

Forum Discussion Group on Decolonizing Gender Studies

Date: 4-5 Juli 2024

Universitas Indonesia (UI), Jakarta

Background

Over the past year, Pokja Gender NICMCR has been actively engaging in the critical discourse of decolonizing academic practices. This theme was prominently featured in NICMCR's annual meeting at UKDW in June 2023, which focused on Decolonizing Religion. In line with this, Pokja Gender has organized a series of webinars that delve into the theme of decolonizing gender studies. These webinars have specifically addressed the intersections of decolonizing women and nature, such as ecofeminism, and reinterpreting holy scriptures from a feminist perspective.

Despite these efforts, many facets of decolonizing gender studies remain unexplored. The complexity and depth of this discipline necessitate a more comprehensive dialogue. Therefore, this Forum Discussion Group (FDG) seeks to not only bring the members of Pokja Gender but also to deepen our understanding of what it truly means to decolonize gender studies.

By bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, we aim to uncover and address the various dimensions of decolonizing gender studies. This FDG will serve as a platform for discussions, critical reflections, and collaborative explorations, ensuring that we continue to challenge and critically examine how colonialism has influenced and shaped the discourse and methodologies within this field. Through this endeavour, Pokja Gender hopes to contribute to the development of a more inclusive, equitable, and decolonized approach to gender studies.

Key Focus Areas

Adichie—the Nigerian writer—once called it ‘the danger of a single story’. Our lives, and our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories and she warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding. The colonial ideology brought ideas, often with a single narrative from their perspectives—be that is the understanding of religion, norm, values, gender, power, etc.—and to validate its superiority and to propagate ‘modernity’, the colonizer tramped the heterogeneous stories of its subjects. So, in essence, the message was that *without our values and ideas, there is no modernity and progress*.

- Decolonizing gender seeks, therefore, the lost stories, the authentic stories that shaped the indigenous cultures before they molded into one single narration. For instance, there are a number of indigenous communities in Indonesia that recognize 4-7 gender classifications while foreign ideology brought a binary classification. The idea of academic research (1)

In terms of power relations, Java enjoys fertile ground due to its volcanic soils in which agriculture flourishes immensely. Women tend to have greater freedom in the agriculture community compared to their peers from the hunt and gatherer community since their labour to till and cultivate the land is valued as the men's, noted Diamond (*Guns, Germs, and Steel* 1997). This assessment is further corroborated by written records in *Prasasti*, stating the history of the women who became rulers or warriors in Java.

- Fast forward to contemporary times, what has happened? Can we say that the freedom and power relation between men and women in Javanese society now seems to be corroded? This deserves extensive research (2).

Race and gender ideologies and corresponding hierarchical dominance in Indonesia as well as in the Netherlands helped fuel and perpetuate the stripping of women's authority in paternalistic approaches where it's conceived from the understanding that women are inferior and in need of protection. This idea was directly inherited from the colonial era in which civilizing and protecting the colonized community was at its core business.

- What are the authentic stories of the pre-colonial era? Where can we find these sources? Have we overlooked the stories of the native women, emancipation, and their relation to power and authority? Finding native women's stories. By way of re-reading, these stories will further the restoration of Native women's identities and understanding of what is to be decolonized. Idea research no. 3.

Participants

All Pokja Gender members will be invited. The forum also welcomes potential new members from diverse backgrounds, including scholars, researchers, educators, students, activists, and other stakeholders interested in gender studies.

Outcomes

FDG Pokja Gender aims to produce a set of actionable recommendations and guidelines for decolonizing gender studies, which will be documented and disseminated to relevant stakeholders, academic institutions, and policymakers. Additionally, the forum seeks to foster a network of collaboration and support among Pokja Gender members to advance decolonial efforts in gender studies in Indonesia, The Netherlands, and beyond.

Through this FDG, Pokja Gender aims to formulate an initial research project that includes securing funding from sources such as BRIN and NWO. This effort will focus on the research ideas discussed during the forum, to develop a comprehensive and well-supported project proposal.

Program (tentative)

Day I, Thu, 4 July

Time	Agenda	Note
8:00-9:00	Reception and registration	
9:00-09:30	Opening remarks:	
	UI	The host, UI
	NICMCR	Ruard/Pak Zain/Sahiron/Roberts
09:30-10:00	Lecture 1 on Understanding the Decolonising Gender Studies	Ibu Sulis
<i>10:00-10:15</i>	<i>break</i>	
10:15-10:45	Lecture 2 on touching the three focus areas (see above)	Ruard/Nelly
10:45-11:15	Decolonizing efforts on the ground, eco-feminism research	Dewi Candraningrum
11:15-12:00	Q&A	
<i>12:00-13:00</i>	<i>lunch/ Dhuhur prayer</i>	
13:00-15:00	1st FDG session	Led by: Yus & ibu Sulis
	Discussing the questionnaires that will be distributed along with the invitation	
	Other matter	
<i>15:00-15:30</i>	<i>Break/Ashar prayer</i>	
15:30-16:00	Decolonizing efforts on the ground, Seroja research (?)	Mery Kolimon
16:00-17:00	2nd FDG session:	Led by: Ibu Mia & Christine
	Either continuation or discussion for the next day FDG	
	Other matter	
<i>17:00-</i>	<i>Sojourned day 1</i>	
Day 2, Fri, 5 July		

Time	Agenda	Note
8:00-9:00	Reception and registration	
9:00-11:00	3 rd FDG session	Led by: Yus & Christine
	Listing potential ideas and preparing guidelines from FDG outcomes.	
	Wrapping up and discussing the follow-up event	
11:00-12:00	Q&A	
<i>12:00-13:00</i>	<i>lunch/ Dhuhur prayer</i>	
13:00-17:00	Pokja Gender book launching	
13:00-13:30	Editor's note	Iklilah
13:30-15:00	Book talk	Iklilah and a couple of authors
<i>15:00-15:30</i>	<i>Break/Ashar prayer</i>	
15:30-17:00	Q&A	Led by:June
<i>17:00-</i>	<i>Sojourned day 2</i>	