within photograph. So, it is not just a photograph.

3.1.1. *Barthian semiotics*

Semiotics à la Roland Barthes is centered on the idea that meaning (or 'signification', in more Barthesian way) has multiple layers. There are two layers: denotation and connotation. Besides, Barthes also offers the idea of myth. My discussion on Barthesian semiotics will mainly focus on those three ideas. They are beneficial in the reading of visual image, so one can understand the layered meanings/significations it may contain.

Denotation is the explicit or direct meaning of thing – or visual images in this case. The photograph of a red rose, for instance, simply denotes a red rose. In Fiske's (1982: 91) words, 'denotation is what is photographed'. Hence, denotation is about what it actually is. For Barthes, denotation is the first layer of signification/meaning. One can easily grasp the denotative meaning of a photograph by recognizing what is depicted there. Barthes (1977: 36) also calls it 'literal message' (of photograph). Furthermore, Chandler (n.d.) describes denotation as 'definitional, literal, obvious, or commonsense meaning of a sign'.

The second layer of signification/meaning is connotation. Opposed to the 'literal' nature of denotation, connotation offers a symbolic message (of photograph). Nothing is explicit or direct in it. The broader concepts, ideas, and values are interplayed in the understanding of connotation. Thus, it usually depends a lot on context and culture. Compared to denotation, connotation is more problematic as a sign can have multiple meanings. It means that a sign is more open to different interpretations in connotative reading of a photograph.

Chandler (n.d.) explains, "Connotation is used to refer to the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, ethnicity and so on." Barthes is also aware that connotation can be very personal and individual. Connotation is produced by 'the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the users and the values of their culture' (in Bouzida, 2014: 1005). In short, connotation is very much associative. It is not about what it is.

Related to connotation is what Barthes refers to as myth – arguably the most important concept from him. Some scholars regard myth as the third layer of signification/meaning in Barthesian semiotics (Fiske & Hartley, 1978; O'Sullivan et al., 1994). Myth is different from connotation as it contains ideology of our time (Chandler, n.d.). In Barthes' words, myth 'pass(es) from semiology to ideology' (1972: 128). This aspect of ideology is very important in myth. One has to understand the underlying ideological structure of society to be able to 'decipher' it. Myth is resonant with Marx's notion of false consciousness (Brody, n.d.).

To understand what myth is in Barthesian sense, one firstly needs to avoid traditional notions of myth. Explaining Barthes' *Mythologies*, Brody (n.d.) writes: "There's nothing of Sisyphus or Oedipus [...] nothing of the classic notion of myth as the founding stories of someone else's religion." Barthes points out clearly that myth is a type of speech, a system of communication, or a message (1972: 107). But, it is not an ordinary kind of those. Relevant to this thesis is the understanding that myth is a depoliticized speech. Barthes explains, "myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion" (1972: 142). Moreover, he says that myth's function is to empty reality; to make it natural and innocent (1972: 143).

In short, myth silences and depoliticizes by making things natural and commonsensical. According to Bazzul (2015: 1156-1157), myth as depoliticized speech is dangerous in two ways: “First, the dissemination of myth promotes a kind of unreflective acceptance of cultural norms and messages. Second, the ideological content of the message, of myth, is taken as a statement of fact, perfectly natural in itself.” (As last remark, besides its methodological importance, Barthian notion of myth will also be conceptually relevant later, when I try to understand underlying postcolonial ideology within visual materials.)

3.1.2. *Social semiotics*

Social semiotics emphasizes more on how ‘semiotic resources’ are used to produce communication. In this sense, visual image matters not only because it contains meaningful signs, but also because it is used in the social communication process. In Rose’s (2012: 137) words, social semiotics ‘focuses on social interaction in relation to signs’. Moreover, ‘semiotic resource’ is crucial term in social semiotics. It is defined as ‘actions and artefacts we use to communicate’. Semiotic resources contain potential for making meanings and avoid the idea that signs are pre-given (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3-4). In sum, with semiotic resources as key concept, social semiotics celebrates the plural meanings and possibilities of ‘what could be’.

In this thesis, I employ Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) notions of representational, interactive, and compositional functions/meanings. The three are treated as part of visual grammar⁵, through which meanings are created and conveyed. Here, the simple maxim is: any visual image does not only *represent* something, but also play its part in social *interaction* and have recognizable visual *composition* in itself. Each function/meaning consists of rich features, so I will only discuss those which are relevant to this thesis.

Visual image is representational. Saying so, the meaning is conveyed by represented ‘participants’, which are people, places, and/or objects depicted within the visual image. Altogether they create ‘syntax’ of image. In visual text, as Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 141) explain, syntax is “a matter of spatial relationships, of ‘where things are’ in the semiotic space and of whether or not they are connected through lines, or through visual ‘rhymes’ of color, shape, and so on.” Furthermore, visual representation can be conceptual, as it depicts the ‘being’ and ‘meaning’ of what are represented in the visual image.

Conceptual representation presents viewers with ‘concept’. The concept can be classificatory, analytical, or symbolic. Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 143-144) explain that classificatory concept “brings different people, places or things together in one picture, distributing them symmetrically across the picture space to show that they have something in common, that they belong to the same class.” Analytical concept relates participants in its ‘part-whole’ structure. This means the concept of visual image can be understood by paying attention

⁵ Following linguist Michael Halliday, Kress and van Leeuwen reject the common idea of grammar as ‘formal rules of correctness’, but as ‘a means of representing patterns of experience’ (2006: 2).

to its whole and its parts (or attributes; in Harrison, 2003: 51). Symbolic concept defines the meaning of represented participants. Meaning is conveyed through recognition of symbolic attributes. Several characteristics of such attributes are: they are made *salient* by size, position, color, and use of lighting; they are pointed out by means of *gesture*; they look *out of place*; they are associated with *symbolic values* (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 144).

Visual image is interactive. In social semiotics, visual image has particular role in social interaction. It may create imaginary interaction between viewers and depicted participants (people, things, or place); or indirectly between viewers and producer of image. In both ways, visual image may suggest viewers to take specific attitude toward 'what is being represented'. There are three factors in this interactive process: contact/gaze, distance/intimacy, and point of view/perspective (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001; Harrison, 2003).

Contact is particularly relevant in visual image of people (either individual or in group). Depicted people 'make contact' through her/his facial expression and gestures. For Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 120), this contact can be in form of 'demand' or 'offer'. People 'symbolically demand something from the viewer' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 145) when she/he imaginarily gazes at the viewers. Meanwhile, when such imaginary gaze is absent, depicted people may offer information to viewers – to make sense of visual image.

Distance suggests the level of intimacy between depicted participants and viewers (again, visual image of people is more relevant). This can be observed by size of frame. Close-up shot suggests intimate/personal relationship; medium shot suggests social relationship; and long shot suggests impersonal relationship. Last factor, point of view, gives hint about level of involvement and power relation in participants-viewers interaction. This can be analyzed by shot angles. Frontal angle indicates involvement, while oblique angle indicates detachment. Furthermore, high angle suggests higher power of viewer, eye-level angle suggest equal power, and low angle suggests higher power of depicted participants.

