

YOUTH, WORK AND LIFESTYLES IN AN  
INDONESIAN INDUSTRIAL TOWN

Suzanne Naafs

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# YOUTH, WORK AND LIFESTYLES IN AN INDONESIAN INDUSTRIAL TOWN

JEUGD, WERK EN LEVENSTIJL  
IN EEN INDONESISCHE INDUSTRIESTAD

## Thesis

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## Acronyms

BAPPEDA	regional body for planning and development
BPS	central bureau of statistics
DISNAKER	manpower office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KNPI	Indonesian National Youth Council
KOPASSUS	the Indonesian army's Special Forces
KS	Krakatau Steel
MENPORA	Ministry of Youth and Sports
OKP	youth social organisation
SAKERNAS	national labour force survey
SDM	human resources
SMA	upper secondary school
SMK	vocational secondary school
SMP	lower secondary school
SUSENAS	national socio-economic survey
WDR	World Development Report



## Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of lower middle class youth and their education-to-work transitions in the Indonesian industrial town of Cilegon, Banten. The study examines how relatively educated young men and women (upper secondary school and tertiary graduates) navigate the contemporary opportunities and uncertainties of Cilegon's changing job market, in particular against the background of the upcoming privatisation of the town's biggest steel factory and the high rates of youth un(der)employment in the region. Cilegon experienced rapid economic growth and industrial development during the Suharto period (1966-1998), but is currently among the regions with the highest youth unemployment rates in Indonesia. Thus large-scale, corporate investment in Cilegon's heavy and chemical industries did not result in significant job creation for Cilegon's growing population of educated youth. Paradoxically, at a time when increasing numbers of lower middle class families invest in formal education for their children, their opportunities to economically benefit from schooling are declining (see also Jeffrey et al. 2008: 9 for the context of India).

The study illustrates how young people's attempts to secure a livelihood are thwarted by an overcrowded labour market and a range of challenges stemming from nepotism, the unfair logics of the market, and inequalities around class, gender and ethnicity. More specifically, the study analyses the gendered tensions and contradictory effects of economic restructuring, privatisation and a decline of jobs in heavy industries which produce a hostile and highly competitive environment for young men, while the rise of consumer culture and a shift towards service industries seems to favour young women who experience a more flexible working situation.

While many families value education as an avenue for upward social mobility, young graduates in Cilegon find that education is necessary, but not sufficient to get a job. Related to young people's difficulties in obtaining access to stable jobs are their experiences of un(der)employment. This study looks at both individual and collective strategies that young people use in navigating and inhabiting periods of underemployment. Many young men, even if qualified with the right education, find themselves channelled into an informal sector job in the transport, construction, trade, petty manufacture and repairs sector, which surrounds Cilegon's large formal industrial and port sector. Competition over jobs in the industries is fierce, with different neighbourhoods setting up local youth organisations to lobby the industries for jobs and training opportunities. While such organisations offer local youth some level of support, at the same time these solidarities are undermined due to competition with similar youth groups from other neighbourhoods.

Apart from valuing education and work as part of their aspirations for the future, young people are also living in the present in which they want to pursue youthful lifestyles and desires. Young men and women need an income to support their lifestyles, attract a girl- or boyfriend, and fulfil obligations towards their families. The study explores young people's aspirations about work and lifestyles and their responses to economic exclusion as shaped by both their structural location in society and their subjective experience of being young. It pays attention to young men and women's fluid notions about work, and the distinctions they make between looking for a job and looking for money to support a lifestyle.

Keywords:

Youth, employment, education, gender, Islam, Indonesia, Banten



## Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift beschrijft een etnografisch onderzoek onder jongeren uit de lagere middenklasse in de Indonesische industriestad Cilegon in de provincie Banten (Java) en richt zich op de overgang van opleiding naar werk. Het onderzoek gaat over de vraag hoe relatief hoogopgeleide jonge mannen en vrouwen (gediplomeerden uit het voortgezet onderwijs en vervolgopleidingen) omgaan met de huidige mogelijkheden en onzekerheden op de veranderende arbeidsmarkt van Cilegon, in het bijzonder tegen de achtergrond van de aanstaande privatisering van de grootste staalfabriek in de stad en de hoge jeugdwerkloosheid in de regio. Cilegon kende een snelle economische groei en industriële ontwikkeling tijdens het bewind van Suharto (1966-1998), maar behoort nu in Indonesië tot de regio's met de hoogste jeugdwerkloosheid. Grootschalige bedrijfsinvesteringen in de zware en chemische industrie in Cilegon hebben daarmee geen significant effect gehad op het scheppen van banen voor het groeiend aantal geschoolde jongeren in Cilegon. Nu steeds meer gezinnen uit de lagere middenklasse investeren in formeel onderwijs voor hun kinderen, hebben jongeren paradoxaal genoeg steeds minder mogelijkheden om in economisch opzicht te profiteren van hun opleiding (zie ook Jeffrey et al. 2008: 9 voor de situatie in India).

Het onderzoek maakt duidelijk hoe pogingen van jonge mensen om in hun levensonderhoud te voorzien gefrustreerd worden door een overbevolkte arbeidsmarkt en een scala van uitdagingen die voortkomen uit nepotisme, de oneerlijke logica van de vrije markt en ongelijkheid die te maken heeft met sociale klasse, gender en etniciteit. In het bijzonder richt het onderzoek zich op de gender-gerelateerde spanningen en tegenstrijdige effecten van economische herstructurering, privatisering en afname van banen in de zware industrie. Deze factoren veroorzaken een relatief vijandige en competitieve omgeving voor jonge mannen, terwijl

de opkomst van een consumentencultuur en een verschuiving naar de dienstensector voordelig lijkt te zijn voor jonge vrouwen, die daarin flexibelere werkomstandigheden aantreffen.

Terwijl veel gezinnen onderwijs zien als middel om hogerop te komen, merken jonge gediplomeerden in Cilegon dat onderwijs een noodzakelijke maar niet voldoende voorwaarde is voor een baan. De moeite van jongeren om een vaste baan te vinden, houdt verband met hun ervaringen met te weinig werk/werkloosheid. In dit onderzoek wordt gekeken naar zowel individuele als collectieve strategieën van jongeren bij het omgaan met en beleven van periodes waarin ze onvoldoende werk hebben. Veel jonge mannen komen ondanks hun opleiding terecht in een baan in de informele sector op het gebied van transport, bouw, handel of kleinschalige productie en reparatie. Deze informele sector omringt de grote formele industrie- en havensector van Cilegon. De concurrentie tussen werkzoekenden in deze sectoren is groot, en verschillende wijken zetten lokale jongerenorganisaties op om bij bedrijven te lobbyen voor banen en opleidingsmogelijkheden. Hoewel dergelijke organisaties de lokale jongeren tot op zekere hoogte ondersteunen, wordt deze solidariteit weer ondermijnd door concurrentie met vergelijkbare jongerenorganisaties uit andere wijken.

Jongeren hechten waarde aan onderwijs en werk als onderdeel van hun aspiraties voor de toekomst, maar leven daarnaast ook in het heden en willen een levensstijl en andere zaken die bij hun leeftijd passen. Jonge mannen en vrouwen hebben een inkomen nodig om hun levensstijl te bekostigen, te daten en een partner te vinden en aan verplichtingen ten opzichte van hun familie te voldoen. In het onderzoek wordt bestudeerd welke aspiraties jongeren hebben ten aanzien van werk en levensstijl en wat hun reactie is op economische uitsluiting. Deze twee factoren worden beïnvloed door zowel hun structurele plaats in de maatschappij als hun subjectieve ervaring jong te zijn. Het onderzoek besteedt aandacht aan de flexibele ideeën die jongeren hebben over werk en aan het onderscheid dat ze maken tussen een baan zoeken en geld vinden dat nodig is voor hun levensstijl.

Trefwoorden:

Jeugd, werkgelegenheid, onderwijs, gender, islam, Indonesië, Bantam



# 1

## Educated youth, work and economic insecurity in contemporary Indonesia

### Introduction

The 2011 political upheaval and revolutions that have taken place in several countries in the Middle East have drawn attention to the global phenomenon of a young generation that seems to be “lost in transition” (Brinton 2011). With youth unemployment rates among the highest in the world, especially among secondary school and university graduates, young people’s inability to settle into a secure livelihood and their frustrations about widespread inequalities in the distribution of wealth and employment were an important dimension of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt (Herrera and Mayo 2011); they were also an important factor in the protests in Greece and Spain in the summer of 2011. The Arab Spring is one example, but also in many other parts of both the global north and south, demographic factors (a ‘youth bulge’) combined with global youth unemployment rates that have reached an all-time high (ILO 2012: 7), have sparked renewed interest in the issue of youth transitions: the way young men and women make the transition from education to work and marriage, and with it, from youth to adulthood. This study examines the education-to-work transitions of educated youth in Indonesia, the archipelago with the world’s fourth largest population as well as the world’s largest Muslim-majority country.<sup>1</sup>

Education and an economic transition away from agriculture to manufacturing and service industries are routinely promoted by the Indonesian government and development institutions like the World Bank (2007) as a strategy to achieve poverty reduction and economic growth. This resonates with the desire of many Indonesian families to invest in formal education as a means to improve their children’s prospects in the modern economy, facilitate upward social mobility, and obtain middle

class lifestyles and consumer goods. In addition, many parents view their children as a safety net in a society without a reliable social security system. They expect that investment in education will enable their children to obtain the jobs and incomes that would allow them to financially contribute to the schooling of younger siblings and support their parents in their old age. Compared to previous generations, the current generation of young men and women in Indonesia is likely to spend longer periods of time in schools and universities, experience a later entry into labour markets, and postpone the age of marriage (Nilan 2008; Smith-Hefner 2005). Youth thus becomes prolonged and adulthood postponed, complicating prevailing notions of youth and adulthood as a stage in the life course.

However, this does not always lead to the expected economic benefits and jobs for young people, in contexts of economic stagnation (as for instance described by Jeffrey et al. 2008; Morarji 2010), or in contexts of economic growth such as Indonesia. The rapid expansion of the education system has not been matched with adequate numbers of the modern-sector jobs for which these high school and college graduates would qualify. Many young people, even if equipped with secondary and tertiary education certificates, find themselves channelled into the urban informal economy. Job opportunities are distributed unevenly, both geographically and socially as competition for jobs is shaped by age, class, gender and ethnic relations. As a result, rural and urban upper secondary and university graduates face widespread challenges in making the transition from education to work, even in regions of the country which are experiencing economic growth. Paradoxically, at a time when increasing numbers of lower middle class families invest in formal education for their children, their opportunities to economically benefit from schooling are declining (Jeffrey et al. 2008: 9). The result is an expanding population of educated youth with aspirations to do better than their parents in terms of livelihoods and lifestyles, but who enter the labour market under conditions which make it difficult to achieve these goals.

The research presented here is based on an ethnographic study of lower middle class youth and their education-to-work transitions in the industrial town of Cilegon in Banten, West Java. The transition into the world of work is only one part of young people's lives, but becomes more important in a context of relative poverty, lack of social security and high rates of youth unemployment in contemporary Indonesia. En-

try into the labour market is often considered a key indicator of the transition to adulthood, as finding employment and obtaining financial independence are important for young people's ability to get married, move out of their parental home and start a family. This study investigates how educated youth are navigating the contemporary opportunities and uncertainties in Cilegon's changing economy, in particular against the background of the upcoming privatisation of the town's biggest steel factory (PT Krakatau Steel) and the high levels of youth unemployment in the region. While jobs for young men in the heavy and chemical industries seem to be stagnant, new job opportunities have opened up for young women in trade and services. Rather than conceptualising young men and women's entry into the labour market mainly as a period of transition and 'becoming', the study takes into account the present realities of young people's lives and how they experience 'being young' in relation to the wider livelihood opportunities available to them. This research analyses young people's aspirations for work not only with regard to ideals about marriage and the future, but also in relation to their youthful lifestyles and obligations to their family in the present.

### **Scope and objective of the study**

The problems of transition into work and marriage raise questions about what happens when educated youth find their labour deemed "surplus in relation to the requirements of capital" (Li 2009). This study examines the social relations through which young men and women gain access to or are excluded from the kinds of stable work they aspire to and how they navigate periods of educated un(der)employment and economic insecurity. The study intends to contribute to debates on the contradictory outcomes of prolonged investment in education and the ways in which educated youth navigate the contemporary opportunities and uncertainties associated with educational change, flexible labour markets and economic globalisation (Katz 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Cole and Durham 2008).

The next part of this chapter will contextualise the issue of youth and their education-to-work transitions, highlighting the main changes that have taken place in young people's experiences of work and education in recent decades and the way researchers and policy makers have conceptualised these changes. It will provide the reader with the theoretical underpinnings of the study, combining key insights from the literature on

youth and development, youth transitions, educated un(der)employment and globalised (Muslim) youth cultures. The section on lower middle classes introduces the social component of the sample of young people in this study. Finally, I discuss the research methodology and outline of the remaining chapters of this study.

## Youth, development and globalisation

### Youth and development

Recent concern with youth in the context of development policy has focused on young people's employability and their potential contribution to economic growth and poverty reduction. While society has always conceptualised young people as political, economic and social actors, recently the value of young people has been narrowed to their role in the economy. Especially since the 1990s, many governments and multilateral organisations such as the World Bank have relied on a human capital framework to inform their policies on education and employment. The origins of human capital theory can be traced back to the work of economists Theodore Schultz (1971) and Gary Becker (1964). Schultz suggested that similar to the way in which people invest in themselves through education to improve their job prospects, governments can stimulate economic growth by increasing people's education opportunities. Gary Becker argued that economic growth and development depend on the health, knowledge and skills of the workforce (Spring 2009: 38). From a human capital perspective, education and training become important insofar as they contribute to individual 'employability' and produce a skilled workforce, which then could become the source of economic opportunity, choice and social status (Brown 2001: 7). Human capital theory also suggests that access to work should be based on a system of meritocratic rules of achievement, to guarantee that the most suitable and skilled persons are selected for the job. In other words, individual employability should be based on one's talents, skills and achievements, rather than ascribed characteristics such as class, gender, religion or ethnicity (*ibid.*). From the 1980s onwards neoliberal globalisation, the spread of new forms of information and communication technology (ICT), and the idea of the knowledge economy further reinforced the idea that human resources are essential to economic competitiveness and development. The World Bank continues to frame its education policies

in terms of economic development, thereby reducing youth, and people in general, to economic productive units and potential entrepreneurs who will compete in the global economy (Spring 2009: 16-18; 30-32). Finally, human capital theorists maintain that their framework can be applied to both developing and developed countries, as it conforms to the universal laws of economic development (Brown 2001: 7).

Part of the current focus on young people as economic actors stems from the notion that many countries in the global South are experiencing a peak in the youth share of their population: this so-called “youth bulge” occurs when cohorts between 15 to 29 years cover more than 40 per cent of the adult population (Bayat and Herrera 2010: 4). A youth bulge could become an advantage if the expanding youth workforce can be capitalised on to contribute to economic growth (United Nations 2007: 2-4; World Bank 2007: 4-5). For example, some research suggests that one of the underlying causes for the economic miracle happening in East Asia between 1965 and 1990 was that education and economic policies took advantage of the expanding youth population (United Nations 2007: 3). Indonesia has already experienced much of this demographic shift over the last 40 years, but it is expected that its workforce will continue to grow with an estimated 20 million workers in the next decade, before, what the potential “window of opportunity” generated by the youth bulge closes (World Bank 2010: 2).

A youth bulge offers not only potential opportunities, but also many challenges. Urbanisation, combined with a sizeable youth population, presents Indonesian authorities with the challenge to provide adequate education, social security and economic livelihoods to their growing population of urban youth, and also to deal with the potential political consequences if these challenges are not overcome.

The marginal position of young people in the economy, especially idle young men, has informed concerns not only about economic costs for the provision of education, health care and job training, but also about political instability and security. Often such concerns are underpinned by the assumption that a combination of youth bulge (demographics), high unemployment levels, marginality and poverty will draw young people into religious, ethnic or fundamentalist movements, characterised by violence and militancy (Ansell 2005: 247-248; Bayat and Herrera 2010: 4-5). Consequently, most governments discourage young men and women from participating in such movements and try to direct their attention

towards more stable and productive forms of youth politics and activities. Such concerns are also evident in the shifting position of the Indonesian government towards young people and its efforts to redefine the meaning of youth (Smith-Hefner 2007: 188). In both popular and government discourse the idea of young people as political actors and ‘hope of the nation’ is well-established. Male, activist youth (*pemuda*) have been the driving force in Indonesia’s major revolutions, including the nationalist struggle against the Dutch in 1945–1949 (Anderson 1972), the anti-communist movement and overthrow of the Sukarno regime in 1965–1966, and the downfall of the Suharto regime in 1998; as well as the routine government changes through national and regional elections in the post-Suharto period. The Indonesian notion of *angkatan* credits several past generations of politically active youth for being at the forefront of these national revolutions: the Angkatan ’45, Angkatan ’65-66 and Angkatan ’98. But the role of youth as a group who challenges authority and embodies radical political and social change usually becomes problematic once political change has been achieved and a new regime is installed (Ryter 1998: 58). Suharto’s New Order government saw youth as a threat to social and political stability. The regime actively repressed young people’s political role and used the 1978 policy known as the Normalisation of Campus Life to ban student activism from university campuses. Instead, the government promoted new ideas and categories of youth, such as the notion of *remaja* (teenager or adolescent), with its connotations of a distinct youth language (*bahasa gaul*), as well as consumption of fashion and music (Siegel 1986: 230-231). Additionally, the government sought to support its policies for economic development by defining young people as human resources and future workers. This strategy continues into the post-Suharto period. In order to promote successful ‘youth transitions’, the government of president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono employs a dual strategy of creating non-political identities for youth by viewing young people as human capital, while simultaneously trying to prevent ‘risky behaviours’ (premarital sex, drug use, juvenile delinquency) that could stand in the way of successful youth transitions (Diatyka 2010).

### Youth and global change

Since the 1990s the challenges that young people face in making the transition from school to work have become more visible. An emerging

comparative literature in anthropology, human geography, and related disciplines suggests that young people today are entering the labour market in conditions that are markedly different from those encountered by their parents' generation twenty or thirty years ago. These studies start from the idea that global social and economic reform presents new opportunities and dilemmas for young people's livelihoods and lifestyles. Consequently, much of the recent scholarly work on youth has tried to theorise the links between youth and globalisation (e.g. Cole and Durham 2008; Venkatesh and Kassimir 2007).

One trend which is highlighted in this literature is that as a result of the rapid movement of goods, people and ideas around the globe, ever more young people are growing up within a reference system of global consumer-based youth cultures. The prolonged period of youth between puberty and marriage has created a distinct market for consumerism and youth lifestyles as well as modern patterns of dating and marriage (Smith-Hefner 2007: 188; Lukose 2009). At the same time, the experience of 'being young' continues to be structured by young people's involvement in schooling and work and prolonged dependency on their parents. Here as elsewhere, Indonesia's urban youth inhabit the contradiction of being targeted as consumers, while at the same time they are unable to obtain many of these consumer goods because of their marginal economic position (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005).

Youth studies in Indonesia have in recent years paid much attention to the formation of hybrid (Muslim) cultures, lifestyles and identities among relatively affluent youth (e.g. Baulch 2007; Nilan 2006, Sastramidjaja 2000), but have shown less interest in the economic changes underpinning young people's education trajectories and employment prospects. Young men and women not only need a cash income to participate in youth cultures, leisure activities and consumption practices, but also to fulfil reciprocal obligations to their families and prepare for their future. As we will see in later chapters, the globalisation of youth lifestyles is happening simultaneously with new inequalities in Cilegon's economy and political landscape. Lower middle class youth are confronted with the rise of power monopolies among local elites who exert economic and political influence in the region and an overcrowded labour market in which access to jobs often cannot be obtained according to the principles of meritocratic ideology or the free market, but is distributed according to age-based, class, gender and ethnic divisions, per-

sonal networks and nepotism. They may develop new aspirations about participation in urban (Muslim) youth cultures as presented by business and the media, but might not always be able to obtain consumer goods or participate in the latest lifestyle trends. Yet, as Bayat and Herrera (2010: 17) note, “they find ways to assert their youthful tastes by resorting to what Michael Mann (2001) calls ‘cheap globalisation’, such as appearing in the fake but globally typical brands such as Nike baseball caps or listening to pirated international CDs.” Often young people try to make the best of what is possible within their financial circumstances (Bucholtz 2002: 542).

Anthropologists have often tended to analyse globalisation as a set of coherent forces or ‘flows’ which impose themselves on a particular locality and then are creatively resisted or reinterpreted (Edelman and Haugerud 2007: 22). A point by now well established in the literature is that these phenomena should be thought of as historical processes (rather than impersonal flows) which manifest themselves in uneven and contradictory ways. In this vein, several authors writing on neoliberalism in Southeast Asia (Nevins and Peluso 2008; Ong 2006; Rudnycky 2010) emphasise that many governments in the region, including Indonesia, have never opened up their entire economy to market capitalism, but instead have followed an ambiguous trajectory in which they have both selectively adopted, resisted, and unwittingly succumbed to neoliberal measures. State discourses about “Asian values” and “Asian capitalism” in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the heavily centralised, authoritarian nature of many governments in the region, influenced the trajectory of neoliberal reform. By using such discourses, combined with the wealth from its nationalised oil and timber resources, Indonesia managed to hold off neoliberal pressures for a relatively long time (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 10).

Since neoliberalism often takes different forms across geographical regions (Harvey 2007: 87), it is important for youth studies not to treat it as a homogeneous phenomenon that is affecting young people across the globe in a uniform fashion. Within Indonesia there is great variation in the quality of education and in patterns of economic growth and employment opportunities across different regions. For instance, whereas the boom in oil palm currently creates wealth and a small amount of jobs in Sumatra and Kalimantan, West Java’s manufacturing industries have never recovered from the 1997 Asian financial crisis and face growing

competition from China (Li 2009: 77). Similarly, while some reports celebrate the rise of a prosperous Asian middle class (e.g. Asian Development Bank 2010), other studies raise serious concerns about the fast widening gap between the rich and poor (Von Luebke 2011). Given these regional and socio-economic inequalities, it is important not to generalise and carefully map which groups of young people are able to access which kinds of jobs and under what conditions their labour might be considered redundant.

Recognising that neoliberal globalisation operates in uneven and contradictory ways also has analytical implications. Scholars studying youth and globalisation have documented how changes relating to economic restructuring, state provisioning of education and welfare regimes, or changing family relations are often happening in conjunction, creating new opportunities, dilemmas and contradictions for young adults. This means that young people might not always pass smoothly through a linear set of “transitions”, but are often navigating several terrains at the same time. Some of these structural changes may become more important at certain times in young people’s lives: for example after leaving secondary school or during periods of educated unemployment (Jeffrey 2011: 2). Finally, as Jeffrey also points out, young people’s capability to exert agency and the various resources they can draw on to respond to some of these structural conditions depend not only on young people’s personalities, qualifications and support by family or peer groups, but also on their location in society and the economic opportunities available to them (*ibid.*).

Whereas this section on globalisation and neoliberal development has discussed some of the structural dimensions of ‘youth transition’, the ways in which young men and women navigate current in- and exclusions in the labour market is influenced by both their structural location in society and the cultural ideas which shape young men and women’s experiences of being young (Jones 2009: 5). In order to reconcile the two, the next section therefore looks at how the concept of youth and the dominant ideas about ‘youth transitions’ in the literature are socially constructed.

## Youth as transition: a polarised debate

The notion of ‘youth transition’ has occupied a central place in discussions on how young people move from school into work. The mainstream view of youth typically sees it as a set of interlinked transitions: from childhood to adulthood, from education to work, and from family of origin to family of destination (e.g. Lloyd et al. 2005; World Bank 2006). This notion of youth transition is prominent in both western developmental psychology and in human capital perspectives used by economists. It assumes that education and training will prepare adolescents and youth for the job market and integrate them in the economy, thereby enabling them to obtain the financial resources to move out of their parental home and eventually start a family of their own. It is based on the idea that a more or less linear and universal progression through easily identifiable stages towards the fixed destination of social adulthood is normal and desirable (Wyn and White 1997: 94-95).

Over the past decade or so, the notion of ‘youth transition’ has been widely critiqued and debated, as the coherence and linearity implied by the concept of ‘transition’ often has only little in common with young men and women’s experiences of entering work (Jones 2009: 89). Usually there is not one fixed point of arrival to adulthood as ‘transition’ is a multidimensional process that can take various pathways, and these pathways differ according to social divisions based on class, gender and ethnicity (*ibid* 1997: 95). Moreover, the timing and sequencing of the markers of social adulthood can be complex: rather than moving through the separate realms of education, work and marriage, as the youth transition model assumes, in the lives of young Indonesians these three realms are usually interconnected and they often overlap, each influencing the other (see chapter 5). Finally, important shifts are taking place in the labour market, which complicate the links between education and work and require new skills and strategies from young people. Employment prospects of today’s relatively educated youth are often problematic and further changes are happening in other aspects of youth transition, such as marriage and family formation, and capacity to fulfil obligations to aging parents. This has led youth researchers to rethink not only young people’s transitions to adulthood, but also current notions of youth and adulthood as life stages and ‘social destinations’.

Ideas about youth are thus in flux, with researchers searching for new concepts to do justice to the realities of a growing population of young men and women whose experiences do not correspond with the clarity and homogeneity assumed in the concept of ‘youth transition’ (Jones 2009: 85-86). Some researchers consider a focus on normative timetables and sequencing of life events in the transition to adulthood to be outdated (Wyn and White 1997: 100) and have proposed to eliminate the concept of youth transition altogether. Other scholars have suggested more flexible and sophisticated approaches, based on Mannheim’s famous notion of generations (Furlong et al. 2011); or Johnson-Hanks’ idea of ‘vital conjunctures’ (Jeffrey 2010a: 497-498). These approaches avoid some of the normative assumptions about linearity and homogeneity in youth, as well as the tendency to view independence and social adulthood as destinations, both of which feature prominently in the youth transition framework. While a generational approach has its own potential challenges, one of its strong points is that it takes a long-term view, enabling researchers to compare local variations on global trends and to understand how they play out across time and place (Furlong et al. 2011: 366).<sup>2</sup> The notion of ‘vital conjunctures’ also moves away from the idea that the transition to adulthood is a linear progression, by focusing on certain ‘key events’ or ‘critical moments’ in young people’s lives, identifying school and the workplace as two sites of such vital conjunctures. This approach productively combines attention to the uneven challenges that young people face, with a focus on the particular configurations of structure and agency in young people’s lives (Jeffrey 2010a: 501-502). Both these approaches are promising alternatives, but have not yet been widely applied in empirical research on youth and educated un(der)employment.

In the discussion above I have pointed out that there are many problems with the tendency to see youth merely or only as a period of transition, as many aspects of young people’s lives cannot be explained by it. At the same time, it is still a powerful idea in the minds of many people, also in Indonesia. In this dissertation I keep the notion of ‘youth transition’, not as a normative concept, but as a metaphor to indicate that I engage with a particular literature and set of ideas about the process of growing up. I use the concept of ‘youth transition’ as a heuristic tool, rather than a normative standard, and try to problematise some of its underlying assumptions. I agree with the need for youth researchers to

move away from some of the problematic foundations of the idea of 'youth transition' and to develop alternative frameworks to conceptualise young people's navigations to adulthood. At the same time, I think it is important to do this in a way that maintains some level of analytical engagement with the temporal dimension of youth as a lifestage. There are at least two reasons for this. First, as the life stage situated between childhood and adulthood, the element of transition is inherently part of youth: we move in and out of youth at some point during our lives. Second, as western notions about 'youth transitions' have been exported to the global south, they have influenced local understandings about youth development and transitions to adulthood (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004: 137). While it might not always be possible for young people to emulate these ideals, research has shown that local ideas about proper life trajectories for youth (Dalsgaard et al. 2008: 51) continue to be important for the ways in which young men and women evaluate their situation. This last point resonates with my findings from Cilegon, where young people often referred to normative trajectories towards adulthood (e.g. male breadwinner models, marriage), even though they were not always able to follow these ideals.

This section discusses the concept of youth as a social construction, with particular reference to the 'being' and 'becoming' dimensions of young people's lives. The aim is to understand how these three elements intersect, complement or exist in tension with each other. I use this discussion to move away from linear models of 'youth transitions' and to arrive at an alternative framework based on the idea that young men and women's entry into the labour market has partly to do with structural conditions in the economy, but at the same time is also a cultural phenomenon related to how young people experience being young (*habitus*) and make sense of the livelihood possibilities around them.

While youth is partly an age category based on biological characteristics, it only becomes meaningful as an analytical concept when it is seen as a social and cultural construction (Jones 2009: 1). This conceptualisation implies first of all that the experience of being young is not universal, but varies according to different places and historical conditions. It understands the experience of being young as shaped by social divisions across age, class, gender and ethnic lines. Secondly, viewing youth as a social construction makes it possible to see that youth is also a relational category. Young people are connected to the wider society by their social

relations with the adults and institutions around them, such as parents and other adult family members, but also teachers, employers and local religious, political and community leaders. These intergenerational relationships situate youth within larger structures of social reproduction and within relations of power, bringing to the fore questions about young men and women's experiences of autonomy and dependence (Wyn and White 1997: 11-12). In Indonesia, co-habitation for young couples is not (yet) accepted and it is common for young men and women to live with their parents until they marry. Despite increased mobility and opportunities for education and work, for many young people the defining characteristic of being young is the combination of relative freedom and autonomy and shared obligations and prolonged dependency on their families. The tendency in youth studies to focus on individual experiences of autonomy and independence associated with growing up, has sometimes obscured the ways in which young men and women are socially positioned within such relations of interdependence within their families and communities (Wyn and White 1997: 96). Yet, for many young men and women 'events' such as leaving school, entering work, marriage and parenthood, only become relevant precisely because of the changing social relations of dependency and obligation associated with them (Jones 2009: 88).

Psychological studies typically define adolescence as a period of turmoil in which young people experience the storm and stress of "uncontrollable biological impulses (...) and conflicting emotional states" (Côté and Allahaar, 1994: xii-xiii). This view, based on the work of psychologist G. Stanley Hall (1904), has been influential in mainstream ideas about adolescence in the global north (Côté and Allahaar, 1994: xiii). It considers adolescence as an inevitable and necessary stage of biological and personal development that young people must go through in order to form their identities and reach adulthood. Similar ideas have informed early anthropological research on kinship and the life cycle, and the rituals surrounding birth, puberty, marriage and death. In his book *Rites de Passage* (1960 [1909]), Arnold van Gennep famously coined the idea of youth as a liminal life stage and pointed out the significance of initiation rites, 'rites of passage', and other ceremonies to mark important changes in a person's social status. These studies constructed rigid life stage models to explain how men and women move through the life cycle. Western ideas of adolescence and linear progression were often held to be univer-

sal, even though this conceptualisation itself is the result of particular cultural circumstances and has only been introduced by social scientists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Côté and Allahar, 1994: xii). Margaret Mead (2001) [1928] critiqued the idea of adolescence developed by G. Stanley Hall, having found none of the storm and stress that is usually attributed to adolescents in the United States during her research on adolescence in Samoa. Mead's study makes an important theoretical contribution by proposing that the ways in which young men and women come of age are structured by the cultural conditions in which they live; even though she did not question the existence of adolescence as a lifestage *per se* (Cole and Durham 2008: 5).

In development studies ideas of youth transition have often turned out to be highly compatible with equally linear development models such as modernisation theory and a more recent neoliberal logic which defines young people as human capital. For example, during the heydays of modernisation theory, Walt Rostow's influential paradigm of the five stages of economic growth, which envisioned development as a universal and linear progression, was one of the ideological frameworks underpinning the Suharto regime's drive towards modernisation and national development. State Minister of Technology and later president Habibie saw technological development as a means to leapfrog several of these stages and raise people's living standards (Rudnycky 2010: 36). Recent scholarship in youth studies has shown how evolutionary notions of progress and development are often mirrored in ideas about how people's lives "map onto chronological time" as they move through distinct life stages of childhood, youth and adulthood (Jeffrey 2010: 12-13; see also Johnson Hanks 2002). In the mid-twentieth century these notions about the life course and the specific age-categories associated with it became institutionalised in laws and education systems (Cole and Durham 2008: 6). The same logic of standardised biographies underpins government policies on the labour market, and the provision of housing, health care and pensions (Jones 2009: 110). Such linear and normative models of youth development become problematic in contexts of educated underemployment where young people might experience 'delays' in obtaining stable incomes or are unable to 'transition' from one life stage to the next and risk being labelled as 'failures' (Jeffrey 2010: 13). Youth researchers therefore insist that although the idea of transition often shapes the insti-

tutional context in which young people grow up, it says little about young people's lives per se (Wyn and White 1997: 94).

In other words, while the element of transition might be foremost in the minds of researchers and policy makers, young people themselves may not consider it the most important dimension of youth identity. Often they are busy creating youth cultures and identities in their own right: they are trying to enjoy themselves and be successful in the eyes of their peers as youth, rather than trying to prepare themselves to become successful adults. As much as the transitions from school to work, leaving home, achieving a livelihood and getting married is part of acquiring an adult status, they are equally important for the present realities of young people's lives:

Although leaving school and getting a job is an important aspect of growing up, it needs to be seen in the context of many other dimensions of life. Even the decision to leave school or get a job is contingent on a range of other factors and circumstances in young people's lives. For young people 'getting a life' is about personal relationships, belonging to their community, and making a contribution as well as having a good income. These priorities are not just held with regard to the future – they are relevant to the present of young people's lives (Wyn and White 1997: 114).

Young men and women are looking to the future and consider education and work as part of how they will realise that future, but at the same time they are also living in the present and want to pursue youthful lifestyles and desires. A framework for studying youth which emphasises the 'being' rather than the 'becoming' dimension of youth sees it as a time in the life course when young people are creating identities and youth cultures. As Fussel and Greene (2002: 43) observe: "... globalization, in terms of the spread of ideas and values as well as increased industrial production and trade, powerfully transmits the notion that youth is a particular time in the life course when one should be free of adult responsibilities and develop individual interests and talents". The youth-as-transition and youth as-identity-frameworks represent two fundamentally different views of what being young is all about: the first approach focuses on young people's future potential and what they may become, whereas the second is mainly preoccupied with the 'being' dimension of youth. Seeking to combine these dimensions, recent studies on youth transitions in Japan (Brinton 2011) and educated underemployed young men in North India (Jeffrey 2010) have usefully drawn on Pierre Bour-

dieu's concepts of *habitus* and field (1977), and the forms of capital (1986). For example, Bourdieu's ideas have been used to conceptualise and understand how young people make decisions within the opportunities and constraints available to them (Jones 2009: 39), something that is especially relevant to the topic of education-to-work transitions. Bourdieu's term *habitus* refers to "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (Bourdieu 1977: 82-83). His main interest was in explaining how people's class and structural location in society becomes embodied in them, often unconsciously, as a set of mental and behavioural dispositions, reflected in people's ways of being and ways of carrying oneself. These dispositions both reflect people's past and contain orientations to action which shape their future, and often help to perpetuate power and class-advantage (Jeffrey 2010: 19). In other words, *habitus* thus suggests that young people act within "socially constructed ranges of possibility durably inscribed in them (even in their bodies) as well as within the social world in which they moved" (Calhoun 1993: 73-74). The idea that young people consciously or unconsciously base their aspirations or decisions on a matrix of perceptions of what they think is possible, has been repeatedly emphasised in studies on young people's education-to-work transitions. Young people expectations and ambitions about work are often informed by their knowledge and understanding of local structures of opportunity, as experienced and told to them by the people they know (Jones 2009: 105). Similarly, in her study of Japanese secondary school leavers, Mary Brinton makes the point that young people "often respond to new opportunities and constraints against the background of what is appropriate or even imaginable behaviour" (2011: 8).

Other youth researchers have used Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* to combine the 'being' and 'becoming' elements of youth. They suggest that despite their internal differences along divisions of class, gender and so on, young people share a certain *habitus*: mental and behavioural dispositions which are related to their experience of being young and their social location between childhood and adulthood, relative autonomy and partial (in)dependence (Bayat and Herrera 6-7). For example, as *habitus*, young people are often involved in creating youth cultures, innovating, carving out social spaces, negotiating with adults and worrying about

their adult status in the future (*ibid.*). This research adopts this notion of youth habitus, as it usefully combines elements of young people's lifestyles in the present with their aspirations for the future, and also reiterates the earlier made point that work should be seen within the wider context of young people's lives. Although this notion of youth habitus might not be directly related to the labour market, it highlights that young people need money to support certain elements of their lifestyles.

Finally, Bourdieu's ideas on the various forms of capital are useful for conceptualising young people's job search strategies. Bourdieu emphasises that the notion of habitus should be used in relation to the concepts of field and different form of capital. He viewed society as consisting of different fields of social competition, in which middle classes and poorer groups with greater or lesser forms of social, cultural or economic capital compete for social advantage trying to outwit each other (Jeffrey 2010: 19). Bourdieu describes four types of capital: cultural capital (education and various types of knowledge), social capital (useful contacts), economic capital (money or material possessions), and symbolic capital (prestige, honour) (Bourdieu 1986). The value of these forms of capital changes according to different fields and is therefore useful to highlight inequalities within the population of educated underemployed youth. More privileged individuals are often able to acquire better schooling, make use of social contacts in the government bureaucracy or their connections with elites, and usually develop a sense of entitlement and privilege (symbolic capital) that is reflected in their speech and ways of carrying themselves (Jeffrey 2010: 20). Elites and middle classes are often able to use this advantage to maintain the societal structures that privilege them, thereby reproducing inequality. I will use these different forms of capital to interpret young people's job search strategies and the resources they draw on and reflect on how lower middle class youth position themselves within unequal fields of competition in the job market (chapter 3).

### **Lower middle class youth and educated underemployment**

This study examines young people's education-to-work transitions from the perspective of lower middle class youth in a provincial town, moving attention away from the elites and upper middle classes in Indonesia's big cities. Urban studies in Southeast Asia have usually researched "the superblock and the slum" inhabited by the new rich, upper middle clas-

ses and the urban poor, leaving out the ‘in between’ space of people who are “neither middle class nor poor” (Simone and Rao 2011: 4). As Simone and Rao remind us, this ‘in between’ space consists of a relatively large segment of citizens spanning a variety of professions, livelihoods and incomes. More concretely, they suggest that this group includes “salaried workers in public and service sectors, traders, artisans, sojourners, petty bourgeois entrepreneurs, industrial labour, racketeers, service workers of various skills and low-level technicians” (*ibid.*). Their definition roughly corresponds with what Richard Robison calls Indonesia’s lower middle classes: a petty bourgeoisie of small and medium business-owners, traders and shopkeepers and an amalgam of “lower-level clerks and teachers in the regions and small towns, often with a strong connection to local *ulama*” (Robison 1996: 85). This describes, indeed, the segment of the urban youth population that I studied in Cilegon, which, following Robison, I will refer to as the lower middle classes.<sup>3</sup>

In this section I will discuss two ways of understanding the concept of lower middle classes, both as an empirical socio-economic category and as a more ideological notion of the middle classes as the harbingers of economic growth and modernity. The combination of these two approaches will help to conceptualise Indonesia’s middle classes as a heterogeneous and fragmented group, highlighting how an uneven distribution of power, wealth and privileges both between and within different class sections affects the prospects of lower middle class youth for social advancement through education and work.

The concept of middle class is ambiguous and a difficult category to define empirically. This is reflected in discussions about the structure and size of Indonesia’s urban middle classes and how to measure them. Different researchers use different criteria and their definitions are not always consistent as they refer to various aspects of middle class life, such as lifestyles and consumption patterns, income and occupation, or political behaviour. Indonesia’s urban middle classes are usually conceptualised as being internally divided into several class fractions, rather than consisting of a single, homogenous category. Some of these class fractions are relatively new; others have a much longer history. Under Dutch colonial rule for example, the middle strata of society were occupied by a small, educated, indigenous elite with modest career opportunities in the civil service (Gerke 2000: 138). During the Suharto years more recent middle class segments emerged. Three decades of state-led development

and economic growth under the centralised, military-dominated New Order government have improved the living standards of many people in Indonesia and created a small but growing middle class. Some of the higher echelons within these middle classes include military officers, business owners, and industrial capitalists who benefitted from New Order programmes for national development. White collar professionals, managers and technicians with tertiary education degrees secured jobs in the modern manufacturing and service industries. Both these groups depended heavily on the state as a source of employment, investment, contracts and monopolies and displayed considerable support for the New Order regime (Brenner 1996: 677; Gerke 2000). Often they were able to use their access to and control of state resources to maintain their privileged positions relative to those ranks below them.

But there was also dissatisfaction among the lower ranks of the middle classes: the petty bourgeoisie typically felt disadvantaged in a business climate controlled by Chinese and foreign investment as well as a small number of indigenous business elites. In response, these small and medium entrepreneurs, traders and manufacturers have turned to political strategies which call for protection from the state and criticism of the government for failing to implement such protective measures (Robison 1996: 90-91). Another source of frustration raised by some fractions of the middle classes concerns the pervasive corruption and self-enrichment of the country's elites and government officials. Some consider Islam as an antidote to problems of corruption and moral disintegration. The current Islamic movement (though not restricted to the middle classes) is firmly rooted in the lower and middle ranks of the middle classes, who typically have the time and resources to study contemporary Islam or become active in Islamic political parties (Brenner 1996: 677-678). These observations are also relevant to Cilegon's lower middle classes, whose cultural milieu is influenced by the global Islamic revival and recent emergence of more conservative Muslim lifestyles and morality. In economic and political terms, however, Cilegon's lower middle classes find that the benefits of rapid industrial transformation under the New Order regime do not automatically trickle down to include them. Moreover, they anticipate that the growing influence of a neoliberal agenda in the post-Suharto period, as for example illustrated by policies towards deregulation and privatisation of state-owned enterprises like Krakatau Steel, will lead to job loss and rising unemployment.