Visual image is compositional. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 176) explain that compositional function made representational and interactive ones relate to each other. They are integrated into meaningful whole through a variety of elements. For my analysis, two elements will be relevant: information value and salience. Information value can be revealed by 'the placement of the elements of a composition' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 147). So, it interrogates the questions of which represented participants are placed in left/right, top/bottom, or center/margin. Each placement can reveal particular meaning. For example, what is placed in the center may provide core of meaning, as it holds the 'marginal' elements.

Meanwhile, salience is the term to indicate that 'some elements can be made more eye-catching than others' (2001: 150). This can be done through different ways, such as size, sharpness of focus, tonal contrast, color contrast, and foreground/background (Harrison, 2003: 57). The bigger size reflects the greater salience; out-of-focus indicates less salience, higher tonal and strongly saturated color have greater salience; and what is in foreground has greater salience than in background. In short, salience is an ability to capture viewer's attention.

3.2. The processes

This thesis springs naturally from my mundane daily experiences – along with sociological imagination I inherit from my bachelor time. So, the wellspring of this thesis is located in everyday life. I will try to narrate this thesis' own journey in methodical fashion; from (unintentional) digital participant-observation, selection of images, and so on.

In Facebook, I befriend many Indonesians who study in various universities in the world. I knew most of them from scholarship program which have funded my study. Others I knew from other 'channels', like high schools, universities, jobs, acculturation course, and so on. Moreover, they study in many different countries: Australia, United Kingdom, United States, The Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Thailand, and so forth. Most are the so-called 'Western' countries, where 'best' universities – generally believed – are.

Then, there comes a critical point of this thesis. That kind of my Facebook friends – Indonesian students studying/living in Western countries – take pictures about their experiences (either in daily life settings or non-daily leisure/travel settings) and share them through Facebook. At first, it was merely daily habit of being virtually in Facebook. Later, I slowly build interest and curiosity toward the photographs that my friends have taken and shared in Facebook. Afterwards, this mere interest/curiosity led me to realize that there is a kind of thematic patterns within those friends' photographs – which mostly were taken in Western places (either cities/countries where they study or the ones nearby).

Those patterns were unintentionally derived from what I call 'social media participant-observation'. By this term, I refer to a practice of actively engaging with and immersing oneself in digital social space (of Facebook) while observing the routine, movement, and sociality within such space.⁶ However, I do not intend to study about social media and its socio-cultural elements. My participant-observation in Facebook is functional in two ways. First, as I have stated in Introduction (ch.1), my Facebook activity has triggered this thesis' topic and problem statement. Second, I use social media participant-observation as a method of gathering information and finding themes – alike ethnographer finding information and themes in her/his fieldwork – within Indonesian students' photographs in the West. The next chapter will discuss themes that I have found from social media participant-observation.

In semiotic analysis of visual images, sampling procedure is usually not rigorous. Rose (2012: 109) mentions that, in general, semioticians do not have interest in justifying their selection of images. For her, semioticians seem like to choose the images based on 'how conceptually interesting they are, (so) they select images that will make their point well'. Moreover, the case study in semiotics analysis usually has relatively few images, but it 'falls on its analytical integrity and interest' (2012: 110). I have followed such logics by choosing the

⁶ This thought about 'social media participant-observation' is mainly based on Caliandro's (2014) explanation on digital ethnography and Postill and Pink's (2012) discussion on social media ethnography.

photographs which are able to illustrate and make my points well. For me, my visual materials are the basis of saying something that conceptually and sociologically relevant.

There are eleven photographs which I use to illustrate my conceptual arguments. They are derived from social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram) of ten Indonesian students living and studying in various city in The Netherlands. All of them are friends of mine – all are also connected with me in Facebook. Most of the photographs were taken in The Netherlands, only two in Germany and Sweden. Although I am not on Instagram, I expanded my ‘field’ to Instagram to collect ‘data’ (i.e. photographs). Compared to Facebook, Instagram is more photograph-oriented social media. So, photography-wise, Instagram is definitely ‘richer’ than Facebook. In short, I have already found three themes from ‘Facebook participant-observation’ before expanding to Instagram to select for photographs which can illustrate my themes well. Following table shows some details of photographs I use.

Figure 1. Shared in Instagram on May 3 rd , 2018 by LL (Leiden University), depicting Old Town’s buildings in Stockholm. Caption: <i>Come back to Stockholm, and those buildings still my favorites!</i>
Figure 2. Shared in Instagram on May 10 th , 2018 by IH (Wageningen University), depicting his self-portrait in Augsburg city center. Caption: <i>Well spent weekend!</i>
Figure 3. Shared in Instagram on November 13 th , 2017 by WA (Wageningen University), depicting her self-portrait with background of Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden. Caption: <i>Eyes are the window of the soul. The mouth shape of a smile is easy to fake. But the eyes can’t lie, when people fake a smile, they usually forget about the eyes.</i>
Figure 4. Shared in Instagram on November 6 th , 2016 by KD (Wageningen University), depicting her feet on fallen autumn trees in Ede. Caption: <i>Loveliest part of autumn: red leaves.</i>
Figure 5. Shared in Instagram on September 29 th , 2017 by WT (Erasmus University Rotterdam), depicting autumn scene in an urban park in Hilversum. Caption: <i>Goodbye Netherlands, you have been fun. Thanks for all memories. I came in Fall, I leave by Fall. Until we meet again NL.</i>
Figure 6. Shared in Instagram on December 10 th , 2017 by TT (NHTV Breda), depicting a snowy street in Breda. Caption: <i>Line.</i>
Figure 7. Shared in Instagram on December 3 rd , 2017 by SR (Wageningen University), depicting snowman in Wageningen. Caption: <i>Goal: eager to make the same snowman this winter!</i>
Figure 8. Shared in Facebook on May 11 th , 2017 by DTA (ISS Den Haag), depicting colorful tulip flowers in Keukenhof Park. No caption.
Figure 9. Shared in Facebook on April 12 th , 2018 by PW (Wageningen University), depicting her self-portrait under cherry blossom tree in Bennekom. No caption.
Figure 10. Shared in Instagram on April 27 th , 2017 by AB (Wageningen University), depicting group picture with her classmates during King’s Day in Utrecht. Caption: <i>Gezellig Koningsdag!</i>
Figure 11. Shared in Instagram on December 19 th , 2017 by AB (Wageningen University), depicting group picture with her classmates during potluck dinner in Wageningen. Caption: <i>Somehow MLE also can be pronounced as family.</i>

3.3. Ethics and positionality

Rose (2012: 329) reminds that research dealing with visual materials often poses ethical concerns and, ethically speaking, involves more than minimal risk. Following Rose, I will touch

issues of consent, copyright, and anonymity. The ethical concerns that I deal with in this thesis are related to the question of how I 'recruit' the photographs and how I use it.

For practical reason, I use photographs which are shared by my friends through Facebook or Instagram. As I have already known them, I could easily ask their informed consent to use, analyze, and publish their photographs for research purpose. Basically, I searched for photographs – which can support my conceptual points – in Facebook and Instagram. After selecting each suitable photograph, I asked consent from my friends whether I could use their photographs. Then, after having consent, I downloaded the selected photographs and reproduced them in the body of this thesis. This is also related to copyright. The friends whose photographs I use in this research are the owner of photographs. As a researcher, my only right is to reproduce the used photographs in this thesis.

For me, the most dilemmatic ethical issue is anonymity. Five out of eleven photographs which I use contain face figure of people. As I think that my research topic is not sensitive, I decided to not anonymize them. Regarding this, I also ask for verbal informed consent to people whose faces appear in photographs. Not only the ones who own the photographs, but also other people who are depicted. This is particularly relevant for Figure 10 and 11. Both are group pictures contain figures of my classmates. I have asked them permission to let their figures/faces appear in this thesis; and they have given me consent to do so.

Furthermore, I will reflect on my positionality in this research. I am an Indonesian student studying in The Netherlands, precisely in Wageningen University. I travel, I take photographs, I am on Facebook but not on Instagram. I am not really active on sharing photographs (of my life and travels in Europe) through social media. I do that sometimes, though – usually along with written post and as profile or cover pictures. Saying so, I am actually also involved in activities of traveling, photo-taking, photo-sharing, and social media life. This makes myself, to some degrees, is resemblant with my fellow Indonesian students whose photographs I use in this research.

Such resemblance has consequences. I have first-hand experiences on many things related to this research – as I have mentioned in last paragraph. Besides, I know first-handedly what it feels to come to the Occident/West/North from the so-called Orient/East/South – to live, to study, to travel, to see, to take photographs, to share them in social media. Then, through my sociological imagination, I could take critical stance on what I experienced, saw, and felt in South-to-North (tourist) encounters. I become the part of what I study. That immersion helps me to look 'from inside' but I also take (imaginary) distance to see 'from outside'. I try to grasp both well; that is the perspectives from inside and outside.

Nevertheless, such immersion might also have side effect. I tried to prevent my own experiences, feelings, emotions, and thoughts totally block other kinds of understandings derived from visual images and social media activities. I am not saying that I avoid being subjective; I am conscious that I am subjective and subjectivity is worthy. Yet, it is problematic if my immersion fully controls everything and neglects the potential yet radically contrasting information. To tackle this issue, I always cross-check my thoughts and drafts with other Indonesian students living in the West; to make sure that what I feel and think is making sense and sociologically relevant. What I present in this thesis has passed such cross-checking processes.

4. What photographs say about West

Indonesian perspectives

The Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of "Look," "See," "Here it is"; it points a finger at certain vis-à-vis and cannot escape this pure deictic language. (Roland Barthes)

Photography is advanced as a form of knowing without knowing: a way of outwitting the world, instead of making a frontal attack on it. (Susan Sontag)

This chapter explores three themes that I found within Indonesian students' photographs in the West: European architecture, seasonal changes, and international friendship. I treat them as dominant pattern in my case study. Saying so, I do not mean that those themes are the only ones, but they are the dominant ones. Each theme has its own particular character, which necessitates particular semiotic rendering and postcolonial reading. Exploring the three (visual) themes, I argue, might give hints on understanding the (idea of) West.

I read and analyze those themes in various semiotic ways. In European architecture theme, I employ both Barthian semiotics and social semiotics. In seasonal change theme, I use social semiotics analysis – with emphasis on symbol and contextual information. In international friendship theme, I rely only on Barthian semiotics. The *interplay* of various semiotics analysis, along with postcolonial thinking, should be able to offer greater understanding of images of West which lie within Indonesian students' photographs.

4.1. European architecture

European architecture theme is mainly identified and defined by element of building. As buildings are everywhere in European cities, so are they in Indonesian students' snapshots. It is seemingly impossible to neglect the salient presence of buildings (along with their architectural design), either as background of self-portrait or central photographic figure. European architecture theme also covers other elements, such as (pedestrian) street, bridge, train/tram rail, statue, monument, urban park, etc. Building and all those elements may represent what West is by Indonesian students. In short, they indicate 'something Western'.

There are many kinds of building elements: church, house, town hall, café, shop, museum, castle, and other iconic buildings (such as Eiffel Tower, Colosseum, or Dutch wind mills). What these buildings offer is a taste of Europe, as well as a glance of Western civilization. Atmaja and Budiastuti (2012), on their study on image of West among Indonesian AIESEC⁷ members, mention the importance of European building in image construction process. It signifies Western

⁷ AIESEC is worldwide, non-profit, and non-governmental youth organization.

modernity and civilization. They find that European buildings make Europe ‘worth for visiting’ and ‘worth to be shown’ to Indonesian people as they indicate ‘very good civilization’ (2012: 24).

To see the relation between European architecture theme and Western civilization, let’s read Figure 1 by using Barthian semiotics. The photograph portrays colorful buildings in Stockholm’s Old Town (Gamla Stan) and is accompanied by caption “Come back to Stockholm, and those buildings still my favorites!” Reading it through Barthian semiotics may offer layered meanings. First, the photo denotatively means four buildings and particular architecture style⁸ – along with less salient elements (café and restaurant in ground floor; various people [can be locals or tourists] in the street). Then, the denotation can lead to connotative meanings of Europeanness, European architecture/building, and European modernity/civilization.



Figure 1

Connotation can be very personal, as it is produced by interaction between sign and the viewers’ feeling, emotion, and/or cultural values (Bouzida, 2014: 1005). Thus, connotation is normally polysemic and more open to interpretation (Chandler, n.d.). Saying so, connotative meaning of Figure 1 is inseparable from sociocultural background of LL and myself as Indonesians – European or Swedish will probably have different connotative interpretation on same photograph. The colorful Gamla Stan buildings are LL’s ‘favorites’ and, echoing Atmaja and

⁸ Architecture style in Gamla Stan has a strong north German influence (Lembke, 2017).

Budiastuti (2012: 24), 'not only worth for visiting, but also worth to be shown' to her Instagram followers. Furthermore, those Swedish buildings can show 'very good civilization' and 'good architecture' of Europe (and certainly, West).

Reading Figure 1 as mythical speech necessitates understanding of ideology. Informed by postcolonial thinking, connotative meanings of European modernity and civilization might lead to myth of West as something 'modern' and 'civilized'. By relating European building with occidentalist image of West, Atmaja and Budiastuti (2012: 24) find that Indonesians tend to imagine West as 'more advanced', 'the place where they have everything', 'modern place', 'better attraction', or 'the symbol of modernity and prosperity'. Moreover, European architecture is regarded as 'benchmark' for young Asians (Bui et al. 2013: 138).

Following those logics, in semiological system of 'West as myth', building/architecture in Figure 1 has moved from 'sign' in first layer of meaning (denotation), to 'signifier' of European architecture and/or civilization in second layer (connotation), and from second layer's 'sign' to 'signifier' in third layer (myth). At the end, the photographed Gamla Stan buildings and their architecture signify the myth of modern, civilized, and developed West.

Chandler (n.d.) reminds us that myth contains ideology of our time. By seeing Figure 1 as a mythical speech, European architecture can also signify the superior position of West toward the rest of the world; or toward Indonesia in particular. As Schlehe (2013: 503) writes: "Many Indonesians tend to believe that the West is more advanced in every respect – except in the realm of religion, spirituality and morality." In every European architecture-themed photograph, I somehow always smell the feeling of amazement in it; that we should be amazed by the architecture, and civilizations, of Europe/West.

Another way of reading European architecture themed-photographs is with social semiotics. Figure 2 depicts IH in the center-front of photo, while various elements of European architecture lie behind and around him. In this self-portrait, taken in Augsburg, we can identify tram rail and cable, statue, bike, various cafés, shops, or restaurants, city lights, street signs, people with different activities (walking in the street, sitting outside the café or restaurant, standing in front of statue, posing for photograph), and buildings with different colors. Figure 3 is also vertical self-portrait, depicting WA posing in front of the blurred Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden. The figure of WA is not located in central-front of photo, but a bit on the right side. It seems like she gives space for viewers to see the church behind her. Besides, there are elements of urban park (indicated by green trees) and other less stand out buildings in the photo.