Many of the available studies on the middle classes in Southeast Asia and elsewhere conceptualise the emerging middle classes as both an indication and result of modernity and economic growth (Davis 2004: 31). This tendency, combined with a widely shared assumption that the middle classes typically live and work in cities, has resulted in a preoccupation with what Diane Davis calls the “so-called new middle classes (...): mainly white collar professionals, managers, and technicians with higher levels of education who are employed in the modern industrial and service sectors” (*ibid.*). The trend to locate the middle classes within a relatively small range of modern occupations is also reflected in the Indonesian literature on the lifestyles and political behaviour of the so-called ‘new rich’ and middle classes which emerged in ‘affluent Asia’ during the 1980s and 1990s (Robison and Goodman 1996; Sen and Stivens 1998). This literature has documented middle class orientations towards the global economy, the formation of distinct class identities and values in which Islam gradually became more prominent (Hefner 1993), and their participation in consumer lifestyles. In reality, this group merely covers the upper middle classes. The lower ranks of the middle classes have received much less academic attention (Davis 2004: 30-33). Attention to this neglected group brings into focus the socio-economic instability that this group faces after the Asian financial crisis and and pressure to maintain middle class lifestyles and membership (Gerke 2000: 146). For Indonesia’s lower middle classes the prospect of downward mobility is very real: they are often barely hanging on to the trappings of middle class lifestyles and can move in and out of the middle classes as an income category. They might experience irregular earnings, moving between periods of significant earnings and periods of unemployment. They are also exposed to shifts in the labour market or changes in prices of basic goods such as food and shelter (Simone and Rao 2011: 4). Indeed, the Asian Development Bank, using consumption expenditures between USD \$ 2–20 per person per day to delineate middle class, estimates that the majority of Indonesia’s middle classes actually belong to the lower middle classes, consuming USD \$ 2–4 per day, making them quite vulnerable to slipping back into poverty in case of economic crisis or other shocks (2010: 5-8).

In this respect, the lower middle classes are very different from the upper middle classes and new rich. My informants did not consider themselves to be well heeled. While there was usually enough food on

the table, they felt under pressure to meet their other daily needs. They worried about how to pay for the costs of education for their children, healthcare when someone became ill, and how to cover the substantial expenses for weddings, funerals and religious holidays. At the same time, they wanted to maintain and display a consumer lifestyle based on a number of goods which they had usually bought on credit, such as a motorcycle, refrigerator, TV, mobile phone, and increasingly, the wish to own a laptop or computer. They considered themselves “just ordinary people” (*orang biasa saja*), with “normal” lifestyles, who made do with “limited means”. If they differ from the upper middle classes, they are also removed from the urban poor. Despite their limited material possessions and fluctuations in their income, none of my informants claimed to be poor (see also Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase (2011: 301-304) for similar observations about lower middle classes in India).

Apart from being a socio-economic category, the notion of the middle classes as “bearers of modernity” (Gerke 2000: 135) represents an ideological dimension of middle class culture which might be best understood as somewhat of a moving target. State policies of Suharto’s authoritarian New Order regime during the 1970s and 1980s aimed at national development and identified the emerging middle classes as the key to economic growth and modernisation. Middle class youth were encouraged to pursue higher education and professional careers in order to elevate the standing of both their families and the nation. “Improvements to the education system raised hopes and expectations among the population for upward social mobility, which was associated with fixed incomes, expansion of consumption, particularly of imported goods, and a lifestyle which included leisure activities” (Gerke 2000: 142).

However, uneven distribution of power and resources mean that the lower ranks of Indonesia’s urban middle classes, despite being heavily targeted in the state-led push for development under the Suharto regime, typically lack the wealth and privileges enjoyed by business and bureaucratic elites (Brenner 1996: 677-678). These problems mainly affect youth, who find that due to unequal access to education and economic opportunities their scope for upward social mobility is quite limited. They have usually obtained some cultural capital derived from participation in secondary and tertiary education, but often with credentials from institutions of doubtful quality. They frequently lack the money and personal networks to successfully compete for stable, middle class office

jobs as managers and salaried employees in the government or private companies (see also Jeffrey 2010: 9 for the case of North India). Almost without exception, my informants have adopted new information and communication technologies (mobile phones, internet, social networking sites like Facebook) and are connected to the wider world and global youth cultures. They are relatively autonomous, but have limited resources to improve their family's standing. The result is a large population of educated, lower middle class young men and women with aspirations for salaried jobs and middle class consumption patterns, but with few prospects in the labour market which would enable them to thrive economically. Although the problem of un- and underemployment among educated youth has yet to be systematically examined within the context of Indonesia, some initial data would suggest "that it is these lower middle class students who are being hardest hit by growing unemployment and underemployment among graduates" (Robison 1996: 89).

This disjuncture between image and reality can produce anxieties about downward social mobility, especially in times of political instability and economic uncertainty. Solvay Gerke (2000) for example describes how in the wake of the Asian financial crisis (1997-1998) a struggling Indonesian middle class, being confronted with a declining income, resorted to a kind of symbolic consumption to display a lifestyle which they could no longer afford. Being (lower) middle class is a constantly renegotiated space, marked by continuing efforts to prevent downward mobility and distinguish oneself from the poor and lower class strata of society (Gerke 2000: 145; Jeffrey 2010: 5).

This situation is not unique to Indonesia and similar conditions have been observed in other parts of the world. Mark Liechty (2003) describes an emerging but struggling middle class in Kathmandu, Nepal, where youth is a relatively new social category due to changes in education practices and marriage patterns. Due to the instability of their relationship to the means of production (as both sellers of labour and owners of capital), Kathmandu's middle classes increasingly rely on consumption and education strategies to demonstrate middle class status and market their skills and services in the labour market (2003: 18). Middle class teenagers and youth are heavily targeted as potential consumers of fashion, music and media, but at the same time they face a stagnant market for middle class occupations and are typically educated and un(der)employed. Linda Herrera (2010) reports how university graduates

from intermediate class backgrounds in urban Egypt face a range of structural constraints in making the transition from education-to-work and experience an overwhelming feeling of 'being stuck'. Other research has documented growing frustration and uncertainties for unemployed young men in different parts of the globe (Jeffrey 2010; Mains 2007). In Indonesia as in many other countries these pressures are more strongly directed towards young men, who, because of male breadwinner norms are expected to become the head of the family and provide most of the household income. Without stable work or a regular income, young people are likely to remain dependent on their families and the state for a longer period of time. Young people's lack of economic independence also has implications for their ability to get married, move out of their parent's homes and start a family (Masquelier 2005). As Karen Hansen (2005) notes of her informants in urban Zambia, many young people are "stuck in the compound": they are unable to acquire the resources to move into a household of their own and achieve social adulthood.

These examples highlight the limited capacity of education, in and by itself, to deliver access to employment, upward mobility and adult roles and responsibilities. In the late 1970s, Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) argued that rather than challenging class inequalities, schools often function to reproduce and legitimise the existing class structure. Paul Willis's classic study *Learning to Labor* (1981) further complicates the role of schools in class reproduction, by turning attention to power relations within schools and by showing the limited capacity of schools to facilitate upward mobility. His analysis of the subculture of working class boys in a British secondary school, which was based on their rejection of school culture, shows how these 'lads' effectively sealed their own future in manual labour. At the same time, these observations should not obscure that education carries with it a great deal of social and cultural capital. While an educated person might not change his or her income level, it is likely that his or her social status will improve, and status carries other types of benefits. As will be argued in chapter 3, in Cilegon as elsewhere in Indonesia, education is a necessary requirement for entry into the labour market but not a sufficient resource for upward mobility.

Despite these widespread socio-economic realities, the current policy literature on young people's education-to-work transitions prominently features technocratic ideas which assume a causal link between investment in education and young people's employability and opportunities

for social advancement (World Bank 2007; 2010). Perhaps not surprisingly, the global spread of ideas which link education to modernisation and social mobility, have raised young people's expectations and aspirations about their future. Karuna Morarji (2010) analyses how formal education transforms the lives of rural youth in a remote north Indian village. She convincingly argues that schooling not only attunes young people to the idea of obtaining salaried jobs in the modern service economy (though competition is fierce and few actually achieve this dream) but also closes off other avenues, such as a future in agriculture (for which educated youth often no longer have the skills) or manual labour, which they do not consider proper work for an educated person and are no longer interested in doing. These insights are also relevant for the context of Indonesia, as the next section shows (see also chapter 3).

### Education, training and work in Indonesia

Indonesia has an ethnically diverse, relatively young and increasingly urbanised population. As in most other Southeast Asian countries, the number of young adults has more than doubled between 1960 and 2000. During the period of rapid economic development and modernisation under President Suharto's New Order government (1966-1998), Indonesian definitions of youth changed considerably. State policies introduced compulsory education, regulated population growth and raised the minimum age for marriage. As a result, youth as a life stage became associated with lengthy schooling and prolonged dependence on parents, but also with consumer lifestyles and new patterns of dating and marriage (Smith-Hefner 2007: 188).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Suharto government used oil profits to invest in the national education system. These state interventions resulted in improved literacy levels, expansion of the number of schools and introduction of compulsory primary education. Basic literacy skills among young adults expanded from 40 percent in 1965 to 90 percent in 1990 (Smith-Hefner 2007: 188). Nevertheless, the number of young men and women continuing to upper secondary school or tertiary education is still relatively low compared to neighboring countries and problems of quality remain, especially in private education institutions (Booth 1999: 301; Nilan et al. 2011: 711). In 2010, 67 percent of girls and 68 percent of boys aged 13-18 years were enrolled in secondary school. Tertiary education is much more expensive than secondary schooling and many

families find it difficult to cover the costs for tertiary education for their children. Unequal access to universities and colleges is reflected in a gross enrolment rate of 23 percent of youth in tertiary education in 2010 (UNESCO 2010).

At the same time, both the structure of the labor market and composition of the youth labor force underwent considerable transformation. Economic growth and processes of urbanisation and industrialisation contributed to the availability of new employment opportunities for young people. An important shift in the composition of the labour force happened as a result of the increasing share of young women in government employment, manufacturing industries and the service sector (Ford and Parker 2008; Manning 1998: 265).

Yet, there is evidence that young men and women with upper secondary and tertiary education qualifications experience a difficult entry into the labor market as the supply of educated youth grows much faster than the demands for them in the job market (Dhanani et al. 2009, 62-63; Keyfitz 1989; Manning 1998, 176). This problem of un- and underemployment among educated youth is not entirely new and affects young people in both the global south and north. Drawing on evidence from Indonesia, Nathan Keyfitz (1989) argued more than two decades ago that due to a combination of population growth and expansion of the education system the supply of college graduates was increasing much faster than the demand for them in the labour market. The imbalance between supply and demand for educated workers means that graduates at all levels are likely to end up in jobs below their expectations and education level, and do work that was previously done by those with lower education qualifications. This 'pushdown effect' also means that the wage premium of education, that is the correlation between higher education and income, has tended to decline. Other scholars from this generation of researchers refer to these problems as the 'diploma disease' (Dore 1976) or 'credentialism' (Collins 1979). These concepts indicate that the market for education degrees and qualifications inflates with only little relation to the actual needs for the job, but reflects a more generalised competition over job opportunities

These problems of underemployment and informality have been attributed to the more general context of 'jobless growth' after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The current period of economic expansion in Indonesia since the mid-2000s is mainly driven by exports and has been

characterised as a period of 'jobless growth' due to the very limited amount of new jobs that have been created during this time. Throughout the 2000s, manufacturing industries and other sectors of the economy which had generated employment during the latter half of the Suharto-period stagnated, while smaller and more dynamic sectors such as mining, finance, transport and communications employed relatively few workers (Dhanani et al. 2009: 30). This means that there are fewer vacancies for young graduates who are entering the job market for the first time (Nilan et al. 2011: 711). Throughout the 2000s roughly between 60 and 70 per cent of all Indonesian workers were self-employed, or worked in informal conditions as casual laborers or unpaid family workers (Dhanani et al. 2009: 31; Manning and Purnagunawan 2011: 323). Although unemployment rates among youth aged 15-24 years have decreased since 2005, the 2010 national average of 21 per cent is still three times higher than the overall unemployment rate of 7 per cent that year.<sup>4</sup> Official youth unemployment rates in Indonesia also continue to be higher than those in neighboring countries like the Philippines (13.9 per cent in the year 2008–2009) and Malaysia (12.3 per cent in 2008–2009) (Manning and Purnagunawan 2011: 324). Educated youth with diplomas from upper secondary school or tertiary education are overrepresented in this group.

An ILO school-to-work survey among youth aged 15-24 in Jakarta, Central Java and East Nusa Tenggara (Kupang) found that many young men and women enter the labour force earlier than they had intended, as they would have preferred to continue their education until college or university. Equally important, the survey also identified a group of young people who leave secondary education early because they do not like school or believe that continuing their education will be of little use in their job search (Sziraczki and Reerink 2004: 51). First-time job seekers spend on average eight or nine months before finding a job (Dhanani et al. 2009: 54) and for many this period takes even longer. Because of the lack of social insurance and unemployment benefits, few young people can afford to be unemployed for long periods of time. The majority of them are underemployed rather than entirely without work: they do not have enough work, are sometimes unemployed, are doing work far below their qualifications, or below the minimum wage level. In a study of young people's expectations about education, work and the future, Nilan et al. (2011) find that when asked about their aspirations for work and

careers (not the jobs they thought they would actually get), young Indonesians (both young men and women) showed high aspirations, preferring professional jobs as teachers, lawyers, and engineers (2011: 717). These ambitious career goals are interpreted as reflecting both parental expectations and young people's own ambitions for upward mobility. Yet, entering such professional jobs requires a university degree, so it is unlikely that all of these young people will succeed in realising their ambitions. As the authors also note, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the number of professional jobs has remained relatively stable, while competition for university places has intensified (*ibid.*). Similar observations are made in Wenty Minza's study among students and tertiary graduates in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. She finds that many of her informants feel they have acquired a higher level of schooling than their parents, but that this upward mobility in education does not necessarily translate into similar upward mobility in the labour market (Minza 2011: 74).

Although young people's orientations towards professional jobs might suggest that the majority of the population is employed as salaried workers in the government or private companies, the reverse is actually the case. Salaried workers are a minority and throughout the 2000s roughly between 60 and 70 per cent of all Indonesian workers were self-employed, or worked under informal conditions as casual labourers or unpaid family workers (Dhanani et al. 2009: 31; Manning and Purnagunawan 2011: 323). In such a context, where stable employment on a contractual basis is highly sought after, but not the experience of most Indonesians, researchers and policy makers have started to question binaries such as 'employment' and 'unemployment', and 'formal' and 'informal' economy. The United Nations have suggested that many youth actually navigate a kind of 'intermediary zone', where they are engaged in casual employment, are compelled to 'get by' through self-employment, are underemployed, or hold a variety of part-time jobs (United Nations 2003: 56).

To conclude, this literature review has directed our attention to the complex situation that many young people find themselves in after completing or dropping out from education. Education often transforms young people's prospects and ideas about the kinds of lives they value. Yet, amidst conditions of cultural globalisation and absence of stable work, educated young men and women often experience a gap between

their aspirations and the realities around them. As a result, many find themselves in an ambiguous period of youth. Rather than conceptualising young men and women's entry into work and marriage mainly as a period of transition and 'becoming', this research will take into account how these young men and women experience this period of their lives, what being young means to them in relation to livelihood possibilities and how they make sense of the wider structures and opportunities available to them. Thus I conceptualise young people's entry into the world of work as both shaped by the structural conditions in the economy, but argue that at the same time it is also a cultural phenomenon related to how young people experience being young (*habitus*) and make sense of the livelihood possibilities around them.

### Research questions

This study seeks to balance an understanding of the structural conditions in which educated lower middle class youth enter the labour market with young men and women's own aspirations for jobs and their understandings of local opportunities. Following the study objectives outlined above, the main research questions posed are: (i) What are the aspirations and strategies of young men and women in pursuing certain kinds of desired employment? (ii) Who benefits from the job opportunities in Cilegon's economy and who does not? (iii) How do young people react when they are unable to move into the jobs they expect? (iv) What are the differences between young men and women in this regard? And finally, (v) what kind of youth cultures do young men and women participate in and how do they seek to fulfil their lifestyle needs?

### Methodology: studying young people from a youth lens

#### An ethnographic approach

Available studies on young people's education-to-work transitions in Indonesia have often used a quantitative approach, relying on large-scale surveys (see for instance Manning 1998; Sziraczki and Reerink 2004; Dhanani et al. 2009; World Bank 2010). These studies allow for statistical generalisation and provide a useful macro picture of young people's participation in education and of (un)employment trends among secondary school and university graduates. But while the overall trends are well documented, much less is known about young people's experiences and

ideas about education and work, nor how they navigate their job search or negotiate periods of educated underemployment. Given this gap in the literature, there is a need to complement existing macro-level studies with micro-level research which combines ethnography with an interdisciplinary political economy approach to detail the connections between young people's individual experiences and the structural conditions under which they enter the labour market.

My choice for a qualitative methodology is also informed by recent scholarship in youth studies which maintains that young people should be studied in their own right and from their own viewpoint (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Hansen et al. 2008; Jones 2009). The focus on youth agency allows us to move away from conceptualisations of underemployed youth as problems or risks, or as mere objects or victims of wider circumstances beyond their control. Instead, it allows for a more nuanced consideration of how young men and women understand their situation and how they inhabit and respond to this on their own terms. Reflecting my interest in studying young people as actors in their own right and in understanding how they make decisions and manoeuvre their post-educational landscapes, this study adopts an ethnographic approach.

### **Choice of research location**

There are several reasons why a medium-sized city like Cilegon provides an appropriate setting for this study. First of all, demographic trends and patterns of urbanisation and rural-urban migration have resulted in a changing composition of the youth population in Indonesia's cities. Earlier I mentioned that available studies on youth and middle classes have tended to focus on Indonesia's major urban centres. But nowadays more than half (52%) of the people worldwide who are living in urban areas actually reside in medium-sized cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants (UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2007*: 9). Even though a considerable part of the world's population lives in provincial towns, these towns generally receive less attention compared to the rapid urbanisation of bigger cities and metropolitan centres (Tacoli 2006: 5). Processes of urbanisation and rural-urban migration are largely driven by young people, as it is mostly rural youth who move to the city in search of education, non-farm work and urban lifestyles. The declining availability of land combined with young men and women's changing

aspirations who have come to think of farm work as an unappealing, low status occupation, encourage growing numbers of rural youth to seek their future outside of agriculture (Rigg 2006: 69). These trends coincide with the current demographic shift towards youth, which, as explained earlier, is characterised by two interrelated social trends, namely a trend towards later marriage and a trend of longer enrollment in education and difficult entry into the labour market for upper secondary and tertiary education graduates. In sum, this suggests that a considerable share of young people in their late teens and twenties now live in these provincial towns, where they try to capitalise on their education, look for work, date and get married, and participate in urban youth lifestyles.

The second set of reasons for studying provincial towns stems from the changing economic and political context in post-1998 Indonesia. In the post-Suharto period regions and towns have become more important, both as administrative centres and as economic and political arenas for the competition over local resources, social status and political power. Decentralisation has divided up central state power and transferred fiscal and administrative responsibilities from Jakarta to the regions and municipalities. As a result, “small and intermediate urban centres are again attracting interest for their role in the provision of services and goods to their surroundings and regions, and as potential engines of regional economic growth” (Tacoli 2006: 3).

When decentralisation was introduced in 1999, Cilegon became a municipality with its own local government, while Banten separated from West Java and became a new province. Decentralisation has resulted in a more local focus on economic and social development within the framework of regional autonomy. Since this process plays out in the regions and municipalities, it is important to move attention away from Jakarta and try to understand decentralisation from the perspective of the semi-peripheries or middle ground, and not only the urban centres. Chapter 2 discusses how local development takes shape in Cilegon through efforts to reverse the pattern of capital flight from its industrial estate, improve job prospects for youth in the industries, and political struggles with Jakarta over taxes and profits. This context is shaped by the interplay between rapid economic and cultural globalisation on the one hand, and the political changes brought by decentralisation and the localising of state power on the other (Hadiz 2010). This combination of global youth cultures with new inequalities in Cilegon’s economic and

political landscape makes that it is interesting to explore young people's livelihood prospects. The paradox of how a region which had recently experienced rapid industrial transformation and high economic growth could simultaneously be among the regions with the highest youth unemployment rates in Indonesia, was what guided me towards the issue of young men and women and the transition from education-to-work.

### **Doing fieldwork**

Following short preliminary visit in 2007, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork over a period of 13 months between 2008 and 2010. The first period of fieldwork was undertaken over a period of 7 months between March–November 2008, with the second part of fieldwork conducted in June–October 2009 (4.5 months) and July–August 2010 (1.5 month). During fieldwork I lived with three Indonesian host families in different parts of the city. During the short preliminary visit I stayed with a family in a housing complex for employees – mostly supervisors and mid-level managers – of PT Krakatau Steel. The housing complex was neatly organised, consisting of relatively spacious streets and orderly rows of houses. There was relatively little economic activity or bustling streetlife within the complex. The two storey houses, though somewhat rundown, had concrete walls, iron plate roofs, ceramic tiled floors and air conditioning, as well as little front gardens and a garage. To some extent, this uniformity was also reflected in its inhabitants. Though the families that lived there had various ethnic backgrounds and originated from different parts of the archipelago, they shared a similar socio-economic bracket and cultural milieu because of their regular salary and social status as employees (*karyawan*) of the Krakatau Steel company.

In 2008 I started fieldwork in a crowded neighbourhood in the city centre. Its central location made this kampong a convenient starting point for exploring and mapping Cilegon. Moreover, this neighbourhood had an active youth organisation which organised a number of cultural activities for local youth, ranging from activities to celebrate national holidays (Maulid, Independence Day), *pencak silat* (martial arts) practice, and a rotating savings system (*arisan*) for youth. Volunteering in various activities of this organisation allowed me to interact and get to know young men and women in this neighbourhood (both those affiliated to the youth organisation as well as those outside). The majority of youth who were active in this organisation were in their late teens and early twenties

and from both sexes, though young women were outnumbered by young men. Some were in secondary school or studying, others alternated between jobs and periods of unemployment. Many of the working and underemployed youth in my study lived in this kampong.

Most people identify themselves as 'lower middle class' and regard their neighbourhood as a 'modest' or 'normal' neighbourhood, 'standard' for most neighbourhoods in the city. People in this kampong tend to work as traders, are employed by companies / industries, live from small businesses (e.g. *warung*), work as teachers, or find themselves without or in between jobs. The neighbourhood was always busy with people and contained dense economic activity. On average, the people who are employed earn about 1–1,5 million rupiah per month (slightly above the minimum wage which in 2008 was set at about 975.000 rp per month), but there are also people who are more well off and earn above this average. People's aspirations centred on aiming to own their own house (as opposed to renting one), provide for their family and send their children to school, own a TV, stereo, refrigerator and fan, as well as a motorcycle (no car) which they buy on credit. Though ethnically diverse with both local people (*pribuma*) and migrants from other parts of Indonesia living side by side, the overwhelming majority of resident were Muslims.

In 2009 I moved to a quieter residential area a ten minute drive away from Cilegon's crowded main road. This was a mixed income neighbourhood with well-heeled families living side by side to others who had difficulties to make ends meet. The neighbourhood contained teachers and bureaucrats, but also private employees and business owners, day laborers and domestic servants. Though not many of my informants actually lived and worked in this neighbourhood, I used my stay in this neighbourhood to extend my network of informants to other parts of town, including the nearby industrial area and other neighbourhoods further away from the city centre. One of the daughters living in this household, a 28 year old NGO worker, took an active interest in my research and became my assistant during the interviews with young women and some of the parents.

### Individual in-depth interviews

I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with both young men and women, both working and un(der)employed youth. The key informants are 25 young men and 20 young women in their late teens

and twenties (roughly between 18-30 years old) who were interviewed to collect their biographies and discuss their views on education, work, marriage and future family life.<sup>5</sup> My informants have all at least completed compulsory lower secondary school; however the majority consist of upper secondary school graduates and some tertiary education students and graduates. Many of them, especially young women, have education levels that are equal to or higher than their parents. Most of my informants come from a lower middle class background. They are trying to stay at least in this class, but are hoping to become members of a better class than their parents.

Informants were purposely selected to cover a range of aspects of young people's entry into the world of work. Some young men and women were in education, often combining school and work; others were no longer in secondary school or university and had started their job search; and still others had found employment, although they would frequently alternate between various jobs and income earning activities. I also included young men and women who were not really looking for stable work or had become discouraged in their job search. Informants were further selected to represent a range of jobs available to young people in Cilegon, including jobs as factory workers and shop assistants for young women (see chapter 5) and jobs in construction, transportation, manufacturing and services for young men.

Interviews discussed young men and women's choices and aspirations about employment and marriage, their strategies in pursuing certain kinds of desired work, and alternatives when they were unable to move into the jobs they expected. Interviews with both young people and parents also talked about how decisions about education and work were negotiated in the family context, gender differences, and their understandings of structures of opportunity in the job market and the roles of local government and employers in creating jobs. I also discussed with young men and women their understandings of 'being young', their experiences in education and work, their consumption patterns and youthful lifestyles. Some informants with whom I did not have a close rapport were interviewed only once; others whom I got to know well or became friends with, were interviewed between 2-4 times over the period of three fieldwork visits made to Cilegon between 2008-2010. This allowed me to see, in some individual cases, how their lives might have changed or not over the course of two or three years, if their focus and aspira-

tions had shifted, if they had moved out of Cilegon or had stayed, and what might have kept them in place. The opportunity to catch up with some of my informants over a longer period of time yielded insights which I would not have observed if I had relied on a 'snapshot' of their lives by interviewing them only once.

Another motivation for selecting my informants was that I wanted to take a different angle on youth in Indonesia as compared to some of the available literature. In contrast to studies which have focused on highly visible, spectacular expressions of Indonesian youth culture, such as underground music scenes (Baulch 2007), violent youth gangs (Ryter 1998; Kadir 2012), or student protests (Aspinall 1995), I tried to engage with less spectacular, but more everyday youthful expressions in Cilegon. Respondents represent "ordinary" youth, in the sense that they want to enjoy their youth, friendships and find love, and secure a livelihood so that they eventually can get married and start their own families. All of the young men and women mentioned here identify themselves as Muslim, though the extent to which they incorporate Islam into their everyday lives varies. Some devout young women dress modestly wearing long skirts, skin-coloured socks and shoulder length veils, while young men dress in neat trousers and clean shirts; they pray and fast regularly, guard their interactions with the other sex and intend to refrain from pre-marital sex. However, many of my informants were more ambivalent about religious morality and they participated in Cilegon's mainstream youth cultures, mixing faith with romance, having fun and drinking alcohol (see chapters 2 and 3).

Other informants included employers, parents and leaders of local youth organisations, as well as local political and religious leaders, NGO activists and journalists. Secondary sources include a bibliography of over 200 newspaper articles relevant to my research project. During fieldwork I collected statistics and secondary data from BPS and Bappeda offices and collected a small number of job advertisements from newspapers and the internet. I tried to supplement these data by interviewing a few government officials at the local manpower office as well as the provincial education department, but these offices were highly bureaucratic and I did not always manage to get the information that I needed. Often I emerged with estimations about the numbers that I was looking for or with contradictory accounts about procedures and gov-

ernment policies. It was here that I learnt first-hand that knowing someone inside these offices (having an *orang dalam*) can be very helpful.

### **Participant observation and casual conversations**

In addition to doing interviews, much of my understanding about the actual experiences and life worlds of young people in Cilegon comes from hanging out, joining them in their activities and from casual conversations. This could either be in group activities, such as attending meetings of neighbourhood or city-based youth organisations (Karang Taruna, KNPI), joining them in conducting a quick count during presidential elections, watching the world cup soccer in the middle of the night, or going out on motorcycle to run an errand or hang out at the industrial lake or a friend's place. It could also be in the form of a casual remark just after the interview was over, or in a private conversation over a bowl of *bakso* soup or a shared glass of tea or coffee at a quiet moment in the late afternoon, during which some of my friends might confide about their doubts, love lives, financial situations or family relations. My identity as a youth researcher allowed me to hang out and travel with young men, sometimes also at night, albeit on the condition that I informed my host family where I planned to be and with whom. This made me different from Indonesian girls, who do not have the same freedom of mobility and hanging out during the evening. During the initial stage of research meeting young women proved to be a bit of a challenge, as they spend more of their time in and around the house. Some of them were shy when I approached them. For the interviews with young women I often used a female research assistant who helped to break the ice and initiated the interviews; but all the other interviews were conducted on my own.

Being a young, Western, female researcher in this part of Indonesia worked out in different ways. Because of the relatively small age difference between myself and my respondents it was quite easy to blend in with young people's lifeworlds. They were often as interested in getting to know me as I was in them and were eager to learn about youth in The Netherlands, to share knowledge, compare experiences and reflect on life in north Banten. Some of my best and most cherished memories from fieldwork concern the friendship, laughter and mutual insights that developed during these conversations, joint activities and hanging out. At the same time, the social gap between my status as a foreign researcher

with stable employment at a Dutch university and the complexities and dilemmas faced by my informants, who were trying to realise their ambitions and expectations within frustratingly narrow margins, was not lost upon them. I often felt uncomfortable about being able to move in and out of situations while my informants had to manage the economic marginality and wider circumstances of their lives by making difficult choices or limit the ambitions and expectations they had devised for themselves. The unequal stakes invested in this research project added to this ambivalence: both sides understood that ultimately this research would lead up to a PhD degree and possibly future academic benefits for me, without changing the circumstances they found themselves in. These concerns were expressed in the form of a questioning of loyalties, especially towards the end of my fieldwork when some informants wondered if my friendship and interest in their lives would extend beyond this research. During fieldwork, negotiations over the potential benefits of the research and my presence as a 'resource person' in their lives were also expressed in the form of requests for money, English lessons, lectures, and information about scholarships and business opportunities. Trying to negotiate and walk a fine line between these tensions and moral dilemmas has been (and continues to be) one of the more difficult parts of this research.

In between fieldwork, the internet, in particular Facebook, provided a means to occasionally exchange news and continue this hanging out. Indonesia has a relatively poor internet infrastructure, but in recent years has seen an extraordinary growth in Facebook usage. Currently the country ranks as the number two Facebook user in the world, with over 41.7 million users, the majority of them, 42 per cent, falling within the 18-24 years age bracket.<sup>6</sup> Most Indonesians access Facebook through an application on their mobile phones rather than visiting internet cafés. I noticed the growing popularity of Facebook during the winter of 2009 when within several weeks suddenly more and more of my friends and informants who had previously been active on social networking sites such as Friendster<sup>7</sup>, switched to Facebook (in the Indonesian language more commonly spelled as *Fesbuk*). Their active presence on Facebook allowed more regular contact in between and after periods of fieldwork. In the first place Facebook became a place to chat, exchange news and maintain friendships and contacts. But during the writing process I used Facebook occasionally to discuss analysis in progress, clarify if I had un-

derstood earlier interview material correctly or inquire about things that I had not asked during fieldwork, and check back on news I had read online in local and national newspapers (for instance, the polemics surrounding the Kubang Sari project and the privatisation of Krakatau Steel described in chapter 2). In such short discussions, informants sometimes disagreed on analysis in progress, or corrected me on certain findings. In a few instances they sent me links about news from Cilegon which they thought might be of interest, or shared photos or clips related to their personal lives or my research project (for example, pictures of a demonstration in Cilegon, a slide from a power point presentation by Krakatau Steel, a short clip of an agreement between the steel factory and a workers organisation). The scale on which this happened was very modest as there were also times when I did not regularly visit Facebook. I also do not want to give the impression that I made use of Facebook in the same way as other research methods described earlier. After all, the opportunity to communicate through Facebook emerged rather spontaneously, when my study was well underway and most of the fieldwork was completed. Communication via Facebook was also different from interviews or face-to-face communication during fieldwork. Chatting on Facebook was often short, informal and, more so than face to face conversation, bounced back and forth in between different topics. But interestingly, these online exchanges made the research process more interactive; and somewhat bridged distance between 'fieldwork' and 'writing' stages of the research.

### **Choice of exemplary arenas and case studies**

Chapter 4 about young men and their work trajectories is based on a case study of young men and their relations with Krakatau Steel and other or industries in their town. In choosing this focus, I do not mean to imply that Cilegon's economy can be reduced to a steel company or even the industrial sector. I am aware that by using Krakatau Steel as a lens I might risk overstating the importance of the steel company for the city while downplaying the extent to which young people living and working in other parts of town go about their daily lives without having any connections to the industrial zone. Nonetheless, I have selected Krakatau Steel (KS) as a case study for several reasons. First of all, many young men in Cilegon identified Krakatau Steel, being the biggest and most well-known company in town, as one of the most obvious places to look

for work. With the exception of outsourced workers and those on temporary contracts, employees (*karyawan*) at this state-owned company enjoy prospects of secure wages plus benefits such as access to social security, pensions, healthcare and credit schemes. This kind of stable contract offers a type of security that is increasingly under threat. The second reason is that a focus on KS highlights the interplay between globalising and localising dynamics in Cilegon. On the one hand, the steel company is under pressure to privatise and compete on the global steel market according to the standards and logic of the market economy. At the same time, it has to adjust itself to the new political realities of decentralised Cilegon, where local politicians try to manage and control local resources in order to improve the prosperity of the region. Through these efforts they create a demanding and sometimes frustrating context for the industries to operate, as exemplified by the dispute over the newly planned Kubang Sari harbour and local resistance to KS's privatisation and joint venture with the South Korean company Posco. The third and final reason is that the case study of KS and other companies allowed study of an interesting response by local youth to the intense competition over jobs in the industries. They have set up neighbourhood-based youth organisations through which they lobby the industries for jobs and training opportunities, which offers interesting insights of how they deal with issues of privatisation and competition.

Chapter 5 about young women and work is mainly based on their involvement in work in trade and services, one of the areas in Cilegon's economy where new job opportunities have opened up for young women, and pays specific attention to their aspirations to work as sales and promotion girls in shopping malls. Young women are attracted to this kind of work because it offers them some level of autonomy and the opportunity to engage with modernity and urban lifestyles. This case study shows that despite its attractions being a sales and promotion girl also has its drawbacks, including long hours of standing on the shop floor, work based on temporary contracts and a company uniform which does not always allow the headscarf. The discussion about these and other kinds of work young women are doing raises the question if young women might have some advantages over young men in the job market, even if they do not face the same pressures to become breadwinners.

### Limitation of the study

This ethnographic study is based on a small-scale sample of urban, relatively educated youth in a provincial town in Java. The focus on lower middle class youth in a medium-sized city extends the scope of some of the available studies on urban youth, which have mostly focused on documenting the youth cultures of relatively affluent students in Indonesia's big cities. In this respect, my study might provide some insights into the impact of cultural and economic globalisation on the livelihoods and lifestyles of lower middle class youth in a nonmetropolitan town. Yet, the small size of this study makes it difficult to generalise my findings to other regions in the country or even to consider them representative of places 'similar' to Cilegon. Here I want to emphasise that while I have found medium-sized towns and regions to be rich sites for understanding some of the dynamics and complexities of decentralised Indonesia, it would be problematic to imply that these are places with clear boundaries onto which certain 'provincial town' or 'lower middle class' cultures can be mapped (Gupta and Ferguson 2002: 66). Rather than taking these localities as a given, I have tried to work within an anthropological tradition which attempts to understand how such localities have been created and reproduced through their interconnections with the national and the global (Brenner 1998: 22-23).

Ideally, this research would have been designed as a longitudinal study, following informants over an extended period of time in order to trace the complex changes and processes happening in their lives between the ages 18 and 30, roughly between leaving upper secondary school and marriage. Due to time constraints, this was not possible within the context of this PhD project. Though the age range of my informants is between 18 and 30 years old, the majority of them are between the ages 18-25. The main limitation of this study is therefore that it does not provide a systematic analysis of the time and age dimensions involved in young men and women's 'transition to adulthood'. As young people grow older and more time has lapsed since they left school, they enter a different phase in their lives in which they might re-evaluate or shift their expectations and priorities about their personal lives, work, marriage and future family life. In this respect, focusing on only one time frame to explore how young people navigate the transition to adulthood can be deceptive.

Finally, this research is not a systematic, historical study which tracks who benefits from industrialisation in Cilegon and who not. For this part of the study I mostly relied on the work of other scholars who have done research on the impact of industrialisation in north Banten since the late 1960s. While I spoke with many adults and interviewed several parents and employers, this research is also not an intergenerational study which compares the education-to-work transitions of the current generation of youth with that of their parents during the 1980s. Instead, as already noted above, the research findings presented here mostly focus on the 'here and now' and are based on interviews with unmarried young men and women in their late teens and twenties.

### Structure of the remaining chapters

The structure of the remaining chapters of this study is as follows. Chapter 2 will outline the industrial transformation in Cilegon during the Suharto years and examine the dynamic 'post-reformas?' / 'post-decentralisation' world of Cilegon, in particular the upcoming privatisation of the state-owned Krakatau Steel factory and the new importance of local political and economic resources and patronage; as well as the general context of limited education and employment opportunities for Cilegon's growing population of urban youth. The chapter introduces Cilegon as a medium sized city which combines metropolitan elements with small town elements. Rapid economic development based around Cilegon's industrial estate has introduced new, urban lifestyles and mentalities to the town. At the same time, neoliberal globalisation includes young people in globalised youth cultures, but simultaneously excludes many of them from it because of their marginal economic position.

Chapter 3 will describe the meaning of education for young people and the education choices they make. School choices are usually shaped by school performance, the family's financial means and a combination of parents' wishes and young people's own choices. Many lower middle class families see investment in education as the main avenue of achieving upward social mobility, sharing the hope that higher education will translate into better jobs. The next part of the chapter will then address the question of what kind of jobs different groups of secondary school and university graduates aspire to and their views about the job market in Cilegon. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that at this stage in their lives (early twenties) not all young people are oriented towards a

job: they want to fill their days with having fun as well. They make a distinction between looking for a job and looking for money to support a lifestyle, which does not necessarily have to be in the form of a job.

Contrary to human capital policy literature which places a strong emphasis on education and qualifications, young people in Cilegon quickly discover that getting a job is not a simple function of education and social background. In a town where nepotism and other informal recruitment methods are common practice, accessing work is dependent on a mix of resources and social and cultural capital, including education, skills, having the right connections, money and a little luck. For many lower middle class youth in Cilegon, a period of un(der)employment is a normal condition during their education-to-work transitions. How do young people understand and respond to this reality? Chapter 4 describes how many young men, even if qualified with the right education, find themselves channelled into the informal economy, where they work in the transport, construction, trade, petty manufacture and repairs sector, which surrounds Cilegon's large formal industrial and port sector. Competition over jobs in the industries is intense, with different neighbourhoods setting up local youth organisations to lobby the industries for jobs and training opportunities. While such organisations offer local youth some level of support, at the same time these solidarities are undermined due to competition with similar youth groups from other neighbourhoods.

Young people enter a highly gendered labour market. As Cilegon's economy is diversifying from heavy and manufacturing industries towards trade and services, job opportunities for young men in the heavy industries seem to be stagnant. At the same time, chapter 5 describes how there is a growing presence of young women in Cilegon's labour force, for instance in administrative jobs, factory workers, or jobs as sales and promotion girls in the mall. Young women's involvement in tertiary education and work involves responsibilities and new levels of independence which they negotiate with their parents, who intend to guard their daughters' status as respectable Muslim girls. Yet their involvement in work continues to be bound to religious values and a gender ideology which sets age boundaries for marriage and emphasises girls' responsibilities as future wives and mothers, in ways that differ from their male peers. How do young women navigate Cilegon's changing economy? What are their aspirations and strategies in pursuing certain kinds of de-

sired employment? And are they better positioned than young men to adjust to Cilegon's changing economy?

The concluding chapter (chapter 6) will revisit the main objectives and study questions posed in chapter 1 and draw together conclusions from chapters 3-5 to see how far these questions can be answered. Next, the chapter reflects on the contribution of this study for an understanding of youth in Indonesia and its broader relevance for discussions about educated youth and their entry into the labour market in a context of neoliberal globalisation and economic insecurity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Of Indonesia's population of 243 million people, eighty-six percent identifies itself as Muslim (Weintraub 2011: 2-3).

<sup>2</sup> For example, one of the drawbacks of a generational approach in the Mannheimian sense is that it requires longitudinal research and a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to capture both large-scale patterns and young people's subjective views. This kind of research is relatively time-consuming and costly, and is therefore not widely available. A second challenge stemming from Mannheim's sociology of generations is the possibility that not all young people will 'fit' into a shared generational pattern, in the sense that many might be excluded from the generational patterns that are seen as representative of their generation (Furlong et al. 2011: 366-367).

<sup>3</sup> As the focus of my study is on youth and their education-to-work transitions, this research is not a study about class per se. In other words, the lower middle classes are not the main topic of inquiry, but they are part of the ethnographic setting in which I conducted my research.

<sup>4</sup> The 2001 definition as used by Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics in the annual labour force surveys (Sakernas), defines the unemployed as those 'who are not working, those who are currently looking for work, and those who are not working and currently not looking for work because they do not expect to find a job' (i.e. discouraged job seekers). Furthermore, the 2001 definition includes persons preparing a business activity and those who have a job but have not started it yet (Dhanani et al. 2009: 55).

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this study, I use pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my informants. In a few instances where I discuss well-known politicians and regional elites I have used people's real names, since these public figures are easily traceable, even if I did attempt to hide their identity.

<sup>6</sup> There are 59 per cent male users on Facebook in Indonesia and 41 per cent female. Statistics for January 2012 from <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/indonesia>, retrieved on 17 January 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Friendster started as a social networking site very similar to Facebook. Since 2002 Friendster has been reasonably popular in The Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, but eventually could not keep up with the competition from Facebook. In 2011 Friendster was re-launched as a social gaming site. 'Friendster Evolves to Escape Facebook's Shadow', *The Jakarta Post*, 28 April 2011. Accessed online on 17 January 2012. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/28/friendster-evolves-escape-facebooks-shadow.html-0>

## 2

## Industrial development and local politics in Cilegon

### Introduction

On any ordinary day Cilegon's main road, connecting it to the provincial capital Serang in the east and the coastal town of Anyer and Merak harbour to the west, is congested with a steady flow of traffic. Small mini buses, loudly honking in a continuous attempt to attract customers, cars and motorcycles all try to make their way from one end of the town to another. In the city centre this frantic traffic passes a colourful array of billboards and signs, advertising anything from political candidates rallying in the latest episodes of regional or national elections to consumer goods such as cigarettes, mobile phones, and branches of global fast food chains. Passing passengers might read one of the messages from the city council which are displayed on several banners throughout town, reminding its citizens to pay taxes or telling them to drive carefully. The four tall minarets of Mesjid Agung, a giant mosque in Middle Eastern style architecture that was recently completed in the city centre, can be seen long before the mosque itself comes into view.