Simply put, both Figures represent the encounter between non-European (wo)man with European architecture. Or, perhaps even more accurate, the presence of Indonesian (wo)man in European city. Such representational meaning is closely linked with interactive and compositional meanings. As both photos are shared in social media, they cannot escape their interactive functions: IH and WA want to communicate something through them.

'Contact' and 'distance' aspects are particularly relevant to interpret interactive meaning of Figure 2 and 3. Self-portrait image make contact through facial expression and gesture of s/he who is in the image. Both IH and WA smile, indicating a sense of happiness of being surrounded

by European architecture (or being in Europe generally). Then, aspect of distance indicates in Figure 2 an impersonal relationship (due to long shot), and in Figure 3 a social relationship (medium shot). Nothing intimate or personal (close-up) in both cases, because what matters most is not intimacy (between IH/WA and viewers) or personality (of IH/WA), but what lies behind and around their self-figures, namely European architecture.



Figure 2 and Figure 3

Furthermore, Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 145) argue that people in the photograph may symbolically demand something from viewers. What do IH and WA demand? Composition of image may answer as it contains aspects of salience and information value. The presence of European architecture (especially buildings) and non-European (wo)man is salient in Figure 2 and 3. More interestingly, the way IH and WA place themselves in photographs could hint information. They demand the viewers to see (perhaps also amazed by) elements of European architecture. In Figure 2, although showing full-body portrait, figure of IH does not block the buildings at all. While in Figure 3, as I have said before, half-body portrait of WA still allows viewers to look at the salient presence of Hooglandse Kerk (although it is blurred).

As last remark, I want to make note on the presence of other people ('strangers', either locals or tourists) in Figure 1 and 2. It may hint something. If we pay attention to detail, most 'strangers' in both photos are Caucasians (white, Westerners). Those 'strangers' can symbolize the West, too; or more accurately, Western-ness. Yagi and Pearce (2007: 38), in studying Japanese tourists, argue that Western foreignness are important element of Japanese tourist experience. The argument is useful here. Although out of European architecture theme, the

incorporation of ‘Western strangers’ – as photographic objects – in Figure 1 and 2 reinforces or ensures the nuance of Europe/West, along with its modernity and civilization.

4.2. Seasonal change

If European architecture-themed photographs can be found any time of year, seasonal change-themed ones cannot. Certainly, it is seasonal. To give context to non-Indonesian readers, Indonesia has only two seasons: rainy season (*musim penghujan*) and dry season (*musim kemarau*). We do not have four seasons like Western countries, either in Europe, America, or Oceania. For us Indonesian students in Netherlands, living in a four-seasons country offers new experiences (especially for those who have never been to four-seasons places).



Figure 4 and Figure 5

What do seasonal change-themed photographs look like? Visual image contains not only literal messages but also symbolic ones (Barthes, 1977: 36). Hence, I use ‘symbol’ to identify visual characters of each season. Let’s start from autumn. Unsurprisingly, the most prominent symbol of autumn is dry brownish leaves (either with trees or on the ground). In the winter, white snow is the most obvious symbol – including its derivatives such as snowfall, snowman, or snow mountains. Some photographs portray the frozen lake or canal as epitome of winter, too. Spring is expressed by the presence flowers; pinkish cherry blossom or colorful tulips are the strongest symbol. Basically, spring photographs are more colorful than autumn and winter ones.

Lastly, I can argue that summer is the least prominent of all as it does not have very strong ‘symbol’. To try to understand this issue, we should pay attention to Indonesian context. In general, I can say that summer is least special for Indonesian students because we have relatively warm temperature year around. In short, Indonesians might not have sound urge to express the summer-ness, so it lacks symbolism. Perhaps, the most frequent symbols of summer are beach

and sea (with their kinds of activities), but it is not as strong as symbols of three other seasons. Thus, in my analysis of seasonal change theme, I will exclude summer.



Figure 6 and Figure 7

I would like to, firstly, interpret representational meaning of autumn, winter, and spring photographs. Conceptually, it can be understood by the means of symbolic structure and its attributes – they define the meaning of things represented in photograph (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 144). While there are various ways of recognizing symbolic structure and attributes, I will focus on two: they are made salient – by their size, position, color, etc. – and they are conventionally associated with symbolic values.

Thus, I can say that dry brown leaves of Figure 4 and 5 are attributive to represent autumn; white snow and snowman of Figure 6 and 7 to winter; and colorful tulips and pink cherry blossoms of Figure 8 and 9 to spring. In general, they look very salient (either in terms of position, color, or size) and have been conventionally associated with their respective seasons. This aspect of ‘convention’ is pivotal in the analysis of symbol. Peircean semiology’s notion of ‘symbol’ – or symbolic sign – is also very much about conventionalized relation between signifier and signified (Rose, 2012: 119). Symbol in Peircean sense is arbitrary. This arbitrariness of seasonal symbols can also be traced in the compulsoriness of seasonal change-themed photographs.

During second year of my study, I could predict which type of photographs would appear in my Facebook timeline depending on the season. It seems compulsory to take (and share) photos of dry leaves during autumn, snow(man) during winter, and tulips or cherry blossoms during spring. One autumn day, I was cycling to campus when I saw a group of Indonesian students taking pictures in ‘autumn setting’ – the ground full of dry leaves (Figure 4 and 5) along with typical autumn trees. During winter, if snow falls, taking pictures of snow/snowfall (Figure 6) and making a snowman (Figure 7) are ‘obligatory’. Then, when spring comes, Indonesian students go to Keukenhof and Lisse to ‘hunt’ photographs of tulips (Figure 8). Specifically in Wageningen, students like to go to springtime picturesque spot in Bennekom (Figure 9). In sum, semiological arbitrariness in symbolic signs of seasons has been neatly reproduced.

Indeed, we can read seasonal change-themed photographs (Figure 4-9) by focusing on interactive and compositional meanings. Figure 4, for instance, is interesting due to its point of view. It portrays the irregular pile of dry brownish leaves from high angle. For Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), high angle shot aims to picture the objects as inferior and submissive. However, I prefer to not read it that way as such reading makes little sense. The placement of elements in Figure 4 may offer more appealing interpretation. It shows some parts of its photographer – legs, shoes, jeans, and scarf – and indicates the act of stepping on the autumn leaves. For me, it seems like the photographer (KD) wants to say ‘I was here (in the autumn)’ through the element of red leaves, which she regards in the caption as ‘loveliest part of autumn’.



Figure 8 and Figure 9

Moreover, Figure 5 can also be interpreted by focusing on the placement of elements. Central position of vacant bench is particularly interesting. What is placed in the center usually provide the core of meaning, however it should be understood in its part-whole relation. In this case, autumn trees and fallen leaves – which are placed in the margin of photograph – have successfully held the centrality of vacant bench, so the latter becomes the part of whole autumn. Together, they create melancholic tone of autumn.