Young men working as parking lot attendants squat on the sidewalk, trying to find a place in the shade. They spend their time chatting with mobile vendors selling food, snacks and newspapers, teasing teenage girls wearing headscarves on their way home from school. Between the store fronts, small passages lead away from the noise and bustle of the main road into the *kampung* (kampong), the neighbourhoods where many of Cilegon's citizens live. The houses are built closely together, connected by a dense maze of alleys too narrow for cars to enter. On the opposite side of the main road, a five minute drive behind one of the town's main shopping malls one will find an Islamic boarding school surrounded by rice fields, its financial livelihood supported by the breeding of

fish, ducks and other life stock which are sold to buyers in Cilegon and Jakarta. Such contrasts are telling of the drastic transformations Cilegon experienced in the second half of the twentieth century. The source which triggered much of these changes is to be found in another part of town. On the edges of the city centre, the visitor is greeted by a sign stating “Welcome to the area of the steel industry”.<sup>1</sup> It belongs to PT Krakatau Steel, Indonesia’s largest steel factory and hallmark of Cilegon.

Cilegon, a dynamic medium-sized city of about 343,000 inhabitants on the northwest coast of Banten (West Java), can be reached by car within two and a half hours from Indonesia’s sprawling capital Jakarta. Cilegon has a relatively young population, about half of its inhabitants are younger than 30 years old (BAPPEDA Kota Cilegon 2007: 48). The overwhelming majority of the people in Cilegon are Muslims: over 98 per cent of Cilegon’s inhabitants adhere to Islam (BPS Kota Cilegon 2006: 89). One example of the importance of Islam is that Banten has a more than average enrolment in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) compared to other parts of Indonesia (Azra et al. 2007: 179). Many Indonesians consider the Bantenese second only to the Acehnese in terms of their religious piety (Williams 1990).

Historically, Islam in Java is considered to be syncretic: a blend of normative Islam with local traditions, such as the belief in the nine saints (*walisongo*) and a number of ritual practices carried out in memory of deceased ancestors, family members, respected Islamic scholars and former rulers. The onset of the Islamic movement since the late 1970s, however, marks a growing influence of a more ‘purist’ and socially conservative Islam, both in politics and in the public sphere. Contrary to the idea that modernity and economic globalisation would somehow reduce the importance of religion, scholars have started to examine the ways in which religion and neoliberal development can be mutually conducive to each other. Religion is playing an increasingly important role in the public sphere in contemporary Indonesia, not in opposition to, but often in tandem with processes of democratisation, decentralisation and neoliberal development (Rudnyckyj 2010: 18-19; Van Wichelen 2010: 1). In Cilegon this is manifested in spiritual reform programmes conducted at the Krakatau Steel company (Rudnyckyj 2010), new forms of piety and Islamic lifestyles among the urban middle classes, and the introduction *shariyah*-inspired regulations by the local government.

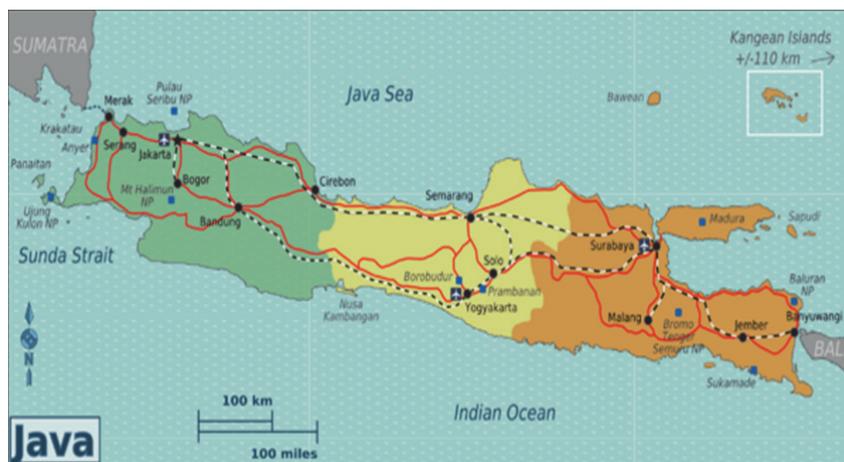
As mentioned earlier, Cilegon is best known as a location for the state-owned company Krakatau Steel. Consequently, many available studies focus on Cilegon as a key site for ambitious programmes of state-led development based around its deep sea port facilities and the construction of PT Krakatau Steel and other industries (Arndt 1975; Marzali 1976; Hikam 1996; Rudnyckij 2010). Originating as a project funded by Soviet development aid in the late 1950s, then abandoned following the 1965 military coup by which President Suharto came to power and reinvigorated during the 1970s (Arndt 1975), the steel factory became a key site for the Suharto government's industrial policies. Foreign and domestic investment in Cilegon's industrial estate transformed the town from a formerly rather unproductive agrarian region into one of Indonesia's biggest industrial areas, even though the benefits from industrial growth are distributed unevenly and social inequality has increased as well (Hikam 1996: 3-9). Until the mid-1990s Cilegon experienced rapid industrial development, yet unemployment rates among young people in Banten province are among the highest in Indonesia, roughly twenty-one per cent compared to a national average of fifteen per cent in 2007 (Ministry of Youth and Sports 2008: 36). Thus large-scale, corporate investment in Cilegon's heavy and chemical industries did not result in significant job creation for Cilegon's growing population of educated youth. To understand why this is the case requires analysing the processes of state-led industrialisation, neoliberal development and the dynamics of local politics which have shaped Cilegon's economy and labour market since the 1970s. The first part of this chapter illustrates how state-led investment in Cilegon's industries is almost disconnected from the local environment, whereby companies are located in town but are not really part of the wider society, nor committed to long-term interests in the welfare of the community. I argue that this situation of capital flight creates adverse long-term effects on the local society and contributes to a context of mutual alienation between the companies and local youth. The second part of the chapter then considers the economic shifts and political climate of the post-Suharto period (1998–present), and the attempts by Cilegon's local government to develop the region, gain more control over its wealthy industrial estate and improve the prospects for youth to obtain jobs in the industries. Finally, after having discussed the political and economic context of Cilegon, the chapter considers the social and cultural impact of industrial development by looking at the kinds of urban,

globalised (Muslim) lifestyles that are emerging for the town's rich and poor.

### Banten in late colonial times

Banten, since colonial times part of the province of West Java, became a province in its own right only in 2000. It is a region with a clear divide between the northern part of the province which is a trade and industrial zone, and the southern part which is a poorer agricultural region. The northern part, consisting of Cilegon city, Serang city and the northern part of Serang district, and Tangerang city and district, is considered to be the social, economic and political centre of Banten. This part of the province is mostly inhabited by ethnic Javanese. The southern part, comprising the southern part of Serang district, Lebak and Pandeglang, is considered to be ethnic Sundanese (Masaaki and Hamid 2008: 113). This section outlines some of the key geographical and historical characteristics of Banten, such as its strategic location at the Sunda Straits, its infertile soil and lack of productive agriculture, and its reputation as an area prone to political unrest, which ultimately influenced the decision of the Sukarno and Suharto governments to select Cilegon as a site for industrial development.

**Figure 2.1**  
Map of Java



**Figure 2.2**  
*Map of Banten province*



Banten's history makes it distinct from the rest of Java. For over two centuries Banten was an Islamic trading state and autonomous region under the Sultanate of Banten (1520-1808) (Kartodirdjo 1966: 29). Famous for its pepper trade and for centuries embedded in overseas trade networks with Southeast Asia and beyond, it was also the region where the Dutch first set foot in what was to become Indonesia, in 1596 (Williams 1990: xxvi-xxvii). However, Banten's role as a trading state began to diminish after the Dutch founded Batavia in 1619 (Kartodirdjo 1966: 30) and the region finally lost its autonomy when it was placed under direct colonial rule in 1832 (Williams 1990: xxvi).

After the dismantling of the Sultanate, Banten became increasingly viewed as an impoverished rural backwater of little economic importance to the Dutch (Multatuli 1860). Facing unfavourable geographical and ecological conditions, Banteneses peasants and smallholders made a precarious living at subsistence levels. Pressed with the need for additional sources of income, they engaged in seasonal migration by labouring as

coolies, dockworkers, construction- or plantation workers in Batavia or in the plantation economy of neighbouring Lampung (South Sumatra) (Williams 1990: 31-37). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the growing demands of the colonial state on the peasantry in the form of compulsory labour and taxation created social and political unrest. This culminated in a series of peasant revolts which, as Michael Williams points out, reflect “a history of opposition not between peasant and lord, but between peasants and agents of outside government” (1990: xxvii). The colonial administration, including its native Indonesian officials, was widely regarded as something imposed from the outside, especially since the Dutch had displaced many local ruling elites with *priyayi* from outside Banten who served in the local administration. As a reaction to this, Islam became a rallying point against the colonial state. The major 1888 peasant revolt in Cilegon was coordinated by a network of locally respected religious leaders (*kyai* or *ulama*), with prominent roles for *jawara* (rural strongmen) and members of the dispossessed nobility of the former Sultanate (Kartodirdjo 1966). The 1926 revolt against colonial rule in Banten was led by a coalition of local religious leaders and members of the Indonesian communist party (Williams 1990). However, since then the influence of religious elites in Banten steadily declined as both the colonial government as well as the national governments of Sukarno and Suharto were highly suspicious of the role of political Islam in this region. Consequently, local government officials in Banten were mostly recruited from the ranks of the Indonesian army’s Siliwangi division based in Bandung (Rudnyckyj 2010: 45).

### State-led industrial development

The project of industrial development in Cilegon was initiated by President Sukarno but really took a hold during the early years of the authoritarian and highly bureaucratic Suharto regime. Under the presidency of Sukarno (1945–1966), the government faced the difficult task of keeping the newly established Indonesian nation together. A series of regional rebellions inspired by communism and the Darul Islam movement challenged the government’s nationalist ideology. After achieving political independence, Sukarno inherited a country characterised by poverty, with a population that had received little education. In the 1950s and 1960s Indonesia’s population grew significantly and literacy levels improved, but the economy was in bad shape and relied mainly on agricul-

ture and the rural areas (Ricklefs 2008: 273-274). Sukarno's nationalism attempted to cultivate an Indonesian identity based on a national language while reducing economic dependency on Western capitalist institutions.

After the bloody military coup and mass killings of hundreds of thousands of real and imagined communists by which General Suharto took control in 1965, the New Order regime's first priority was to develop the nation-state and stabilise the economy (Friend 2003: 138-139). The five year development plans of the Suharto-cabinet were designed by experts of the IMF and World Bank and the so-called 'Berkeley Mafia', a group of Indonesian technocrats with doctorates from universities in the United States and Europe. These secular macro-economic policies presented a clear break with the previous government. Unlike Sukarno, Suharto's New Order regime (1966-1998) welcomed foreign investment and believed that state-led economic development, technological progress, industrial growth and productivity were essential to develop the country. From the mid-1970s onwards the state created a large research and technology sector as part of its plans to take shortcuts to import substitution industrialisation (Shiraishi 1996). Industrialisation took the form of many newly established state-owned enterprises, particularly in heavy industries such as petrochemicals, steel, cement and mining, that were heavily protected by tariffs and state subsidies (Ismalinda and Sitalaksmi 2005: 119). Using profits from the oil boom in the 1970s these new industries were funded both by foreign capital and by domestic investment by a tight network of family-run conglomerates. The New Order regime did not maintain a clear division between state and market. The state ideology of *dwifungsi*, dual military and civil function, provided legitimacy for the army to play a major role in business and politics, resulting in rampant corruption. The state used patrimonial networks to control and distribute access, protection, business licenses to well-connected business partners and cronies, resulting in the concentration of large amounts of wealth in the hands of a small group of powerful politicians and business elites based around the Suharto family (Robison and Hadiz 2004).

Rapid economic growth, improved infrastructure, and the increased prosperity of the emerging middle classes provided legitimacy for Suharto (who had himself labelled "The Father of Development" (*Bapak Pembangunan*) by the parliament) and served as a justification for the government's use of repression and violence against those who resisted the

regime. SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar Golongan*) doctrine was used to suppress all public manifestations of ethnicity, race, intergroup affiliations, and religion, which the New Order regime considered politically sensitive topics (Friend 2003: 153). The New Order government also curbed political Islam and prohibited many other forms of political activism, in favour of a narrow state ideology which promoted economic development and stability. Many Indonesians improved their standard of living, even though much of the economic development was based in Java, the island where 60 per cent of the country's population lives (Ricklefs 2008: 349).

During those years, the PT Krakatau Steel complex in Cilegon, "a rusting remnant of Soviet aid to Sukarno" (Friend 2003: 243), was rescued from bankruptcy and became a 'pet project' of Suharto's State Minister for Research and Technology Habibie (T. Shiraishi 1996: 175). The Suharto-government hoped that by investing heavily in the development of the northern part of Banten as an industrial site and by integrating it economically and politically into the state, the Banten region would stop being a source of political instability (Hikam 1996: 4). Foreign investment in Cilegon's industrial estate was backed up by the presence of the military, whose Special Forces (Kopassus) are based in the nearby city of Serang, nowadays the capital of Banten province.

By 1991 Cilegon had emerged as one of Indonesia's highest per capita income areas, earning it the nickname '*kota dolar*' (dollar town) (Hikam 1996: 4). Cilegon's industrial estate, shopping malls, international fast food restaurants, cinema and large number of banks serve as public symbols of successful economic development. Industrial expansion attracted considerable numbers of migrants from other parts of Indonesia, mostly from Sumatra and Java, who found salaried jobs in the factories or in the large informal economy of transport, construction, trade, petty manufacture and repairs and service activities linked to the industrial estate. Foreign and domestic migrants brought with them different cultures and more affluent lifestyles.<sup>2</sup>

But this rapid industrial transformation also produced new inequalities and reproduced on-going contradictions. From the perspective of the local society Krakatau Steel had been allowed to operate in Cilegon with the understanding that industrialisation was indispensable for national and regional growth, job creation and prosperity. As Daromir Rudnycky (2010: 68) aptly summarises: many of Cilegon's inhabitants

“tolerated environmental pollution, growing inequality and an influx of outsiders (many of whom were not Muslim) under the presumptions of faith in development”. Substantial amounts of agricultural land had been confiscated, either voluntary or by force, for the expansion of the industrial estate (Marzali 1976). Local peasants and fishermen were forced out of their jobs and controversy arose in the 1970s when the regionally influential Al-Khairiyah *madrasah* had to relocate to Cilegon’s Citangkil district to vacate land for the on-going expansion of Krakatau Steel (Rudnyckyj 2010: 52). Some of the more conservative Islamic religious leaders (*kyai* and *ulama*) continue to be hostile towards capitalist development and the growing influence of state and military in north Banten and feel that their social position is further being undermined. They are anxious that the advancement of secular education, the arrival of foreign and domestic newcomers in town and the emergence of urban consumer lifestyles will threaten local Islamic norms and beliefs (Marzali 1976; Hikam 1996). Their inflexibility towards religious diversity is also apparent in their resistance to the idea of establishing a church in Cilegon. As this opposition seems to be supported by the wider society, the city’s tiny minority of Christians has to travel to Serang to attend church.

### Investment patterns

Many of Cilegon’s inhabitants hoped to benefit from the arrival of Krakatau Steel and other companies through the new jobs and increased prosperity which they anticipated these industries would generate. But these local expectations did not always correspond with the national stakes invested in PT Krakatau Steel. From the beginning, the project of industrialisation in Cilegon was orchestrated by the central government in Jakarta, based around state-owned enterprises whose financial viability seemed to depend on protective measures and million dollar loans. These problems are not restricted to state-owned companies only. The active role of a small group of Suharto’s cronies and business partners in Cilegon’s industries and the general blurring of state and business interests is also apparent in Chandra Asri, another well-known enterprise located in Cilegon. Like Krakatau Steel, Chandra Asri is part of the government’s broader national industrialisation strategy, producing ethylene for Indonesia’s domestic petrochemical industries. Despite being a privately-owned company, one of Suharto’s sons is a major stakeholder in the US\$ 3.26 billion project, and the company has difficulties surviving

without protection and financial backup from Indonesia's state banks (Robison and Hadiz 2004: 92-94).

Industrial development was aimed at strengthening the national economy (as reflected in PT Krakatau Steel's motto 'We support steel as a national power'), rather than developing the Banten region per se. In a seminar about the future of PT Krakatau Steel (KS) which I attended in 2008, its CEO emphasised the value of KS as an "*aset bangsa Indonesia, bukan hanya untuk Cilegon*", "an asset for the Indonesian people, not just for Cilegon"<sup>3</sup>. Seen from this perspective Cilegon is merely a convenient location, strategically placed between Sumatra and Java, supported by deep sea ports and an infrastructure which connects it to the industrial area surrounding Tangerang and Jakarta. As most of the industries are owned by foreign and national business conglomerates, they are operated from Jakarta rather than Cilegon. Even in the current era of decentralisation, the economies of Jakarta and Cilegon remain closely intertwined, as each year large parts of Cilegon's revenues are transferred to the capital city and decisions about large-scale investments in Cilegon's industries require permission from Jakarta first. In sum, industrial development in Cilegon is the result of top down policies of the Sukarno and Suharto governments with a prominent role for national elites in Jakarta, who are being supported by the presence of the military in the region. As a result, investment in Cilegon's industrial estate is almost disconnected from the local society. This feature is at the heart of the problem of the difficulties that many of Cilegon's citizens report in accessing jobs in the industries and is something that local youth may not be able to overcome.

### Employment prospects

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, heavy and petrochemical industries continue to be the main source of economic activity in Cilegon, contributing about 59 per cent to the town's gross regional domestic product (BPS 2006: 233). But as these industries are capital rather than labour intensive, their capacity to create employment for the growing population of educated youth is fairly modest. Most of the industrial plants in Cilegon, such as the chemical industries, require large scale national and international investment, high technology and little manpower. "These factories are not like shoe or garment factories which hire a lot of people. Cilegon's regional income is already fine but there are still a lot of people who are unemployed. And when there is unemployment, there is pov-

erty”, was the explanation of a local parliament member (interview, Cilegon, 8 May 2008). Nevertheless, heavy and chemical industries are the engine behind Cilegon’s economy and, further reflecting the character of an industrial town, create employment for 27% of Cilegon’s population. In addition to employment in industries, Cilegon’s citizens find work in the trade, hotel and restaurant sector (28%) or the service sector (15%) (BAPPEDA, Cilegon dalam Angka 2006).

However, the scale of industrial expansion in Cilegon should not be exaggerated. A number of well-known international companies are based in Cilegon’s industrial estate, including the German company Siemens, the Japanese chemical company Asahimas and the Australian company Bluescope Steel. But “optimistic plans to make Krakatau Steel the centrepiece of an industrial development zone attractive to foreign investment” never materialised (Rudnycky 2010: 42). Driving through Cilegon’s industrial estate it is easy to see the plots of overgrown land in between the factories that were purchased but have not been used. Likewise, some of the older offices and production facilities belonging to Krakatau Steel are in dire need of paint and repairs (*ibid.*).

When it comes to creating employment, Indonesia’s capital-intensive manufacturing industries offered relatively high wages, but a modest amount of jobs (Manning 1998: 166). Furthermore, manufacturing industries are often highly selective in their recruitment of both skilled and unskilled workers. Repeating patterns of rural dispossession for export agriculture in colonial times, newly built factories in northern Banten rarely absorbed the people that they had displaced. Instead, these factories recruited large amounts of workers from distant places, who because of their outsider position and dependence on their employers are easier to control (Li 2009: 71). A case in point are the light manufacturing industries surrounding Tangerang which started to operate in the 1970s offering factory jobs to only certain categories of young people, often based on short-term, insecure contracts. Celia Mather (1985) has argued how local religious leaders (*tokoh*) acted as intermediaries between industrial capitalists and the local community by recruiting young girls with little education from nearby villages into factory work. In addition to this group of local workers, Tangerang’s manufacturing industries recruit large numbers of migrant workers. These young migrant women often have a higher education level than local girls and take up factory work

for several years before returning to their place of origin or moving on to other activities (Mather 1985; Elmhirst 2004).

Heavy and petrochemical industries in Cilegon provide very few jobs for young women and employ mostly male workers, but nevertheless similar recruitment patterns are observed as local or indigenous people (*pribumi*) compete for jobs with educated, skilled migrant workers. It was not possible to obtain statistics on the ethnic composition of Cilegon's workforce. Nonetheless, over the years a number of studies (Marzali 1976; Hikam 1996; Rudnyckj 2010) have documented how these companies, claiming that local people lack the education and skills to take up mid-level management positions, mostly hire local people to work at the lower levels as machine operators or outsourcing workers; jobs which nowadays require a completed upper secondary school education. During the 1970s and 1980s skilled and highly educated newcomers (*pendatang*) from Java and Sumatra came to occupy most of the middle and upper rank positions in Cilegon's heavy industries where they work in salaried jobs as supervisors and managers. During those years, "a small segment of the labour market, of both unskilled and skilled workers, benefitted from the protection afforded to foreign investors, state enterprises and government-backed companies in relatively capital-intensive and heavy industries" (Manning 1998: 166). As we will see in the next chapter, this comparative advantage enables these 'newcomer' families to use their well-paid salaries to provide their children with a good quality education at the best secondary schools in Banten, after which these children often continue to good universities in Java and Sumatra. Yet, while the main growth period for jobs in manufacturing industries occurred in the period between 1985 and the early 1990s (Manning 1998: 109), this changed after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Since then, there has been a decline in the availability of jobs in manufacturing industries: "fewer workers are now being drawn into the relatively better-paid jobs in the manufacturing sector" (Aswicahyono et al. 2011: 130). In the post-Suharto period, most of the newly created industrial jobs are in small firms, rather than large companies.

### **Spatial and social divisions**

These income and employment inequalities are further exemplified by some of the spatial divisions in town. During the 1970s Krakatau Steel built several housing complexes (consisting of about 1800 houses in to-

tal), a hospital, schools, golf course and several other recreational facilities for its employees (Yuarsa 2009: 90-94). While initially all permanent workers were offered such living arrangements, by the 1980s the number of employees at Krakatau Steel had outgrown the capacity of its housing facilities. Nowadays only employees with positions at supervisor level or above enjoy the benefits of company provided housing and foremen and operators are largely excluded from living in these communities (Rudnyckyj 2010: 38). Even though most of these buildings are rather derelict today, they signal some of the class inequalities and spatial divisions between Cilegon's wealthy industrial estate and the majority of local kampung inhabitants.

Another indication of the social divisions between Cilegon's local inhabitants and the immigrant community living in company-owned housing complexes is that their interactions are fairly limited. A manager at Krakatau Steel who had migrated to Cilegon eighteen years ago once told me that even after working at the steel factory for almost two decades, he had never visited one of the local urban neighbourhoods, nor did he speak the regional Javanese language. Similar spatial and social divisions between immigrant and local workers have been observed in the industrial area surrounding Lhokseumawe in Aceh, Sumatra (Effendi 1979) and the mining town of Soroako in Sulawesi (Robinson 1986).

However, while rather clear cut social divisions have been reported between first-generation immigrants and local communities in several industrial sites in Indonesia during the 1970s and 1980s, nowadays this matter is not as straightforward as it is sometimes made out to be. The categories of 'newcomers' (usually loosely defined as people from Sumatra and other parts of Java) and 'local people' (usually referring to people originating from Cilegon or Banten province) are becoming more ambiguous as they blend into the current generation of youth. Thus the notion of 'newcomers' becomes more complex as people from Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta or Sumatra who moved to Banten in the early 1980s to work for Krakatau Steel and other factories now have children who were born and raised in Cilegon. An example is Anis (23), a young woman whose parents moved from Jakarta to Cilegon in 1984 when her father got a job at PT Krakatau Steel. Anis grew up in a housing complex owned by Krakatau Steel where she lives with other immigrant families who had found jobs at the steel factory. But she considers herself a citizen of Cilegon: "My parents came to Cilegon as newcomers (*pendatang*),

but I am from Cilegon”, was her response when I asked her how she located herself within the newcomer – local people discourse. Nevertheless, during her childhood she experienced differences in language use that relate to her growing up in a community of Krakatau Steel employees. The families in this housing complex, originating from different parts of the archipelago, usually speak *bahasa Indonesia* among each other rather than the local variety of Javanese that is spoken in the Cilegon district. During childhood Anis enrolled in the elementary school that was situated within the housing complex. But when she became a teenager she moved to a public lower secondary school (SMP Negeri 3) outside of the complex, where she got new friends and had to adjust to a different language: “In elementary school the children mostly used *bahasa Indonesia*, but lower secondary school was different. My new friends communicated in the regional language”, she remembers.

Some of my informants suggest that the difference between migrant versus local people status is probably not that important anymore for the current generation of youth, rather it might be more of an issue for their parents’ generation. However, as one of my respondents mentioned, the issue could become more important in the context of the industries of Cilegon. “There are still some factory managers, though certainly not all of them, who think that local people represent the prototype with a bad work ethic”, he said. A young woman whom I interviewed anticipated that the local people versus newcomers issue in relation to employment opportunities will probably not disappear anytime soon and would become an issue again in the local elections in 2010 when Cilegon chooses a new mayor. As will be elaborated on in chapter 4, it is indeed in these two realms, when the newcomer–local people distinction becomes linked to the competition for jobs in the heavy industries or to a regional politics that endeavours for a fair distribution of the economic benefits of industrialisation, where it continues to be an important trope.

When people talk about the *pribumi–pendatang* distinction they do not so much seem to refer to any particular ethnic background of the newcomers in town or their privileged access to company-owned facilities. Even though locals and newcomers seldom mixed, most of the newcomers are Muslim and thus could easily adapt to Bantenese culture. What local people most of all seem to invoke when they talk about these social divisions is the notion that factory employment in Cilegon has never been available on the free market, but can only be accessed by cer-

tain groups of people, based on personal contacts and networks. A local activist friend with previous work experience in one of Cilegon's factories remarked cynically: "The numbers of upper secondary school graduates are steadily growing, and many of them experience difficulties in getting access [to job information]. A lot of companies in Cilegon use recruitment practices that are not transparent. For example, if the factory director is someone from Sumatra, then many people from Sumatra will work in the factory." As Muhammad Hikam (1996: 9) points out in his study about the political marginalisation of Cilegon's working class, inherent in such accounts is the idea that widespread nepotistic practices make it difficult for local people in Cilegon to compete with educated, skilled migrants in the job market. Most workers in Hikam's research do not agree with the official argument that local people do not find salaried jobs in the industries because of their lack in skills and education. "Rather, for them, the crux of the matter is the failure of the state to provide a clear policy related to lower skilled workforce which will help the Bantenese to participate in the industrial sectors" (1996: 9). As will be explained in the next sections, this has become one of the key issues which local politicians try to address during the post-Suharto period.

### **Economic restructuring and privatisation**

During the Suharto period, the state-owned company PT Krakatau Steel was expected to bring about economic growth and national development, and to elevate the living standards of relatively well-educated middle-class Indonesians (Rudnyckyj 2010: 150). Supported by government funding, Krakatau Steel could afford to hire more workers than necessary for its production and put profit in second place. This pattern has changed during the post-Suharto period (1998–present). While many young men continue to aspire to a stable job in Krakatau Steel, the steel factory no longer provides the same guarantees for a lifelong career as it once did for their parents' generation twenty years ago. The boom in export-oriented manufacturing industries which was so central to the New Order government's industrialisation policies has largely collapsed (Hill et al. 2008: 408). Cilegon's icon PT Krakatau Steel can no longer rely on the state subsidies and import monopolies which protected its ageing steel plant facilities during the Suharto years. From the mid-1980s onwards Indonesia selectively started to adjust its economic policies in response to neoliberal development agendas pushed by international donor

institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Following collapses in oil prices in 1981/1982 and again in 1985/1986, structural adjustment programs were put in place. These policies aimed to make Indonesia's economy more competitive globally by promoting free markets and free trade, deregulation and privatisation of state assets (Shari 2000: 970-971). But at the same time the Indonesian state actively resisted some attempts at introducing economic liberalisation. In 1988, when Suharto's close friend Liem Sioe Liong faced US\$610 million debts in his joint venture in PT Krakatau Steel after the removal of his monopoly on the import of cold-rolled steel products, the Indonesian government backed up Liem's 40 percent investment in the project (Robison and Hadiz 2004: 75). In 1989 Cilegon's steel factory was again protected, when Minister of Research and Technology Habibie excluded 10 strategic state-owned companies from the privatisation process (*ibid.* 89). In fact, neither Suharto nor his technocrats were strong supporters of the free market economy. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the state remained the key actor in the economy, especially through its state-owned enterprises.

This changed after the Asian financial crisis and subsequent toppling of the New Order regime in 1998. Following the implementation of neoliberal reform packages as part of the IMF's \$40 billion bailout during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the Indonesian government agreed to the privatisation of Krakatau Steel and a number of other state-owned enterprises. Career prospects at KS have become uncertain because of this upcoming privatisation. Perhaps more so than in the incomplete privatisation of KS, economic restructuring is materialised in on-going pressure on Cilegon to further integrate into the global economy. The steel company increasingly faces competition from other steel manufacturers on the global market and will continue to do so in the next decade(s). Cilegon's economy is increasingly defined in international rather than domestic terms. The future viability of its industrial estate depends on the town's ability to attract foreign investment. Furthermore, the opening up of trade barriers and the recent establishment of the China-ASEAN free trade area<sup>4</sup> have led to the removal of tariffs on imported steel, forcing Indonesia to open up its economy to cheap imported steel from China (Rudnyckij 2009: 106). This could have important consequences for KS and Cilegon's economy, but at the moment these effects are not yet clear.

As a result, young peoples' expectations of this once state-funded enterprise are slowly starting to change: they are beginning to anticipate that career opportunities will be reduced as privatisation will force the company to become more profit-oriented. They also expect that privatisation and foreign investment will result in the steel factory taking the profits out of town and out of Indonesia, so that the success of the company will not necessarily lead to the prosperity of the community. Roni and Wildan, two 23-year old BA graduates who are in their training period after passing the initial selection in Krakatau Steel's 2008 recruitment, expect job prospects at the steel company to change after privatisation:

State companies like KS aim to create jobs for Indonesian citizens so they hire three or four people for work that could be done by one person. State-owned enterprises are less money oriented because they know that if they collapse the government will help out. But private companies are more under pressure to make maximal profits. Privatisation will force Krakatau Steel to adjust to international standards. The company culture will be different.

### **Decentralisation and the emergence of regional elites**

Apart from more exposure to the global market economy and less financial support and protection from the central state on the one hand, Krakatau Steel and other industries in Cilegon are faced with a reorganisation of power relations at the local level, which has strengthened the political influence of old and new regional politicians and business elites. This combination of globalisation and the decentralisation of political power brought new opportunities, tensions and contradictions to the town. Andri (27), a young leader from a neighbourhood-based youth organisation in Cilegon's industrial area, who combines a part-time job teaching religion at a local secondary school with a job unloading goods at one of the harbours, expresses a commonly shared observation about recent developments in Cilegon: "Since regional autonomy became effective, Cilegon's industries, infrastructure and economy have quickly developed. The town has experienced a really dynamic expansion."

Indonesia's decentralisation laws that were adopted in 1999 and put in practice in 2001 have shifted political power from the central government in Jakarta to the newly established municipalities and local governments in Cilegon and Banten province. Decentralisation of state

power is a key feature of economic and political reform packages adopted in the post-Suharto period. The implementation of Law no. 22/1999 on Regional Governance and Law no. 25/1999 on the Financial Balance Between Central and Regional Governance radically turned Indonesia from one of the most centralised to one of the most decentralised countries in the world (Hadiz 2010: 22). Many provinces were divided into smaller regencies (*kabupaten*) and municipalities, often based on ethnic and religious identities, each with their own administration, budgets, local agendas and problems (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007: 17). The number of new local government districts soon reached 440 and is still growing. Governors, district heads ( *bupati* ) and mayors are appointed through direct local elections. Whereas political parties are organised nationally, their local party branches have to address local concerns and interests (Ricklefs 2008: 396). These new political realities create a much more complex business environment for Krakatau Steel and other companies to operate in. The first part of this section describes how decentralisation has facilitated the rise of influential entrepreneurs, politicians and local strongmen who have become key actors in the local economy and political arena, while also introducing new forms of corruption at the local level. Next, I illustrate how Cilegon's local government, business elites and politicians try to reverse the pattern of capital flight from Cilegon's industrial estate that had previously benefitted wealthy elites in Jakarta by using the new decentralisation laws to demand a share of taxes and profits from the industries.

Indonesia's decentralisation laws came into being due to a combination of international market-based reforms and domestic demands for a new political system. Decentralisation is promoted by large development agencies and financial institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, USAID, and Asia Development Bank, which deem it a necessary strategy to create transparent and efficient governments, strengthen democracy and civil society and support the market economy. As such, decentralisation has not only been implemented in Indonesia, but in many countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Although this international dimension contributed to the decision to adopt decentralisation, the government under Indonesia's third president Habibie (1998–1999), former vice-president under Suharto, had its own reasons for wanting to speed up the process of decentralisation. Following the downfall of the Suharto regime, the majority of Indonesians demanded a free press, free demo-

cratic elections, and a fair and just society. Furthermore, Habibie's government was confronted with anti-Jakarta sentiments in many regions outside Java and the still ruling Golkar party saw in decentralisation a means of accommodating the geographical, cultural and ethnic diversity of the archipelago, while maintaining its power bases in the outer islands (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007: 12). In the case of Banten, people's longstanding dissatisfaction about being governed by ethnic Sundanese district heads and mayors who originated from Bandung was one of the motivations for the campaign towards regional autonomy. Because these Sundanese officials were unfamiliar with the language and culture in the region and displayed an orientation more towards national political and military elites in Jakarta rather than an interest in representing Banten, the Bantenese experienced a gap between the political leadership and the aspirations of ordinary citizens (Rudnyckij 2010: 46). In Cilegon, this was coupled with frustration about the unequal distribution of the benefits of state-led industrial development. In short, many Bantenese hope that decentralisation will lead to 'a more prosperous, democratic and religious Banten' (Hidayat 2007: 209). The implementation of decentralisation resulted in Cilegon becoming an autonomous municipality (*kota madya*) in 1999 and Banten being recognised as a new province 2000.

Decentralisation and the localising of state power are intended to transform Indonesia's system of state-led capitalism and end the uncontrolled corruption enriching the presidential family and a small group of cronies (Robison et al. 2005: 172). Neoliberal policy makers assume that decentralisation and 'good governance' will result in the dismantling of what they regard as a large and inefficient central state apparatus and that it will create the institutions necessary to attract foreign investment and facilitate further integration into the global economy. At the same time, they assume a link between decentralisation and democracy. They expect that direct local elections will bring local governments closer to the ordinary people and that democracy empowers these local communities to hold their local officials accountable for their governance (Hadiz 2010: 121-122). However, the effects of decentralisation are different from these expectations. In post-Suharto Indonesia the old system of centralised, authoritarian state rule is no longer in place, but democracy and decentralisation have not been able to replace the system of predatory power relations that characterised the New Order regime. The continu-

ing legacy of the New Order makes that in many regions of Indonesia decentralisation has resulted in a reorganisation of old and new business alliances and the rise of local elites (Hadiz 2010: 42-43; Robison and Hadiz 2004).

Some of these emerging elites were new, but most were cultivated during the New Order period, where they held positions as career bureaucrats, state-connected entrepreneurs or gangsters, which made them well positioned to take advantage of the opening up of Indonesian politics after 1998 (Hadiz 2010: 46). In addition to appointing military officials as political leaders in Banten, Suharto's regime strengthened its relations with a group of local strongmen: the *jawara* (also known as *pendekar*). Masaaki and Hamid (2008: 113-114) define *jawara* as

Rural strongmen or semi-socially embedded men of prowess who are skilful in *pencak silat* (Indonesian traditional martial arts) and some are believed to have magical power, called *ilmu*. *Jawara* partly live in the underground world and are often involved in criminal activities.

While *pendekar* exist in other regions of Indonesia as well, *jawara* are considered to be typical of Bantenese culture. Historically, the male *jawara* have occupied an ambiguous position in society, being part heroes and part criminals. In colonial times *jawara* were both feared for their involvement in robbery and extortion and tolerated for the protection they could offer villages and neighbourhoods from intrusions by other groups of criminals (Wilson 2011: 304). In the nineteenth century, *ulama* and *jawara* played important roles in a number of revolts against the colonial authorities (Rudnycky 2010: 47; Kartodirdjo 1966). During the New Order period the role of *jawara* changed as they became important power brokers between the Suharto regime, the ruling Golkar party and Banten society. Both religious authorities (*ulama* and *kyai*) and *jawara* were co-opted into the Golkar party and the Suharto government partly relied on *jawara* to maintain security in the region and consolidate regional loyalties in support of the national government. Whereas the political influence of the *ulama* continued to decline, in the post-Suharto period *jawara*, often operating as contractors and entrepreneurs in infrastructure, industries and real estate, quickly became powerful figures in the region (Armujj 2004; Hidayat 2007).<sup>5</sup> Backed by a system of patronage and their control of the major business associations and political institutions in Banten, these *jawara* entrepreneurs became successful actors in the competition

for decentralised resources. At the same time, the *jawara* need to secure the support of national elites to maintain their influential position in the regions and they cannot act entirely independently from the central government (Masaaki and Hamid 2008: 111). Critics, including local *ulama* and intellectuals, as well as descendents of Banten's last sultan, accuse *jawara* of using their martial arts skills, coercion and intimidation to solve political problems, relying on excessive force (*main kasar*) to get things done. According to these opponents, the negative reputation of *jawara* not only results in an undesirable stigma for Banten, but is also stifling people's creativity and hampering the socio-economic and cultural climate in the newly established province. Some *ulama* have proposed the implementation of Islamic law (*syariah*) to counter the influence of *jawara* but without much success. Banten's small and loosely organised intellectual community, including a network of university teachers, journalists and a literary community called Rumah Dunia based in Serang, tries to provide an alternative space to the masculine and authoritarian culture of *jawara*. Rumah Dunia (meaning "Home of the World") offers small-scale grassroots programmes to encourage young people to develop their capacities as educated persons and engaged citizens by teaching them about writing, journalism and literature.

Throughout the 2000s, the richest and most powerful *jawara* in Banten was Pak H.Tb. Chasan Sochib and his Rau business group. Chasan Sochib passed away in June 2011, but was often informally referred to as the "governor general of Banten", a nickname which denotes his reputation as the region's most influential informal leader. Part of Chason Sochib's standing in society was based on his skills in martial arts and his knowledge about magic and invulnerability. Sochib was the leader of the largest *pencak silat* organisation and *jawara* network in Banten, the Union of Martial Arts and Bantenese Arts and Culture Guardians (*Persatuan Persilatan Pendekar dan Seni Budaya Banten*). During the New Order years Chasan Sochib became rich by brokering land deals for the development of Krakatau Steel in the 1970s and later by being a successful entrepreneur in the competition for lucrative government contracts for construction and infrastructure projects, while also venturing into tourism and real estate. Sochib also controlled the Chamber of Commerce and other major business organisations in the province. He was one of the founders of a university in Serang and of the Banten Museum (Rudnyckyj 2010: 47-49; Masaaki and Hamid 2008: 117-118). His formal and informal in-

fluence over provincial business and politics was further strengthened by a deliberate strategy to encourage family members to run for positions as top officials in Banten. Chasan's daughter Atut Chosiyah (Golkar) became vice governor in 2001. Atut is a business woman who maintains good relations with national elite politicians such as Jusuf Kalla, a prominent Golkar politician and Indonesia's vice president between 2004 and 2009 (Masaaki and Hamid 2008: 125). She was appointed as Indonesia's first female district head in 2007, after she succeeded Banten's governor Djoko Munandar who had to resign due to a corruption scandal.<sup>6</sup> Since then, relatives of Chasan Sochib and Atut Chosiyah have obtained key positions as (deputy) mayors and regency heads in Serang, Tangerang and Pandeglang, as well as seats in the House of Representatives and the Regional Representative Council. By early 2011 Atut Chosiyah formally installed a ninth close relative in a high ranked political position in Banten, prompting political analysts and ordinary people alike to comment that within the first decade of regional autonomy this elite family had managed to build a political dynasty (*Tempo Interaktif*, 10 March 2011; *The Jakarta Post*, 31 January 2011, 21 April 2011).<sup>7</sup> Atut and those supporting her family have always denied such allegations, claiming it is the combination of her family's efforts to develop Banten and the public's trust in them, which leads them to occupy these political positions. They also maintain that everyone has the same rights to run for political office in the region.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in the 2011 elections for governor in Banten, Atut started with a head start by being the richest candidate in the campaign with her wealth reported to be Rp 37.7 billion (US\$4.1 million) (*The Jakarta Post*, 10 July 2011).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, her election campaign was backed up by national parties such as the Golkar Party and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). In late October 2011, following a successful campaign with her running mate Rano Karno, a former film star, Atut was re-elected as governor of Banten. This means she is expected to remain in office until 2017, which could make her one of the longest running governors in post-Suharto Indonesia.

While Banten has attracted some national attention due to the dominant role of *jawara* and the particularly sobering conclusion that ten years of Reformasi have resulted in a monopoly of Chasan Sochib and his cronies over regional business and politics, this phenomenon is far from unique to the region. In fact, the emergence of local strongmen and regional elites has been observed throughout the archipelago and has been

a prominent feature of studies documenting the political changes in post-Suharto Indonesia (see for example Robison and Hadiz 2004; Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007). Whereas Chasan Sochib and his extended family emerged as important elites at the provincial level, in Cilegon the most influential and wealthy Golkar politician and entrepreneur was Pak H. Tb. Aat Syafa'at, who served as the city's mayor during two periods from 2000–2010. Besides being rumoured to be connected to the world of *javara*, Aat Syafa'at was furthermore supported by the national Golkar party and his governance of Cilegon's state-sponsored youth organisations such as the National Youth Council (KNPI) and Karang Taruna. Aat Syafa'at regularly mobilised members of these youth organisations to demonstrate against opponents or to publicly support his agenda to develop Cilegon. Aat's son Iman Ariyadi used to be the leader (*ketua*) of the local KNPI branch.