Similar analysis can be done with Figure 6-9, too; but now I prefer to return to ‘context’. As Collier (2001: 38) recommends, contextual information of photograph should not be discredited. That is why I explain a bit about Indonesian context in the beginning. Reading/interpreting visual text by considering contextual information can offer more thorough understanding of complexity and associations within photograph.

Then, let's talk about snow (Figure 6 and 7) and springtime (Figure 8 and 9). What is the important contextual information of snow in seasonal change-themed photographs? Recounting her snow experience, Agmasari (2018) writes:

"As a person who was born and lives in Jakarta, experiencing the snow is one of the dreams of my life. Since my childhood, snow can only be seen in television, magazines, or postcards. Living in the tropical country, snow is indeed a luxury." (my translation, from Indonesian)

Indeed, being in snow – and taking pictures with/of it – is a fulfilled dream for many Indonesians. I suggest that we read Figure 6 and 7 with the awareness that snow almost does not exist in Indonesia – except in Jayawijaya Mountains in Papua. Hollinshead (1998: 125) regards tourism as 'quintessential industry of "difference" and "otherness"'. Hence, the experiences of winter, which are represented by snowfall and snow-covered street, cars, and houses (Figure 6) and snowman and snow-covered lands (Figure 7), are basically the experiences of difference – the ones that (wo)man does not have in her/his homeland.

While winter's contextual information is related with 'difference', spring's is associated with 'familiarity'. What kind of awareness one needs to have to understand Indonesian students' spring photos? I suggest this following reading: previously living in tropical country when sun is almost always constant year around, then moving to Europe and experiencing the long, cold, and gloomy months of autumn and winter, spring feels like a homecoming for Indonesian students. Spring symbolizes joy. Bright colors of tulips in Figure 8 and gesture of smile under cherry blossom tree in Figure 9 indicate the nice feeling of springtime. For Indonesian students, I argue, the joy that spring brings contains element of familiarity ('feels like home' feeling) within the foreign, colorful, and picturesque spring days of Western lands.

4.3. International friendship

The last dominant theme is international friendship. It consists of the portrayals of Indonesian students with their international friends. Studying abroad offers chance to build friendship with people from many countries. Then, this human-to-human relation turns into photographic objects – and subsequently into social media posts. I will rely on Barthian semiotics to read and decipher international friendship-themed photographs.

Photographs of international friendship certainly display humans – unlike previous themes which can be without human elements. Moreover, the photos should contain more than one person (group picture) and, importantly, from more than one nationality. The latter is important to show the international-ness of photographs. Settings can be varied, based on places and activities. Place settings consists of classroom, campus area, park, bar/pub, city (center), kitchen, apartment room, house, café, restaurant, shop, river, sea, sports center, etc. Activity settings includes lecture/class, groupwork, study excursion, campus event, party, barbecue, drinking, eating, traveling, sightseeing, playing sports, chilling, cooking, cycling, gathering, etc.

In my Barthian semiotic analysis of this theme, I will use Figure 10 and 11 as cases. Both photos are posted in Instagram of AB, one of my Indonesian classmates. They consist of our other

classmates, who come from various countries – Indonesia, Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, Guatemala (in Figure 10) and Indonesia, Netherlands, Brazil, Uganda, Kenya, Russia, Lithuania, Ecuador, Germany, France (in Figure 11). Besides analytical reasoning, I use both photos because I can easily ask informed consent from those who are included in the photos.

In Figure 10, the denotative meaning can be easily understood. It represents a group of people within bigger crowd. Through its caption ‘Gezellig Koningsdag’, we can know that photo was taken in King’s Day. So, it is a kind of festival photograph. The mood of that photo is cheerful and full of party feeling. Orange – the color of Dutch royal family – is dominant as it was King’s Day. The presence of wine bottle, held by a man in the left with orange glasses, tell the nuance of festival or party. The facial and bodily gestures of people in the photo – smiling happy faces and different dancing hand-gestures – indicate enjoyment, fun, and happiness.



Figure 10

Figure 11’s denotation is similar as it represents a group of people – consisting of more persons than Figure 10. The setting is different, though. The people are indoor, along with many plates (empty and filled-with-food ones) and drinks (ice tea, beers, wine, liqueur). As I am also inside the photograph, I can tell that it was a potluck dinner of our group, held in an apartment’s kitchen cum living room of one of our classmates. The presences of sixteen people and of plates, bottles, food, and drinks may indicate dinner (eating/drinking) and gathering occasions. Furthermore, facial gestures, which are full of smiles, signify fun moment. The caption that AB put in Instagram also hints that, as she thinks of the group ‘as family’.

In my reading of two cases above, I have mentioned some connotative interpretations; the ones which are less obvious and literal: ‘cheerful’, ‘full of party feeling’, ‘enjoyment’, ‘fun’, ‘happiness’ (Figure 10) and ‘fun moment’ (Figure 11). However, there can be still more

connotations. The main denotation of both cases is 'a group of people'. Departing from that, the connotative meanings of those photographs can be something like 'international/multicultural group', 'international friendship', or 'international gathering'. The diverse outside/physical appearances of people within photographs are important semiotic resources to interpret them as 'international', 'multicultural', or even 'cosmopolitan'.



Figure 11

To decipher the myth within Figure 10 and 11, we need to understand what 'becoming international' means for Indonesian students. Studying about international school in Jakarta, Tanu (2014: 580) argues: "becoming 'international' involves learning how to live peaceably with *difference* and engage with *the Other* in an increasingly interdependent world" (my emphasis). He continues that becoming international is embedded in 'transnational structures of power' and 'perceptions of cultural hierarchies'. Furthermore, it necessitates discursive practices, which can make ones become or seen as 'interculturally competent' and 'internationally minded' (2014: 581). This aspect of 'discursive practice' is relevant here, as I consider taking and sharing international friends-themed photographs as discursive practices.

Becoming international is related to cosmopolitan cultural capital. Referring to Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital, Tanu (2014: 583) mentions 'friends' as a form of cultural capital – among others like food, drinks, sports, etc. If friends are cultural capital, so international friends – 'global social networks' – are cosmopolitan cultural capital. Indeed, cultural capital that one acquires through international education can be seen as 'cosmopolitan capital'. Furthermore, Salazar (2015: 51) points out that 'search for contrasts' and 'allure of elsewhere and Otherness' are

necessary for becoming cosmopolitan. Putting all those together, I want to emphasize that 'contrast' and 'Otherness' represented in Figure 10 and 11 – by the presence of (physical) diversity – signify cosmopolitan character of such group (of friends).

For Tanu (2014: 579), becoming international (or cosmopolitan) for Indonesian students very often overlaps with becoming Westernized. Bui et al. (2013) use the term 'Western cosmopolitanism' in their analysis of young Asians travelers' imagination of West. Such term is somewhat paradoxical, especially considering Kantian notion of cosmopolitan as being 'citizen of the world'. Unsurprisingly, they also find that 'friendship with Westerners' (2013: 140) is one of the elements to acquire (Western) cosmopolitan cultural capital. In Indonesian society, being and befriending with Westerners/bule comprise 'prestige' and 'very high value' (Atmaja & Budiastuti, 2012: 22). Having Western friends is prestigious because it makes you 'recognized as somebody who has something more than what society has'.