But while Aat managed to be elected as mayor for two subsequent periods, Cilegon's political landscape contains other influential politicians and business leaders who are contending for political power by contesting Aat's position. One of the mayor's main opponents is Sam Rachmat, a Golkar politician who acted as the head of Atut Chosiyah's election campaign in 2006 and is the owner of a business group with strong ties to Cilegon's industries, chamber of commerce and the local business community. During the campaign for the 2010 mayoral elections in Cilegon another influential opponent emerged: Ali Mujahidin ("Mumu"), a local entrepreneur, former head of Cilegon's Chamber of Commerce and candidate for the Democratic Party, who could furthermore claim to be related to the locally well respected Syam'un family, one of Cilegon's 'influential families' (*keluarga besar*). Members of this family had played a historical role in the 1945-1949 struggle for national independence and founded the locally well-known network of Al-Khairiyah *madrasah* (Rudnyckyj 2010: 52). Ali Mujahidin did well in the mayoral elections, obtaining 36 per cent of the votes, but did not manage to defeat the incumbent candidate who won 45 per cent of the votes. Thus in July 2010 Pak H. Tb. Iman Ariyadi, a Golkar politician and member of the national parliament, succeeded his father as the new mayor of Cilegon (*Tempo Interaktif*, 20 July 2010).<sup>10</sup>

Among the young people I knew, these election results were met with mixed feelings and opinions. Many older and younger people alike consider Pak Iman to be a hardworking, religiously educated and bright poli-

tician and entrepreneur, but are quick to point out that he owns much of his wealth and career to the support of his father and his privileged family background. This family lineage (*faktor keturunan*) is a key element in explanations which suggest that Iman was groomed by his father to succeed him in business and politics. The following comment by Reza, a 22 year old male student from Cilegon, captures this sentiment well:

Of course, personally I would be happier if someone else had won the elections. Pak Iman is a protégé of his father<sup>11</sup> and is being supported by his family. From the beginning [i.e. since decentralisation became effective] power in Cilegon has been captured by Pak Aat, even though Cilegon is for everyone and not just for one family. That's not very democratic. So it would be better if someone new had won (interview 17.07.2010).

The rise of wealthy local elites like Chasan Sochib and Aat Syafa'at who have benefitted from economic restructuring and political decentralisation in the post-Suharto period, suggest growing socio-economic inequalities based around class and ethnic identities. As Reza's statement above shows, the fact that local elite families further cement their power base by providing their children with privileged access to top political positions and business contracts reinforces young people's perceptions about the importance of nepotism and political clientelism in obtaining access to jobs and funding in the post-Suharto period. This is despite the discourses around decentralisation, democracy and 'good governance' that have become more prominent. Similar to Reza's comments, other young people see in Pak Iman's succession an indication that the status quo in Cilegon will be maintained and do not think it will actually make much of a difference to have Pak Aat or his son Iman as a mayor. "Even though we have a new mayor, everything will stay the same. For real change we need political reform" was another typical remark. Yet others are hopeful that Pak Iman will continue the agenda for local development that his father initiated, by focusing on efforts to expand Cilegon's income and infrastructure and by improving health care, education and employment opportunities. As will be elaborated in chapters 3 and 4, young people express different views and positions towards Cilegon's government policies and elite politicians, depending on how they are situated in relation to networks of political patronage and the extent to which they manage to use the in- and exclusions in the labour market for their own benefit.

### Realignment: corruption and nepotism

As part of the neoliberal agenda towards decentralisation and ‘good governance’, a number of institutional and legal reforms have been established which aim to eradicate corruption and change the institutional framework in which rent-seeking takes place. This includes new banking regulations, intensive auditing of government departments and state-owned enterprises, and stricter rules concerning procurement and tender (Robison and Hadiz 2004: 189-191). The Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK) has successfully handled a number of high profile corruption cases. There is also a relative flourishing of civil society and a slow strengthening of the rule of law although it is implemented weakly and unevenly, with student activists, NGOs and journalists exposing cases of corruption. A number of local bureaucrats, politicians and governors have been prosecuted with corruption charges (Ricklefs 2008: 397). Soon after retiring as Cilegon’s mayor, Aat Syafa’at was charged with a big corruption case involving the alleged fraud of Rp. 6,5 billion (US\$721,500) in funds for a fictitious land purchase for Cilegon’s new Kubang Sari harbour (*The Jakarta Post*, 12 January 2011).

But one of the paradoxes of the post-Suharto period is that despite these legal and institutional reforms, there has been a realignment of patterns of corruption and illegality that prevailed in the Suharto period. Decentralisation has thus not only transferred administrative and political power from Jakarta to the regions, but has also facilitated new patterns of corruption. Corruption, collusion and nepotism, in Indonesia commonly referred to as “KKN”, were entrenched during the New Order regime, but the patterns were more or less predictable and organised according to the patronage system surrounding the Suharto-family, military and Golkar party (Ricklefs 2008: 396). In the post-Suharto period market-based reforms have generated patterns of corruption that are more fragmented and less predictable: regional and local elites are competing to establish new business coalitions and local networks of patronage, while multiparty politics and direct local elections have greatly increased the costs of funding political campaigns (Johnston 2005: 180). The pervasiveness of these trends leads Vedi Hadiz to observe that: “In post-authoritarian Indonesia, money politics – taking on a variety of forms – has become the main political game in town and village” (2010: 120). For example, many of Indonesia’s politicians are active in the con-

struction business where they can make illegal profits from adding up the value of infrastructure projects and other public works (see Hidayat 2007; Hamid and Masaaki 2008 for Banten). Because such government contracts are a lucrative business, there is a fierce competition over the implementation of these projects.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, a number of recent public opinion polls suggest that many citizens are distrustful of public institutions and believe that corruption continues to be pervasive, and might even have worsened in the post-Suharto period (Aspinall and Van Klinken 2011: 5).

Of course the resilience of corruption in the post-Suharto period contradicts the expectations of international donor organisations that decentralisation would accomplish policy goals of transparency, efficiency and good governance. It also raises questions about the extent to which Indonesia's reputation for corruption will get into the way of its efforts to attract foreign investment.<sup>13</sup> It is tempting to view such problems as irregularities or "growing pains" in Indonesia's transition from an authoritarian government to a more democratic society (Hadiz 2010: 42-43). But recent research suggests that patterns of elite competition for political power and access to local resources and money politics have proven to be so entrenched that it would be unrealistic to expect that they will disappear anytime soon (Aspinall and Van Klinken 2011: 23; Robison and Hadiz 2004).

### Contesting Jakarta, developing Cilegon

Earlier I mentioned that decentralisation has replaced the centralised, top down policies of the New Order government with a more local and regional focus on social and economic development. To Cilegon then, decentralisation holds the promise of being able to manage and control its local resources with the aim of increasing the prosperity of the region. This means that the local government is trying to address some of the long term adverse effects of state-led industrial capitalism, including problems of capital flight and unequal distribution of taxes and profits between the centre and region, as well as the difficult job prospects for local people and disconnection between the industries and the local environment. As one local politician commented:

The centre (*pusat*) is mostly oriented towards profit, while the region (Cilegon) is aiming to improve the well-being of its citizens. The industries

should not only think about profits but should also be concerned with raising the prosperity of the society around them.

For the period of 2006-2010 Cilegon's administration identified five priority areas for regional development, many of which are directly or indirectly intended to develop the city's income and economy. These priorities are about improving: 1) infrastructure (fixing roads, building a new terminal and reallocating the main open air market to another part of town, and improving the supply of water and electricity), 2) economic productivity (promoting small and medium business, attracting investors, increasing people's labour market participation, improving industrial relations); 3) human resource development (education, healthcare); 4) capacity building of the city administration; and 5) management of natural resources (Work Plan Regional Government of Cilegon for the year 2008, chapter 3, pp. 23-29). The document does not explicitly mention youth as the beneficiaries of these policies, but aims 2 and 3 cover issues pertaining to young people's prospects for schooling and work. In the next part of the chapter I examine what this local development agenda entails for educated un(der)employed youth. I suggest that the more regional focus on development plays out in two different ways. One is that the efforts towards increasing prosperity in the region often involve power struggles between various actors at the local and national level. The other is that these power struggles also shape the interests of local politicians towards youth: through their governance of youth organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna they try to mobilise young people behind the agenda for local development.

As noted above, the more local focus on social and economic development often includes a re-evaluation of the relations between Cilegon and Jakarta, especially the redistribution of resource revenues and power. Citing past injustices stemming from state-led industrial expansion in Banten which granted the central government in Jakarta privileged access to profits and taxes from Cilegon's industries at the expense of the town's local population, local political and business elites are involved in negotiations with Jakarta for the control of the city's ports and wealthy industrial estate (Maasaki and Hamid 2008: 136). Cilegon's government used the legal framework of decentralisation to introduce a regional regulation which enables it to collect a bigger share of taxes and retributions from the town's 22 harbours, many of which would previously flow to Jakarta.<sup>14</sup> Efforts like these helped to increase the city administration's

income. But even though the city administration's own revenues more than doubled since decentralisation, an achievement which makes it exemplary for other municipalities (*kota madya*), Cilegon's government still depends for a large part on grants and money flows from Jakarta. Local politicians and bureaucrats complained about the "half-hearted implementation" of regional autonomy, the power that the central government in Jakarta still has over issuing grants and permission for big investments in Cilegon, the limited amount of subsidies received from the centre (*pusat*), and the general lack of funding coming from the national level in support of big infrastructure projects like the new ring road and Kubang Sari port. In order to address these problems, they try to get local politicians elected in important posts in the provincial and national parliaments, so that they can represent local interests and lobby for funding. Before he became mayor, Pak Iman spent several years of his career moving back and forth between the regional and national level, as he held various key posts in both provincial and national parliaments and also pursued a degree on the topic of regional development at the prestigious Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta. Local elites also try to gain more influence over profits and business contracts. This is not surprising, as most local politicians and bureaucrats simultaneously operate as entrepreneurs and earn a significant part of their income as contractors for construction and government infrastructure projects and as suppliers to other companies and industries. In the post-Suharto period the heads of the local Chamber of Commerce attempt to negotiate business contracts as suppliers to Krakatau Steel and other industries (Rudnyckyj 2010: 49). Demands from Cilegon's local administration towards the industries also include occasional proposals to set quota for the recruitment of a specified number of 'local' workers in outsourcing contracts in the industries (see chapter 4).

### **Krakatau Steel's partial privatisation**

In addition to the above-mentioned efforts, one of the most important issues under debate in decentralised Cilegon concerns Krakatau Steel's impending privatisation and joint venture with the South Korean steel company Posco (Pohang Iron and Steel Corporation). Cilegon's local government and many of its' citizens are challenging the upcoming privatisation of Krakatau Steel. Seen from their perspective, it is questionable whether the IMF-imposed privatisation of the steel factory

would be considered a successful neoliberal project. Even though the national government has agreed to it, Cilegon's administration and many of its citizens are not keen on it. There are several reasons why the local government resists the plans for privatisation. First of all, KS has a symbolic value as its presence made Cilegon known as a 'steel city' (*kota baja*): the company and the town grew together. Krakatau Steel is considered to be an asset for the town and since many years has been the engine behind its economy. More importantly, there are concerns that the sale of KS to foreign investors would have a negative effect on employment prospects for local people. For example, many people anticipate that the joint venture with Posco means that South Korean employees will be transferred to Cilegon, thereby reducing the number of jobs available for Indonesian workers. Several informants shared the idea that privatisation and foreign investment in the industries will result in the local population becoming marginalised for the second time, following the social and economic inequalities brought on by the first round of state-led industrialisation under the New Order regime. All in all then, there are concerns that economic liberalisation and privatisation will make the nature of these corporations far more exploitative of the local population.

During the period of my fieldwork there were various meetings, banners and small-scale demonstrations (for instance at KS's head office or the neighbouring ministry of state-owned enterprises in Jakarta) protesting the privatisation of Krakatau Steel. After 13 years, actual privatisation has still not taken place: after being postponed several times, an initial public offering of 20 per cent of KS's shares took place in November 2010.<sup>15</sup> Daromir Rudnyckij suggests that besides concerns over local unrest there are also some vested interests within the steel company to oppose privatisation. While some employees and managers consider privatisation necessary to modernise the company, update its production facilities and guarantee its international competitiveness, other powerful figures are reluctant to give up on the enterprise which for years has been a lucrative source of money and status to them (2010: 67). The uncertainty over privatisation of Krakatau Steel and the power contests between the national government and local interests related to it are not unique to Cilegon. Similar dynamics have been observed in attempts to privatise state-owned enterprises in other parts of the country, for example PT Semen Padang in West Sumatra (Prasetyawan 2006). The repeated postponement of actual privatisation of these state companies sug-

gests that wider support for privatisation policies is actually far more limited than policy makers might have anticipated and calls into question the extent to which neoliberal practice is really embedded or supported in Indonesian society.<sup>16</sup>

Even with the initial sales of 20 per cent of Krakatau Steel's shares and the joint venture with Posco happening in 2010, a new dispute emerged which delayed Krakatau Steel and Posco's intention to invest US\$6 billion in a new steel project in Cilegon. The plans by KS and Posco to build a new steel plant in the industrial area conflicted with a project of the local government to construct a new port in Kubang Sari. The disagreement is over the location of these projects, as both parties have set their eyes on the same construction site and also claim to be the legal owners of the land. Eventually, the dispute over the clearing of land was settled in late 2011 in favour of the steel company which is being backed up by the national parliament and ministry of state-owned enterprises in Jakarta and facilitated by a tax break. The solution is that Krakatau Steel reimburses Cilegon's administration for some of the investments made in the Kubang Sari project, both financially and through the exchange of land. Preparations for the construction of the new Posco–Krakatau Steel factory started immediately with President Yudhoyono and his wife already visiting the construction site in late February 2012 (*Jakarta Post*, 29 February 2012).

Again, the dynamics surrounding this dispute illustrate the power struggles between Cilegon and Jakarta and the continued importance of national and foreign interests in the industrial area. But this example is also relevant for understanding youth employment and local politics. If Krakatau Steel and Posco asserted that the new steel plant would create jobs and economic productivity, the local government equally promoted the Kubang Sari port as a project that would reduce unemployment and bring about growth and social mobility. Local bureaucrats and politicians spoke glowingly of the “multiplier effect” that the Kubang Sari port and other big infrastructure projects would generate. They imagined not only that the new port would contribute significantly to the city's income and attract investors, but also anticipated that the economic productivity generated by the project would create jobs in the port and its surrounding area. These claims seem difficult to substantiate and I wondered how young people would interpret the relevance of these projects for addressing issues of youth underemployment in the region. Furthermore, the

unfolding dispute provided a lens into the ways in which local politicians tried to ‘capture’ young people as active supporters of their agenda for regional development. The next section explores how young people understand and respond to these dynamics.

### Youth politics and local development

Not surprisingly, in the political turmoil surrounding the dispute both Krakatau Steel and the city administration actively tried to mobilise support for their initiatives. For example, the steel factory tried to create goodwill by directing more of its corporate social responsibility initiatives towards the city districts close to the location where it planned to build new production facilities. The local government actively campaigned in regional media and organised meetings throughout the city to mobilise support for the Kubang Sari port. Young people were certainly not the only citizens targeted in this campaign. For instance, in November 2010, when over seven hundreds of Cilegon’s citizens were about to depart for the pilgrimage to Mecca, Mayor Iman Ariyadi asked them to send their prayers from Mecca in support of the Kubang Sari harbour project (*Radar Banten*, 4 November 2010). Nevertheless, my impression was that Cilegon’s administration expects young people, particularly those active in government-sponsored youth networks such as KNPI (Indonesian National Youth Council) and Karang Taruna, to support and not question its agenda for local development. Members of KNPI had worked together with the local government to lobby at the national level for the continuation of the Kubang Sari project. They helped explain the expected multiplier effect, the jobs that would be created and the relevance of the new port for the industries in its surroundings. While organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna are open to both male and female youth, the majority of active members are young men, reflecting the fact that politics is considered a predominantly male preserve in Indonesia. In a keynote speech on National Youth Pledge day on 28 October 2010 at a seminar organised by the local branch of KNPI, Mayor Pak Iman expressed his views on young people’s role in supporting projects like Kubang Sari and other local government policies. In this talk he called on Cilegon’s youth to change their “pragmatic”, “hedonistic” and “individualistic mentality” into a “collective spirit” and participate in regional development. He was quoted as saying: “It is not surprising if many of today’s youth are happy to play their mobile phones and Facebook. But

this is an era of globalisation and at this moment young people need to be an influence in order to scale up development” (*Radar Banten*, 28 October 2010). Some politicians expressed the idea of young people as “agents of change” (*agen perubahan*) or “change makers” who, governed and contained through their participation in youth organisations, had an active role to play in the local government’s programmes for regional development. Two years earlier when I interviewed him, Pak Iman expressed somewhat similar views on the role young people should play in promoting social and economic development.

The extent to which ordinary people allow themselves to be mobilised by either the KS business elites or Cilegon’s new mayor through the KNPI or Karang Taruna networks remains to be seen. Certainly, the mayor and others were aware of the difficulties of getting young people – the majority of whom are not active in state-sponsored organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna – involved and interested in the political project of regional development. As a politician, Pak Iman knew very well that the supposedly mutual reinforcing links between decentralisation, democracy and efforts to increase prosperity in the region are far from straightforward and not easily achieved. He commented that since the downfall of the Suharto regime Indonesia now holds regular democratic elections at the national, regional and local levels, but that this procedural aspect of democracy has not yet been paralleled with an increase in prosperity and social-economic well-being for many people. This, according to him, is one of the key dilemmas that he and other politicians have to address in the post-Suharto period. He said:

Elections are taking place every five years, national elections or provincial elections, but there is no economic improvement to show for. But democracy should strengthen both the state and bring prosperity. So in Indonesia I observe a kind of hesitation about democracy. Because democracy has not resulted in any kind of economic prosperity. This needs to be developed. Even though it has only been a short time, I believe we should be seeing results. I worry when I see that people (*masyarakat*) are indifferent about politics. When they become indifferent (*apatis*) about politics, they will no longer care if the political system is democratic or authoritarian. So in my view, the idealism of the younger generation of politicians should be to improve the population’s welfare as fast as possible (interview 26.09.2008).

In certain respects, his analysis was to the point. In a climate of foreign investment, competition with skilled migrant workers, economic liberalisation and the uncertainty surrounding the future of Krakatau Steel and other industries, many lower middle class youth thought that the local government should intervene in order to reduce the mutual alienation between the companies and local youth and negotiate a fairer deal for them. They wanted the local government to create jobs, address youth un(der)employment, reduce economic inequality and increase the welfare of the population. But contrary to Pak Iman's hopes, they considered waiting for the mayor to improve employment prospects not really an option and criticised the local government for not doing enough. Their lack of trust in the local political leadership was further enhanced by their perception of widespread corruption and personal enrichment among wealthy local elites and government officials. Typically, they thought that Pak Iman's father, Pak Aat Syafa'at, who is considered the richest and most powerful politician in Cilegon, only creates jobs for his own circle of cronies and relatives, "people with a higher class and education background than me" as one informant explained. Many lower middle class youth also questioned the neutrality of organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna from local politics and considered these organisations to be part of the wider patronage network surrounding the mayor.

Rizal (23), an upper secondary school graduate who is an active member of the local youth organisation in the kampong where I lived in 2008 and who also occasionally participates in Karang Taruna meetings and activities, gave a fairly representative picture of how many of the young people I knew engaged with local politics. Rizal explained that most of his friends are more concerned with their daily needs, such as the rising prices of everyday commodities rather than following the latest developments in youth organisations (OKP). "Young people in this neighbourhood are indifferent (*apatis*) because they view government-sponsored youth organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna as already contaminated with politics. KNPI and Karang Taruna are one package in the hands of the mayor", he remarked.

During the New Order-years, government sponsored youth organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna were viewed as appendages of the state and especially membership of KNPI is considered as a stepping stone for a career in business and politics. In the post-Suharto period,

these youth organisations have become assets for new political parties and seem to serve local elite politicians who try to consolidate local networks of patronage and business contacts. Their access to these organisations enables them to mobilise local bases of voters and masses for rallies during election campaign (Diatyka 2010: 21). The ways in which mayor Pak Aat interacted with government-sponsored youth organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna only seemed to confirm this picture. In 2009 (the year before the mayoral elections in 2010) he had personally intervened in the election process of new leaders of KNPI and Karang Taruna, overruling the outcome of the internal selection process and replacing their leaders with two persons of his choice. His intervention was contested and discussed in local media and even required interference from provincial and national KNPI ranks to be settled. Pak Aat also regularly used his position and governance of KNPI and Karang Taruna to mobilise young people to protest against or occasionally intimidate his opponents. These events, together with Pak Aat's rather authoritarian political style, contributed to an overall atmosphere in which youth organisations are not encouraged to be critical of the local government. They have little space to offer alternative views about employment and regional development.

Moving our conversation beyond the scope of youth organisations like KNPI and Karang Taruna, Rizal explained that it is not necessarily the case that young people in his neighbourhood are not interested in politics, but they do not feel included in the political process:

Whenever there are elections [for example the presidential elections in 2009 or the mayoral elections in 2010] young people become objects to politicians who are trying to woo their voters: "this is my base, this is my mass". Young people become political commodities to politicians who are trying to secure a constituency. (...) Young people in this neighbourhood join the *pesta demokrasi* and political campaigning, but these are spontaneous and instant activities in which we take advantage of the moment. The people here are very pragmatic and their political behaviour is difficult to predict, because they perceive campaigning as only a *pesta demokrasi*; who they will vote for is a private matter. (interview, 15.06.2009).

Rizal's comments point to a widely shared perception that elections are mostly a matter of elites trying to obtain wealth and power. During personal interviews, even local politicians and entrepreneurs were upfront about the fact that business and politics in Cilegon evolve around a

few groups of powerful businessmen (both local and national elites), *ulama* and locally influential families (*keluarga besar*). Furthermore, these class-based inequalities are coupled with a generational conflict in formal party politics. A small clique of elderly, male and super rich politicians and entrepreneurs tries to maintain its grip on the economy and politics and refuses to make place for the younger generation. This crisis of reproduction in Indonesia's political system transcends class-boundaries and has become especially acute in light of the upcoming 2014 presidential elections. Nevertheless, already during Indonesia's 2009 presidential elections many of my informants voiced their disillusionment about this situation: "Look at the candidates, at SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono), Megawati Sukarnoputri and others. They are all above sixty years old!" said an informant.<sup>17</sup> The combined effects of these widening age- and class-based disparities makes that many lower middle class youth feel not included in the policies of the local government, which in their view mainly help to enrich local elites and a small group of cronies, rather than opening up any real employment possibilities to young people. "The government does a lot of planning, but its plans are not always realistic. So I don't have much hope for a solution brought on by local politicians. The costs of daily life are increasing, and the government says it wants to raise the standard of human resources in Cilegon, but so far I have not seen any initiative of this in my neighbourhood", said an unemployed twenty year old male living in the same kampong as Rizal.

As Rizal's remarks also indicate, lower middle class youth's involvement with local politics often takes an instant nature. A small group of young people, usually students and those with good contacts with local NGOs and independent research organisations, were able to access a new type of work that emerged in the wake of decentralisation as direct local elections created a very modest, but vibrant industry of survey, polling and quick count jobs throughout Banten. Such jobs typically last only one to three days, but offer a reasonable income. Depending on the timing of local and regional elections such 'instant' jobs could become available several times a year.

Furthermore, in April 2009 Rizal and several other members of the local youth organisation in his kampong had joined the Karang Taruna section in their subdistrict three times to demonstrate against critics of Mayor Pak Aat. When I discussed these events with him two months later, Rizal had already forgotten what these demonstrations were about.

One demonstration was in front of the office of a regional newspaper in Serang, after a journalist had published a piece in which he criticised Cilegon's government policies, the other two demonstrations were in front of the mayor's office in Cilegon. Rizal had hoped that each individual would get some money or that the youth organisation in his kampong would be rewarded with a financial contribution (*dana stimulan*) to fund its activities, but that did not happen. To his disappointment, he was only paid rp.15,000 per demonstration. This is only a small amount which he characterises as "instant" money, merely covering "operational costs" for transportation to and from Serang.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from his personal disappointment, Rizal was also dismayed about the lack of recognition for the contributions that the youth organisation in his kampong had made to the local Karang Taruna section, as well as the goodwill they had shown towards the mayor by demonstrating for him. According to Rizal and others, most of the mass of people in these demonstrations came from the Karang Taruna section which he was part of, which in turn was largely made up of members of the youth organisation in his kampong. "The name of this Karang Taruna section has become quite popular and is already known at city level. The youth here are compact, so there's a perception that the young people from this Karang Taruna division can be used to get votes. But we don't want to be exploited", says Rizal.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Rizal's story suggests that, perhaps because of their general low trust in the local political leadership and the 'instant' opportunities open to them, young people often engage very pragmatically, if not opportunistically with local politics. Rizal's concern was not so much with any political cause since he has quickly forgotten the issues he was supposed to be demonstrating for or against. Instead, he readily admits that he was mainly oriented towards a profit and had hoped to make some money from his participation in these demonstrations.

Finally, young people's opinions about the local government's big infrastructure projects were mixed at best. While some informants from the Kubang Sari area supported the plans for the new harbour, youth in other parts of town expected little in terms of employment opportunities. Many people were disappointed with the quality of the newly finished ring road outside of Cilegon, another of the city's big infrastructure projects. The top layer of asphalt was rapidly deteriorating and potholes already emerged within the first year after completion, even though the

road itself seemed to be little used. Whenever I passed this road it always seemed somewhat deserted, many of the trucks and other heavy traffic taking their usual route between the industrial zone and the toll road to Jakarta. Many people attributed the bad state of the new ring road to corruption and suspected that the road had been constructed with inferior building materials. All in all then, this gives young people the sense that there is a lot happening around them, but in general they feel they have little to gain from these developments.

### Cultural consumption and globalised (Muslim) lifestyles

Meanwhile, industrial development and economic growth have introduced new consumer cultures and leisure spaces to Cilegon's citizens. Straddling the geographical space between metropolitan areas like Jakarta on the one hand and Banten's rural hinterland on the other, Cilegon combines small town with metropolitan elements. Indonesia's medium-sized cities and provincial towns are not typically imagined as sites of global consumer cultures, but they are included in processes of cultural globalisation. The Suharto government's aggressive pursuit of economic development and accompanying industrial change in Cilegon coincided with a global religious revival in large parts of the Muslim world since the 1970s, which is manifested in a more prominent place of Islam in politics and public life (Esposito 1987). The social-economic and political factors behind this revival are complex and varied, but nevertheless seem to share in disillusionment with secular political systems, feelings of anxiety about the paradoxes of globalisation, and criticism of perceived Western economic and political hegemony (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004). The growing visibility of religion in everyday life is seen in an expansion of mosques and Islamic schools, religious activism on university campuses, young women's practices of veiling and the booming market for Muslim fashion, music and *halal* products (Brenner 1996; Jones 2010; Weintraub 2011). These developments have opened up opportunities for young men and women to actively engage with both 'westernised' youth cultures and parallel lifestyles based on more socially and religiously conservative Islamic values (Smith-Hefner 2007: 189). Rather than juxtaposing these different types of youth cultures as mutually exclusive to each other, scholars emphasise how Islam and capitalism are intertwined in the lives of moderate Muslims in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia (Weintraub 2011: 1). The last part of this chapter traces the kinds of

globalised Muslim lifestyles that are emerging for the city's rich and poor, and how they are intersected by different class and gender experiences.

New, urban lifestyles became available to Cilegon's youth when in the mid-1990s the first shopping malls were established. The town has had a Matahari department store since 1994 and a Hypermart supermarket since late 2007.<sup>20</sup> The number of supermarkets is expanding every year, signalling a slow replacement of traditional markets and itinerant vendors for daily and monthly consumption needs. Cilegon currently has two air-conditioned shopping malls, although smaller in size and less elaborate and lavish as compared to those in metropolitan cities like Tangerang, Jakarta, and Bandung, department stores, a trading house and four open air markets. Young people are much more at home in these modern shopping malls compared to their parents, some of whom have never visited such places and may never do so. The Indonesian literature has noted how young people from both genders and across different social backgrounds have created distinctive kinds of 'shopping mall culture' (Setiawan 2006). Shopping malls provide new kinds of meeting points for teenagers and youth which were not yet available to previous generations. In particular for young women, who do not have the same opportunities as their male peers to go out at night and meet with friends at coffee shops (*warung*) or street corners, shopping malls are attractive and safe places to spend time in during the evening. Dressed up in their finest jeans, sandals and a colourful headscarf, they wander around the mall to meet with friends, date, and enjoy recreational facilities, without attracting negative comments. In the food court young men and women are chatting with their dates or sharing soft drinks with a group of friends. Groups of young men hang out in front of the entertainment area on the upper floor, attracted by the pool hall and games parlour. The cinema located at the top floor of Ramayana mall, draws not only teenagers and youth from Cilegon but also from Serang. This place shows a selection of Indonesian horror, comedy and popular drama movies as well as the occasional Western film. Many of my informants were eager to go there on a date or to see particular popular films, but since tickets were not cheap, none were regular visitors other than a few times a year. For the most part they watched films at home in front of the TV.

Although upper middle class families could be seen frequenting Pizza Hut and other westernised restaurants and fast food chains in the mall,

most of the lower middle class youth I knew did not regularly visit these places as costumers. A number of young men and women had found jobs preparing and serving food in these air conditioned restaurants, but considering the relatively expensive menu and the in their opinion “just average” taste of the food, they declared the cheaper and more spicy Indonesian food much better value for money. Their food of preference included rice with a variety of meat and vegetable dishes. On ordinary days young people would buy a bowl of meatball soup (*bakso*) from a peddler or spend 5000 rupiah (50 cents) on fried snacks (*gorengan*). They considered more expensive snacks such as *martabak* (20.000 rupiah, \$2) or drinks such as *es campur* or fruit shakes to be a treat. Similarly, while my informants liked to shop for certain items at the mall, such as a pair of glasses, a secondhand mobile phone, or discounts at the supermarket, they usually made careful calculations about their budget and preferred to buy other items on the market or in smaller shops outside of the mall where they knew they would be cheaper.

These examples show that young people’s consumption of fashion, food, and recreational activities reflects class and gender differences. A good deal of urban youth studies in the 1990s and 2000s has tended to focus on the lifestyles of young, ‘hedonistic’ Indonesians from elite and middle class backgrounds who participate in Western and East Asian consumer lifestyles. These studies paint a picture of Westernised, cosmopolitan youth flipping glossy magazines, visiting music concerts and dance parties, doing drugs, having sex, and building their identities around the consumption of the latest trends and fashions (Baulch 2007: 5; Sastramidjaja 2000). But it is important to note that these studies represent the lifestyles and consumption habits of a relatively small segment of the nation’s urban youth. Most young men and women in my sample could not afford to buy glossy magazines like *Hai* (young men), the Indonesian version of *Rolling Stone*, or *Aneka Yess*, *Muslima* and other teenage girls’ magazines which have been described for relatively affluent youth (Nilan 2006: 104-107). In general, very few of them owned novels or magazines. While they read local newspapers to catch up on sports or regional news, very few of them claimed to have a hobby of reading. Insofar as such experiences are part of the everyday lives of my sample of lower middle class youth in a provincial town, it is mostly through watching soaps, films and reality shows on TV. In both families that I stayed with, the daughters would typically start their day by putting on

the TV as loud as parents would permit and eat their breakfast watching hugely popular music chart shows like RCTI's *Dahsyat* and SCTV's *Inbox*. These interactive shows, presented by stylish and humorous VJs, are typically recorded in front of trendy locations in urban Java and Bali and provide a daily update on the music charts. In addition to broadcasting videos and live performances by *pop Indonesia* artists, these programmes are a reference point for the latest developments in youth language, fashion and media use. Many of the young people I knew would download popular songs from these music charts onto their mobile phones and use them as ringtones or entertainment for their friends.

Being up to date with current pop and rock music, popular TV shows, and media technologies is an important marker of youth identity. Both young men and women enjoyed listening to a variety of music, ranging from Western bands such as Linkin Park and Nirvana to Islamic pop (*nasyid* bands). Occasionally, young men participated in *dangdut* performances at wedding parties, where a few of them would publicly display their male bravado by climbing on stage to dance and throw small amounts of money at the sexy female singers. *Dangdut* music is very popular in Indonesia, but carries with it connotations of being a kind of vulgar music which is mainly popular in rural areas and among the unruly, urban, lower class masses (the *rakyat*). This stereotype is widely used to index social distance from the urban middle classes and elites (Baulch 2010: 107). Hence, few young people I knew would openly profess their taste for *dangdut* music.

Just as musical taste could give away rural and class origins, so could language. Throughout the day, the young people I knew switched between various types of speech. Daily communication with peers and adults alike took mostly place in the regional language, the kind of 'coarse' Javanese spoken in Cilegon and other coastal parts of northern Java (*bahasa Jawa kasar*), which they distinguished from the more refined variety of Javanese that is characteristic of the central region of the island. To a lesser extent, people who had origins in other parts of Banten or West Java spoke the Sundanese language with each other. The national language *bahasa Indonesia* is used in schools, media announcements, government bureaucracy, and on formal occasions. To a certain degree, the ability to speak proper *bahasa Indonesia* is associated with being smart and educated, implying that in some settings it can become a form of cultural capital. Since I do not speak the regional language, I spoke in

*babasa Indonesia* with my informants, but most young people found this national language too formal and rigid for hanging out and preferred to use more the informal Indonesian that is learned outside of school. Finally, in conversations with their friends, young men and women infused their regional language or informal Indonesian with elements of *babasa gaul*, Indonesia's youth language. Informal, flexible and witty, this ever changing youth lexicon combines Indonesian slang words with occasional English, lending much of the humour and playfulness that characterises young people's conversations and hanging out. *Babasa gaul* not only indexes knowledge of the latests trends, in contrast to the regional language, it also provides an air of casualness and cosmopolitanism (Smith-Hefner 2007: 186; Sastramidjaja 2000: 64). Yet, while soaps and popular TV programmes as the ones described above provide a setting to learn *babasa gaul*, I found that in everyday conversation this youth language is not as pervasive as might be expected. Writing about students in Yogyakarta, Smith-Hefner notes the appeal of *babasa gaul* among students from rural backgrounds, who try to mask feelings of 'provincial insecurity' or 'lack of experience' by engaging in *gaul* sociability (2007: 187). But in the provincial setting of Cilegon the reverse is also true: young people who incorporated too much *babasa gaul* into their speech or used heavy Jakartan slang, risked being seen as trying too hard, to be overdoing it, or reflecting a type of arrogance associated with wealthy youth in the nation's capital. It is also possible that as somewhat older youth, my informants associated *gaul* language with teenage lifestyles and were therefore careful not to overuse this youth language, but I have not researched this. The majority of my informants only selectively used *gaul* expressions and English words in their conversations and hardly anyone I knew had fully adopted *babasa gaul*. The regional language remained their language of choice.

The emergence of an Indonesian youth culture influenced by western and East Asian music, fashion and consumption patterns, has been coupled with a simultaneous trend towards more conservative, Islamic lifestyles (Smith-Hefner 2007: 189). Since the late Suharto period, Islam has become more prominent in Indonesia. During the 1980s, the initial appeal of the Islamic movement was in its moral stance against the political oppression, materialism and corruption associated with the New Order government. Initially the movement was rooted in Islamic study groups and student organisations at university campuses, but its influence even-

tually spread to the urban poor and middle classes (Brenner 1996: 677-678; Hefner 1993: 13). Islam enabled urban, middle class youth to critique their parents' generation, by calling for political democratisation and more ethical lifestyles. Based on their study and practice of a more purified and orthodox Islam, children began to question their parents' religious conduct and understandings of the quran. At the same time, the global Islamic movement provided opportunities for young men and women to position themselves as modern Muslims, without adopting western style modernity or returning to older Javanese lifestyles and traditions, including localised practices of Islam (Brenner 1996: 678, 683).

One of the most visible manifestations of the influence of new forms of piety and Islamic lifestyles in Indonesia is the growing popularity of veiling among young, educated women of the middle classes. This practice forms a significant departure from the recent past when few Indonesian women covered their head or wore Islamic style clothing. Whereas one or two generations ago mostly older men and women who had completed the pilgrimage to Mecca marked their piety through Islamic dress, nowadays the headscarf has become fashionable (Jones 2010: 617-618). During the 1980s, wearing the veil was still a marginal practice in Java and young women who did so risked becoming the object of gossip among neighbours, relatives and friends. Parents worried that their daughter's decision to veil would negatively impact on her employment prospects (Brenner 1996: 675). By the 1990s, the Suharto-government started to loosen some of its restrictions on Islam, by lifting the ban on veiling in public schools and by creating the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI, *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia*), an organisation which openly promoted a deepening Islamisation of Indonesia (Hefner 1993: 2). From the 1990s onwards, Suharto himself, who was widely known as a nominal Muslim with a strong adherence to Javanese mysticism, turned to Islam not only politically but also personally, seeking media coverage of trips to the mosque, his fluency in Arabic and his pilgrimage to Mecca (Van Wichelen 2010: 9).

Although the influence of global Islam is seen in many aspects of social and political life in Indonesia, it is especially in the realms of popular culture, arts, and middle class lifestyles that Muslim piety has become mainstream (Jones 2010: 617). More and more young women have started to wear the veil, ranging from colourful *jilbab*, to shoulderlength veils, with a minority of women even wearing the full chador (Brenner 1996).

Islamist groups encourage young men and women to emulate religious models of modesty and piety, and to discard the corrupting influence of Western morality and consumer lifestyles. This includes more conservative styles of dating and courtship among devout youth which reject dating as sinful. Instead, these pious youths believe in gender segregation and pre-marital chastity, and usually avoid premarital courtship altogether (Smith-Hefner 2005). While such styles of courtship are still relatively limited, they were being practised by some of my informants who had a strong adherence to Islam.

The proliferation of consumer lifestyles, fashion and new ways of socialising for youth has been received with mixed feelings by the older generation and conservative groups. Young people's mobility and enthusiasm for information and communication technologies makes that their behaviour is more difficult to monitor. New styles of dating and romance have further spurred moral panics about young people's unsupervised interactions (*pergaulan bebas*), pre-marital sex and youth morality (Smith-Hefner 2005, 2007). Each year before fasting month, Cilegon's nightclubs and entertainment places are targeted by demonstrations organised by local Islamic student organisations who oppose these places as alleged hotbeds of prostitution, drugs and alcohol consumption. Most of the time, however, capitalism and religion mix: during fasting month McDonalds and other fast food restaurants offer special Ramadan meals to their clientele of middle class families, while a lively evening market next to the Mesjid Agung mosque offers a range of street foods and refreshing drinks to break the fasting. At the same time, even the new conservative Muslim youth cultures are not free from ambiguity, as their claims towards virtue and piety seem difficult to reconcile with the simultaneous mass-production of Islamic fashion industry (Jones 2010: 618).

As the examples above show, young people in Cilegon actively combine globalised western, Asian and Islamic youth cultures. This can be seen, for instance, in young women wearing *jilbab* (headscarf) and tight jeans, then putting on a helm over their headscarf as they leave home on their scooter. In a similar way, young men would attend Friday prayer at the mosque, and then later in the evening would go out to chase girls or gather with their friends to drink alcohol and play guitar. Cilegon's mainstream Muslim youth culture combines faith with fun: young people pray and participate in fasting month, but are also interested in romance and dating, listening to rock music and playing soccer. Some young men and

women had steady boy- or girl friends; others did not want to be committed: they were looking for fun or experimented with dating several people at the same time.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the broader political-economic context of the New Order government policies for state-led capitalism and industrial development which have shaped Cilegon's economy and labour market since the 1970s. This forms a background for understanding the general context of limited employment opportunities in heavy industries for Cilegon's growing population of urban youth. The first part of the chapter has focused on the history of industrial development in Cilegon. It has highlighted the top-down, military-backed process of national and foreign investment which characterised industrial development in north Banten. Throughout the chapter, I have emphasised the highly contradictory effects of this process. Industrialisation turned Cilegon into a vibrant city, generated economic growth, and a modest amount of desirable manufacturing jobs to young men with university degrees and technical training certificates. Yet, the chapter has also pointed out the negative effects of industrial transformation. Many of the global and national companies in Cilegon are disconnected from the wider society and often not committed to long-term interests in the welfare of the community. I have argued that this situation of capital flight creates adverse long-term effects on the local society, ranging from environmental pollution to unequal access to jobs and economic benefits, thereby contributing to a context of mutual alienation between the industries and local youth.

In the post-Suharto period a stronger influence of a neoliberal agenda can be seen in the upcoming privatisation of PT Krakatau Steel, the growing competition with China and ongoing pressure to further integrate into the global market, bringing into focus issues of economic insecurity and changing job prospects at the steel factory. At the same time, decentralisation has fragmented central state power, resulting in power struggles between political and economic actors at the national and regional level. While pressures to adopt neoliberal policies are partly incorporated by the central government, at the provincial and local level they are much more contested. Often lacking the superior education background and technology to compete in the global economy, Cilegon's

lower middle classes typically feel uneasy about market-based reform, anticipating this would only lead to further marginalisation, deteriorating job prospects and economic uncertainty. Hence, they hope that the local government will protect their interests.

The second part of the chapter has illustrated how Cilegon's local government tries to gain control over decentralised resources by resisting privatisation and reversing the pattern of capital flight from its industries and harbours. While these attempts have been successful in some areas, until now the results have been diverse and messy. Furthermore, I have tried to show how the rise of local and business elites and their collusion with government projects for regional development has undermined a more equal distribution of job and income opportunities. Notably, local politicians and business elites aim to increase the prosperity of the new province through lucrative infrastructure projects which they claim will generate employment opportunities for local youth. But in practice, the agenda for local development is often put in second place compared to these elites' personal interests in getting access to state budgets. These state funds are then distributed to clientelist networks, or used to fund election campaigns and obtain or buy political stability (Van Klinken and Aspinal 2011: 161). I have suggested that this is one of the reasons why many lower middle class youth feel not included in these policies, which in their view mainly benefit local elites and a small group of cronies, rather than improving the livelihood prospects of young people.

The last part of the chapter has considered the social and cultural dimension of contemporary globalisation and industrial development by describing young men and women's participation in Islamic lifestyles and urban consumer cultures. Economic growth during the Suharto-period combined with a simultaneous influence of the Islamic movement, have spurred the development of both 'westernised' and more socially conservative Muslim youth cultures (Smith-Hefner 2007: 189). The chapter has described how young men and women's ability to participate in these youth cultures is fragmented along religious, age, class, and gender divisions. These new youth cultures are not uncontested and older generations and conservative groups worry about the influence of music, dating and consumption practices on youth morality. Yet, young men and women in Cilegon are adept at combining and integrating different aspects of globalised youth cultures into their lives, thereby creating hybrid youth cultures of their own (cf. Nilan 2006).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “*Selamat datang di kawasan industri baja*”. In the same area there is a similar sign stating “Welcome in the area of the heavy industries” (*Selamat datang di kawasan industri berat*).

<sup>2</sup> Apart from people who came to Cilegon as migrants, Cilegon’s industrial estate also employs personnel who live in other parts of Banten and the wider Jakarta area and commute daily between home and work.

<sup>3</sup> Studium Generale ‘Profil PT KS Rencana dan Prospek Industri Baja Indonesia di Masa Depan’, Cilegon, 14 May 2008.

<sup>4</sup> The China – ASEAN free trade area came into effect on January 1, 2010. Some critics warn that it is likely that this arrangement will benefit China, rather than the ASEAN countries. See ‘The China-ASEAN Free Trade Area: Propaganda and Reality’, Walden Bello, January 18, 2010. <http://www.tni.org/article/china-asean-free-trade-area-propaganda-and-reality>, accessed online February 26, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> A few *kyai* and *ulama* have managed to maintain influential political positions and they are visited by local politicians and captains of industry alike, in particular during election times. More importantly, even though their political role might be declining, many *kyai* and *ulama* continue to be held in high esteem for their role as religious and cultural authorities in the region.

<sup>6</sup> At first, Atut Chosiyah’s nomination for the governorship in 2006 was resisted by conservative religious groups which deemed it unsuitable for a woman to become a political leader. However, her nomination was supported by an extensive campaign, the patronage networks of her family, and the political backing provided by the Golkar and PDI-P parties. In this respect, Atut’s victory most of all illustrates the efforts by her family to maintain and strengthen its political and economic influence in the region, rather than being a successful example of a female politician overcoming gender-based discrimination (Satriyo 2010: 255).

<sup>7</sup> Several newspapers have reported on these issues. See ‘Kerabat Gubernur Atut "Kuasai" Banten’, *Tempo Interaktif*, 10 March 2011; ‘Banten Govt Installs Ninth Relative in Office’, *The Jakarta Post*, 21 April 2011; and ‘Political Corruption Reaches Alarming Level: Watchdogs’, *The Jakarta Post*, 31 January 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Atut was quoted in a national newspaper commenting: “It’s God’s grace that my family members hold top political posts [in Banten]. (...) I think everyone has the same right to run for regent or mayor in the elections.” *The Jakarta Post*, 31 January 2011.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Ratu Atut Richest Banten Hopeful with Rp38b’, *The Jakarta Post*, 10 July 2011.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Anak Gantikan Bapak Jadi Wali Kota Cilegon’, *Tempo Interaktif*, 20 July 2010.

<sup>11</sup> The exact phrase Reza used was “*Pak Iman dibawa sama Pak Aat*”, literally meaning “Pak Iman was carried along by Pak Aat”, indicating he is his father’s protégé.

<sup>12</sup> The construction business occupies the nexus between business and politics. Contractors are often part of the campaign teams in local elections and occupy seats in provincial and municipal governments making money on infrastructure projects that they themselves decide on. While the presence of the Corruption Eradication Commission and other anti-corruption agencies has made contractors and politicians more cautious about being accused of KKN, the construction business continues to earn a reputation for being implicated in a corrupt and collusive provincial politics (Van Klinken and Aspinall 2011: 140-142).

<sup>13</sup> In August 2011 the national government introduced a 5-10 year tax break for foreign companies if they invest a minimum of 1 trillion rp (approximately \$117 million) into Indonesia’s industries. The tax incentive is targeted at five capital-intensive industrial sectors consisting of base metals; oil refining; petrochemicals; machinery; and telecommunications equipment. Among these investors is the Korean steel company Posco, which intends to build a new steel plant in Cilegon (Manning and Purnagunawan 2011: 319-320).

<sup>14</sup> Taxation is one of the most important areas of struggle between Cilegon and Jakarta, as for the local government port taxes are an important source of income. One of the first policy measures taken by mayor Aat Syafa’at in 2001 was to issue a regional regulation about the management of the city’s harbours. Cilegon has 22 harbours, many of which are company-owned: Krakatau Steel for example, operates its own harbour. During the Suharto years, most of the taxes and retributions from Cilegon’s harbours were transferred to Jakarta via PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Pelindo), a state-owned company that had a monopoly position in regulating the harbours in Cilegon and other ports in Indonesia. Jakarta, not willing to give up the revenues that were flowing in from Cilegon initially refused. Only when the case was brought before court did Cilegon win and the regional regulation became effective in 2004.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Krakatau’s IPO set for second half of 2010: Executive’, *The Jakarta Post*, 28 October 2009.

<sup>16</sup> While the word ‘neoliberalism’ is used in some activist circles, actually few people have adopted the term. During the 2009 presidential elections, the term became used more widely. In the election campaign incumbent president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his running-mate Boediono, then central bank governor of Bank Indonesia, were accused of being neoliberals. By using this term derogatively, opponents tried to discredit Yudhoyono’s cabinet which they accused of being too market-friendly and supportive of the interests of national and foreign business conglomerates. By criticising Indonesia’s increasing integration into

the global economy, the other candidates (Yusuf Kalla and Megawati Sukarnoputri) invoked nationalist and populist discourses promoting a 'people's economy' characterised by self-sufficiency and a balance between market and state.

<sup>17</sup> While this informant talks about the national elections, the same applies to Banten and Cilegon, although recently Chasan Sohib and Aat Syafa'at have been followed up by their children.

<sup>18</sup> Travelling back and forth between Cilegon and Serang using public minibus costs 10,000 rp., but if one has to change transportation in Serang (e.g. another minibus or *ojek*) to reach the final destination, the 15,000 rp would have been spent completely. However, it is more likely that Rizal and his friends rode to Serang on their motorbikes (two persons per motor), spending no more than 5000 or 10,000 rp on gasoline per motorcycle. This leaves then 5000 or 10.000 rp per person to spend on cigarettes, cell phone credit (5000 rp) or a cheap meal (e.g. *bakso*, *nasi uduk*, instant mie) at the warung. Furthermore, by sharing and pooling the remaining money with two friends, Rizal might have been able to cover several of these items: for example, by buying food for two persons while sharing it with three, enabling the third person to buy two glasses of coffee or a few cigarettes to hand out after the meal.

<sup>19</sup> On a few occasions the youth organisation in Rizal's kampong invited local politicians to attend their activities. For example, they once organised a question and answer session with a local parliament member to discuss issues pertaining to local politics and regional development. On another occasion, the youth organisation had obtained funding from the local government to organise a mass circumcision event, where families from disadvantaged backgrounds could have their sons circumcised. Future mayor Pak Iman gave a speech as part of the festivities surrounding this event. These examples show that young people like Rizal were not completely cut off from politics, but rather sought to interact with local politicians on their own terms.

<sup>20</sup> See Radar Banten, 21 July 2007; 17 November 2007.

## 3

## Education, employment and urban lifestyles

### Introduction: education and regional development

In the post-Suharto period, discussions about regional development not only focus on economic growth, distribution of employment opportunities and control over local resources, but also on education. In the early years following decentralisation, experts and policy makers told Banten's provincial government that if it wanted to achieve its ambitions for regional development and prosperity, it would urgently need to improve its poor education and training facilities and lack of human resources. The message to the newly established province was loud and clear, as can be read from the following headings of articles that appeared in the national daily *The Jakarta Post* around this time: 'Better Education Urgent for Banten, Experts Say' (16 October 2000), 'Progress of Banten Depends on the People' (4 January 2001), 'Banten Needs to Educate Itself' (5 January 2001), and finally, 'Banten to Improve Human Resources Quality' (28 April 2008). The quantity and quality of Indonesian secondary and tertiary education is uneven, with great variation across and within different regions, and between individual schools and colleges. Despite industrial expansion and economic growth in the northern part of the province, Banten still had West Java's lowest levels of education and public welfare at the end of the Suharto period, especially the southern part of the province (Hidayat 2007: 206). This applies especially to the Pandeglang and Lebak regencies in the southern part of the province. An exception is the city of Tangerang in the northern part of Banten, a satellite city of Jakarta, which has a good education record and pupils from its schools do well in national competitions. Nevertheless, Banten's human development index ranks 20 out of 33 provinces in Indonesia (*Radar Banten*, 25 April 2008). Following research which concluded that Banten was one of eight provinces in the country with an education record below the

national standard (*Radar Banten* 2008; *Tempo* 2006; *Kompas* 2006), in 2009 the national government instructed the province to improve on its education record.

The table below compares school participation rates of children and youth in Banten province with those of its neighbouring provinces of Lampung (Sumatra), the special region of Jakarta, West Java, and the Indonesian national average. It shows that school participation rates in Banten are lower than those in Jakarta and the national average, but that other parts of West Java are worse.

**Table 3.1**  
School participation rates (%) per age group and province in 2008

	7-12 yrs (Elementary school)	13-15 yrs (Lower secondary)	16-18 yrs (Upper secondary)	19-24 yrs (Tertiary education)
Banten	97.75	81.28	50.35	11.66
Lampung	98.26	85.00	50.69	9.06
Jakarta	98.26	90.53	61.86	17.75
West Java	98.24	81.00	47.58	10.54
Indonesia (national average)	97.88	84.89	55.50	13.29

Source: BPS-RI, Susenas 2003-2010. Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia

Retrieved from:

[http://www.bps.go.id/tab\\_sub/view.php?tabel=1&daftar=1&id\\_subyek=28&notab=2](http://www.bps.go.id/tab_sub/view.php?tabel=1&daftar=1&id_subyek=28&notab=2)

### A human capital model?

In post-Suharto Banten, discussions about regional development have been linked to the idea of improving the human resources in the region (*meningkatkan sumber daya manusia*). This policy language reveals a specific educational discourse based on a human capital model, which emphasises investment in education as a means to achieve economic development and reduce economic inequalities between rich and poor people, regions and countries (Spring 2009: 38-39). Applying economic principles to non-economic realms of life, this educational model considers young men and women as human resources. Human capital theory draws from neoliberal ideas in the sense that issues of education and training are delegated to the supply-side of the economy. A neoliberal framework pro-

poses that economic growth and development are best advanced within a setting characterised by free trade, free markets and strong private property rights. According to this neoliberal view, the role of the government is to create the institutional framework appropriate to the functioning of markets. Thus the government should guarantee macro-economic stability, create the necessary legal, political and military structures, provide infrastructure and public goods such as education, but beyond that it should not intervene in the functioning of the market (Brown 2001: 10-11; Harvey 2007: 2). Human capital theory assumes that governments should be responsible for the educational infrastructure to give young people the opportunity to gain education and training before they enter the labour market, but that it is young people's responsibility to invest in themselves through schooling and training, in order to improve their prospects in the job market (Brown 2001: 11). Local schools rarely exactly adopt global educational policies, but more often selectively borrow and adapt the concepts and ideas in such frameworks (Spring 2009: 117). Moreover, a human capital model is not the only educational model in Banten, which has its own traditions of religious instruction and New Order education programmes which, through *pancasila* state ideology, advanced ideas about citizenship and national identity. But the discourse about human capital became more prominent after the economic and political collapse following the 1997 Asian financial crisis and reflects a growing concern of international and Indonesian policy makers with educational models that claim to facilitate the market economy. These ideas are mirrored in Indonesia's new law on youth that was adopted in 2009, which combines older practices of youth containment from the Suharto period with a neoliberal emphasis on young people as human resources (Diatyka 2010).

As noted above, this policy language also gained currency within the context of decentralisation and is used by local media and people on the ground in discussions about the role of education and training in advancing regional development and prosperity. In the post-Suharto period education (as 'human capital') and skills training became pressing issues in order to keep up with the competitive business climate in decentralised Cilegon and improve people's economic productivity and access to professional jobs. Local politicians and bureaucrats whom I interviewed spoke of the need for today's youth to learn computer skills, speak English and be schooled in physics, chemistry and mathematics in order to

be able to compete for work in the industries in the current climate of relentless economic globalisation. A wealthy, university educated local Golkar politician /entrepreneur who occupied a high position in the local administration summarised these challenges in no uncertain terms and commented:

Economy is important: why are the people here stupid (*bodoh*)? Because they do not go to school. Why don't they go to school? Because of the economy. Our human resources have to compete hard with other companies. This competition is a problem because we were forced into it without our human resources being ready (interview, 10.09.2008).

In Cilegon especially, many people identify problems of availability and the 'low' quality of education as one of the reasons why the local population is losing out in the competition over jobs in the town's industries. An observation made on various occasions by both local inhabitants as well as newcomers was that when the project of state-led industrial development was initiated from Jakarta, Cilegon's population was ill prepared and did not yet possess the technical knowledge and training required for skilled work in the heavy industries. Apart from more general problems of quality and access to schooling, many people identified the history of religious education in Banten as one of the main factors which contributed to this mismatch. Reza (22), a BA student from Ciwandan, a neighbourhood in Cilegon's industrial estate, summarised this observation as follows:

When the industries were first established in Ciwandan human resources (SDM) of local youth were not up to the standard of the industries. The reason is that many families were oriented towards religious education: "How can we live our lives according to our religion?" This is the influence of our parents: they didn't understand the kind of skills that the industries are looking for. But nowadays this mentality has changed; the people in Ciwandan want to meet the industries' education demands (interview, 14.10.2009).

While many people take for granted the explanation that links the history of Islamic education in the region to the mismatch between the education background and skills of local youth and the needs of the industries, others are more critical. Some people I spoke to were even offended by the suggestion that the provision of education in Cilegon would be considered "below average". Whereas they agreed that it is

plausible that in the first decade(s) of industrialisation there was a gap between the skills and training of local inhabitants and the needs of the industries, they questioned the relevance of this explanation for the present day situation. Mayor Pak Iman said:

In terms of education and intellectual capacity, young people possess a human resource capacity that is adequate, I think. Because, on average, young people nowadays are reasonably well educated, and their human resources (SDM) are sufficient. (...). So young people need to be able to access the industries. [Whether or not they succeed] depends on the political will of the companies, which at the moment is not yet optimal (interview 26.09.2008).

Is education background really the problem or, as the mayor implies, should this be understood as a cosmetic reason given by the companies to mask underlying problems of nepotism and companies' highly selective recruitment practices? To what extent does education help to prepare young men and women for their entry into labour market? This chapter and the following one examine the relation between education and employment in more depth. This chapter looks at the role of education and other forms of social, cultural and economic capital in relation to young people's livelihood prospects, whereas chapter 4 focuses on young men and the competition for work in Cilegon's heavy and chemical industries.

After a brief sketch of local educational landscape and the policy discussions that are concerned with youth, employment and regional development, this chapter considers the meaning of education for young people and their parents, and the education choices they make. The chapter considers how education shapes young people's aspirations towards certain kinds of employment and what happens when upper secondary and tertiary education graduates leave school and try to convert their education credentials into stable livelihoods. Many lower middle class families see investment in education as the main avenue for achieving upward social mobility, sharing the hope that higher education will translate into better jobs. But is this always the case? Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of social, cultural and economic capital, the chapter examines whether schooling helps young men and women to develop and widen the social and cultural capital which gives them an edge in the labour market or whether it just reproduces existing social relations and class inequalities. The next part of the chapter then addresses the question of what kind of

jobs different groups of secondary school and tertiary education graduates aspire to, their job search strategies and how they perceive and manage situations of educated un(der)employment. The chapter discusses young men and women's fluid notions about 'proper' jobs and fall back work and the ways they seek to secure the income and money to support their youthful lifestyles and desires.

### Islamic and secular education

In Indonesia nine years education is compulsory, until age 15 or completion of lower secondary school. There is an intention to make twelve years compulsory but hardly any districts have taken this on. Bantenese families have the option to enrol their children in the more general system of secular public schools funded by the Ministry of Education, or a parallel system of Islamic schools (*pesantren* and *madrasah*) which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In Banten as elsewhere in the country, the vast majority of children join the general schools within the state system, rather than the smaller system of Islamic education. Yet as noted earlier, Banten is a region with a high proportion of Muslims which is also reflected in a more than average participation in Islamic education. According to 2003 data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs *madrasah* enrolment in Banten is 12 per cent (Azra et al. 2007: 179). Several informants mentioned that before Cilegon became a steel city (*kota baja*) it had a reputation for being a '*kota santri*', due to the prevalence of Islamic education in the region. A considerable number people can read and write in Arabic due to their studies of the Quran and hadith, Arab grammar and Islamic law.

Nevertheless, the creation of a system of Islamic schools is a fairly recent phenomenon. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in rural Banten expanded considerably. *Pesantren* are typically privately run by an Islamic scholar (*kyai* or *ustad*) who provides religious instruction to his pupils (*santri*), mostly boys, based on classical Arabic texts. Most *pesantren* are associated with the stream of traditionalist Islam that is represented by the mainstream organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and are seen as socially conservative (Van Bruinessen 2008: 218). The reformist movement of Muhammadiyah is more closely associated with the establishment of modern schools like *madrasah*. In the early twentieth century Islamic education modernised when the first *madrasah*, Mathla'ul Anwar, was established in Menè

(Pandeglang regency), a Muslim school offering a curriculum which included not only religious studies but also general courses that were graded and examined. In 1925 the Al-Khairiyah *madrasah* was established in Citangkil, Cilegon and nowadays both schools have become the centre of extensive networks of *madrasah* throughout Banten province (Van Bruinessen 1995: 192). Currently most *madrasah* are part of the state system and receive some amount of government funding. These schools fill 70 per cent of their curriculum with general education and 30 per cent with religious teaching (Azra et al. 2007: 173-178).

While there is substantial overlap between the curricula of general secondary schools (SMP and SMA, as well as vocational schools) and *madrasah* (*madrasah tsanawiyah* and *alīyah*), some of the dualities between Islamic and general secondary schools remain. In general, *pesantren* and *madrasah* education is cheaper than education in secular schools, whether state or privately funded, and some families consider education in Islamic schools more culturally appropriate compared to a secular environment (Van Bruinessen 2008: 222). There is considerable difference in government subsidies per pupil in state schools and private *madrasah*, which is reflected in poorer education facilities and lower teacher incomes in many Islamic secondary schools. Students at lower and upper secondary *madrasah* also tend to score lower at the national exams than their peers in the general education system. Consequently, the average *madrasah* serve a student population of a mainly rural and economically disadvantaged background, such as the children of farmers and working class families (Azra et al. 2007: 181-182).

More importantly, secular and religious schools prepare their students for different education and career paths. Students with certificates from a *madrasah alīyah* (upper secondary school) usually do not join a general university, but continue their studies at a State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) or other Islamic colleges (STAINs or UIN). The proliferation of these Islamic colleges and universities at the upper end of the spectrum of religious schooling illustrates the influence of the Islamic resurgence since the 1970s. This movement is characterised by new forms of piety and a greater influence of reformist Islam, the proliferation of *da'wa* activities and construction of mosques and Islamic schools. Nowadays there is an IAIN based in every provincial capital (Van Bruinessen 2008: 226), including Serang. These tertiary education institutes indicate the demands from an educated Muslim middle class for marketable skills for

their children and opportunities for upward mobility (Azra et al. 2007: 173).

Reflecting these notions, secular colleges (*sekolah tinggi*) and universities in Cilegon and Serang advertise their facilities by stating that “Studying is not only about gaining knowledge but also about job placement”<sup>1</sup> (LP3I business college in Cilegon – “the campus for those who quickly want to get a job”)<sup>2</sup> or that their institution simply represents “*The Gate of the Future*”, as stated on a flyer of Universitas Serang Raya, Serang.<sup>3</sup> But tertiary education facilities in Cilegon are limited and it is important to emphasise that the majority of young people come to Cilegon to work rather than to study. Young men and women who continue to tertiary education often study elsewhere. Cilegon has one polytechnic institute (a branch of the state university Universitas Ageng Tirtayasa in Serang) and eleven colleges (*sekolah tinggi* and *akademi*). Tertiary education institutes in Cilegon and Serang typically offer one to three year certificates (D1–III) and BA degrees (S1) in study fields covering political science and government administration, communication and information technology, management and accountancy, agribusiness, technical and industrial science, and teacher training and education.

Additionally, Islamic secondary schools and universities advertise that their institutions not only provide students with academic and professional abilities, but that they also aim to instil moral qualities in their students which will “convey an intelligent and Islamic society” (*mengantarkan masyarakat yang cerdas dan Islami*) (Al Khairiyah college, Cilegon). Graduates of these Islamic colleges and universities often find employment as religious teachers or in other clerical positions, as well as jobs in the bureaucracy of the Department of Religious Affairs (which oversees religious education, the administration of marriages, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and operates religious courts). Moreover, a number of IAIN graduates have continued to general university for postgraduate studies or have moved on to careers outside of the religious sphere (Van Bruinessen 2008: 226-227).

All in all, this suggests that the argument about the prevalence of Islamic education in the region does not fully explain the difficulties that young men and women experience in accessing work in the industries and other parts of the labour market. The kind of education that young people receive in Islamic schools may provide them with useful general and religious knowledge, but probably not with the technical skills that

would prepare them for jobs in the heavy and petrochemical industries, regardless of the level of education that they complete. Furthermore, students who continue to IAIN or other Islamic colleges are likely to be oriented towards a career as teachers or bureaucrats affiliated to the Department of Religious Affairs, rather than looking for salaried employment in the industries. It is possible though, that students at the lower end of the *madrrasah* system, who have opted for an Islamic school simply because it is the cheapest option available and do not have the means to continue to better quality upper secondary or tertiary schools, would be oriented towards factory work. They might try to find work in the harbours or heavy industries or the surrounding transport- and repairs sector. Possibly they experience limitations from their background in religious schooling compared to their peers with certificates from vocational schools. Students from vocational schools (SMK) have usually done an internship as part of their training and may already have established some contacts with companies in the industrial estate. Nevertheless, on the whole *madrrasah* graduates constitute a rather small group, as even in Banten the overwhelming majority of children enrol in the secular schooling system. This suggests that the problem does not lie in Islamic education per se, but rather in more general problems of education quality, a growing supply of secondary and tertiary graduates, jobless growth and companies' highly selective recruitment procedures. To many parents, this competitive environment only reinforces the importance of investing in education for their children.

### **Modern aspirations: education as upward social mobility?**

Schools and universities in Indonesia, as elsewhere, not only play a role in socialising children and young people as citizens, they also carry the promise of improving prospects for employment and social mobility. Formal education is widely regarded as a necessary requirement for future employment, but also for personal development. In general, young people and their parents value education because they hope that their children will obtain the skills and qualifications to be successful in the urban job market and that they will be able to find employment that is both higher in status and more secure compared to that of their parents. Because of its potential to raise people's social standing, education serves as one of the foremost institutions through which class-based identities

are created and reproduced (Liechty 2003: 212; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

### Parents' views on education

In the post-Suharto period the costs for upper secondary and tertiary education are rapidly increasing, but nevertheless many parents continue to make financial sacrifices to pay for the schooling and training for their children, with the hope that their children will "become someone" (*menjadi orang*) and achieve a higher standard of living than their parents (Smith-Hefner 2007: 190).

This mentality was very much present in the family of Teh Sita (46) and Pak Ahmed (51). Teh Sita has lived in Cilegon all her life and married Pak Ahmed straight after she graduated from upper secondary school. Her husband holds a graduation certificate from lower secondary school (SMP). Both of them are Muslim. After their first child was born, Teh Sita enrolled in a one year course (D1) to obtain a diploma which enabled her to work as a teacher at the local elementary school near her house, where she worked for a year. Nowadays she works as a trader, selling vegetables and other household products from the small store (*warung*) attached to her house. Her small grocery store has to compete with at least three similar *warung* at her end of the street, all within walking distance from her home. Notably, when I interviewed her, she introduced both her profession and that of her husband by saying that they were self-employed, using the broad and fancier category of '*wirasmasta*'. Only when I asked her if she could be more specific about the work that she performed, did she refer to herself as a 'trader' (*pedagang*), and her husband as a salesman trading goats (*penjual kambing*), which he keeps in a small plot of land behind the house.

Teh Sita and Pak Ahmed have four children between 10 and 22 years old: three daughters and a son. Their eldest daughter aged 22 is already married. After completing upper secondary school this daughter found a job at a local shopping mall, but recently quit her job when she became pregnant with her first child. Together with her husband she continues to live at her parents' home. The second daughter, aged 19, is in her third semester of studying accountancy at a college in Cilegon, which she combines with a sales job at a finance company. The other two children are in upper secondary school (a daughter aged 15) and elementary school (a 10-year old son). Pak Ahmed and Teh Sita consider it their du-

ty as parents to see to it that their children do well in school and pay for their school fees. Hence, they exercise considerable influence in determining which school their children go to, although they leave some room for their children to agree or disagree with their parents' preferences, as they do not wish to simply force a particular school choice on them. While they hope that their children enrol in a state public school, Teh Sita narrates an instance where this proved to be not possible, because one of her children did not score high enough on the entrance test. "In the end we settled for a private school and chose one with less stringent admission requirements, not too far from our home. At this moment the school fees are reasonable (*sedang-sedang saja*), we try our best to cover the costs."

Teh Sita wants her children to have a bright future: "For example, that they have a permanent job (she seems to refer here to her ten year old son) and for my daughters that they marry a husband with a well-paid, high status profession." She hopes that all her children succeed in school and work:

If one of my children would only want to complete their education until lower secondary school, my husband and I would not allow it. We would be angry and force our child to continue to upper secondary school. Children have to go to school so that they do not become like their parents. I mean, I now have a small grocery store attached to the home, but I don't want my children to own a *warung* as well. My children should find better jobs; they should get credentials (titles), office jobs, and high status positions (*jabatan*). Operating a *warung* requires an amount of capital and physical labour, but if you find work for which you need your brain, you won't get tired.

That she pushes her children to obtain at least an upper secondary school education not only has to do with improving the status and prosperity of her family, but is also influenced by her recognition of the increasing demands for education in Indonesia's economy. Teh Sita continues:

Previous generations in Cilegon were not highly educated. Usually young people would finish their education until elementary school or lower secondary school. Only rarely did they complete upper secondary school. But we now live in modern times with mobile phones, laptops and computers, which require a high education. So for the current generation of youth ed-

ucation is very important. Children without an education cannot work and will not be able to succeed in life. (interview, 7.10.2009)

Teh Sita's comments illustrate her hope that her children will become educated persons who will surpass their parents' achievements by moving out of economic livelihoods based on manual labour, which she imagines as physically demanding and low status work. Like many other working class and lower middle class parents, Teh Sita identifies upper secondary and tertiary education as a pathway to obtain clerical jobs in the government or a private company or salaried work in the service industries which she associates with urban, middle class lifestyles. As we will see in chapter 5, these service jobs are often based on temporary contracts, are sometimes poorly paid, and do not necessarily offer young people long-term prospects for promotion or future careers. Yet, many of my informants aspired to such office and service jobs, attracted by what they regarded as the relatively 'light' and undemanding nature of salaried employment which is performed in a modern, clean and air conditioned environment. But Teh Sita's remarks also hint that she imagines education will provide her daughters with the cultural capital which will enhance their chances of moving out of manual labour by marrying a professional husband with sufficient earnings from, for instance, a *jabatan* position as a civil servant. A *jabatan*-rank not only signals middle class success, but the salary associated with it might be just enough to support the family without the wife having to supplement the household income, for example by selling food or operating a *warung*.

A somewhat similar analysis about the importance of formal schooling was given by Pak Faisal (44) from Cilegon, who works as an operator (*karyawan, operator*) in a company which produces construction materials. He has an upper vocational secondary school diploma with technical qualifications (he specialised in *teknik*). In 2006 he obtained a four year post as an RT head in his neighbourhood. Pak Faisal recounts the changes in the demand for credentials and the availability of employment opportunities for Cilegon's youth which he has observed over time:

Employment opportunities in Cilegon have changed. When I was young there was only Krakatau Steel. After that other contractors entered the scene, then chemical industries, next shopping malls. Most of the employment opportunities are for young men, because of the heavy industries here. Young women like to work in the mall, as civil servants, in professions related to healthcare or they find jobs at PT Nikomas [a shoe

factory in Serang]. In previous times one could still get work with only an elementary school certificate. But nowadays one needs at least an upper secondary school diploma. And many jobs require a title, like a BA degree or three year diploma (D3). For example, if you want to work as a teacher in elementary school, you need at least have a D3 if you want to be eligible for promotion. For upper secondary school graduates it is difficult [to compete for jobs]. (...) So I strongly encourage my children to continue to tertiary education, but I give them the freedom to choose the school and study path that is best for them. (interview, Cilegon, 29.7.2010)

Pak Faisal's account stresses the importance of higher education in a context where a process of upward credentialing continues to raise the bar for the level of education qualifications required to be eligible for salaried employment. This phenomenon has also been analysed in the literature on educated un(der)employment in Indonesia. As noted in chapter 1, expanding access to education combined with a shortage of modern sector employment has resulted in what Nathan Keyfitz calls a 'pushdown' effect: the increasing numbers of young people gaining qualifications means that their education certificates are less likely than before to give them access to the jobs that they are formally qualified for. Dhanani et al. (2009) explain this phenomenon with the following examples: upper secondary school (SMA) graduates are nowadays employed as "sales assistants, petrol pump attendants and waiters and waitresses", jobs that would previously go to lower secondary school or elementary school graduates. The same happens when university graduates become employed as "cashiers, tellers and secretaries in preference to SMA graduates" (2009: 63). In other words, ideas about what is considered a skilled worker are changing: in Pak Faisal's time young people with upper secondary school certificates were considered to be educated, whereas nowadays many of the same jobs require a tertiary education degree. Dhanani et al. also note that young people and their parents often tend to respond to this phenomenon by continuing to invest in education, in order to keep up with the declining value of credentials. Recent survey data about youth employment patterns in Indonesia suggest that this strategy of prolonged investment in education pays off at the level of tertiary education graduates: while tertiary graduates also experience a difficult transition into the labour market and long job searches, employers seem to prefer more educated job seekers and in the long run they fare slightly better in the job market than upper secondary school leavers

(World Bank 2010: 18; Dhanani et al. 2009: 63). The labour market prospects for upper secondary school leavers are much less clear: according to a recent World Bank report based on Sakernas (national labour force survey) data from 2007, this group stands a fifty-fifty chance of obtaining stable salaried employment, compared to one third of the lower secondary school graduates who managed to access a formal, salaried job (2010: 16-17). As will be shown in the next section, my qualitative data from Cilegon point towards similar patterns.

Not only parents feel obliged to provide their children with a good education: their children often aspire to upward social mobility as well. Pak Faisal's daughter Dian (18), who in 2008 had just started her first year as a BA student in agribusiness at a university in Serang, told me: "For example, I come from a middle class background,<sup>4</sup> not rich, not poor. Automatically my parents and I hope that the level of education and future income of the children will be better than that of the parents." Dian's aspirations echo the ideas described above which link education to notions of personal development, family status and upward social mobility. She hopes that after completing her BA degree she will be able to find an office job at a bank or at PT Krakatau Steel, so that she can contribute to the education of her younger brothers and achieve a standard of life that is "more fitting" (*lebih layak*) than that of her parents. Dian's parents have similar aspirations for their daughter, although they hope that she might become a civil servant, "so that she can commit herself to public service in a job that is not too demanding". Dian's mother adds that she hopes that her daughter finds a job in Cilegon and surroundings:

I don't want her to go far away from Banten. We are a Muslim family, so we have to guard our daughter. We are responsible for her until she marries. So we don't like her to go far away before she has started a family of her own. If she did, I would be worried about *fitna* (sinful acts). With our daughter we are a bit stricter, for her brothers it doesn't matter if they want to work outside of Banten (interview, Cilegon, 29.7.2010).

In short, the comments above show that Dian's parents are willing to make great financial sacrifices to invest in education for their children with the hope that this will provide an avenue for upward social mobility, and entry into the middle classes. Yet, despite encouraging their daughter to take advantage of increased educational opportunities and participate in student life, Dian's parents put constraints on their daughter's behav-

our by telling her to guard her reputation and uphold the good name of the family. Similar patterns have been observed elsewhere in Java, where Smith-Hefner found that female university students in Yogyakarta often feel ambivalent about how to deal with the new freedoms and measures of autonomy available to them, while simultaneously controlling themselves (Smith-Hefner 2005: 453-454).

### Access to education: reproducing social difference?

While many parents hope that education will be an avenue to improve their family's social standing, at the same time uneven distribution of power and economic resources shape the education trajectories of their children in such a way that the education system often reinforces already existing class, gender and other social divisions. Alongside class and income, considerations based around gender, age and birth order are often equally important in shaping families' education decisions (Chopra 2005: 299). For example, several informants reported that they had to wait for older siblings to finish their education before they could continue their schooling, while others said their parents expected to help pay for the schooling of younger siblings. Hence, decisions about moving in and out of school, work and home are often taken collectively and involve entire families pooling their cultural, social and economic resources. The gender gap in secondary school enrolment has almost disappeared, but other inequalities remain, notably between rural and urban areas, between rich and poor students, and public and private schools. These and other inequalities become more pronounced as the level of education attainment rises (Oey-Gardiner 2000: 127). In Indonesia as elsewhere, tertiary education is increasingly being transformed from a heavily subsidised right to a freely traded commodity (Tomasevski 2003: 111) and people increasingly get the education they can afford (see also Liechty 2003: 213 for Nepal). Families with higher incomes are usually able to keep their children longer in school and provide them with better quality education.

One such class division which I observed in Cilegon was that the children of midlevel managers with permanent contracts in Krakatau Steel and other factories whom I spoke to, like the children of local *tokoh*, successful businessmen and civil servants, tended to study in cities like Jakarta, Bogor, Yogyakarta or Bandung. These cities are widely considered to offer a broader selection and better quality of colleges and universities than is available in Banten. Families with supervisor or man-

ager positions at Krakatau Steel used the stable salary of the fathers and their family networks in their region of origin to send their children away for their studies. Their children relied on their parents' financial support to cover tuition fees and basic living costs, so that they could focus on their studies and fully join in campus life. This is illustrated by the story of Anis (23), who had grown up in one of the housing complexes for Krakatau Steel employees, and had family connections and fathers who had studied in Yogyakarta. While Anis initially planned to study at a campus in Jakarta, she soon found out that the quality of the university she had in mind was not so good. Moreover, its students did not have a good reputation (Anis said this was because of promiscuity or *pergaulan bebas*, literally: "free interaction"), and the tuition fee was quite expensive. Her father, who had graduated with a degree from Indonesia's prestigious Gadjah Mada University, told her to try a university in Yogyakarta. He reasoned that this city, being one of the main destinations for students in Indonesia, offers many good universities and that the costs of daily life are relatively cheaper compared to Jakarta. More importantly, he was thinking about Anis's three younger sisters: if his eldest daughter would enrol in an expensive university, her sisters might not have the chance to study. At first, Anis was reluctant about the idea of moving to Yogyakarta, a sixteen hour bus ride from Cilegon, rather than the three hours to Jakarta. But she decided to give it a try and enrolled in communication studies at an Islamic university. She found a rental room in a *kos* (boarding house) and later her younger sister moved in with her when she also went to study in Yogyakarta. During her time in Yogyakarta, Anis could concentrate on her studies as she was financially supported by her parents, who not only paid her university fees but also transferred her 1 million rp (84 euro) per month to support her living expenses. Anis used her parents' contribution to pay for her rent, daily expenses for food and transportation, and to buy books and other study materials. At the same time, the investment Anis's father made in providing his three daughters with a university education was considerable, and the family had recently sold its car.

In contrast to these students from middle class backgrounds, young men and women from the lower ranks of Cilegon's middle classes often had similar aspirations to continue to tertiary education, but due to financial constraints faced quite different prospects for the range and quality of tertiary education they were able to afford. Studying outside of

Banten was often not an option except for those few excellent performing secondary school graduates who had been able to secure a scholarship, and the majority of the young men and women of lower middle class backgrounds, if they continued to tertiary education, went to local colleges and universities in Serang and Cilegon. While these students receive some support from their parents or older siblings, this is often not sufficient to cover tuition fees, transportation and basic living costs, a large part of which they have to shoulder themselves. The combination of academic demands with their efforts to juggle school and work made studying a precarious experience. Even though these students had already invested considerable amounts of money into their studies, they were not always sure if they would be able to continue into the next year or semester. The weeks before registration and payment for the next semester or school year was due could be hectic and stressful. On several occasions I witnessed friends and informants making phone calls and making rounds of visits to family, friends and acquaintances to try and find information about temporary jobs or negotiate a loan to pay their school fees. Sometimes they were not sure until the final day of registration if they would succeed, often resulting in sighs of relief and a slight sense of bewilderment when they had managed to collect the money after all. If they had not been able to come up with the full amount, they had to negotiate with their college or university about postponement of payment of the next instalment of tuition or exam fees. Some universities or colleges were rather flexible, but if the university was less than understanding this could be a rather embarrassing experience.

Another common pattern which I observed for young men and women from lower middle class backgrounds is to enrol in university, then at some point having difficulties to cover the tuition fees, drop out and embark on bouts of employment or search for a scholarship with the hope to eventually save enough money to continue the abandoned studies in the near future. For some this strategy worked, even though they sometimes had to work several years before being able to return to tertiary education, or had to move to a cheaper institute of less quality to finish their studies. In such instances, frustration at the poor class room facilities and “old fashioned” style of teaching was common. Upon returning to university in their late twenties, some of these students wondered if they would be considered “too old” by their fellow students, most of whom were younger than them, but usually such anxieties quick-

ly disappeared within the first month of college. Others had to juggle their efforts to finish their studies with obligations to their family, or had to choose between paying for their own wedding or the next semester of college. All in all, the combination of financial constraints and rather poor quality of tertiary education that lower middle class youth were able to access, made improving the family's social economic status not impossible, but an achievement that is difficult to reach.

### Education and urban lifestyles

Apart from valuing education for its potential to facilitate upward social mobility through entry into salaried employment, schooling is also important for young people's lives in the present. Many young men and women said school was the place where they formed friendships, started to think about romance and experienced having girlfriends and boyfriends. Dian recalls how in secondary school she participated in extra-curricular activities, fell in love for the first time and started wearing a headscarf which was part of the uniform in her upper secondary school. She reflects:

In lower secondary school I did not wear a headscarf (*kerudung*), but in upper secondary it was made compulsory. I felt comfortable wearing a headscarf at school, even though afterwards I sometimes like to take it off, depending on my mood. But I agree with the regulation to guard ourselves from other people's views by covering our *aurat*.<sup>5</sup> As teenagers, our ways of interacting become more mature. We travelled to and from school together with our male classmates, started to like boys, and became interested in dating (*berpacaran*).

School is one of the places where young people learn about gender roles and meet boy- or girlfriends. As Smith-Hefner notes, in general dating in secondary school is considered relatively innocent. Teenage relationships typically consist of flirtations, teasing, travelling home together, making phone calls and sending text messages. Most boys and girls do not mention this to their parents, as they are "just having fun" (*having fun saja*). This is not to say that some relationships can be more serious, both sexually and otherwise, possibly interfering with school work, causing emotional distress or even unwanted pregnancy. In order to avoid such situations, parents monitor their children's behaviour and often discourage or even forbid their daughters from having serious boyfriends during secondary school, seeking to prevent any distractions from school work,

test scores and class rankings (Smith-Hefner 2005: 451-452). Of course boys can also experience distractions from dating or break ups, but they are thought to be better capable of handling this and because they are away from home more often, it is difficult for parents to monitor their interactions with girls (*ibid.*: 452). Yet, for older youth who are no longer teenagers and who have completed secondary school, dating is considered a logical activity leading up to finding a marriage partner (Platt 2012). Parents accept and might actually encourage their children to engage in courtship, albeit on the condition that their children, daughters especially, guard their social reputation in the public sphere (*menjaga diri*).

Several young women mentioned that their friendships in secondary school evolved around tight-knit ‘gangs’ with other girls and expressed ambivalence about the extent to which they were able to forge close friendships with boys. While they regularly interacted with boys at school and in their neighbourhood, they considered these friendships “just normal” (*biasa saja*). They felt comfortable sharing stories and confiding (*curhat*) in their girlfriends, but had experienced that when they became close (*akrab*) and shared similar conversations with boys, their honesty and friendship could be mistaken for something more. As such misguided ideas about romantic intentions could lead to uncomfortable situations, they maintained casual friendships with boys and developed more intimate friendships with girls. Boys’ friendships in secondary school seemed to evolve more around stories of disobedience towards teachers, being naughty (*nakal, bandel*), or skipping school to go to the beach with friends. Both young men and women mentioned surveillance and disciplinary actions taken by their schools, such as ‘*operasi rambut*’ where the school checked if pupils’ haircuts and school uniforms were clean and tidy, or ‘*razia hp*’ meant to check if pupils’ mobile phones are free from pornographic clips and images.

Secondary school was also the time when my informants started to use mobile phones (*hp*, which is short for hand phone). Irfan, who was 23 in 2007, remembers how he and his friends mostly communicated through ordinary phones when they were teenagers. Cell phones became really booming when he was in university, to the extent that nowadays “They have become a basic need for every teenager who doesn’t want to appear old fashioned. Even children in elementary school now start to use mobile phones!” Anis (23) got her first cell phone from her father, who bought her one on the day before the start of the national exams in

upper secondary school. Most of Anis's friends already had a mobile phone, so she was happy when she got one as well. Dian (18) started to use a mobile phone in the third year of lower secondary school (SMP).

While there is a broad variety in different brands and types of mobile phones, most of the young people I knew owned a second hand cell phone. During fieldwork (2008–2010) prices for a really basic, older model hp (second hand) started at around 200,000 rp, whereas more fancier and up to date smart phones with internet, camera and music applications could be bought second hand for 800,000–1 million rp.<sup>6</sup> For Dian, having a cell phone changed her social life and expanded her range of interactions as she could now communicate with friends living both near her house and those far away. She stayed better updated on the well-being and activities of her friends, even though they might be far away. Moreover, she got to know new friends through her mobile phone, for instance when someone dialled a wrong number or if she got introduced to a friend of a friend over the phone. She says: “Suddenly I had new activities, such as answering the phone and sending text messages (SMS). But my expenses also went up and I had to ask my parents for money to buy phone credit (*pulsa*).”

These examples resonate with research on young people's use of new communication and information technology (ICT) which suggests that, provided that they can afford these, young people are typically early adopters of mobile phones and other technologies. They use mobile phones to reinforce and expand their social networks, which are often based on peer groups formed at school and in their neighbourhood (Castells et al. 2007: 168). Access to these communication technologies can provide young men and women with more autonomy to connect themselves to a wider world, expand their social networks and bypass parental control. Dian mentions: “Mobile phones also provide opportunities for dating. If a young couple meets in person, inevitably other people will notice, but if they communicate by phone you will only hear their voices, other people won't find out.”