International friendship-themed photographs represent Western 'cosmopolitan outlook' (after Salazar, 2015: 51) through visual representation of Westerners/bule or, at least, Western-look-alike men and women. In Figure 10 and 11, Westerners/bule are saliently (re)present(ed) there. Both photographs, and others within international friendship theme, are complex: entangled with ideologies of 'becoming international' and '(Western) cosmopolitanism'; motivated by allure of (cosmopolitan) cultural capital; and positioned within postcolonial structures of power (and cultural hierarchies). Echoing Sontag (1977: vii), the more I thought about photographs, the more complex they became.

To sum up, I have read Figure 10 and 11 as mythical speech. They are filled with, communicate, and reinforce myth of Westernized internationalism or Western cosmopolitanism. Myth has double functions: "it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" (Barthes, 1972: 115). Understanding the ideologies and structures of power are necessary to decipher myth. I have shown how international friendship-themed photographs, which seem natural and neutral in the beginning, are actually full of postcolonial histories. Indeed, myth naturalizes history and distorts realities. Barthes says that 'myth essentially aims at causing an immediate impression', that is why 'myth is experienced as innocent speech' (1972: 128-130). However, photograph as mythical speech is never innocent. The acts of reading and deciphering are what is needed to show its un-innocence.

4.4. (Visual) images of West: A summary

What I have just discussed, basically, is visual narratives on image of West. Instead of spoken/written narrative, I rely on visual texts to 'speak' something about the West. We could also say that this chapter try to offer Indonesian-projected occidentalism, by paying attention to and interpreting Indonesian students' photographs in the West.

In Indonesian society, as others have studied, images of West lie around the notions of modernity, individualism, liberalism, materialism, intellectuality, cosmopolitanism, and so on (Nertz, 2014; Schlehe, 2013, Atmaja & Budiastuti, 2012; Al Auwal, 2016; Bui et al., 2013). In visual narratives, those images might appear or might not. Obviously, visual text has different way of

saying. My findings and analysis do not try to refute or confirm previous studies, rather they add and complicate Indonesian-projected occidental images of West.

In my case study of Indonesian students' photographs, the visually-narrated images of West are related to European architecture, seasonal change, and international friendship. 'West' is imagined and portrayed through such themes/framings. In this sense, we should consider the studied photographs as visual/virtual form of South-to-North tourist encounters and of postcolonial relationships. Each theme offers different stories, literally and symbolically. European architecture is mainly about buildings and amazement toward Western civilizations; seasonal change is about autumn, winter, and spring, along with various experiences and feelings they bring to non-Western bodies; and international friendship is about human-to-human relations and desire of Westernized internationalism/cosmopolitanism.

5. The underlying postcolonial narratives

This chapter basically contains my main conceptual points. It shows what I feel and think sociologically important within Indonesian students' photographs in the West. To put it bluntly, this is what I really want to talk, utter, and express since the beginning. This is about postcolonial narratives which lie beneath Indonesian students' photographs and their relation with the idea of West. I will explore the notions of 'occidental fairytale' and 'west as destination' to try to grasp (or perhaps, guess) what lies under the visual images. Later, I aim to reflect on my occidentalism, that is my attempt to understand the (idea of) West through photographs.

5.1. Occidental fairytale

We have been poisoned by fairy tales. (Anais Nin)

I have discussed visual representations within Indonesian students' photographs in the West and my sociological interpretation on them, assisted by semiotic analysis. In this section, my aim is to make interpretation of my interpretations. Each theme that I have explored – European architecture, seasonal change, international friendship – is not standing alone, but linked through coherence. I name such coherence as 'Occidental fairytale' to recount the wonder, dream, and desire which lie silently/visually/mythically beneath the photographs Indonesian students have taken in the West.

Winterson (2013) argues, "fairytales always involve reversals of fortune. This works in both directions: beggars become kings, palaces collapse into hovels, the spoilt son eats thistles [...] Fairytales are also and always about transformation of various kinds." Furthermore, Carrassi (2016: 71) links the concept of fairytale with magic, wonder, and belief. He challenges traditional dichotomy between magic/wonder and belief, by posing a question: "are there any narratives without some sort of 'belief'?" I will engage with the notion of fairytale, by linking it with its Indonesian equivalence, *dongeng*, which means 'story which is not really occurred' or 'words (news or else) which are nonsense and untrue'⁹.

In my conceptualization, Occidental fairytale is the wonder-like narrative (or belief) about West/Occident. In this thesis, such narrative is emerged from Indonesian students' photographs in the West. Fairytale-esque image of West can be traced back in the three dominant themes: European architecture expresses the amazement toward Western civilization; seasonal change emphasizes the glorification of West's climatic condition; and international friendship reveals the desire of Westernized international (or cosmopolitan) outlook.

Amazement, glorification, and desire toward West are not ahistorical. Bui et al. (2013: 134) argue that "young Asians perceive the West to be associated with modernity, progress, and

⁹ My translation from *The Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language*.

advancement, and as a result Western cosmopolitanism, language, and culture are considered prestigious". Cohen and Cohen (2015a: 30-31) point out 'curiosity as to how those Western countries have modernized' and 'searching for signs of technological achievements' as some of the motives for Asians to travel to Western countries. In other words, West is appealing for Asians for specific reasonings and histories. Furthermore, the superlative images of West are shaped by 'prior knowledge' (Bui et al., 2013: 138). It means the knowledge, image, or concept about West has already been implanted in their homelands.

Being in the West is prestigious. That is where photography enters the arena. Cohen and Cohen (2015a: 31) note that "photographic documentation of the trip as proof of 'having been there' is therefore of central concern among long-haul Asian tourists, serving as material markers of status." Photographs taken in the West by Indonesian students, then, are not merely the collection of memories; but also the tangible accumulation of prestige. Photographs of the West – of its classical buildings, wonderful seasons, and cosmopolitan people – project the images Indonesian students have about West, and its associated prestige.

Being in the West is like a fairytale. It is the (geographical and ideological) place where our (postcolonial) dream, desire, and wonder can be realized. This realization of fairytale, in postcolonial manner, entails 'reversal of fortune' or 'transformation of various kinds' (after Winterson, 2013). We should read this reversal or transformation by taking into account the notions of metropole and periphery. I argue that: being in metropole, while previously living in periphery, is a sort of fairytale-esque reverse/transformational reality for many coming from global south, including Indonesian students. Thereafter, their photographs can be seen as site of performance for such Occidental fairytale; containing amazement, glorification, desire, dream, and wonder, which all are centered on and addressed to West.

Lastly, I would like to complicate my interpretations so far by putting forward the idea of *dongeng*. It emphasizes untruthfulness, nonsense ('yang bukan-bukan'), bizarreness ('yang aneh-aneh'), unreality, or unhappening. Then, if so, there are multiple what-if questions I want to provoke. What if the West we know (believe; see; photograph; share [in social media]) is not true/real? What if our dream, wonder, and desire toward West are nonsense, created and manipulated by particular ideologies? What if our amazement and glorification toward West are misplaced? What if those European architecture, seasonal change, and international friendship are merely bizarre affairs we are silently/mythically taught to celebrate? And, what if the West is never there since the beginning, is never really occurred/happened, is a pure fiction?

I pose those questions not to answer them per se, but to contemplate. They also act as a bridge for following section, where I discuss postcolonial (un)realities we live today. Beforehand, I would like to bring to mind that Occidental fairytale is more about (discursive and performative) believed narratives, through which postcolonial bodies and elements encounter each other visually within the frame of photographs. I use Occidental fairytale as an 'umbrella' to encompass and connect three themes I explored before; and to provide more thorough exploration about Indonesian students' photographs in the West.