Mobile phone usage enables young people to communicate independently with friends and lovers, by sending text messages in a shared, coded language that is often difficult to decipher for outsiders. They also regularly use the cheap late evening rates offered by some mobile phone providers to make phone calls and send text messages during several hours of the night. Young people made regularly use of this service to

communicate with their (prospective) boy- or girlfriends or *teman curhat*, close friends whom they would confide in. Parents were not always pleased when they overheard their daughter texting or chatting with their boyfriend or romantic interest, insisting it is not appropriate (*tidak sopan*) for single girls to be involved with other young men around midnight, even if only by phone. Yet, there is considerable variation in parents' stance towards these practices: whereas some parents tried to monitor their daughter's late night phone use and maybe withheld pocket money for phone credit, others were more relaxed. Of course, young men and women who are living in a boarding house (*kost*) are not monitored in this way and can do more or less as they please.

The examples above show how schools are not only a place for learning, but also important sites for the formation of friendships and building of social networks. Young men and women's use of mobile phones and occasionally internet, indicate that during their time in secondary school they learn modern communication skills, all important aspects for their job search after finishing school.

### **Between fun and frustration: leaving school, entering work**

Chapter 1 noted that in order to understand how young men and women move in and out of school, work and their parental home, it is important to situate young people not only within the structural conditions in the economy and labour market, but also to understand their aspirations and decisions as being shaped by their experience of being young and their relations with adults around them. This section therefore gives an account of young men and women's ideas and experiences about youth and social adulthood and explores how this informs the ways in which they navigate the transition from education-to-work.

#### **Youth, gender and uncertain futures**

Young people in Cilegon do not base their definitions of youth and adulthood solely on age or sociological markers such as employment status, independence from parents or marriage. They mentioned that someone who is already married can still have the characteristics of a youth, spend time with young people and engage in youth lifestyles and ways of talking, whereas some girls marry at age 17 when they are still young. They talked about being young in terms of individual characteristics such

as one's behaviour and way of thinking. A typical view on this was given by the following young man (aged 20):

Teenagers (*remaja*) have reached puberty, are looking for their identity and are mainly interested in having a good time. They are relatively free and do not yet think about the future. Youth (*pemuda, anak muda*) already differ in their way of thinking: they are already oriented towards the future, asking themselves 'What do I want? Who do I want to be?' The beginnings of adulthood can already be traced in them.

A similar observation was given by a 22-year old male student:

During our teens (*masa remaja*) our minds are not yet occupied with many things, we are mainly concerned with ourselves. We just like to go out (*jalan-jalan saja*), while continuing our schooling.

As these comments indicate, teenagers are typically thought of as young persons who are not yet mature, whose minds and bodies are still developing and who are mostly occupied with their activities in the present. Teenagers are of course not completely free from obligations towards others, but the main expectation that parents have towards them is that they do well in school. Older youth feel that they differ from teenagers through their ability to think about the future and being able to take on a greater measure of responsibility towards themselves and others. Being able to think about the future was also consistently mentioned as an indication of mature thinking. While teenagers' daily lives are structured around compulsory secondary school, young men and women in their twenties have already left this environment. A few of them are gaining new experiences away from their parental home at a university campus, many others are trying to get a foothold in the competitive labour market, and /or are looking for a marriage partner. Several informants mentioned that whenever possible, young men and women want to take some time to relax after finishing secondary school. Reza (22), a BA student in Islamic law, explained it as follows:

After graduating from upper secondary school many young people want to relax for a while. For young men this is a time where they are not yet serious (*iseng-iseng*) and spend their time getting together, hanging out and chatting with friends. Occasionally they will try to find information about job opportunities, not via official channels like the government manpower office (*disnaker*) or the media, but by asking friends. For girls this period is more or less the same, although they spend more

time at home, or they use this time to take a course (English, embroidery). Some of them may teach as well. We want to relax first, the desire to move ahead (*rasa pengen maju*) only emerges slowly. During these months we get money from our parents, only slowly do we start asking our friends for information about work.

But other informants from similar social backgrounds contested this view, like Ilham (24) whose father works at Krakatau Steel, who told me that after graduating from upper secondary school he did not have time for leisure and immediately started looking for a university. He says:

Several of my friends from upper secondary school experienced a “vacuum” (*sempat vakum*) after graduating. This lasted for about one year during which they tried to collect the funds to continue their studies.

The extent to which young people are able to take some time before getting serious about looking for work, is often depends on class, family conditions, and economic background. Furthermore, young men and women’s interactions and experiences of leisure activities, as well as expectations and choices about education and participation in the urban job market are informed by gender-specific cultural values. A clear example of such gender inequalities concerns the monitoring of mobility and interactions between young men and women. As ’20-something’ urban youths, the young men in my study are at a stage in their lives where they are no longer teenagers, but have not yet reached social adulthood either. As adolescent boys and unmarried men they are allowed relative freedom, mobility and playfulness and are considered to be not yet serious until at least in their twenties (Guinness 2009: 120). As Retno (female, 23, married) explains:

Young men are free to go wherever they want to; girls need to inform their parents if they want to go outside. They have to introduce their friends to their parents and provide some information on how they know each other.

Hamid (male, 29, single) expresses a similar view:

Guys (*cowok*) can go wherever they want; they can go outside the house and travel for work to other parts of town. Girls tend to mostly stay in their own neighbourhood, close to home and their neighbours. It does not look good on young women if they go outside too much, it gives the signal that maybe they do not want to help their parents, that they want to be

just happy, are looking for fun while their tasks at home may not be finished.

Dian, single, 18 years old and a pious Muslim, adds to this:

In itself going outside of the house is not bad, as long as you go out with a positive purpose, such as attending a *pengajian* (Quran reading).

These comments reflect broader Islamic and patriarchal values which suggest that a good daughter should be supportive of her parents, help out with chores at home, guard her interactions with unrelated boys and men and does not stay out until late at night. By contrast, young men are expected to take care of themselves and are allowed more freedom to come and go as they please. This particular notion of masculinity constructs youth as a period of enjoying life and having fun, a time to “just relax” (*santai saja*) during which concerns with work and future livelihoods became an issue for later: in this context the phrase “tomorrow never dies” borrowed from a James Bond film, was a frequent remark made by one of my informants. For young men it is common to spend their leisure time hanging out in front of the base camp of their youth organisation, a friend’s house or a local *warung*, sharing coffee and cigarettes, listening to music or accessing Facebook on their mobile phones, making fun of each other and teasing girls who happen to pass by. Late at night young men gathered to play guitar, drink alcohol, play cards and board games, or indulge in occasional gambling, whereas young women were expected to be home by 10 pm. If the atmosphere was particularly *ramai* (lively), young men stayed up all night and frequently moved around: in that case they could be found the next morning having spent the night at the boarding house (*kos*) of a group of student friends or sleeping on the floor in front of the TV at the house of a relative.

However, this kind of hanging out was considered inappropriate for young women, except for certain places. In the afternoon young women typically sat in front of their homes to chat with friends and neighbours or they dressed up in their finest jeans and headscarf to wander in the mall, frequenting fast food restaurants or confection stores selling girls’ clothes and accessories. The afternoon was also the time during which young couples and families could be found spending recreational time alongside the local industrial lake. Here, young men and women would be cruising on their scooters and motorcycles, hanging out with groups of friends, sitting on the grass with their boy- or girlfriend, or buying

snacks and other items from a selected number of stalls. Young couples who had access to a motorcycle would find ways to sneak away and spend some private time together at the beach or other quiet places, such as the newly built but often deserted ring road (*jalan lingkar selatan*) between Cilegon and Anyer. This was also one of the sites where at night young men held street races on their motorcycles. Young men and women also interact and form friendships at school and through the meetings and recreational activities organised by local youth organisations, usually including sports events and social activities on religious and public holidays. Local mosque groups would organise *pengajian* (Quran recitations) which were frequented by both young men and women, usually teenagers.

Yet while adolescent boys and unmarried men enjoy greater mobility and more freedom to experience 'being young' compared to their female peers, at the same time they associate being a youth rather than a teenager with becoming economically independent from their parents. They are starting to think about their future in which they have to secure an income or stable job. Sometime between their late twenties or mid-thirties they are expected to get married and fulfil their Islamic duties as men by becoming the breadwinners for their wives and children (Nilan 2009: 328). Thus as they grow older and start thinking about settling down, individual competencies such as autonomy and maturity give way to relational ones (Jones 2009: 96). In this sense young men face different pressures compared to their female peers who, if they have trouble finding a job, can always settle their position by getting married and becoming a wife and mother (see chapter 5).

Agus (24), an upper secondary school graduate and owner of a cell phone counter in one of Cilegon's shopping malls, explains what being young means to him in relation to livelihood opportunities and why looking for a job for young men is different than for young women:

When I was a teenager I was still in school and did not yet have to worry too much about money. My responsibilities have changed now that I am in my twenties. I have to act more mature which means there is less time to play (*main*). I think a lot more about earning an income. In the future I want to get married and will become the head of a family. I have to start preparing for that.

When Agus looks at the labour market in Cilegon and its surroundings, it seems to him that there are more job opportunities for girls. “They can immediately enter factory work at PT Nikomas [a huge shoe factory based near the neighbouring town of Serang]”, Agus says. “Apart from that, young women in Cilegon tend to marry earlier than young men, they do not face the same pressures about work. This is different for young men as they have to become independent first. They have to secure a permanent job or a stable income.” Like many children from lower middle class families, young men like Agus often not only have to find money to support their daily lifestyle needs (coffee, food, cigarettes, transportation, cell phone credit) and prepare for their future, but also are expected to support their families. Consequently, not having a stable income can become a source of insecurity. Despite their investment in education however, lower middle class men in Cilegon are not always confident about their prospects of finding salaried work.

Consider Ibnu (24), a young Muslim man from Cilegon. He is the fourth child in a family of nine; his parents sell vegetables which they grow on a plot of land next to the wall of their kampong in downtown Cilegon. When Ibnu was nine, his father married a second wife and went to live with her in Tangerang. Ibnu’s mother did not agree. After Ibnu’s father had two children with his second wife, he returned home to live with his family in Cilegon. Nowadays Ibnu has a good relationship with his stepbrother and sister. After graduating from lower secondary school in 1999, a *madrassa* which was the cheapest private school available, Ibnu was told to postpone his education until this older brother had finished upper secondary school. But Ibnu liked his newfound freedom, and being not very motivated in school he decided that he did not want to continue his education. Nowadays he regrets this decision, because it is difficult to find work with a lower secondary school diploma, you need at least have finished upper secondary school. Since 2000, on and off Ibnu has been involved in various kinds of manual labour, including a job as a helper assisting a truck driver carrying loads of sugar and other goods from Cilegon’s harbour to various companies, attending to his neighbour’s *warung* and recently jobs as a kitchen helper in hotels in Bogor and Cilegon. Usually he got these jobs via family members or acquaintances.

When it comes to jobs for young people in Cilegon, Ibnu feels that there is really not enough work available (*sangat kurang*). There are a lot of big companies in the Ciwandan and Cikading districts in Cilegon’s

industrial estate, but Ibnu thinks that on average these companies are staffed with people from Bandung and other parts of Java. However, even companies run by local people do not always offer jobs to young people. This leaves inadequate opportunities for young people in Cilegon, so many of Cilegon's citizens try to find work in Tangerang or Jakarta. Ibnu thinks that Cilegon's mayor and other politicians should really make an effort to create more job opportunities. Because there comes a time when young people like him will grow older and will want to look for a spouse:

Work (*pekerjaan*) is important. For sure every youth wants to lead a certain lifestyle, wants to own equipment such as TV and cell phone, a means of transportation (e.g. motorcycle). If I had a job, I could focus on starting a family. I want to work hard for my future wife and children, even if there is no job. Some people say it is better not to marry if you do not have a job. But do I have to stay like this all the time, unmarried and without a stable job?

Ibnu has modest ambitions for the kind of lifestyle he would like to lead: "Just a simple lifestyle, so that there's enough to provide for food for me and my family every day." Then again, if he really wants to look for a spouse, he may not have to secure a job first: "the important thing is that we would love each other", he concludes. Yet, while young men like Ibnu on the one hand worry about the future in which it is commonly assumed that they will become good husbands and providers for their families, they also want to enjoy their youth in the present. When I met him again in 2010, Ibnu still lived with his parents and worked in the kitchen of a fancy hotel in Cilegon, which earned him 650,000 rp (53 euro) per month. This is a very small income, but already far more than the exploitative wage that he started with during his first months at the hotel. Meals are provided for by his employer. While operating within very narrow margins, Ibnu nevertheless felt bold enough (*berani*) to use this income to buy a new, shiny Honda motor (*motor bebek*), which he pays for in monthly instalments of 500,000 rp.<sup>7</sup> This motorbike met with approval of his friends and they all wanted to borrow it for a ride. As for the remainder of his income, Ibnu kept 100,000 to himself and gave 50,000 rp to his parents. He told me: "My parents agree on the motorbike, as long as I use it for transportation to work and to accompany my younger sister to lower secondary school." Ibnu also thinks that his parents are happy to see him in a regular job, rather than pursuing irregular, informal

economic activities and hanging around with his friends. In 2010 he also had a girlfriend:

Yes, there is a girl, I see her in the weekend. Actually, she's already talking about marriage, but I told her "later, not now", I don't want to be burdened. I want to relax first. The responsibility for the motor and accompanying my sister to school is already enough. Maybe after the debt for the motor has been handled, I'll start thinking about marriage. (interview, 29.07.2010).

Ibnu and Agus's accounts highlight the intersection of parental expectations and family obligations that young people want to fulfil as good sons and daughters, while also wanting to enjoy their youth and plan for the future. Ibnu's story shows how his lifestyle desires and obligations in the present inform his planning for the future. It shows his anxieties about how the absence of stable work might influence his ability to marry and fulfil locally salient values about masculinity. Yet, even though his very modest income is not sufficient to become independent, let alone start a family, for the time being it gives him more control over his consumption and leisure activities even though the margins are extremely tight. At the same time, operating within these constraints, he gains confidence from being able to make a contribution to his family by supporting his younger sister and showing gratitude to his parents for raising him by giving them a monthly supplement of his income. The motorcycle shows how Ibnu also wants to conform to masculine youth cultures with his friends. Motorcycles are not only important as a means of transportation, increasing young men and women's mobility; they are also an accessory which can make you look cool, for example if you make an effort of nicely airbrushing it or decorating it with stickers. For young men especially, current trends include gathering in motorcycle clubs based around a certain brand, for example Vespa clubs and Honda clubs. Finally, Ibnu and Agus' accounts show common expectations about the simple life goals young people want to achieve, something that was shared across informants (mostly secondary school graduates).

### **Searching for a job: mixing education with the right connections**

What are the aspirations and strategies of young men and women in pursuing certain kinds of desired employment? And what are the gender and

class differences in the way young people navigate the labour market? This section looks at young people's job search strategies and their assessment of the local structures of opportunity for earning a livelihood in Cilegon. In their efforts to access information about job opportunities they employ their ability to socialise (*bergaul*) and build a network of contacts which could be crucial in opening up opportunities for work (Sastramidjaja 2000: 72-73). Drawing on the concepts of social, cultural and economic capital as coined by Bourdieu, this section shows how getting a job is much more complex than the current policy literature suggests and often depends on a combination of education credentials (cultural capital), personal connections, nepotism (social capital) and bribes (economic capital).

My informants who were students or had completed a tertiary education degree (usually a bachelor's certificate) expected that their status as educated persons and the cultural capital from their degree would give them an edge in the labour market and would distinguish them from the majority of upper secondary school graduates. Reza (22), who is pursuing a BA degree in law at a university in Serang said: "Those who continue to university are different. They will extend their interactions with society and hope that their fate (*nasib*) will be better compared to upper secondary school graduates." Other tertiary graduates confirmed this picture. Ilham (24), a university graduate from Cilegon who had found a job at a bank in Jakarta said:

Nowadays it is difficult for upper secondary school graduates to look for work. Most companies look for young people with a three year diploma (D3) or BA qualifications. [Compared to secondary school graduates] BA graduates have a stronger theoretical background and usually have done an internship during their studies. So they are in a better position than secondary school graduates. This makes it difficult for upper secondary school graduates to compete. Only few companies are willing to recruit people with secondary school certificates. (interview, 23.07.2010).

In general, the tertiary education graduates I knew were oriented towards an office job with the government (becoming a civil servant) or in a private company (banks, industries). These university graduates often looked for office jobs in national and local newspapers and via job sites on the internet, in addition to using personal contacts to obtain information about job vacancies. As there are limits to the office job market in a provincial town like Cilegon, they were often oriented towards Jakar-

ta and other big cities. During their time at the university they had received little, if any, instruction or training on how to write application letters or prepare for job interviews, though some of them used the alumni networks of their university to circulate information about job fairs or vacancies. Tertiary graduates also have to prepare for a prolonged job search, but eventually seem to be able settle into the office jobs that they aspire to. Most of my informants had obtained their first job within a year after graduation, even though these jobs were often on temporary contracts and during their first years after graduating they moved regularly in and out of work. Problems and anxieties around prolonged underemployment were more acute among secondary school leavers, who had obtained secondary education but who experienced a gap between their expectations for the future and the economic realities around them. The majority of job seekers who have registered themselves with the local manpower office in Cilegon are upper secondary school graduates, followed by tertiary education graduates with bachelor degrees (see table 3.2). The actual number of job seekers is likely to be much higher, as most job seekers rely on personal contacts and informal networks to obtain work rather than official channels like the manpower office (see also Reerink and Sziraczki 2004). I met very few young people who had officially registered themselves as jobseekers or had otherwise established contacts with the local manpower office (*dinas tenaga kerja*).

**Table 3.2**  
*Number of newly registered job seekers by education level  
 at the manpower office Cilegon in 2008*

	Male	Female	Total number
Elementary school	35	2	37
Lower secondary school	244	101	345
Upper secondary school	3,553	1,669	5,222
Diploma I/II/III	254	635	889
BA degree (S1)	558	732	1,290
MA (S2) or PhD degree (S3)	2	3	5

Source: BAPPEDA Cilegon, *Cilegon in Figures 2008*, pp. 55-56.

Upper secondary and tertiary education graduates use quite different job search strategies. In contrast to tertiary graduates, most secondary school graduates almost solely relied on friends and family for information about job opportunities as many job positions are filled through personal networks. Getting job information proved to be a challenge for both groups, but especially secondary school graduates reported being confused or overwhelmed (*menghadapi kebingungan*) about finding information about job openings at their education level. They mentioned several reasons for this. Eka (22), a secondary school graduate who works for Matahari department store in Cilegon, usually gets information about job vacancies through friends, family or public announcements, for example at the post office or local manpower office. She never looks for job advertisements in newspapers or online job search sites where employers post recruitment announcements, usually at the level of tertiary graduates. Even though she has learned some basic computer skills at school, she does not know how to use the internet. Rifka (30) who holds a two-year diploma as a children's playgroup teacher, also rarely searches for job advertisements in newspapers or the internet. Usually such advertisements ask for high qualifications: a BA degree or a three year diploma, active and passive English skills and at least one year or more relevant work experience. She does not have enough confidence to apply to such job advertisements as she has already failed several interviews because of her lack of English skills. Instead, she has often used acquaintances to get a job. Rifka explains that using connections will get you quicker results: "So that you will quickly know for sure: will there be an interview or not, is there a result or not?" She adds:

"Educational background is important when looking for a job, but having connections is maybe even more important. I have friends who have BA degrees but no connections and they have almost given up hope of finding a job because nowadays there are very few people who find jobs without using personal contacts."

Nowadays an upper secondary school certificate has become the minimal requirement for even a factory job and many positions in business or in the local government bureaucracy require a BA certificate. Furthermore, many kampong youth felt that even with the right education, they often do not have the contacts with civil servants or company officials to access salaried work in the formal economy, nor do they or their

parents have access to the credit which would enable them to start their own business (see also Guinness 2009: 121 for Yogyakarta).

In short, the stories above show that my informants had often used connections and a few had paid bribes to get a job. This means that they often had to spend a month's income before they even could start their job, an expense which was often calculated within the wider household, with parents and siblings pooling their resources. The experiences of Eka and Rifka also illustrate that the labour market is not only based on merit, but also on informal social networks. Education is important, because qualifications are a precondition for applying to a certain pool of jobs and it defines one's starting point in the job market. But given that nepotism and other informal recruitment methods are common practice in Cilegon and other parts of Indonesia, young men and women rely on a mixture of resources and social capital in order to secure a job. Informants stressed that the value of a particular form of social capital (a contact in the government bureaucracy or inside a company) or cultural capital (education credentials) and the ability to socialise (*bergaul*) varies within different fields. They tend to see this as a continuum: someone with a strong education background might draw primarily on this cultural capital in his or her job search. Furthermore, they might be able to convert this into economic capital: for example in the way that it helps young people to secure loans or find business opportunities (Levinson & Holland 1996: 6). Others who have a less strong education background would automatically draw more on the contacts and friendships they develop through school. Friends and family were often important sources of information in young people's job search.

These findings contrast with human capital theory which assumes that individual employability is a source of opportunity, choice and occupational status (Brown 2001: 7). The examples above show that personal and informal networks based on class, gender and ethnicity continue to matter in young people's job search. Another problem with human capital theory is that it treats education purely as an investment and reduces young people to objects for economic development. With its focus on the agency and skills of the individual, human capital theory also neglects the power relations and inequalities inherent in young people's access to credit to start their own business, education and jobs (Ansell 2005:134). In short, because of the highly individualised approach to schooling, a human capital framework may not work in more collectivist

cultures or in settings where the job markets do not work on a purely free market model.

### Personal networks, corruption, and nepotism

The section above has pointed out that most of the young men and women I met do not really believe that a meritocratic system exists in Cilegon. But how do they make sense of their disjuncture between the meritocratic ideologies encountered in school and the nepotism and political clientelism they encounter in their job search?

First of all, as noted in chapter 2, young men and women grow up amidst realities of corruption and often share ideas about certain groups of people having privileged access to certain kinds of jobs (e.g. educated migrant workers have privileged access to management positions in the industries, relatives of the mayor have privileged access to lucrative business contracts or jobs in the local bureaucracy, it is easier for girls to find factory jobs than it is for young men). So in this respect they are not really surprised and corruption and nepotism are not new to them. They might have encountered it during secondary school, for example through cheating on exams or tests. But when they start navigating their post-educational worlds, the issue of KKN (corruption, collusion and nepotism) makes its presence felt more directly: whether they want to deal with it or not, young men and women are likely to encounter situations in which they have to make decisions about using KKN to achieve their goals, in which case they have to learn how to use it to their advantage. As there are no manuals, this is a confusing and frustrating process to them, especially if their personal networks are not that big or do not extend in the right direction. For first-time job seekers, information about the use of KKN often depends on hearsay and information narrated to them by others. The challenge for them is to figure out the strategies and resources that will help them navigate the job market. In Bourdieu's terms, they have to get a 'feel for the game'.

Young men and women's responses to the omnipresence of corruption and nepotism take several forms. A common reaction among young men and women is to be sort of weary about the situation and simply shrug their shoulders that no matter how they would have liked the system to work differently, the simple fact is that "yes, this is what Indonesia is like" (*iya, Indonesia begitulah*) and they just try to make the best of it.

Another common reaction among young people is to blame themselves for failed job applications, whether they had unsuccessfully tried to use nepotism or had simply failed the various tests that are part of companies' recruitment procedures. They tended to interpret this as a personal failure, rather than questioning their education background or the recruitment process. But the reverse also happened: when they were sure they had done well and passed the tests or had paid bribes to an intermediary or someone inside the company or government, but still did not get the job, they attributed this to the unfair logics of KKN. They usually assumed that someone else with stronger connections had outwitted them and fell back on commonsense knowledge about which groups in society are thought to have privileged access to government work or jobs in the industries (see chapter 2).

Young people sometimes used KKN not only to access jobs, but also to earn money when they were unemployed. One example of such illicit practices is young people earning a fee by acting as the ghost writer for another student's thesis or written assignment. I witnessed an example of this during an afternoon visit to the office of a local NGO in Serang in 2008. While exchanging news and gossip with a group of staff members and friends at this organisation, the head of this NGO who worked as a university lecturer in Pandeglang (Banten) casually announced: "By the way, there are thesis's available" ("*O ya, lagi ada skripsi?*"). One of my friends, a 28-year unemployed university drop out and NGO volunteer, immediately jumped up and eagerly exclaimed: "yeeesss.....that's 1,5 million rupiah for me and 1,5 million for my friend!". His friend smiled and with twinkling eyes confirmed his participation in this scheme: "At your service commander" ("*Siap komandan?*"). Cheating on essays and other assignments is a common practice in many university campuses and there are even agencies run by students offering their services in trading, copying and writing other students' work. Probably less common is that the lecturer was facilitating the arrangement. Two students in his course, both civil servants, had to write their thesis but did not have the time or the inclination to do so. Instead, they had made a deal with their lecturer that they would pay a handsome amount of money for someone else to be the ghost writer of their thesis. All it would take was a few short meetings or phone calls with their ghost writer to discuss the title and topic of the thesis as well as a payment of 1,5 million rupiah, and this simple transaction would buy these students a thesis of sufficient quality

to pass their course. The exact fee was probably higher: being the broker for this arrangement, the lecturer no doubt made a profit on this deal as well.

Maybe this arrangement made everyone happy: the civil servants were exempted from a lengthy and boring process of thesis writing, the university lecturer made some extra cash and could offer a 'job' to two of his friends, and my underemployed friend had found an activity which would earn him enough money to live on for the rest of the month. It was agreed upon that the completed documents were due three weeks later and the deal was sealed with much joking and laughter. This assignment seems to reinforce class-based patterns of privilege and corruption. My underemployed friend, who had dropped out from university a few years before due to financial difficulties, was eagerly hoping to continue his studies but was still trying to collect the money needed to realising this dream in the near future. Instead, he was anonymously writing a thesis for a privileged, but corrupt civil servant who apparently was too lax to do his own work. Not only were these civil servants getting their qualifications based on the brains and efforts of people who were poorer than them, very possibly, they would enjoy labour benefits off their credentials which they did not earn.

Recently I asked my friend how he looked back on this episode. Did he feel he had taken part in something that could be considered problematic, maybe even immoral, or exploitative? He reflected:

“Yup...it's immoral. I took it because of my situation. Just because I was laughing and joking, doesn't mean I was happy. I felt also burdened (*saya juga beban*). You see, you have to understand the way people lobby their friends, like the lecturer did. I didn't agree with what he was proposing, but I needed the money. And he is my friend, if I would have criticized him for what he did...well, we both knew that this is the mentality of many students and that [this is how] civil servants want to get their degree.”

He concluded by saying: “nowadays I'm a student again, so I don't write thesis's anymore for other people than my self”. In the meantime had obtained a six month job outside of Banten and had moved to Jakarta in 2010. He now shared a boarding room with an old friend whom he knew from his days in a *pesantren*. Their room was furnished with a TV, cupboard, water storage, some books and a single mattress. While his

friend had a part time job that enabled him to pay the rent, my friend had taken up his studies again (even though he often was not sure how to pay for the next semester). Now in his second year, the costs for one semester at his university are 2 million rp. (approx. 168 euro). These examples illustrate the social, economic and political situations which can have the effect of pushing young people into illicit practices. The next section further analyses these issues by looking at how young people react when they are unable to move into the jobs they have come to expect and how they navigate periods of economic insecurity. It pays attention to young people's fluid notions about work and looking for money.

### Cultures of educated un(der)employment

Problems of educated un- and underemployment are a familiar aspect of the lives of many lower middle class youth in Cilegon, especially upper secondary school graduates. They are in an ambivalent situation where they have not (yet) managed to obtain stable employment, but cannot afford to be unemployed either. Often they are grappling with how to position themselves, unsure about their status in present and wondering what the future will hold for them. Yet, little is known about how young men and women perceive and adapt to this situation. In recent years, a number of studies have started to uncover how globalised, relatively educated youth experience and manage a prolonged and sometimes indefinite 'transition to adulthood' where they are trying to realise their aspirations for employment, marriage and localised ideals of masculinity and femininity.

Several studies have focused on young people's experiences of waiting, boredom and unstructured time, in particular in contexts where youth unemployment is very high. Daniel Mains, in his study of educated unemployed young men in urban Ethiopia, where unemployment rates for secondary school leavers are close to fifty per cent, describes how these youth, no longer in school but without work, experience time "as an overabundant and potentially dangerous quantity." (2007: 659). As first-time job seekers, these young men often remain without work for three to four years and joke that "the only change in their lives is following the shade from one side of the street to another" (*ibid.*). Their everyday activities consist of

Chewing *chat*, a locally grown stimulant; watching the latest videos from Hollywood, Bollywood, or, much more infrequently, Ethiopia; and, above all, engaging with one another in *chewata*, the playful conversation that is a favourite pastime of many Ethiopians (*ibid.*)

In North India, Craig Jeffrey examines how the sons of rich Jat farmers navigate educated un(der)employment through prolonged waiting in local colleges and universities, allowing them to maintain an identity as “students on the brink of salaried work” (2010: 86). Largely excluded from the secure government jobs that they aspired to, but reluctant to go home and take up farming or manual labour, these students rely on their parents’ support to keep them in education until their late twenties and early thirties. Often they wait for years on end, while accumulating several bachelor degrees and other postgraduate qualifications. During this period of ‘limbo’, they develop youth cultures of ‘timepass’: hanging out at street corners and tea stalls in Meerut, while keeping an eye out for opportunities (*ibid.*, p. 102).

These studies contain elements that are both different and similar to my findings from Cilegon. The sense of having too much unstructured time or giving up hope was not the main experience among young people I knew. As noted above, their main frustrations evolved around “getting access” to job information and stable employment and their experience is one of ambiguity. They experienced frustration and boredom, and occasionally expressed anxieties about their future, but had not given up hope that something would change in their situation. Young men and women experienced time in several ways. On the one hand, they tried to plan their activities around structured time. Young men kept an eye out for a next recruitment round at Krakatau Steel or other companies, knowing this usually takes place only once a year or every two years. Similarly, young women anticipated that during the busy weeks surrounding Ramadan and the New Year many stores hire extra staff on a temporary basis. Upper secondary school graduates who had plans to continue their education waited for the summer to take admission tests and start the academic year in September. As noted before, when possible, young men and women like to take some time after completing secondary school before starting to make work of finding a job. During this time they are often involved in casual work, help out in family businesses where they exist, do housekeeping (young women), and get by with all kinds of informal economic activities which they insist is not their job.

There is a clear gender dimension to these activities as the ‘timepass’ experiences of female graduates tend to be relatively invisible. When they are unemployed it is often seen as less of a problem: in the absence of salaried work they usually spend their time at home, helping their mothers with household chores or watching over younger children of family and neighbours. While personally young women may find this boring and frustrating as they would prefer to find a job, in doing so they nevertheless conform to a mainstream gender ideology which promotes a binary opposition of women in wifely roles within the household and men taking on leadership roles in the economic and political sphere (e.g. Suryakusuma 1996). For parents, the behaviour of unemployed sons is more difficult to control as they are allowed greater freedom and mobility. At the same time, unemployed young men are under more scrutiny of the wider society, because they are seen as potential trouble makers and their hanging out in the public sphere is more visible.

Apart from taking some time while being busy with all kinds of informal economic activities, young men and women often had to lower the expectations about the kinds of jobs they had hoped to get. At the same time, it was also common among my informants to quit the jobs that they felt were boring (attending a *warung*), or exploitative in terms of income (selling shoes in a store). This often led to great mobility between jobs and economic activities.

### Rizal’s story

Young people’s fluid ideas about what constitutes looking for money or what they consider a proper job or just something on the side call into question rigid dichotomies of employment versus unemployment. One of the young persons who I got to know well and who taught me most about these fluid boundaries is Rizal (23), who we also met in chapter 2. Rizal originates from another part of Banten but lives in Cilegon with an older relative who teaches in a *madrasah*. After graduating from upper secondary school in 2006 Rizal told me in 2007 that he was “waiting for a job”, but was unable to get work because of the difficult economic climate, which he considered not just emblematic of Cilegon, but of Indonesia in general. However, over the course of the next three years I observed that there were several kinds of manual, low status work that he was not interested in and refused to do even though it was available to him, such as factory work which he had quit or work as *ojek* driver. Only

slowly did he admit that at the time when I first met him he “was waiting for work, without looking for it”, and that he still “very much wanted to be free, hang out at the *warung* with my friends, go places and seek refreshing (*cuci mata, refreshing*).” The problem was not so much that there was no work available to him, but that many of it did not appeal to him.

At the same time he was also grappling with his disappointment about not being able continue to tertiary education. His family did not have the financial means, nor did Rizal have stable work to pay for his own studies. He said: “What kinds of work are available to male upper secondary graduates? Usually jobs as *ojeg* driver (motorcycle taxi driver), helper in a factory, office boy, parking lot attendant or selling mobile phone credit. The income earned in these jobs is not enough to save, pay for the semesters and cover daily expenses.” Figuring there are other ways of learning besides formal schooling, he decided to focus his attention to social activities in neighbourhood youth organisations, as well as the local mosque organisation, Karang Taruna and regional NGO based in Serang, as a means of informal education. This enabled him to gain knowledge and get a better sense about his skills and potential (*potensi*). During these activities he tried to build up his credibility, expand his social network, while keeping an eye out for information about work.

For the time being, he could get by with “looking for money” (*cari uang*), which he insisted did not necessary have to be in the form of becoming a salaried worker, but could come from several sources: for example a three-day job as a surveyor in local elections or quick counts; or from earning a fee by acting as a broker for someone who wants to sell a motorcycle or mobile phone.

In addition to these mundane forms of looking for money, Rizal tried to expand his social network by establishing contacts with more powerful adults which he hoped would open up opportunities to enter office work in business or the local government that he aspired to. These attempts included a brief one month stint of clubbing with the rich, 30 year old younger brother of one of Cilegon’s elite politicians and business owners through whom he was vaguely related through family. Rizal joined his new acquaintance on several occasions to spend time in pubs and disco’s in Cilegon, but quickly grew bored of what he referred to as a “hedonistic world”. Reflecting on this brief episode he says: “The amount of money that these rich people spend on one night, renting a VIP room, women, drinking Jack Daniels, the costs can add up to 7 mil-

lion rp (587 euro)! It really made me understand that there is no balance between the lifestyles of such rich people and the surrounding society. It's hedonistic, they have two Kopassus people as bodyguards and really don't care about ordinary people (*masyarakat*).” Looking back on this time Rizal said: “Actually I was not so much interested in the clubbing, I was looking for relations (*relasi*).” In particular, Rizal hoped to find an opportunity for a job or contract through a locally well-known company owned by his new acquaintance, but when he was told there was no such opportunity he stopped seeing this person. Then, in 2010 Rizal briefly joined the campaign team (*tim sukses*) of one of the political candidates in the elections for mayor in Cilegon. He hoped he would be rewarded for his work in the *tim sukses* through entry into the civil servant apparatus, but this never materialised. Rizal's case is exceptional in the sense that many of his peers are probably less well connected to the town's elites and integrated in Banten's emerging NGO scene, but his example also highlights common themes that are shared by other informants. Disappointment about not being able to continue education was common. A few young men I knew mentioned they had gone through a period of being 'bad boys' because of it, venting their disappointment through drinking sessions with their male friends. But his example also shows how “looking for money” could take various shapes, ranging from formal and informal economic activities to establishing relations with patrons.

While on the one hand I was sometimes mistakenly under the impression that someone was unemployed whereas in fact he or she would be quite busy looking for money and undertake all kinds of informal economic activities, in other instances I assumed that some of my informants had proper jobs, only to find out when I interviewed them that they really did not consider this their job, but rather 'something on the side'. One informant, a vocational secondary school graduate with a certificate in *mesin*, had moved between various jobs and at the time when I spoke him during a second round of fieldwork had been working as an *ojek*-driver (motorcycle taxi driver) over the past year. Yet, he insisted that this was not real work, but just “something on the side” (*kerja sampingan*) while he was looking for work that would better match his technical background and job aspirations. Similarly, Agus (24), a vocational secondary school graduate and successful owner of a mobile phone counter who was introduced earlier in this chapter, spoke of his work as some-

thing that was really “*pekerjaan sambil main*” (literally: “work while playing”). While he was serious about attending to his mobile phone counter and worked in the mall daily from mid-day until 9 pm, he also said: “But there is no-one to supervise me, so I work while playing right?” His friends would frequently stop by and hang out at his mobile phone counter in the mall for a chat or a coffee. Agus’s remark hints that the mobile phone counter does not reflect his real job aspirations. As we will see in the next chapter, it is actually Agus’s dream to become employed as a permanent worker in one of Cilegon’s factories. Other informants who had taken up part time or full-time work which did not match their aspirations while they were looking for a better job or hoped to earn the money to continue to college, often referred to this kind of fallback employment as “filling time” (*mengisi waktu*). ‘Filling time’ also highlights the temporal dimension of educated underemployment.

Craig Jeffrey’s study on the ‘timepass’ cultures of un(der)employed young men in a student town in northern India paints a lively picture of local timepass cultures and stresses that ‘doing timepass’ is not just a passive activity of hanging out at tea stalls, but that it constitutes “a form of productive idleness and alertness to possibility” and might even provide opportunities to obtain information relevant to their job search (2010: 101). I had a similar impression in Cilegon, although I often found this mixture of hanging out, casual chatting while being open to possibilities and largely informal, relatively hidden, everyday activities that these young men engaged in, difficult to pinpoint. A common way for young men to stay up to date on local news and share information about job opportunities, dating and girls, is to hang out at the local warung, a friend’s house or other ‘basecamp’. For example, hanging out at the local warung offered opportunities to share coffee and cigarettes, while playing cards with adults living nearby (e.g. the RT head, a local policeman, relatives). This provided a way to stay up to date about everyone’s whereabouts and local gossip. Being on standby, young men could also be called upon by the adults around them to borrow a motorcycle and run errands, or, in the middle of the night to accompany the local women to the market to sell their goods. These episodes of hanging out could suddenly change into periods of great activity when a new job or opportunity to make money presented itself. It often depends on friends or family if an individual or collective job opportunity presented itself.

Being in these situations of underemployment often makes it difficult for young people to plan for the future. Moreover, it also meant that they have to be creative in seeking to fulfil their lifestyle needs in the present. Often they would cut down on meals, eating only once or twice a day. In the absence of a stable income, young people volunteered their services in return for a free meal, for example by walking over (rather than taking a minibus) to a nearby mosque and helping out with social activities in return for a meal, or helping out at a local warung (food stall). In other instances they would collect 5000 rp from their friends and buy a meal together. Cell phone cards of various networks were usually shared between friends: if someone was out of credit on his/her mobile phone, he or she might borrow the card from a friend to make a quick call or send a text message. T-shirts and caps could also circulate among friends, as did cigarettes and cups of coffee. During late night hanging out and playing guitar, young men would often buy cheap and mixes of alcohol which came in a plastic bag (rather than the exclusive Bintang beer or Jack Daniels whiskey) and was shared among friends. In short, young people are often quite busy doing informal activities and looking for jobs while hanging out. They do not count this as work, but reprimanded me for not recognising that they bought and shared coffee, cigarettes, snacks and cell phone credit at the local warung through their own efforts – I had mistakenly assumed they were unemployed.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the different perspectives about the role of education in preparing young people for their entry into the labour market. Many parents identified education as the foremost route to upward mobility for their children. Policy makers view education as a necessary investment to create a skilled workforce of future workers and entrepreneurs. This human capital perspective equals education with employment and regional development, but in reality education is a necessary but not always sufficient resource to get a job. Education is certainly important in the labour market, but young people's ability to benefit from education depends on money and range of social and cultural capital. Many young people I spoke to did not really believe that a meritocratic job market exists, rather they base their understandings of the kinds of employment available to them on their knowledge of local structures of opportunity: they grow up in a context where corruption and nepotism

prevail, where local and migrant youth compete for jobs in heavy industries and where a set of newly emerging regional elites is strengthening its monopoly over some of the top positions in regional business and politics. Hence young people are not really surprised about this, only confused (*bingung*) about how to deal with some of these obstacles.

During their job search young people often experienced periods of educated underemployment. The second part of the chapter has documented young people's individual strategies of earning an income in the absence of stable employment. Young people expressed fluid ideas about work and income which complicate conventional understandings which relate unemployment to idleness. The next chapter explores some collective strategies that young men in Cilegon resort to in dealing with competition over jobs in the town's industrial zone.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “*Kuliah tidak sekedar mendapatkan ilmu tetapi juga penempatan kerja*” (LP3I business college Cilegon, brochure for the academic year 2008-2009).

<sup>2</sup> “*Kampus bagi yang ingin cepat dapat kerja*” (LP3I business college Cilegon, brochure for the academic year 2008-2009).

<sup>3</sup> Flyer Universitas Serang Raya, Serang, academic year 2009-2010.

<sup>4</sup> Dian brought this up herself and used the phrase “*latar belakang orang menenggal*”.

<sup>5</sup> *Aurat* refers to those parts of a women's body, usually at least her hair, head and shoulders, which should be covered during prayer, religious study and the presence of unrelated men. See further Smith-Hefner (2005: 443).

<sup>6</sup> Blackberry smartphones gained popularity in 2011, but were not (yet) in use among my informants during the time I did fieldwork.

<sup>7</sup> A new motorcycle of the type that Ibnu bought costs approximately 10 million rp (823 euro). Paying for the motorcycle in monthly instalments would take 2 – 3 years, meaning that Ibnu will need to have a stable job during this time. Should Ibnu's family miss one or two payments, the motor dealer is authorised to take back the motorcycle.

## 4

## Young men and the competition for jobs in heavy industries

### Introduction

On 11 March 2008, a small group of young men from one of the neighbourhoods next to Cilegon's industrial estate visited two internationally-owned factories that are located just across the road from their kampung. These lower middle class youths, representing a group of about 200 young men in this neighbourhood, most of them in their twenties and thirties and without regular jobs or stable incomes, had come to negotiate an important issue: the need for more jobs and training opportunities for local youth in Cilegon's heavy industries. Since *Reformasi* many of such local grassroots youth organisations have sprung up in the area of Cilegon's harbour and industrial estate. One of their aims is to advocate better access to information about job openings and more transparency in the recruitment process. They also try to bypass having to compete in the labour market by attempting to negotiate exclusive job contracts for their members with the newly established factories in their neighbourhood. Finally, by setting up neighbourhood youth organisations they hope to obtain funding through companies' corporate social responsibility programmes, which they intend to spend on skills training programmes or other activities for their organisation. Usually these efforts are met with limited success. Factory managers routinely refer to national standard recruitment procedures and are unwilling or unable to give exclusive job contracts to local youth groups. Moreover, not all of these local youth organisations last long: competition between them is fierce and some quickly dissolve because of internal conflict, making them not always reliable negotiation partners for the companies that they are lobbying. The extent to which these local youth organisations become successful or fall back into a state of "being vacuum", as several

informants phrased it, often depends on the energies, charisma and networks of their local leaders.

Grassroots youth organisations like these may be small, but they signal a local and collective response to a challenging issue: the number of secondary school and university graduates is growing faster than the available job opportunities for young people in Cilegon, as elsewhere in Java and Indonesia. This chapter examines some of the pressures and uncertainties young men in Cilegon face when they enter the world of work; in particular in the competition over jobs in Cilegon's industries against the background of the upcoming privatisation of the town's biggest steel factory, the state-owned company PT Krakatau Steel. The chapter analyses how young men from a lower middle class background in a medium-sized Indonesian town are dealing with issues of competition and privatisation in their efforts to obtain a livelihood. Using Krakatau Steel's 2008 recruitment of 'fresh graduates' as a case, the first part of the chapter describes the experiences of a small group of tertiary and secondary graduates who are trained to become employees of the steel company. Although in some ways these young men belong to the lucky few who managed to 'get in', as trainees they are expected to follow certain moral and bodily disciplining practices aimed at increasing worker productivity while the rewards are not always clear. The second half of the chapter traces the individual and collective responses of young men who have not been able to access salaried work in the industries.

### Young men and their relations with Krakatau Steel

Though certainly not everyone is interested in a job in Cilegon's industrial estate, on average young men tend to view the heavy and petrochemical industries and the surrounding port area as one of the biggest employers in town and the most obvious place to look for work. As one informant living across the road from Cilegon's industrial estate put it: "the industries are right in front of our eyes". Those living in other parts of town might notice how company-sponsored buses drive back and forth between Cilegon's bus terminal and the various nationally and internationally owned companies in the town's industrial estate, dropping off uniformed employees who commute to their workplace every morning and afternoon. Cilegon's industrial estate contains both private and state-owned companies. The division of labour in these companies is highly regimented: different production, administrative and managerial

professions reflect a hierarchy in education, skills, status and job security. To young men with upper secondary and tertiary education certificates and technical qualifications, the industries offer prospects for future jobs as welders, mechanics, electricians, operators, foremen and midlevel managers. Educated youth centre their aspirations on the idea of becoming *karyawan* (employees) rather than *buruh* (workers) in the industries. There are important distinctions between the two in terms of status, income and job security. The notion of *karyawan* implies a stable position (*pekerjaan tetap*) and income plus benefits such as pensions, healthcare, and for some even housing. Having a stable income also makes it easier to get loans from banks or buy a motorcycle on credit. In this respect, becoming a *karyawan* at Krakatau Steel and other national and international companies in Cilegon carries with it similar connotations of social status and benefits which many educated Indonesians associate with a career as civil servant. Indeed, during the Suharto period there was a certain amount of overlap between the two, as employees of Krakatau Steel and other state-owned enterprises were required to be a member of Korpri (*Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia*, the Republic of Indonesia Civil Service Corps), the official organisation for all government employees, and were subjected to similar kinds of government training. This changed in the post-Suharto period when Krakatau Steel employees dismantled Korpri and established their own labour union in 1999 (Rudnyckyj 2010: 225).

In contrast to *karyawan*, the notion of worker (*buruh*) applies to those working in less prestigious and stable circumstances: workers have jobs that are lower in rank and status compared to those of *karyawan*, they receive smaller salaries and significantly less benefits, their contracts are insecure and they can be laid off easily whenever a company deems it necessary. Whereas from the perspective of relatively educated youth becoming a *karyawan* would be considered desirable, becoming a *buruh* is not and employees would be offended if they were mistakenly held for a worker (see Rudnyckyj 2010: 221-222). Furthermore, some of my informants mentioned that young people who become factory workers might change their aspirations after a while and try to become self-employed (*wiraswasta*) as traders or suppliers to the industries if they managed to save enough money to start a business.

As noted in chapter 2, during the Suharto period state-owned enterprises like Krakatau Steel were considered crucial to national develop-

ment and could rely on large amounts of state funding. In addition, these companies provided salaried employment and (upper) middle class livelihoods to a small group of well-educated, indigenous Indonesians. However, the regular funding from the national government and the fact that these state-owned companies were part of the wider patronage system surrounding President Suharto's Golkar party, created ample opportunities for self-enrichment and corruption. Internal auditing and accounting systems existed, but were enforced loosely and unevenly. These practices have come to be seen as increasingly problematic in the post-Suharto period. The upcoming privatisation of Krakatau Steel and the need to attract foreign investors requires the company to reduce corruption and comply with international standards of accounting, auditing and fiscal control (Rudnyckj 2010: 152-153). Furthermore, as the company seeks to increase its profits and improve its competitiveness in the global steel market, old and new forms of employee training and disciplining are combined. As neoliberal notions of transparency, accountability and employee discipline are being promoted, both the meaning of being a *karyawan* and the recruitment process and criteria one has to go through in order to become one, are starting to change.

These developments, combined with the steady supply of relatively educated youth and longer history of fraught relations between the industries and local youth, make that young men enter a context of intensified competitions for jobs in Krakatau Steel and other companies. In chapter 2, I have described the context of mutual alienation between local youth and the companies, many of which are located in Cilegon's industrial zone for the ports, tax breaks and cheap labour. I also pointed out that in general employment opportunities as *karyawan* are limited, due to the capital intensive instead of labour intensive nature of the heavy and chemical industries, as well as competition with skilled migrants from Java and Sumatra. Finding a job might become more difficult in the coming years due to the impact of the global economic recession on the steel industries. For example, in the beginning of 2008, a number of 12,444 jobseekers had officially registered with the manpower office (*Dinas Tenaga Kerja*) in Cilegon. By July that year, a local newspaper reported that during the past six months out of this group of over 12,000 jobseekers only 72 people had been placed in a job with the industries in Anyer, Cilegon and Merak (*Radar Banten*, 6 September 2008). There is

probably more employment in the various service industries surrounding Krakatau Steel and other factories.

### **Company recruitment practices**

Local and migrant youth use various tactics in their competition over jobs in PT Krakatau Steel and other industries. They are not all competing for the same kind of jobs or training opportunities, as their education level determines their entry level in the labour market and the kind of positions they formally qualify for. Companies like PT Krakatau Steel, which employs about 6000 permanent workers, usually recruit workers and staff on different kinds of contracts. While the company offers a modest amount of long-term contracts with relative security to some, it also uses outsourcing staff which is not directly hired by KS but are recruited through a more insecure subcontracting system, often on temporary contracts.

The PT Krakatau Steel Group recruits employees at various levels:

1. A. Upper secondary school graduates with a background in technical education, who are fresh graduates of SLTA (upper secondary school) or SMK (vocational secondary school). For the recruitment of these youths KS uses a consultant from Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta, one of the country's most prestigious universities. Being a fresh graduate means that one graduated no longer than 5 years ago, hence the age limit for applicants is set at 22 years old. The announcement for this kind of recruitment is made in local newspapers in Banten. The 2008 advertisement stated specifically that citizens from Banten would get priority. When these new trainees start at KS they have to follow an on the job training for twelve months. They become permanent workers after passing the training.  
B. People who are not directly employed by KS, but are hired as subcontracted workers and 'unskilled labour', i.e. they work for KS as security guards or cleaning personnel.
2. Tertiary education graduates who have at least a three year diploma (D3), bachelor degree (S1) or master certificate (S2). These young men work for KS as accountants, in marketing, legal staff, supervisors or planners. The recruitment is handled by a consultant from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), an-

other one of the country's elite universities. The recruitment announcement is made in national newspapers, the websites of several nationally well-known universities, as well as several websites advertising job vacancies. The recruitment procedure consists of various rounds of testing, including a psychological test and a physical examination. Tests take place in several cities across the archipelago, including Makassar, Padang, Surabaya, Jakarta and Cilegon. No explicit preference for Banten residents is mentioned.

A typical job advertisement addressing fresh graduates with a three year diploma (D3 certificate) or a BA degree for a one-year period as management trainee is included below:

**Figure 4.1**  
*Job advertisement for management trainees at PT Krakatau Steel (March 2010)*

*Lowongan Kerja PT. KRAKATAU STEEL (Persero)*



The biggest steel company in Indonesia, located at Cilegon - Banten needs you. We are opening new enrollment for fresh graduates as:

**MANAGEMENT TRAINEE (MT)**

1. D-3: Mechanical Engineering, Electronics/Instrumentation Engineering and Informatics Engineering
2. GPA: minimum 2,75 (at scale: 4)
3. Male & Single
4. Willing not to marry during the period as a management trainee
5. Maximum age: 25 years for D3, at 28 February 2010.
6. Active English with minimum TOEFL score: 450 (please attach the certificate)
7. Not currently engaged in any contract with other companies

Test schedule:

\* TPA and TOEFL: 11 March 2010

- \* Psychological test : 12 March 2010
- \* Job Test and interview : 15 March 2010

For those eligible with all the requirements, please apply at : SAC ITS deadline is on Friday, March 5th 2010 di SAC ITS Lt. 2 Kampus ITS Sukolilo Surabaya<sup>1</sup>

Source: <http://infokarirbumn.blogspot.com/2010/03/lowongan-kerja-pt-krakatau-steel.html> accessed online 12 Oct 2010.

This job vacancy is directed towards young, single men below the age of 25 years old. Academic qualifications (cultural capital) are considered to be important, as indicated by the emphasis on having a tertiary education diploma and the need for applicants to give proof of GPA and English test scores. During the competitive application procedure, candidates are selected through various rounds of testing, including a psychological test. Candidates who pass these tests enter a traineeship period in which they will be trained as employees and gain work experience within various divisions of the Krakatau Steel Group. During this traineeship these young men are not paid a full salary; they receive a monthly allowance instead. What is striking about this advertisement are the various stipulations which state that new recruits are single, do not marry during the traineeship period and have no formal ties with other companies. This seems to indicate that the company expects the full commitment from these young men who are in the prime of their lives and wants them to be 'married to their job'. I do not have data about why it is important that they do not marry during their job training period, but a possible explanation might be that the company has to pay family benefits in case the trainees marry and start a family during this time.

### **Fresh graduates: traineeships for university educated youth**

In 2008 and 2010 Krakatau Steel held recruitment rounds for young trainees to enroll in a one-year training programme which will prepare them to become workers and staff in the steel factory and its ten daughter companies. Because of the large numbers of youth who are competing for a job, companies like KS can be highly selective about the kind of young workers they want to hire and select those applicants with good education credentials. They recruit not only BA graduates from the technical department of the local Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University in Ci-

legon, but also fresh graduates from elite universities in Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta and Jakarta.

Roni (23), Yanto (24) and Wildan (23) match the profile of single, male fresh graduates that the steel factory is looking for and were recruited by KS over the summer of 2008. I met them in the common room of one of the company dormitories, which houses eight to ten trainees during the first weeks of their internship. It is late afternoon, the young men have returned from their daily routine at the company's education and training centre (*diklat*), and they now have a few hours to themselves to eat and relax before they will participate in the mandatory evening *apèl* (rollcall) at 9 pm. After this session they will soon retire to their beds, as each day starts early with compulsory morning exercise at 5 am. Roni is from North Sumatra, Yanto from East Java and Wildan from Banten, but they all have in common that they graduated with a bachelor's diploma from universities in Java, like ITB in Bandung (Indonesia's elite technical university) and Institut Teknologi 10 Nopember in Surabaya. The fact that KS is a state-owned company is one of the reasons why Roni and Yanto want to work there: they assume that since KS is a state-owned company, its profits will benefit Indonesian state and society. Some of Roni's friends reacted surprised when he told them he got a traineeship at KS ("Wow, you work for KS?!"). These friends work at private mining companies such as Freeport (gold and copper mining), KPC (coal mining) and Newmont (copper and gold mining) where they make 7 million rupiah (563 euro) a month or more. In a similar position at Krakatau Steel one would earn about 5 million rupiah (about 400 euro).<sup>2</sup> But, he said, Krakatau Steel's profits are used by the government to help develop the country whereas profits from Freeport are channeled abroad. In addition to this Yanto sees another advantage of working at KS. He has just resigned from a job at a paper factory in Serang because of the work overload and lack of career perspectives, the middle and upper management positions all being occupied by Taiwanese expats. He thinks his career perspectives at KS are clearer. The average age of employees is 45, which means that within the next decade many of KS's permanent employees will retire. He hopes this demographic opens up long-term career opportunities.

Other informants gave similar explanations for the appeal of state-owned companies such as Krakatau Steel. One of them is Pak Ali, a recruitment manager from Cilegon who works at a privately-owned enter-

prise in the industrial estate. This company produces a variety of plastic products and utilities from its production facilities in Cilegon and has a head office in Jakarta. In 2010 the company employed 451 workers, the vast majority male, although a small number of women had found jobs in administrative positions. At the time of the interview, Pak Ali had been working at this company for 14 years. He explains that this company was initially established in 1992 as a state-owned enterprise. But as Pak Ali mentions: “We already went public in 1996”, meaning that the company was privatised in the mid-1990s. During the interview, he recounts an incident that happened a few years earlier, which illustrates the different appeal of private and state-owned companies. A few years ago, Pak Ali was involved in a recruitment round for a traineeship programme for new employees and had invited potential candidates for a day of testing in Cilegon. As it turned out, this testing day happened to coincide with a similar recruitment event at KS. According to Pak Ali, the result of this unforeseen overlap was that only 60 percent of the invited candidates attended the tests at his company. Reflecting on this incident, he says:

The wages at here are higher than those at Krakatau Steel, because we are a private company. But Krakatau Steel still acts like a magnet for job seekers in Cilegon. It is a big company and a state-owned enterprise. It has the added bonus that it offers broad facilities. People are looking for security: they anticipate that if there is a bankruptcy or other financial trouble [at a state-owned company], the government will help them out (interview 22.07.2010).<sup>3</sup>

While Pak Ali thinks there is a possibility that some of the candidates might not have received the invitation letter from his company or in the meantime had found other work, he considers the competition with KS a big factor in the low turnout that day.

### **Job opportunities for local and migrant youth**

Recently a manager at PT Chandra Asri, one of the biggest chemical companies based in the industrial estate, was quoted in a newspaper article in *Radar Banten* asserting that the majority of Banten’s workforce did not yet possess the human capital to qualify for a job in this factory. The company therefore tends to recruit graduates from outside Banten, mainly from Java’s elite universities such as UI (Jakarta), ITB (Bandung) and

UGM (Yogyakarta).<sup>4</sup> As noted before, this story confirms a longstanding and widespread perception by people in Cilegon that skilled migrants from Java and Sumatra get favoured in jobs in KS and other industries (especially the middle and upper rank positions) because they have an educational advantage over local people in Banten, who only get hired on a contract basis for lower ranked positions (for example, as an out-source worker, machine operator), jobs which only require a completed upper secondary school education (SLTA). In an attempt to redress some of the inequalities in the division of job opportunities for local and migrant people in the town's industries, Cilegon's local administration has discussed with the industries the need for quota which would guarantee the recruitment of a specified minimum proportion of local people. During the interview with Wildan, Roni and Yanto, I had brought with me an article from a local newspaper about Cilegon proposing KS to set a quota for hiring a minimum of 40 percent of local people for its outsourcing contracts. When I asked their opinion about it this led to an animated discussion. Wildan says:

Of course people with upper secondary education qualifications should be tested if they want to become permanent employees of KS. They have to pass the tests. Where they are from should not be an issue. Only when two people have the same skills and abilities, then KS might choose the applicant who lives nearby. But KS is a state-owned company and should give job opportunities to everyone, not just to people from Cilegon.

Yanto remarks: "Cilegon used to be left behind and was deserted, with a lot of land that remained unused. When KS came to Cilegon, the town developed." Wildan adds: "Serang used to be more advanced than Cilegon". Yanto: "And because KS is here a lot of other industries settled in Cilegon as well." Yanto and Wildan both agree that the development of KS and Cilegon are related: Cilegon only became known as a 'steel city' (*kota baja*) when Krakatau Steel came to Banten. Wildan (Banten) continues:

I find this kind of thinking [i.e. asking for a quota for local people] embarrassing. If you want to work you have to have the qualities. Indeed, the level of education of people in Cilegon and Banten in general is not too consistent. Often their education is of less quality than from newcomers (*pendatang*). Usually people here have an education until the end of upper secondary school. The management positions in KS are mostly taken by

migrants, the people in Cilegon usually work in positions below that, because they are not yet able [to obtain such positions].

Nevertheless, Wildan hopes that one day KS will have a CEO from Cilegon. Roni agrees with the 40 per cent quota: “Krakatau Steel uses a lot of resources from Cilegon such as land and electricity. So it should open up job opportunities for the people in Cilegon but the applicants should enter KS by way of selection.” He thinks that on the one hand the steel factory has to listen to the demands from its surrounding society, on the other hand it also has to make profits and for that it is important that it selects employees with good skills and qualifications. In the end he agrees with Wildan that “those people who get jobs at KS should have the skills, KS should give priority to quality”.

A human capital integration manager at KS confirmed that the company looks for quality during the recruitment procedure. He told me that applicants only get hired if they pass the tests:

We do not hire people just because they are from Banten. KS is a nationally owned company and is not just here for the people in Cilegon. The only thing we can do is prioritise people from Cilegon after they have passed the tests.

Pak Ali, the recruitment manager at a plastic producing company who was introduced earlier in this chapter, thinks that the elaborate recruitment procedures such as those used by Krakatau Steel and his own employer, are really standard practice among companies Indonesia. “So I don’t think that our recruitment criteria are set too high”, he says. Like the manager at Krakatau Steel, Pak Ali insists that the selection of new trainees occurs through elaborate tests in the various recruitment rounds. “Only if two candidates have the same score and one is from Banten and one is from elsewhere, then we take the one from Banten” he explains. His colleague, Pak Anton, who originates from Yogyakarta and has been working for the plastic company since 1992, is in charge of coordinating a traineeship programme for local youth. Each year the company trains 25 secondary and tertiary graduates with certificates from schools and universities in Banten, to become employees in this company. Pak Anton reflects on the quality of education in the region:

In 1992, there were only a few spots with educational institutes in Banten. Indeed, the quality of schools and universities in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung and Surabaya was much better. But nowadays the difference in

knowledge between graduates from Banten and elsewhere is not so big anymore. For example, for our internship programme in 2007, we had a considerable number of trainees who had studied at Untirta Cilegon. Since regional autonomy, education in the region has become better. Of course, the quality of institutes like Universitas Indonesia (Jakarta), ITB (Bandung) and IPB (Bogor) is still superior, they continue to be favourites [among companies in Cilegon]. But overall, education in Banten is relatively good (*cukup baik*). (interview, Cilegon, 23.07.2010).

On the one hand, the insistence of the recruitment managers that I spoke with that selection of new trainees occurs solely on the basis of merit and test scores is plausible. After all, the educational ‘gap’ between institutes in Banten and those in other parts of Java, although not yet closed, has been reduced over the past few decades. Moreover, as the recruitment manager from Krakatau Steel explained during the interview, the upcoming privatisation makes that the company is more regularly audited and has to comply with international accounting and recruitment standards. The company managers’ descriptions of the recruitment procedures contradict with the perception of local youth that factory employment is only open to people with personal contacts and networks. This raises the question why local youth continue to adhere to the idea that informal ways of accessing work are more important than educational background. This will become clearer in the next part of the chapter. The purpose of discussing these two opposing views is not to ‘prove’ which view is right and which view is wrong. To do this, more extensive research is needed. This should include more data on migrant labour in Cilegon’s industries, which has remained outside of the scope of this research. In this chapter, I want to show how the opposing discourses about the role of education and informal networks in accessing factory employment are each connected to broader developments in Cilegon, namely the tensions between neoliberal development and globalisation on the one hand, and the national programme of decentralisation on the other.

### Recruitment of vocational secondary school graduates

Krakatau Steel’s 2008 recruitment provided an opportunity to interview not only youths with a tertiary education background, but also young men with an upper secondary education qualification who had passed the various rounds of testing during recruitment process and are

now involved in a one year training period at KS. One of them is Oman (19), a young man living in a crowded kampong in downtown Cilegon. I found Oman at home on a Sunday afternoon, studying reading materials from KS. Oman graduated from upper secondary school in 2007, a vocational school in Cilegon where he specialised in machinery (*mesin*). After graduating from secondary school he applied for jobs at several factories but was never invited for an interview. After a year of job searching he gave up hope. He did not question his education or the companies, but was disappointed with himself and wondered if his skills and abilities maybe were not up to the standard companies were expecting. “But you have to try when there is an opportunity”, he said, so when he found out the steel company was looking for fresh graduates he applied.

Oman showed me a copy of the job advertisement which appeared mid-June in a local newspaper, advertising job opportunities for people with a technical background, including 141 positions for young men with an educational background in *SMK Mesin*. The job advertisement states that these graduates should have graduated no longer than 5 years ago and be no older than 22 years old. Oman has saved all the letters he got from the consultancy handling the application procedure and we went over the various test rounds which included tests about knowledge, based on his high school teachings, as well as a psychological test and a physical exam. Oman feels proud that he managed to pass the selections, because there are many people who want to work for KS. He has heard stories about young men who cried upon finding out they had failed the application procedure. He is also proud that the selection process was ‘clean’ (*proses murni*) and that he was selected because of his own efforts and skills rather than knowing someone inside. Actually, one of Oman’s older brothers works for the cleaning service at Krakatau Steel’s logistics department. This brother motivated him to apply at KS but was not involved in the application procedure.

Later when I mentioned to several informants that I had met a local youth who was selected in KS’s recruitment without using nepotism, my story was refuted. The following comments are typical for the kind of response that Oman’s story elicited: “Oh, but if local people get a job at KS it is because they are lucky or because one of their parents already works there” or “No, people like him are just an exception, usually you need to know someone inside the company (*orang dalam*)” and “Yeah, of course he is not going to tell you that he used an inside contact to help

him. He is guarding his reputation!” These reactions of surprise and in some cases even denial of the possibility that Oman had accessed work at the steel company without resorting to bribes or nepotism, show how deep-seated young people’s ideas are about the need for connections (social capital) to obtain a job at the steel company. What these responses imply is that Oman could not have obtained his traineeship based on his education background and test performances alone. As discussed in chapter 3, here young men and women seem to subscribe to the trope that local youth have difficulties competing for jobs in the industries because of their ‘inferior’ education background. Possibly, this leads them to underestimate the importance of credentials (cultural capital) in the recruitment process. At the same time, the extent to which their competitors, the better educated migrant youth, rely on their education background or also make use of nepotism is not really clear.

Being accepted in the fresh graduate traineeship means Oman will be involved in a one-year internship, he does not yet have the status or the salary of a full employee. He expects that his monthly salary as an operator will be above the regional minimum wage, maybe between 1,3 or 1,5 million rupiah (between 110 or 128 euro). The new trainees are divided over KS and its daughter companies; Oman has been placed in KS proper. He likes working at Krakatau Steel, even though you have to work hard and be disciplined. He likes the solidarity among his colleagues and already feels part of the big KS family. That he mentions these qualities is perhaps the result of something he experienced in his introduction to KS. Oman started his internship in November 2008, by way of a *binamental* (literally: “mental guidance”). This four day training took place in Cilegon and was given by Kopassus, the Indonesian army’s Special Forces. The aim of this training was to install discipline and a strong work ethic in the trainees. Oman thinks the people from Kopassus were very strict: the participants in the training (“100% male” he says) had their heads shaved, beards and moustaches were not allowed and cell phones were to be left at home. If you showed up only a little late you were disciplined right away.

The *Binamental* seems part of recent efforts by the steel company to address what some employees jokingly refer to as the *kerja santai* (relaxed work) ethic among its staff. In order to reduce corruption, increase company competitiveness and install a productive work ethic among its employees, Krakatau Steel has in recent years provided its managerial staff

with extensive “Emotional and Spiritual Quotient” training (ESQ). This motivational training combines Islamic practices with models for business success and personal development (Rudnyckyj 2010). In his ethnography of ESQ training at Krakatau Steel, Daromir Rudnyckyj traces the shifts in various models of employee training that are used in the steel enterprise. He explains that ESQ replaces earlier forms of employee training based on notions of *pancasila* citizenship that were part and parcel of Suharto’s New Order government. *Pancasila* was originally formulated by President Sukarno as part of the project towards nation building of the newly independent Indonesian Republic. It defines Indonesia as a nation-state and aims to create a national identity for its citizens. The *pancasila* is based on five religiously neutral principles: the belief in one God, humanitarianism, the unity of Indonesia, democracy, and social justice for all Indonesian people (Ricklefs 2008: 245-246). In the late 1970s Suharto’s government developed a training called “Training for the Realisation and Enactment of Pancasila” (*Penataran Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*), which Indonesians usually shorten to “P4 training”, or simply P4 (P *empat*). This training was designed to instill the basic principles of the official state ideology of *pancasila* and was compulsory for all state employees, including employees of state owned companies, civil servants, teachers and university staff. The training course usually lasted one week and included homework and a final test. Participant’s performances were recorded in their employment files and could later be consulted for decisions about promotions and salaries (Rudnyckyj 2010: 196). At Krakatau Steel, P4 training stopped at the end of the Suharto period and soon became discredited as state propaganda of New Order regime.

Rudnyckyj argues how the downfall of the Suharto government put many KS managers in an awkward position. A lot of of them had directly benefitted from the state largesse of the New Order regime, which in the post-Suharto period was increasingly discredited as corrupt. Part of the reason why ESQ training was mainly directed at the company’s managers rather than lower-level employees such as operators was that it provided them with a means to publicly renounce their complicity with the regime and the benefits they had received from it (2010: 255). But more importantly, ESQ training represents a change in the way that the meaning of work and the individual and collective responsibilities of employees are conceptualised at the steel company. During the Suharto-period, the

P4 training was used to convey the idea that employees of KS and other state-owned companies were contributing to nationalist progress and development. In the post-Suharto period, ESQ motivational training reformulated productivity as a means for both personal development and company success. By being disciplined, productive and individually accountable, managers could simultaneously develop their faith as Muslims, while also reducing corruption and increasing company output and profits (Rudnycky 2010: 192). ESQ training thus intended to facilitate Krakatau Steel's transition from a state-dependent enterprise with a social mission towards national development and creating middle class livelihoods, towards a privately owned company which is productive, profitable and competes in the global market. The extent to which ESQ training has managed to eradicate older patterns of corruption and 'relaxed work' at the steel company is difficult to assess. The idea of increasing productivity and accountability may not be appealing to everyone.<sup>5</sup> After all, it requires individual employees to work harder, while demands for greater transparency and an end to nepotism and corruption reduce employees' opportunities to top up their income or help their cousin get a job. Furthermore, the forms of employee training and disciplining like Oman and other future operators experienced in their *binamental* at KS are not for everyone and some youth opt out of careers as *karyawan* because of it. They are put off by the hierarchical nature and lack of creativity in such jobs, expecting that as junior staff they would have to comply with their seniors' demands and would be continuously "bossed around" as one informant put it.

The dynamics described in Krakatau Steel's recruitment process, such as a neoliberal logic promoting competitiveness, individual productivity and accountability, but also the focus on credentials and "fresh graduates" and the particular age limits attached to it, pose constraints to young men's opportunities to access professional jobs as employees (*karyawan*). The criteria used by employers, which are further enhanced by the exclusivity implied by the company uniform and the moral and bodily disciplining of young trainees, clearly set boundaries between jobs intended for new graduates and jobs for everyone else. Yet, because of the age limits used and general supply of new graduates, even for tertiary graduates who have ambitions to become *karyawan* there is really only a small window of opportunity to access such jobs. Candidates can be ex-

cluded from employment on the basis of being older than 22 or 25 years old or, in some cases, of not being registered as a citizen of Banten.

I suggested earlier that these developments in the industries are coupled with a more local focus on development in decentralised Cilegon, with the local government trying to get a bigger share of profits generated by its ports and industrial zone, while also trying to negotiate better employment prospects for local people. These efforts are illustrated by attempts to negotiate quota for the recruitment of local workers or stipulations which appear in some job advertisements stating that the applicant should have an identity card (KTP) from Banten. Whereas during the Suharto period *pancasila* state ideology emphasised national identity and pluralism, in the post-Suharto period decentralisation and democratisation have sometimes produced new exclusions based on ethnic and religious identities (Rudnyckyj 2010: 191). Similar dynamics have been observed in other parts of Indonesia. For example, Wenty Minza has described how in the post-Suharto period in the city of Pontianak (West Kalimantan) young people's education-to-work transitions are mediated by ethnic identity. Though ethnic personal networks have always been an important factor in accessing jobs in Pontianak, after decentralisation they became more accentuated in the competition for local resources and employment opportunities, shaping young people's perceptions of social mobility and the segments of the labour market they are able to access (2012: 64-65). In Cilegon, neoliberal development on the one hand introduces a stronger emphasis on human capital and formal qualifications as a prerequisite for professional jobs in the government or private companies. But on the other hand, the more local focus on regional development in the post-Suharto period and attempts to improve job prospects for local people in the industries has strengthened the importance of personal networks which draw on class-based and ethnic privilege in accessing work. The next part of this chapter focuses on the individual and collective strategies which young men without strong formal qualifications use when they are unable to access the kind of jobs they aspire to.

While Oman has been able to get a permanent job as operator in Krakatau Steel, other local youths are not so successful. Agus (24), who is born and raised in Cilegon, has been oriented towards factory work since he was a teenager. Like Oman, he chose to go to a vocational secondary school (STM) specialising in machinery because, as he explained

“Cilegon is an industrial town” and he hoped to get a future job as a factory employee (*karyawan*). However, after graduation Agus quickly learned that finding a job in the industries was not easy:

After graduation I often applied for factory jobs. But I have not yet been able to get a job, it is really difficult. So I changed my focus, I opened a mobile phone counter instead. Yet, I am still interested in a job in the industries, because of the prospect of a secure salary [i.e. as worker on a permanent contract] and because of the social status attached to wearing a badge and company uniform.

Agus’ mother hopes that her son will become an employee wearing a company uniform, indicating the status of a well-paid and relatively stable job. The issue even affected a romantic relationship that Agus once had. He had set his eyes on a girl that he liked, but was facing competition from another guy. According to Agus, the girl and her parents were from the same social strata as Agus and his family, lower middle class. Typical of many parents, the girl’s parents urged their daughter to marry a young man with a stable job in the government or a private company and therefore they did not agree with the prospect of their daughter dating Agus. Following her parents’ wishes, the girl chose the other candidate who had a job at a local paper factory in a position which provided him with a name badge and company uniform. This humiliating experience continues to influence Agus’ motivation to look for a factory job. In terms of income, getting a job as operator or attending his mobile phone counter would not make that much of a difference. In his current job he earns about 1,5 million rupiah per month from sales, which after he has paid rent for his place in the mall and the two counters that he is using, leaves an income between 700,000 to 800,000 rupiah for himself (between 60-70 euro). “Yes, that is below the regional minimum wage of 1,1 million rupiah (94 euro), but it is the result of my own work. No-one is telling me what to do”, says Agus. He estimates that even if he would earn the minimal regional wage in a factory job, after deducting the costs for food and transportation, he would probably end up with a similar net income of around 800,000 rupiah. This suggests that it is really the social status and potential security provided by a future pension and other benefits that still attracts him to the idea of becoming a salaried employee.

Agus has not given up hope that he will get a factory job which he plans to combine with attending to his mobile phone counter, but his chances are becoming slimmer as he grows older. As noted before, many

companies use standard criteria such as age limits and higher education qualifications in their job advertisements. Pak Ali, the aforementioned recruitment manager for a plastic factory in Cilegon explains:

For our internship programme we are looking for fresh graduates from technical secondary schools and universities with a background in mechanics, chemistry and electronics. We are looking for young men who have performed in school. They should have graduated no longer than two years ago. We use age limits of maximum 20 years for upper secondary school graduates and those with a one-year diploma (SLTA and D1), a maximum 23 years for those with a three year D3 certificate and a maximum of 25 years for young men with a bachelor degree. The pace of learning in our internship programme is high: today the students learn, the next day they are tested. Young men who have graduated no longer than two years from high school still remember what it was like in school; they have the spirit to learn. This tends to be different among young men who have graduated from secondary school more than two years ago: their spirit to learn has diminished and their orientation has already changed.

Agus has already surpassed these age limits and probably no longer matches the profile of fresh graduate which many companies are looking for. He feels he has tried his best to get a job in the industries, but finds it difficult to apply because the companies' use of age limits and criteria related to education credentials. He identifies his education level and lack of personal contacts inside the factories as the main reasons why he has not succeeded yet. "A lot of people pay money nowadays to get a job", he says. Usually this practice of using bribes involves paying the equivalent of a month's wage to a broker who acts as a go-between between factory and applicants. Agus once paid money during the application process, but still did not get the factory job. He does not know why: "Maybe because I didn't know anyone inside the company's office?" he offers. Sometimes he feels disappointed that he has not managed to enter the line of work of his choice, but he is also proud that he now owns and runs a cell phone counter in a lucrative site in one of Cilegon's busiest shopping malls and he has plans to expand his business in the future.

### **Neighbourhood-based youth organisations: negotiating jobs**

For Agus, becoming an entrepreneur by opening a cell phone counter has become an alternative to getting a job as a permanent factory worker. Other young men end up doing work that is related to the industrial es-

tate, for instance in jobs as construction workers, suppliers to the industries, as *checker mobil* checking freight documents of trucks or as day labourers unloading goods in the harbour. They might work as security guards in the harbours or factory sites or are hired on outsourcing contracts as labour supply, cleaning service or office boys. To some young people migration can offer a solution if they manage to get work through temporary contracts out of town, usually arranged by relatives or other adults. But in general, the geographical mobility of local underemployed youth living in the neighbourhoods in Cilegon's industrial estate is quite low. It was not uncommon to encounter youth who had never visited Jakarta (three hours away by public transport) or travelled outside Banten. Frequently lacking the combination of English language and computer skills, the social contacts in the city and the financial means to migrate successfully and take up work in the service industries in Jakarta or other urban centres, many of these un(der)employed young men remained in their neighbourhoods to swell the ranks of the educated unemployed. One informant remarked that compared to young men, some of the young women in his neighbourhood were more mobile as they ventured into town to take up jobs as sales and promotion girls in shopping malls and supermarkets, as teachers, waitresses, or factory workers in the neighbouring town of Serang. This informant remarked that "Young men in this neighbourhood mostly focus towards the industries. When they cannot find work in the industries you will find them at home.", though as we have seen in chapter 3, in many cases they are not completely idle but take on various temporary jobs. As 'kampong youth' (*anak kampung*) with a relatively low education background and being economically and politically marginalised within the wider society, some of these un(der)employed young men resorted to petty crime, such as stealing goods from the harbour or scrap iron and metal from the factory sites, earning them a reputation for being tough (*keras*) and prone to aggressive behaviour.

Despite the slim chances of obtaining factory employment or related work in Cilegon's harbours, many lower middle class young men living in the neighbourhoods in the industrial districts persevere in their orientation towards the industries: "We continue to hope that we find work in the industries. The evidence [that these factories will provide jobs to us] is lacking but my neighbourhood has already become part of the industrial estate so there are not many alternatives", was the explanation of

one young man. Notwithstanding continuing problems of youth un(der)employment and environmental pollution, many young people in the industrial districts in Cilegon express support for the industrial expansion in their area, hoping that it will improve their life chances. As their neighbourhoods were often already encroached by the industries, it was hard for them to imagine viable alternatives.

The local orientation of these youths is further reflected in individual and collective attempts to establish the social relations which would enhance their prospects of getting access to factory work in the surrounding area. A clear example of a '*kampung* youth' who has managed to establish the right contacts with more powerful adults in order to access the line of work of his choice, is Pak Andy (30), who had just married one month before I met him in 2010. Born and raised in one of the neighbourhoods in Cilegon's industrial estate, Pak Andy works as a security guard (*satpam*) in one of city's company-owned harbours, while his wife teaches Arabic at a local religious school. Pak Andy is the ninth child in a rather poor family, his father used to be a farmer, but both his parents have passed away. About his job aspirations he says:

"From the beginning I aspired to becoming a security guard. I wanted to find work but my skills / abilities are very minimal. Coming from a modest background ("*orang tuanya yang tidak punya*", literally 'parents who don't have anything') I completed lower secondary school (SMP). Many SMP graduates obtain project work, they become welders or mechanics. Getting factory work is difficult, because the value of my diploma is minimal and factory work requires at least an SMA (upper secondary school) certificate. So with these abilities and skills (*kemampuannya*) I wanted to become a security guard.

Andy's desire to become a security guard is closely linked to his abilities in *pencak silat*, Indonesian martial arts, which he has been practicing since childhood. While practicing *silat* usually starts out as a hobby, older and more skilled practitioners might end up with a job as security guard because of their martial art skills. Most children and teenagers practice martial arts as a sports and social activity, which is regarded as part of Banten's cultural heritage. Andy explains:

From the age of twelve I have been involved in *pencak silat* (Indonesian martial arts). I also like sports such as volleyball and soccer. *Pencak silat* and *jawara* (local strongmen) are closely linked: it's a culture from our ances-

tors, specific to Cilegon. It depends on the person if someone wants to join a *silat* organisation. Some people like *silat*, others don't. Girls participate in *silat* as well, but most members are boys. On average young people stop participating in the training by the age of twenty.

While some people place martial arts within the realm of arts and culture and view it as a positive and empowering activity for youth, others shy away from it because they associate martial arts with the authoritarian, masculine culture of *jawara* (also known as *pendekar*). Many *pencak silat* practitioners have no interest in becoming *jawara* (local strongmen), nor do they cultivate links with the world of *jawara*. But historically there have been close ties between *pencak silat* schools and *jawara*. Chapter 2 described how in the post-Suharto period *jawara* have become prominent political economic actors and violent rent-seekers who often act outside the legal system. Both the late Chasan Sochib, Banten's most powerful *jawara* entrepreneur, and Aat Syafa'at, Cilegon's former mayor, mobilised the support of martial arts schools, the police and the military to support their campaigns in recent local elections (Masaaki and Hamid 2008: 117). They also established their own *silat* organisations. The *silat* organisation which Andy is part of actively supported the election campaigns by Aat Syafa'at who was mayor between 2000 and 2010, and his son Iman Ariyadi, who is the current mayor in Cilegon. Reflecting on these connections Andy continues:

Pak Aat used to be a *pendekar*. He received a lot of support from them, he became mayor because he had several thousand *pendekar* behind him. His son Iman Ariyadi is also supported by *pendekar*. For example, we recently had a meeting (*sosialisasi*) between Iman and *pendekar* in my district [this was during the election period when Iman was campaigning to become mayor]. (...) It is difficult to find work for youth from Ciwandan [part of the industrial area in Cilegon], our education background is minimal. People from outside Banten, for example people from Java or Palembang (Sumatra) used to have more influence. But that has started to change since Pak Aat became mayor. Now there is more work for local people (*putra daerah*), a considerable achievement by the mayor. I work as a security guard because of a programme by Pak Aat in 2008. He arranged for *pendekar* to work as permanent security guard in the harbour.

My job as security guard in the harbour involves overseeing the conveyor belt on which goods from the ships are unloaded. It often happens that goods are stolen; the security is there to prevent theft. I am not hired

directly by the company that owns the harbour, but am placed there by an organisation owned by Pak Iman Ariyadi [the current mayor]. I hope that in the future the new mayor extends his presence (*"tambah ek.sis"*). Hopefully my wage will increase. Now that I work as a security guard and have a wife, I feel I have been successful. (interview, 23.07.2010).

Andy's example illustrates that young people in Cilegon are not united in their stance towards the development agenda of the local government. Some young men and women feel that the mayor and other politicians mainly view young people and youth organisations as resources at the hands of local elites who are trying to secure a power base by buying loyalties. As we have seen in chapter 2, the Ciwandan district in Cilegon is currently at the heart of several conflicts between industries and local government: most notably the conflict between Krakatau Steel and Cilegon's local government over land needed to build the new Kubang Sari harbour. Earlier I explained how against the backdrop of this heated dispute local power holders are actively targeting these neighbourhoods in an attempt to mobilise people behind their agenda. Young men like Pak Andy who see few viable alternatives are pragmatic and link themselves to more powerful adults such as Cilegon's mayor. At the same time, Pak Andy comes from a relatively poor family background and left school with a certificate that does not qualify for a formal job in the industries. He cannot get a job through formal recruitment and testing procedures and relies on nepotism and informal relations with more powerful adults to get a job. Unable to compete for factory employment with better educated local and migrant youth, Pak Andy buys into the *"putra daerah"* (literally: 'sons of the soil') sentiment and resorts to political clientelism through a martial arts organisation linked to mayor to achieve his goals.

Apart from these individual strategies, young men use neighbourhood-based youth organisations as collective strategy to establish the relations that will open up job opportunities. For young men living in Cilegon's industrial estate, joining a neighbourhood-based youth organisation is a means of lobbying for better access to information about jobs in the industries which they aspire to. Unlike the nationally advertised recruitments of KS described earlier, during which the steel factory may recruit between 100–250 trainees at once, most companies do not openly publicise their job openings if they only need to replace two or three employees. Pak Sofyan (37), who originates from Cilegon and works as a forklift operator for a Japanese chemical factory in the

town's industrial estate, describes his employer's recruitment practices as follows:

The company I work for employs a little over 750 people. The site and brand managers are Japanese, but on average the employees are from Indonesia. A company that only has a job opening for one or two people will most likely not publicise these job vacancies. Often only a few people know about it. It depends on the company whether or not it allows its employees to use their personal networks to bring in applicants to fill a job vacancy. Sometimes each employee is given the chance to bring in a new worker, but there are also companies who never give their workers this opportunity. My employer allows its workers to bring in their relatives, but they need to pass the tests in order to get the job.

Exactly because employers use this practice as a common way of filling job openings, that is, by asking their employees to propose someone who can take up the job and only when this fails resorting to publicly advertise the vacancies, it becomes difficult for young jobseekers to access information about job opportunities, even if they have the proper education background. For young men living in Cilegon's industrial districts, this means that they do not always know when a company has a job opening, even though the factory might be located just across the road from their kampong. The leader of the neighbourhood-based youth organisation introduced earlier in this chapter tried to discuss this issue during a meeting with the mid-level management of a Chinese-owned steel factory which he visited in March 2008 (in the company of two local journalists and an anthropologist). He argued:

As people living in the surrounding area of the industries we hope to solve the problem of unemployment which is really urgent here. We hope that the industries care about the society surrounding them. This factory should provide information about job openings, because in the current situation we do not know when there are jobs available and many people from outside Cilegon enter the industries. In one RW in our kampong there are over 200 people who are unemployed, most of them youth. The industries have an obligation to care about this problem, because if they fail to cooperate the unemployment issue will become a time bomb for them.