5.2. West as 'destination'

For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. (Frantz Fanon)

This section responds to question of 'why Occidental fairytale?' I believe such fairytale is based on specific postcolonial ideologies and histories; thus, it can be discussed with particular postcolonial reading. I want to offer deeper understanding on occidental fairytale by proposing the idea of 'West as destination'. For people from global south, West is arguably a 'destination' to go. My use of term 'destination' can be read denotatively and connotatively, as it is (destination) in global tourism context and as a metaphor ('destination') in broader postcolonial context. Later, at the end, I will treat the idea of 'West as destination' as a myth.

Postcolonialism, as Samuel and Sutopo (2013: 294) suggest, should be understood as the prolonged domination of West toward the rest of the world. Then, following Connell (2007: viii), I see postcolonialism as relationships – hegemony, negotiation, appropriation, resistance, etc. – between metropole and periphery. Putting all those together, I treat the notion of 'West as destination' as a social/cultural/historical construct which expresses the Western-dominated relationship in today's contemporary global context.

To reverse Said's (1978: 1) statement on orientalism, I argue that West is a 'special place' in (Indonesian) non-Western experiences. For Indonesians, West is very much considered as 'desired Other' and 'Western world has been known from long time as the desired world for our society' (Atmaja & Budiastuti, 2012: 23). West is what many Indonesians – and other non-Western bodies – are longing for. Within postcolonial context of today, such desire and longing reflect the persistent superior position of the West toward the rest. Travel – including for study – then becomes a vehicle to be in that special place of West; to feel, taste, and experience what has been desired and longed all this time.

The idea of West as 'destination' certainly has its historical trajectory. Through *Orientalism*, Said portrays how the discourse of Occident and Orient is discursively produced, spread, and sustained. Said (1978: 57) writes:

"Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant [...] It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes."

West becomes an imaginative 'destination' due to this power over the rest and its abilities to articulate. It is West that articulates the condition, criteria, and standard of good/bad, developed/undeveloped, civilized/uncivilized, modern/nonmodern, center/periphery, and many other Cartesian categories. Thus, living in postcolonial world with all those Western-made standards, West becomes – in Fanonian sense – the only destination to go for many (if not all) articulated non-Western bodies and societies.

Articulating itself as center, developed, civilized, and modern, West becomes an object of admiration, amazement, glorification, desire, wonder, and dream for non-Westerners – specifically Indonesian students in this thesis. Then, all those beliefs and feelings about West are translated into visual images by Indonesian students. Their photographs, echoing Barthes (1981:

5), become 'antiphon of "Look," "See," "Here it is"' to point out the fairytale of Occident – its classical building, its charming spring, its cosmopolitan character, and so on.

I would like to borrow Barthes' notion of myth once again – but in more conceptual manner. In my view, themes of European architecture, seasonal change, and international friendship signify Occidental fairytale. Then, Occidental fairytale turns into a signifier for the myth of West as 'destination'. Barthes famously says that myth is depoliticized speech. I am tempted to compile several passages of Barthes in length:

"Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification [...] because formally myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion [...] The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences [...] The function of myth is to empty reality [...] It purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact." (1972: 142-143)

Hence, because of the myth of West as 'destination', we are 'trained to celebrate things, and no longer to 'act them"' (ibid.: 143). That myth silences and depoliticizes; so we can only accept postcolonial experiences, realities, and relationships as 'natural, commonsensical understandings of the world' (Bazzul, 2015: 1155). Myth as depoliticized speech is dangerous in two ways: "First, the dissemination of myth promotes a kind of unreflective acceptance of cultural norms and messages. Second, the ideological content of the message, of myth, is taken as a statement of fact, perfectly natural in itself" (ibid.: 1156-1157).

Barthes (1972: 144) argues that "men do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use". It reminds me of the notion of *dongeng* (fairytale), which refers to something that 'not really occurred' and 'untrue'. Myth of West as 'destination' does not have to be true (or truthful). In fact, it does not really matter. What matters most is that myth can be useful and usable for 'ceaseless flowing out', 'hemorrhage', or 'perceptible absence' of realities (Barthes, 1972: 142). In Marxian sense, myth is basically false consciousness. Occidental fairytale/*dongeng* and myth of West as destination are linked by their falsities.

Lastly, I would like to make note about the interrelatedness of Indonesian students' photographs of West and myth of West as 'destination'. The former might perform, reinforce, spread, and sustain the 'West as destination' myth. In reverse, the latter provides rationale for Indonesian students – and other non-Western bodies – to travel to and collect the photographs of West. Thus, the unequal and mythical postcolonial relationship remains.

5.3. Indonesian occidentalism: A reflection

The West is not in the West. It is a project, not a place. (Edouard Glissant)

I have gone so far without reflecting much on what I have done so far. I ask myself: Is what I do here a kind of occidentalist work? I started this thesis with presumption that I aim for reversal of orientalism, by investigating the reverse framing of South-to-North (or East-to-West) tourist encounters. I have interrogated and 'talked to' Indonesian students' photographs in the

West to provide me greater understanding about such reversal. Thus, with this section, I want to reflect on my attempt to understand the idea of 'West'.

There are several ambivalences on occidentalism that I have encountered and noticed throughout the process. First is related to the question of 'where the voices come from'. Are they come from inside or outside the West (geographically and epistemologically)? Who is authoring? As I have discussed in Literature Review (ch.2), occidentalism is a project that can be authored outside the West by non-Western bodies (Bonnett, 2005; Schelhe, 2013; Nertz, 2014; Ahiska, 2003) or inside the West itself by Westerners (Carrier, 1992; Venn, 2000). I may claim that I have voiced out Indonesian perspectives and produced Indonesian-projected occidentalism. But, is it really coming from the voices of mine and Indonesian students – from outside the West? Or, is it a mere echo of Western voices – that is Western-projected occidentalism?

The occidentalist work I do here is ambivalent within that inside/outside rhetoric. In more literal sense, I write inside the West (i.e. Western country [Netherlands], Europe, Western university) but express the voice from outside the West (i.e. Indonesian narratives, non-Western perspectives). In more epistemological sense, I wonder if the epistemic location of this occidentalism is actually 'inside' the West (i.e. Western way of thinking, language, etc.) or really 'outside' the West (i.e. Indonesian/non-Western ways of thinking and talking).

Such issue is related to another issue: 'language'. I aim for talking back to orientalist narratives of West-to-East (North-to-South) tourist encounters. But, do I use the same 'language' as orientalism in my talking back? I noticed that it is not easy to challenge or resist the orientalist way of talking, especially when what you aim is to talk back, to provoke two-ways dialogue. How can we have dialogue with speaking different languages? In the end, what I found through my analysis is actually something familiar, something alike orientalism but in reverse. For instances, I write that images of West in Indonesian students' photographs contain desire, dream, and admiration toward West; that West is like fairytale and 'destination' for many non-Western bodies. Where am I actually heading to?

The occidentalism I produce, on positive light, has led to self-reflection and self-criticism. I – and perhaps other Indonesians and Indonesian students – come to know that I/we see, treat, and project the West as such. I/we dream of, desire, admire, and glorify West in one way and another through visual images. So, I/we have talked back to orientalism and the voice reflect back to me/us. It offers me with more questions rather than answers. Why is it hard to escape from 'language' of orientalism? Are the conceptual and methodological tools I use not enough for generating radically different non-Western voices, for escaping from orientalist 'language'? Are photographs only able to project images of West as something admirable and desirable, and not the West as something to be avoided and rejected (like in Nertz's [2014] and Schlehe's [2013] studies on occidentalism in Indonesian society)?

Then, Bonnett (2005: 507) enlightens by suggesting that one should study 'non-Western representations of the West in their own right, as both intrinsically important and as possessing a degree of autonomy from Western global hegemony'. Occidentalism, in this sense, is not a mere Western project of self-invention which non-Western bodies just copy for their own occidentalism projects. So, let's go back to question of 'language': do I use the same 'language'

as orientalism in my talking back? If we see the West is inherently authoritative and superior, the answer could be yes. But, if we appreciate and take seriously the voices from South and the non-Western arguments, the answer can be no.

When non-Western narratives say something about West, why don't we take them seriously ('in their own right') and consider their voice/language as theirs, not merely an echo of Western voice/language? It can be same or different, but it is non-Western voice/language since the beginning. The idea of 'West', anyway, has already been discussed and written in the East long before it exists as central concept in Western Europe (2005: 506). Doubting the 'language' of non-Western occidentalism as copy of (or prolongation of) orientalism, I argue, may mean that we doubt non-Western bodies are able to produce the 'language', or to speak.

However, occidentalism is indeed complex. Here comes the second ambivalence of my own occidentalism. In the last two paragraphs, I indicate neglecting the superiority/authority of West by acknowledging that non-Western bodies also have voice to talk. But, as I have stated in Literature Review (ch.2), considering the unequal power relation between metropole and periphery is important to understand occidentalism in critical manner. We indeed need to take a critical look at the talk that non-Western narratives produce. Thus, I would like to say that the occidentalist work I do is actually located in such ambivalence; that I fully acknowledging the voice from South (i.e. Indonesian students' photographs and my interpretation of them) but, at the same time, I constantly question whose voice it really is.

6. Final thoughts

To listen is revolutionary. That was what decolonial scholar Rosalba Icaza said during one lecture in Wageningen (titled ‘Contemporary activism: A colonial past? A feminist future?’). The phrase was stuck in my head, then reappears in this exact moment when I think of what to write in this concluding chapter. I have talked back through this thesis; the ‘talking back’ has also reflected back to me as self-reflection. Still, is anybody else listening? Somehow, I agree with what Icaza said. I think many people grew up with the belief that talking is more crucial than listening. Then, everyone is talking. Who is listening? Shouldn’t we stop talking a bit and start listening carefully? When you ‘listen’ to the voices from South that I have tried to narrate via this thesis, you actually do more revolutionary work than what I do.

6.1. Conclusion

Indonesian students’ photographs in the West are the epicenter of this thesis. I take them seriously as (visual) narratives to tell stories of West. Simply put, within the frame of photographs, there lies occidentalism – the idea of West. In general, there are three dominant themes represented in Indonesian students’ photographs in the West: European architecture which is mainly defined by the element of buildings (along with their architecture styles); seasonal change which portrays prominent symbol of each season; and international friendship which depicts cosmopolitan and multicultural human-to-human relationship.

I treat those three themes as pieces of information – each consists of smaller pieces of more detailed photographic information. The (idea of) West is visually represented in Indonesian students’ photographs through those themes. Each theme has its own postcolonial rendering: European architecture indicates amazement toward Western civilizations; seasonal change glorifies the beautiful weather seasons of Europe; and international friendship exemplifies the desire of Westernized cosmopolitan cultural capital. All of them, eventually, open the way for understanding postcolonial narratives behind photographs.

These underlying postcolonial narratives are my main conceptual points in this thesis. They are why I think the Indonesian students’ photographs in the West are sociologically relevant. Lying beneath the photographs is what I call ‘occidental fairytale’ and ‘West as destination’ narratives. The former recounts the fairytale-esque images of West for Indonesian students; that being in – and photographing – the West is alike realization of fairytale. For non-Western bodies, occidental fairytale contains wonder, dream, and desire toward West. Meanwhile, the latter emphasizes the Fanonian logic of our postcolonial world; that West – and their standard of everything – is the only ‘destination’ to go for many non-Western bodies. Both are interplayed, including through visual images and tourist encounters, to reinforce the unequal postcolonial relationships between West and the rest of the world.

6.2. Contribution, limitation, suggestion

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the occidental visual narratives of non-Western tourists in the West by using Indonesian students' photographs as case study. Not so many studies narrate South-to-North tourist encounters before and fewer focus on visual/photographic feature of such encounters. Hence, as non-Western citizens of the world become more mobile and the reversal (South-to-North) framing is unavoidable, this thesis should be read as an attempt to provide groundwork for future inquiries.

I would like to think that this thesis has contributed to debate on non-Western tourism and postcolonialism-tourism theoretical encounter. Since the beginning, I have imaginatively treated this thesis as a part of postcolonial dialogue, through which I am talking back to previous accounts on North-to-South tourist encounters. The often-neglected non-Western tourism is full of stories; this thesis only narrates one of them. Moreover, this thesis has tried to show that relationship between tourism and postcolonialism should not always be addressed as one-way West-to-East (North-to-South) rendering and framing. Non-Western tourists do both things, too, toward Western places, cultures, and societies. Two-ways dialogues are possible.

Nevertheless, I notice some limitations – which lead to suggestions for future research. There are two sets of limitation/suggestion. First, I initially expected to offer a radically novel account of occidentalism and postcolonial relationship by projecting Indonesian perspectives. Yet, it happened that the narratives resemble more orientalist kind of voice/language; that West is superior, articulating, amazed, glorified, desired, etc. I argue it is probably because what I capture is more 'general' themes, not the 'deviant' ones. Another guess is: postcolonial thinking might not be able to offer tools for escaping the 'language' of West/orientalist. This links to Mignolo's (2013: 144) critique toward postcolonialism whose, he argues, point of origination is in Euro-American and English-speaking world rather than Third World. Epistemic location of postcolonial thinking is West, so it cannot escape Western/Cartesian ways of thinking and talking.

Following such unrealized expectation, I imagine how decolonial thinking may offer us radically different voice/language on studying similar topics. Mignolo writes (2013: 137) that what decolonial thinking promotes is epistemic disobedience and delinking from Western categories of thought. In short, it is completely out of Western/Cartesian way of thinking and, thus, it talks with the 'language' that is never taught/generated by the West. Future research armed by decolonial thinking, I suppose, will offer narratives which do not, at all, sound like mere echo of West/orientalist voices.

The second set of limitation/suggestion is related to methodology. In this thesis, I only employ visual methods, by fully relying on semiotic analysis. I am aware that this methodological choice denies triangulation of methods. Besides, only using visual analysis has limited me to grasp richer and more contextualized understanding of this thesis' topic and problem statement. Therefore, I suggest future research on related topics to incorporate non-visual methods, so the narratives can be enriched and more contextual. In-depth or narrative interviews, in particular, will be very beneficial to gather stories beyond the photographs. In this sense, visual and written/spoken narratives may complement each other to provide deeper understanding on postcolonial relationships within tourist photographs.

7. References

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