While the factory manager was nervously twitching his leg during this speech which was no doubt uncomfortable to him, he ended the meeting

after one hour by replying that *insya'allah* (god willing) he would pass on the aspirations of this youth organisation to the managers at the head office in Jakarta, who, unlike himself, would have the power to take decisions on this matter.

Pak Ali, the recruitment manager of a plastic factory based in Cilegon since the early 1990s, also had experience in dealing with neighbourhood-based youth organisations from different districts in Cilegon's industrial estate. He explained that during *Reformasi*, the period following the end of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998, many local grassroots organisations emerged. Before that time the military had a strong influence in Cilegon's industrial area. He says:

There are many youth groups in the districts surrounding the industries, but these groups are often in conflict with each other and quickly dissolve. As a company we are not sure which one to take. We have never worked together with neighbourhood-based youth groups that ask companies to use quota of hiring 70 per cent local youth in their recruitment. The problem is that most of them do not have a strong education background. They would qualify for outsourcing contracts to do unskilled work but we cannot hire them as operators. For this we have set up a traineeship programme aimed at local youth, through our corporate social responsibility division. Every year we train 25 fresh graduates with upper secondary and D3 credentials. But usually such local youth organisations appear when a new factory establishes itself in their neighbourhood; they do not target older companies that much.

A similar one-year traineeship programme is initiated by Krakatau Steel, which in 2009 hired 115 vocational secondary school graduates from Cilegon who had registered as job seekers with the local manpower office (*Radar Banten*, 2 October 2009). Neighbourhood-based youth organisations in the area of Cilegon's industrial estate try to bypass having to compete in the labour market for work in Cilegon's heavy industries and instead try to negotiate themselves and their members into jobs. These organisations reflect the idea, shared by many young people whom I interviewed in Cilegon, that the job market does not function according to market principles of competitiveness, transparency, merit and individual responsibility, but rather reflects the climate of the Suharto-period, when there was no clear division between state and market and one got access to jobs and business contracts via personal networks, bribes and nepotism. In the post-Suharto era, the old patrimonial system of the

New Order regime is no longer in place. Yet as explained in the previous chapters, there is the widespread perception that corruption and money politics have increased since regional autonomy became effective in 1999, and personal networks continue to be important informal mechanisms in Cilegon's local politics, business and labour market.

Apart from uniting the underemployed young men in a particular *kampong*, the youth organisations act as brokers between factories and youth living in their surroundings. Often the leading members of these youth organisations already have established relations with some of the local industrial leaders or personnel departments of nearby factories, contacts which individual young men who are joining their organisation often lack. Sometimes a youth organisation manages to negotiate that local youth get prioritised for job openings in nearby companies. At times this results in a tiny number of young men being hired as workers and enables them to play a part in the industrial development in their neighbourhood, rather than "becoming just bystanders". Andri (27), leader of a local youth organisation in a *kampong* situated in the district of Cilegon's heavy and chemical industries close to the town's harbours, explains how the system works in his neighbourhood.

I live in a part of Cilegon that has been an industrial area for a long time, but only since 2000 did the industries start to base themselves in my neighbourhood. They produce sugar, cement and chemical goods related to the ports. On average, the people here are positive about it, with the hope that our people and youth especially will be hired by these companies. Nowadays most of our youth have completed their education until upper secondary school, but many of them do not score high enough on the tests to fulfil the recruitment standards of these companies. (...) When there is a job opening at one of the companies our youth organisation instructs every RT head to select one youth (mostly those who are unemployed) to get the chance to enter factory work. Usually we use an *arisan* system for this. It is an agreement between various neighbourhood leaders (at RT/RW, *kelurahan* and *kecamatan*-level).

Another strategy is to negotiate quota for hiring local youth whenever a new investor enters the neighbourhood. Andri explains: "Whenever a new investor enters the scene, our local youth organisation tries to organise a meeting with the company management. We try to negotiate that the new companies hire 75 per cent of its workers from our district (Ciwandan)." According to Andri these strategies sometimes yield re-

sults, but overall it does little to reduce un(der)employment levels in the neighbourhood, as the number of secondary school graduates grows faster than the number of youths who find employment.

When I asked Andri how he felt about youth from other parts of town applying for work in one of the companies based in his neighbourhood he replied: “They will have to get their information about jobs from the newspaper. Youth from Ciwandan have more rights to work in these companies, because we feel the pollution first.” Indeed Andri’s comment implies that in the competition for jobs it matters in which part of town one lives. A friend who lived in the centre of Cilegon, in the area between the malls and the market, confirmed this. Here, local youth have access to jobs as traders or parking lot attendants along the town’s busy main road which borders their urban kampong. Should young men from other parts of town want to become parking lot attendants here they have to compete with local youth first. Conversely, if any of the youth from this neighbourhood want to get to work in one of the factories on the edges of town, they would have to compete not only with people from outside Banten but also with local youth from those areas who feel that if there are any jobs to be had, these jobs belong to them since this is *their* area. Indeed, as my friend jokingly remarked, this is “regional autonomy” (*otonomi daerah*) taken to another level. This means that while young men get some level of support from the youth organisations in their neighbourhood, this support is fragile because of heavy competition with other neighbourhoods who have similar youth organisations. The success of these neighbourhood youth groups thus not only depends on their level of organisation and contacts with companies and employers, but also on their ability to keep out rival youth groups from other districts in town.

Recently, in an attempt to reduce the possibility of conflict happening between neighbourhood-based youth organisations lobbying the industries, an umbrella organisation has been set up to better coordinate their efforts. At the time of the final round of fieldwork in July-August 2010 this organisation was just a month old, too short to know whether their efforts are successful or not.

### Concluding remarks

Young people's understandings of PT Krakatau Steel and other factories in Cilegon illustrate how they negotiate issues of privatisation and competition for employment opportunities in the local industries and situate themselves within a wider context of neoliberal globalisation and relatively high levels of youth un(der)employment. When looking for a job in the industries, young men in Cilegon on the one hand encounter ideas based on a neoliberal economic model that the labour market should function according to values of transparency, accountability, personal responsibility, and merit. From a human capital perspective, young people's chances to access work depend on their individual 'employability'.

On the other hand, this development is contradicted by the renewed importance of ethnic and class-based identities in the post-Suharto period and a local politics which seeks to strengthen control over the industrial estate and negotiate better jobs for local people. Not surprisingly, many of these youths have the strong idea that this kind of labour market does not really exist, but rather that one obtains employment based on personal networks and negotiations. The perception that in the past few decades local youth have been entering an unequal playing field in the competition for factory jobs and that regional autonomy provides opportunities to correct this, has become one of the motivations behind the local government's attempts to implement a quota politics within the industries. Despite a policy literature which sees young people as human capital and supposes that a market mechanism can be applied to the world of work, the reality in Cilegon is more complex: young men negotiate between both 'old' and 'new' recruitment practices in the industries as they try to get a job and secure a livelihood in insecure times. By joining a neighbourhood-based youth organisation young un(der)employed men living in Cilegon's industrial estate seek a pragmatic solution for the problem of getting access to information about jobs, as they try to open up opportunities for generating an income through work in the industries. While such organisations offer them some level of support, at the same time these neighbourhood-based solidarities are undermined because of fierce competition with similar youth groups.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://infokarirbumn.blogspot.com/2010/03/lowongan-kerja-pt-krakatau-steel.html> accessed online 12 Oct 2010.

<sup>2</sup> The current regional minimum wage for Cilegon is set at about 1,1 million rupiah per month (roughly 94 euros).

<sup>3</sup> According to Pak Ali, during the year 2008-2009 different types of operators working at his company would earn the following monthly incomes: an operator with an upper secondary school certificate would earn 1,6 million rp a month, an operator with a three year diploma (D3) between 1,6-1,7 million rp a month, and finally an operator with a university background (BA certificate) 2,5 million rp a month. These monthly incomes are above Cilegon's regional minimum wage, which for that year was set at 1,17million rp a month.

<sup>4</sup> 'Tingkatkan Kualitas', Radar Banten, 20 October 2010. <http://www.radarbanten.com/mod.php?mod=publisher&op=viewarticle&artid=59453> accessed online 20 Okt 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Another informant, Ilham (aged 23 in 2007) a BA graduate from Cilegon who had moved to Jakarta and was completing a one year traineeship at a state-owned bank in 2010, described similar tensions around '*kerja santai*' ethics and productivity. Like Krakatau Steel, this bank was preparing to 'go public' with in initial sale of some of its shares as part of the trajectory towards privatisation. While overall Ilham is content with his traineeship, he expressed irritation at the behaviour of his senior colleagues. According to Ilham, these older colleagues do not work very efficiently during the day, as they are busy talking and playing games on their computer. Hence, it often happens that at the end of the day, their work is not yet finished so they stay until 7 pm. According to Ilham, the younger generation of trainees works more efficiently, but if they wanted to leave the office at 4.30 pm, their senior colleagues commented on this. Because of the hierarchy between younger and older workers and the politeness that trainees are expected to show towards their elder superiors, Ilham often felt compelled to hang around until after *maghrib* (evening prayer), even though the purpose of this was not clear to him.

## 5

## Young women, work and marriage

### Introduction

The previous chapter noted that job opportunities for young men in Cilegon's heavy industries seem to be stagnant and lower middle class young men experience both periods of waiting and intensified competition over factory employment. As Cilegon's economy shifts from heavy and manufacturing industries towards trade and services, new job opportunities for young women have opened up, for instance as sales and promotion girls (known as SPG) in shopping malls and other professions in the trade and services sector. This chapter examines how young, (lower) middle class Muslim women navigate Cilegon's changing job market and how they negotiate between metropolitan and small town lifestyles and different sets of gendered ideals about women and work. More to the point, chapters 4 and 5 analyse the gendered tensions and contradictory effects of economic restructuring, privatisation and a decline of jobs in heavy industries which produce a hostile and highly competitive environment for young men, while the rise of consumer culture and a shift towards service industries seems to favour young women who enter a more flexible working situation. Young women may have some advantages in the workplace even though they do not face the same pressures to be breadwinners as their male peers.

The findings presented here are based on in-depth interviews with sixteen young women in their twenties who live and work in Cilegon, for instance as staff in stores, factory workers, civil servants, teachers, and traders representing the range of jobs available to young women in this town. Most of these Muslim girls are from a (lower) middle class background, represent different education backgrounds, are not yet married and live with their parents or in a boarding house. The sample includes

the experiences of young women who originate from families with a relatively disadvantaged background and who are trying to obtain a type of jobs that their parents never had access to. At the other end of the spectrum, I interviewed young women who seek to maintain their families' middle class standing through their pursuit of university education and aspiration towards office jobs, just like their parents had done before them. In interviews with young men and parents I also discussed young women's choices and aspirations about employment and marriage, their strategies in pursuing certain kinds of desired work and alternatives when they were unable to move into the jobs they expected. I also included young women who had given up on their job search and chose to get married instead. My informants are mostly born and raised in Cilegon, rather than migrant women. This might have implications for their attitudes towards work and the kind of jobs that they do. For example, the young women I interviewed rarely seemed interested in jobs in hotels or *karaoke* clubs in Cilegon or the nearby beach town of Anyer. This work is often deemed to be morally questionable, as some of these nightlife bars serve alcohol and create a setting for guests to engage in casual sexual behaviour (Bennett 2008: 90). It is likely that local women do not want to compromise their reputation by being associated with these places and that such jobs are taken up by migrant women.

After reviewing the sociological and anthropological literature on women, work and marriage in Indonesia, I provide a brief description of Cilegon's changing economy and different opportunities for young men and young women to secure a livelihood. Next, the main sections focus on young women's strategies in looking for a job and the role of parents in decisions about schooling and work. Finally, I will discuss some of the lifestyle changes that come with young women's participation in schooling and work and their expectations about married life and the future.

### Young women, work and marriage

Recent scholarship on young women's participation in the labour market, dating patterns and marriage choices highlights changing and contested understandings about gender roles, appropriate feminine behavior and personal development for young women. Young women face complex and contradictory gendered ideals about education, work and marriage. For example, under President Suharto's New Order regime (1966-1998) the state's official gender ideology promoted women's duties as

loyal wives and mothers who were expected to support their husbands and manage the household (Suryakusuma 1996). Even today, most Indonesians regard young women as future wives and mothers and parents remain responsible for their daughters until they are married. Alongside gender ideologies promoting women's roles as wives and mothers, the New Order state actively encouraged the entry of young, rural women as a cheap and compliant workforce in manufacturing industries or as overseas migrant workers. This indicates the contrasting state interests towards young women (Blackburn 2004: 10). The growth in service industries, combined with a boom in manufacturing industries and an expanding civil service during the 1980s and early 1990s, are reflected in a rapid incorporation of young women into manufacturing industries, trade and services and government employment (Manning 1998: 265).

Young women's increasing participation in formal education and the labour market compared to previous generations may provide opportunities for greater mobility and autonomy. However, the unprecedented opportunities for migration and wage earning prior to marriage create anxieties with parents and community leaders who fear that the behaviour of their daughters might not be as easily supervised as before. Academic literature on gender and work in Indonesia has emphasised the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory position of the state, religious leaders, parents and local community towards young women's entry into dynamic and sometimes migratory labour markets (Mather 1985; Wolf 1992; Ford & Parker 2008). On the one hand, young women's increased mobility and involvement in education and work offers them new levels of autonomy, and the opportunity to engage with urban, middle class lifestyles. At the same time, as Muslim daughters their involvement in work continues to be bound to patriarchal values and a gender ideology which sets boundaries in ways that differ from their male peers. This is for example reflected in the regional variations in young women's mobility and in the extent to which young women are supported or discouraged to leave their families to take up factory work or become overseas labour migrants (Manning 1998: 255).

### **Background: young women in Cilegon's labour market**

Women comprise one third of Cilegon's working population aged 10 years and over. Most women in Cilegon are registered as housewives: 44 percent of the working population (BPS Cilegon 2007: 39). This reflects

the dominant gender ideology, inscribed in the Marriage Law of 1974, which prescribes that men are supposed to be the breadwinners of the family and that women's main responsibility is to take care of the children and the household. At the same time, women in Java have always been important economic contributors to their families and many women work outside of the home. Yet they are expected, "regardless of their activities outside the home, to put the welfare of the family above all else, provided that this does not interfere with the goals of state and society" (Brenner 1999: 23). Many married women in Cilegon are commonly involved in home industries, such as making *ketupat* (cooked rice in small containers of leaves) or selling fried snacks or rice dishes. Moreover, even if they do work this is not always valued as such. Reza (33, married and father of a 5-year old son) says:

In Cilegon, for the most part it is men who work. Married women work as well, but this is seen as just helping out. Most of the women who work in Cilegon are girls who are not yet married, so they mainly work to contribute to the economy of their family and help their parents and siblings.

The majority of men in Cilegon find jobs in heavy industries (26%), transportation (20%) and trade (19%); most women work in trade (39%), services (32%) or industries (24%) (BPS Cilegon 2007: 40). While certain professions can be taken up by both men and women, other parts of the labour market reflect a clear gender division into men's work (in transportation, construction, heavy industries) and women's work as traders, staff in shops, nurses, teachers, and factory workers in light manufacturing industries. Firman, a 23-year old young man with a diploma as a welder from a technical secondary school, gave a clear and commonly heard example: "Since girls are physically less strong than boys, they are not likely to work in the heavy industries. There is no way a girl could work in this industrial sector. Girls are more likely to choose becoming a secretary and end up in office jobs."

Job opportunities in Cilegon's labour market are thus profoundly gendered. The highest layer in the labour market consists of office jobs for young people who have graduated from tertiary education. Young women with a diploma or a BA degree qualify for positions as secretaries and administration staff in banks, government offices or private companies, and for jobs as teachers. But as there are limits to the office job market in a provincial town like Cilegon, many university graduates are

oriented towards getting an office job in Jakarta and there seems to be a high mobility among tertiary educated job seekers between Cilegon and Jakarta.

By contrast, girls with elementary school or lower secondary school certificates, often from lower class families, qualify for informal sector jobs such as domestic servants, babysitters, or petty traders at the market. Jobs which involve childcare or household work are perceived as something that women do 'naturally', so no training is necessary. An example is Nisa (27), the third child in a Muslim family with four children. She is not yet married and lives with her mother in Cilegon in an extended household which they share with four families, 16 people in total. Nisa was a high-performing pupil in school, but unfortunately there was no money to continue her education after lower secondary school. One reason for this was that when Nisa was nine years old her father took a second wife with whom he also had children. He now had two families to support, no work and he only seldom came home. Nisa's mother is a housewife who worked as a *tukang pijat* (traditional masseuse) when her children got older. Nisa's older brother and her mother paid her school fees in lower secondary school (there was no financial contribution from her father), but they had difficulties making the payments on time. Nisa only obtained her graduation certificate from lower secondary school three years after her graduation, when all the installments for her school fee had been paid. She says: "The motivation to go to school still exists, I really want to. But there is no money so the motivation [to go to school] stopped halfway".

Nisa experienced quite an early entry into the world of work, because of the lack of financial means to continue her education and the need to help pay for the schooling of her younger sibling. Since completing lower secondary school Nisa has worked as a nanny for a family who lives close to her home in Cilegon. This job, working six mornings per week (between 7.30 am and 1.00 pm) earns her the very low income of 200,000 rp a month. She thinks that a lot of girls in Cilegon get married and become housewives, like her 24-year old sister and most of her friends from elementary school. About job opportunities for young women she says:

In Cilegon a lot of girls work as staff in shops, that is those who have a certificate or diploma from school. Girls like me, who do not have the right credentials do work which depends on honesty. Having a graduation

certificate is really important when you are looking for a job, for if you do not have one you cannot work. Girls without a certificate become housewives or work as domestic servants, because companies will not hire them.

Based on her knowledge about the kind of work available to young women like herself with a modest education background, Nisa thus imagines that her options are limited to domestic work or caregiving. She told me that she is not interested in factory work (“even though such work pays well”) because she is not strong physically. But apart from that, she says: “The most important thing is that I do work that I like, money is not my only consideration”. When she was younger, she dreamed of being a teacher, because she likes working with children. But she is happy in her current job as a nanny, which she has been doing for eight years.

Ina (19) graduated from upper secondary school (SMA) in June 2009, but has not yet received her diploma because she still has to pay part of her school fees. This means that for the time being she too cannot apply for the jobs she would like to do. The school gave her a transcript to confirm that she graduated. This letter is sufficient to apply for tertiary education, but not to get a job, not even the factory job which she aspires to. Many of Ina’s friends who also have not yet received their diplomas are indifferent (*cuek*). Why would they bother looking for a job if they do not yet have a certificate? But Ina has to work since her parents have both passed away and her elder sister who took on financial responsibility for Ina is currently out of a job. So for the time being, Ina works as a sales girl selling accessories at a favourite hangout place in Cilegon, for which she earns 15.000 rp a day. Reflecting on her job, she says: “If you do not have a diploma you can only do work with small wages, such as my job selling accessories here at the lake. But if you want access to a job with a bigger wage, you need to have a certificate.”

### Experiencing urban lifestyles: shopping mall girls

Indeed upper secondary school (SMA) certificates have increasingly become the lowest level of qualification needed for a formal sector job. While there is a range of occupations they would qualify for, including work in hotels and restaurants in Cilegon or Anyer, typically my informants with upper secondary school certificates mentioned two kinds of jobs they wanted to pursue. They preferred a job as a sales and promo-

tion girl in the mall, locally known as 'SPG', or factory work in either a Taiwanese-owned shoe factory in Serang<sup>1</sup> or a plywood factory in the Cilegon area. Some young women had work experience in both sectors as they alternated between SPG jobs and jobs as factory workers. An example is Bunga (21), the second child in a family of three children. Her family originates from Lebak, Banten, but during Bunga's final year of elementary school the family moved to Cilegon when her father got a job as an operator at Pertamina in Merak, earning him 1,5 million rp per month. Bunga went to a vocational upper secondary school in Cilegon where she specialised as a secretary. After her graduation in 2005 she tried to get a job as a sales and promotion girl in one of Cilegon's department stores or supermarkets, such as Ramayana, Toko Edi and Al-famart. Her job search lasted a year and after three unsuccessful applications for SPG positions at several stores in Cilegon, she got a job at Matahari department store. She focused on a job in a store because compared to being a factory worker, working in the mall or a shop seemed more relaxed to her:

I was oriented towards getting a job in a department store because the work is very relaxed. Some of my friends already had jobs as sales and promotion girls. If I had not gotten a job at Matahari Cilegon I might have continued to search for a job in a department store in Serang.

Only when her contract at Matahari ended and her aspirations of finding a new SPG job frustrated, did she move to a factory job in Serang. Contrary to much of the literature on Indonesian factory daughters (Wolf 1992; Koning 2005; Warouw 2008), which focuses on rural girls who leave their villages to take up factory work, Bunga and other young women who live in Cilegon commute rather than migrate for their work. During weekdays they stay in the factory dorm; they spend the weekends at their parents' home in Cilegon. Like Bunga, Lina, an upper secondary school graduate aged 22 in 2008, alternated between factory employment and various jobs in the mall. She worked for a 1,5 years as a leather cutter for a well-known sport shoes brand in the Nikomas factory in Serang. Rather than being recruited for a traineeship programme as described in the previous chapter, Lina was informed by a friend who already worked at the factory that there were job opportunities. Lina's case matches the practices described in the previous chapter, whereby the company does not advertise a position, but seeks to recruit new staff through the contacts of current employees. However, similar to the story described by

Agus, this job application involved ‘smoothing’ or ‘ironing money’ (*jalan pelicin, uang setrika*). Lina had to pay 1,4 million rp up front and borrowed money from her parents to do this. Lina passed the test and could start the next day as a leather cutter. According to the personal experiences of Lina, as well as the accounts of other informants, knowing someone inside or paying money will help one get invited for a job interview, but cannot guarantee that one actually gets a job, which ultimately depends on test scores.

A job in the mall is not the exclusive terrain of young women. Fast food restaurants and supermarkets employ both male and female youth. But department stores such as Ramayana and Matahari, as well as most clothing stores seem to offer a particular kind of ‘youth job’ in the form of SPG positions which are specifically aimed at young, single women. There are multiple reasons why female secondary school graduates consider shopping malls to be an attractive workplace: they represent the urban lifestyle, they are lively social places, and present opportunities to meet the opposite sex. Ina (28), who grew up in a rural kampong on the outskirts of Cilegon explains:

The presence of shopping malls has opened up new job opportunities for young women in Cilegon. Before there were shopping malls most female senior secondary school graduates were oriented towards jobs as factory workers. Nowadays young women want to experience new lifestyles and ways of interaction, they want to lead a modern life. So they are oriented towards a job as a sales and promotion girl in the mall.

Indonesia’s noisy and air-conditioned shopping malls are public places where young women can work and hang out without being cast as ‘naughty girls’ (*cewek nakal*) and have their virtuous reputation compromised (Baulch 2007: 10-11). Amel (22), who is employed as an SPG girl by Ramayana Cilegon on a string of six month contracts, likes her work because she has many friends among her colleagues, all young women in their early twenties like herself. She likes to tease or confide in them. Her job earns her between 800,000–900,000 rupiah per month, which is below the regional minimum wage of roughly 1,1 million rupiah (94 euro), but which covers costs for food and transportation and enables her to occasionally buy cosmetics and clothes. She used her first salary to buy a second hand mobile phone.

Like their male peers described in the previous chapter, these young women had similar experiences with company recruitment practices. Lina (22) for example, had a certificate from a local upper secondary school. Though she would have liked to continue to tertiary education, her parents lacked the financial means and told her to look for a job to help her family. She applied for jobs at ten companies, including a sugar factory and a position as civil servant in the local government, but was never invited for an interview. One of Lina's friends who worked at Matahari department store in Cilegon arranged for Lina to be interviewed by the manager who was looking to hire extra staff on a one month contract during the fasting month of Ramadan. Lina got the job, but on a short-term contract which was not extended after fasting month. The recruitment procedure involved admission tests, including a psychological test. There was no requirement to have an identity card from Banten, as there are also girls from Bogor and Bekasi who work at Matahari Cilegon. However, unlike the factory employment described for young men in the previous chapter, jobs as sales assistants in the shopping mall emphasise qualities such as feminine beauty, fashion sense and good communication skills. Looks are an important part of the job: SPG girls need to have the right body height and match a certain beauty ideal for young women. They should be single, no older than 25 years and have good communication skills. At Matahari department store which represents the more high-end SPG jobs, sales girls have to comply with company instructions about hair style and make up, issuing specific colours of eye shadow and lipstick. The company uniform consists of a blouse, short skirt and neat shoes with moderate high heels. A headscarf (*jilbab* or *kerudung*) is not part of the Matahari uniform, contrasting with the dominant style of everyday dress of many young women in Banten, who routinely wear a headscarf within the public sphere although they might remove their headscarf as soon as they arrive home. While for some young women the make up and uniform that come with the SPG job might be fun, for others who are brought up with the notion that they should dress modestly and cover certain parts of their body, removing their headscarf and wearing a short skirt at work can be awkward or uncomfortable. Even though they accept this style of dress as part of their work uniform within the surroundings of the mall, many young women feel that it would attract unwanted attention in settings outside of the

mall. Eka (22), a devout Muslim woman who works at Matahari store, explains:

The Matahari uniform does not allow a headscarf. I feel embarrassed to leave from home wearing a short skirt, so I change my clothes when I arrive at my workplace.

The strict company policy about how to dress and what to look like at work is one of the aspects that Eka likes least about her job at Matahari. While Eka is not allowed to wear a headscarf at work, Ayu (26), an upper secondary school graduate who works as staff for a store selling Muslim fashion and Islamic accessories, has to wear one:

I have to wear a headscarf (*kerudung*) for my job. Actually, I'm a tomboy: I prefer to wear jeans rather than skirts, never wear a headscarf at home and I don't always wear one when I go out. But girls who wear a headscarf have a good image. My mother likes that I have to wear a headscarf at work. She also likes that my interactions are guarded (*terjaga*) and that I join the weekly Quran readings with the other staff.

Ayu is a clear example of how her work environment reinforces locally valued notions about women's work and femininity. To Ayu's mother her daughter's current job "has an extra value" compared to Ayu's previous job as an assembly worker when she often had to work overtime and arrived home late at night. The Islamic store represents a safe work environment consistent with culturally sanctioned values about dress and mobility for Muslim daughters.

For young women like Amel or Eka (22), whose father is a mobile street vendor selling soy bean curd and whose mother is a housewife, the fact that she has a job as a sales and promotion girl in Matahari department store, seems an improvement over their parents' professions. The job requires a senior high school certificate and Eka wears a uniform and works in an air-conditioned workplace. On the downside, her job requires that she has to wear high heels and is not allowed to sit during her eight hour work day except during breaks. Many sales and promotion girls are hired on temporary contracts and while some of these youth jobs provide an appearance of upward social mobility, they fail to provide long-term prospects for permanent work and social status to young people.

Lower middle class women in Cilegon experience increased opportunities for education and economic achievement, but in a town where urban middle class lifestyles have “in many respects become more orthodox and religious (...) rather than necessarily displaying the features of the middle classes in the west” (Barendregt 2008: 161), their mobility and involvement in work continues to be bound to religious values and a gender ideology that differ from their male peers. One area where this is visible is in the influence of a regional politics which claims cultural or religious authenticity based on customary law and practices (*adat*) or Islamic law (*syariah*). In some regions of the country this regional politics has resulted in an introduction of Islamic by-laws at the provincial, city and district levels under the legal framework of decentralisation.<sup>2</sup> These laws focus on a number of issues ranging from cultivating public morality and overcoming social problems, banning alcohol and prostitution, to promoting female modesty and Islamic dress. Whereas until 1991 wearing a headscarf (*jilbab*) for government employees was forbidden (Smith-Hefner 2011: 158), in the post-Suharto period Banten has introduced regulations which stipulate compulsory *jilbab* and Islamic clothing regulations for government employees and secondary school students (Warburton 2006: 40).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Tangerang City has introduced a controversial regulation aimed to ban prostitution and uphold public morality, making it possible to arrest any person who is suspected of displaying the qualities, dress or behaviour of a prostitute. This by-law is particularly problematic in an industrial area like Tangerang where it is common for young women to end their evening shifts at 10 or 11 pm and on their way home risk being harassed by civilian police looking for signs of alcohol or prostitution. Often such by-laws are advanced by Islamic conservatives or politicians with particular social or political agendas, who rely on religious symbols such as women’s headscarves to secure a voter base in local elections. As Van Wichelen notes with regard to the introduction of compulsory veiling in Banten and several other regions in Indonesia:

Making the veil a compulsory dress code for women seemed, for those in all these regions, to be the symbol through which the implementation of Islamic law was made visible to Jakarta and the outside world. In other words, women’s gender roles functioned as a proxy for asserting local autonomy, both religiously, and, especially, politically (2010: 46).

In a similar vein, other critics maintain that such regulations rely on arbitrary and superficial notions of women's dress and appearance to promote symbolic forms of public piety (Warburton 2006: 41-43).

### **Generational tensions: daughters' mobility and independence**

Youth transitions are not only about finding a job but also about moving from being dependent on one's parents to becoming economically independent. This independence can become a source of generational tension, as young women's autonomy involves new forms of autonomy, risks and responsibilities which have to be negotiated between parents and children (Jones 2009: 142). Even though these young, (lower) middle class women are in their twenties and earn an income, they are not completely independent because their parents continue to be responsible for them until they marry. This is important because as daughters they negotiate decisions about education, work and marriage with their parents.

Noni (19), who works as an operator in an internet café in Cilegon, got the chance to become a nurse, something she has been interested in since she was little. She was offered three months training in Tangerang<sup>4</sup>, but her parents did not allow her to go there. Noni had sent in her application without telling her parents, and only when she was invited for an interview did she tell her mother. Her mother and her uncle did not think it was a good idea: the problem was that she would have to live in Tangerang, which they considered to be too far away from Cilegon. So now Noni wants to look for a better job in Cilegon, one that pays more than her current job at the internet café. If her parents would allow her to look for a job elsewhere, Noni would be interested in moving away from Cilegon to have new experiences: "If a job is good, why not accept it if I have my parents' permission?" she says. "My parents are only worried, they are afraid I will not be able to live independently from them."

Similarly, Inda (28) experienced tensions and disappointment in her school-to-work transition as she was forced to adjust her expectations when her parents became obstacles to her dreams about tertiary education and future careers. Inda's mother went to school until the fourth grade of elementary school and married at age twelve. Inda's father never went to school and is illiterate. He works as a farmer growing cassava, cucumber, beans and peanuts, her mother used to sell vegetables but

stopped in 2004. Perhaps because they felt the limitations of having little schooling, her parents have “indoctrinated” their children to study hard and raise the social status of the family through education.

Inda had a bitter experience when in her final year of upper secondary school she was offered a scholarship to study maths at a university in Malang (East Java). Her school was proud of her, but she could not accept the offer to study in Malang. The costs of living and studying in Malang were one factor, the other one was her older brother Anwar who told her: “You shouldn’t feel proud, because your achievement is still at *kampung*-level. It is not at all certain you will be able to compete with city kids.” Inda’s parents also did not like her to go too far from home, unlike her brother Anwar who was allowed to study abroad and had obtained a master’s degree from an Australian university. Inda explained it like this: “My father is too worried about his daughters, to the point that he gets stressed. Maybe he just wants his daughters to be well-behaved. He believes his sons are better able to provide for their own living. This was proved when I was forbidden to go to Malang”. Inda’s parents have clear gendered and age-based expectations towards their children. While they gave their eldest son the freedom to study abroad, and thought him capable of handling this situation, they took a different stance towards their daughter. They prefer her to stay at home, to be a good daughter to her parents, to not go too far away from home for school or work, and to marry at the right age. Inda represents an exceptional case, coming from a rather poor family that managed to provide all their children with secondary and tertiary education and even send the eldest son for studies to Australia. But several other informants had similar experiences with their parents forbidding them to study or work in places that they considered too far from home.

### Ideas about marriage and the future

Even though Inda has a job as an English teacher that she likes, she does not yet feel satisfied with her life. She says: “A career is not everything for me. I would feel satisfied if I were to get married and have children who become successful.” Although there is a trend among educated youth to postpone marriage, this does not mean that marriage as an institution has become less important to them. All informants reported that they intend to marry in the (near) future and usually cited a combination of personal, religious and social reasons for this. Apart from personal

motivation (e.g. romantic love, unintended pregnancy), young men and women also consider marriage a requirement of Islam and a moral obligation to their parents (*membalas budi*) (Smith-Hefner 2006: 147). Despite new courtship patterns and shifts in youthful sexuality before and after marriage (Smith-Hefner 2005), marriage is idealised as the only legitimate institution for young couples to experience romantic love and sexual relations (Nilan 2008: 68). In large parts of the country living together without being married is not accepted and men and women who do not marry are stigmatised. The social pressure to enter heterosexual marriage and produce offspring is so great that even homosexual men feel compelled to have a wife and children, as marriage seems the only way to fulfil cultural norms for proper Muslim men and Indonesian citizens (Boelstorff 2005: 577-578). In sum, marriage signals social adulthood for both young men and women, and part of growing up thus necessarily involves getting married and having children (Platt 2012). After the wedding, young couples are under considerable pressure from family and their wider community to soon have their first child, so as to prove their fertility and maturity (Smith-Hefner 2006: 149). This often requires the wife to give up her job or temporarily drop out from the labour market during and after pregnancy to take care of the newborn child.

Whereas in previous times marriages were arranged or brokered by Indonesian families, nowadays choosing a marriage partner is increasingly a matter of personal choice (Nilan 2008). Contemporary trends include increasing possibilities to postpone marriage and engage in modern-style dating and romantic relationships, as well as a trend among devout Muslim youth to avoid inappropriate interactions with the other sex, remain chaste and agree to an arranged marriage with someone they have met only once or twice in the company of chaperones (Smith-Hefner 2005; Nilan 2008). I observed both trends in Cilegon, but found that there are limitations on young women's possibilities to postpone marriage, especially among the majority of young women who do not continue to tertiary education. As some of my informants commented:

Women in Cilegon still live according to local custom (*adat-istadat*), so that as soon as they reach adulthood they prefer to get married and stop working. Young women often choose to become housewives rather than career women, especially kampong girls. There are very few women who have BA degrees. (Mia, 26, university graduate).

Another illustrative remark came from Lina (28) a teacher and part-time college student:

There are few job opportunities for young people in Cilegon, many youth are unemployed. Even though there are a lot of factories, many factories take skilled workers from outside [from Java]. Young men in Cilegon usually become factory workers, work in business or become civil servants. As for young women, there are still only a few who are interested in working. Many wait at home for their husband to come, including in my kampong. [Young women in my kampong] only seldom pursue a career or continue to tertiary education. On average they have secondary school diplomas, from a *madrasah aliyah* (Islamic secondary school). I want to have a career, but I have not yet found the opportunity. The mentality in my kampong is still old-fashioned (*masih awam*) and not yet advanced. People think that going to university is not too important, because women will spend most of their time at home. But my parents support me to work and to study. They want their child to have a bright future.

Social consensus about the right time to get married involves certain gender-based age boundaries for when young men and young women should be married. The different social constructions of the proper age to marry and transition into social adulthood for young men and women reveal the class- and gender-based boundaries of an extended period of youth. On average, young men can extend their youth for a longer period of time than their female peers as they do not face demands to get married until they are into their thirties. One of my male informants observes:

Young women in Cilegon tend to marry earlier than young men; they do not face the same pressures about work. This is different for young men as they have to become independent first. They have to secure a permanent job or a stable income (Agus, 24).

The majority of young women in Cilegon marry when they are in the 19-24 years age bracket, usually after gaining a few years of experience in waged work. Age 25 was often mentioned as an informal age limit by which young women (secondary school graduates) should have been married, or they risk being labelled an old virgin (or, in the case of the researcher, a “red traffic light”). Almost 20 per cent of young women get married even younger, at age 17 or 18, but as the comments above show, nowadays an early marriage shortly after graduating from secondary

school risks being stigmatised as *kampungan* (rural, unsophisticated, old-fashioned). For many female secondary school graduates the experience of being young involves participating in the urban lifestyle by taking advantage of increased opportunities for education and economic achievement, preferably by obtaining temporary work as factory workers or SPG girls prior to marriage. Their flexible labour, while not exempt from hardships, provides new experiences and a modest wage; as well as opportunities to meet new people, although parents instruct their daughters to guard their interactions with the opposite sex and avoid unwanted pregnancy before marriage.

### Marriage to avoid educated underemployment

Pak Haji, a local politician and neighbourhood leader, suggests that for young women their future is considered to be settled as soon as they become a wife:

Young women tend to work as bureaucrats and civil servants, they are traders or housewives. They might work in the heavy industries as secretaries or accountants, but are not involved in the production process. But if they already have a husband then they are safe (*aman*) and do not have to work anymore.

Indeed, for some young women marriage can be an exit strategy from the problem of educated unemployment. An example is Dinah (21), who after graduating from a secretarial vocational secondary school in Cilegon in 2006, helped out at home for a few months doing household chores and looking after her little niece. Then, through an acquaintance, she found a job as a waitress at a restaurant in Cilegon, where she worked for a month. She had hoped to get a job in the mall like her gang of friends from secondary school, but this did not happen. Initially Dinah wanted to work, but after her applications were refused a few times she became disappointed and the longer she stayed at home, the less motivated she became in looking for a job. After a while, her parents noticed that Dinah had lost her motivation in looking for a job so they stopped asking. At this time, Dinah was already dating her boyfriend Udin. She felt that she had “already given up hope of finding a job. Instead of my applications being continually rejected, it was better just to get married”. In the absence of salaried work, Dinah settled her social position by getting married and becoming a housewife, complying with

mainstream gender ideology which promotes a notion of womanhood based on reproductive labour in the domestic sphere. At the same time, she and her husband continue to live with Dinah's parents and have yet to secure the financial means to move to a place of their own. Although Dinah's husband has regular work, for the couple to be able to move out both partners would have to earn an income. For the time being, they are saving money by continuing to live with Dinah's parents. As other scholars have observed, this is a regular practice in Java. Writing about Central Java, Wolf (1994: 57) notes that when young Javanese couples marry, they continue to live with their parents (usually the bride's parents) during the first years of marriage. This period can take up to five or ten years, until the couple, with help from their parents, have saved enough money to move into a house of their own. Although this is a common pattern, most of my informants did not consider this an ideal scenario and said that they preferred to become financially independent before entering marriage. This common arrangement suggests that young people's difficulties in finding stable employment might lead them to postpone marriage, as showed by Ibnu's story in chapter 3, but does not necessarily prevent them from getting married. Although the proportion of never-married females aged 30-34 years in Indonesia has increased from 2.2 percent in 1971 to 8.1 percent in 2005, this is still a minority of the population (Situmorang 2011: 83). Social pressure to marry is considerable and all my informants expected to marry within the next five to ten years. Rather, as Dinah's story shows, the issue for young couples might be that they have to narrow down their expectations about their living arrangements, privacy and consumption expenditures due to their inability to obtain independent housing and continue to live in an extended family arrangement for several years.

#### **University graduates: marriage, status and security**

A small group of lower middle class young women in Cilegon continues to university, thereby usually postponing marriage until their late twenties (30 years is seen as the boundary). During the time these young women spend in tertiary education and their workplace, they are introduced to new ideas and gain experience with new levels of independence and earning an income. Inda, who obtained a bachelor's degree in English at the Islamic state university in Serang, explains:

I feel that my studies provided me with a better life and enabled me to move out of the traditions and habits in my kampong. If I hadn't gone to university my life would be very different now. I might be helping my mother working on the land or would already have children. I am the only one of my friends in elementary school who continued to university. If I had held on to tradition I wouldn't have enjoyed knowledge or interactions with different kinds of people, nor would I have gained experience.

For this group of young women studying or having a job can be a means to negotiate pressure from their surroundings to get married if they do not feel ready yet. Roughly 12 percent of young women in Cilegon get married when they are 25 years or older (BPS 2007: 47). 'Failing' to get married at the right age can result in considerable pressure from family members or gossip from neighbours and married peers. Poppy, a student and NGO-worker who got married in 2008 at the age of 28, explains the pressure she felt:

A few years ago I felt pressure to get married. People were gossiping about me, saying that at my age I should have already been married. Usually these were kampong people; such an environment can be very influential. I felt embarrassed and was annoyed by the people who were gossiping about me. My self-esteem dropped. At that time I decided for myself that age 30 would be my age limit to get married. It also helped that I had many female friends, age 30 or above, who are not yet married. I decided to take these friends as an example, and I tried not to worry and let go of the thought when to get married.

While taking into account socially-accepted age limits young women also base their decisions on more individual and psychological dimensions, such as finding the right person to get married to and feeling mature enough to shift from being cared for by their parents to being a caregiver. They have their own ideas about the right age and the best basis for a marriage, which they negotiate with their parents. Anis (23), who was introduced in previous chapters, has clear ideas about when she will get married and the kind of husband she is looking for. Anis has lived in Cilegon all her life, but after graduating from upper secondary school she moved to Yogyakarta, the same student city where her father had enjoyed his own university education more than two decades earlier, to study for a BA degree in communications. Five years later, after completing her degree, she returned to Cilegon to live with her family. When I met her in 2008 she was looking for a job and a boyfriend. Over the past

four months Anis had applied for several office jobs ranging from call centres to banks. Although she had occasionally been invited for a test and an interview, her efforts had not yet materialised in a job and for the time being she was financially supported by her parents. When I asked her about her plans for the future, the subject of the conversation shifted from education and work to boyfriends and marriage. These seemed quite different topics to me, but in Anis' account the three became intertwined. When she explained about the kind of boyfriend (and potential future husband) she was looking for, she mixed ideas about romance with calculations of her own and her parents' wishes about religious affiliation, education background and employment status. Her observations show that when young men and women start thinking about partnerships and future marriage, they take into account current education and employment status. In this respect, the 'being' and 'becoming' dimensions of youth can be in creative tension with each other. While handing over a plate of snacks she said:

I'm looking for a boyfriend who is good, patient and not egoistic, standard qualities really. My parents leave it up to me if I want to have a boyfriend or not. But because we are Muslim, he has to pray. And he has to study; he needs to have a BA degree or more. Usually my father asks if he is studying or not. Because for sure someone who has studied has an extra quality, the future looks a little brighter with a university degree. I mean, for those [young people] with college degrees it is already difficult to find a job. It must be even harder for those with only secondary school certificates, where do they want to go?!

Taking into account the considerable amount of sacrifices that her parents have put into her university education, Anis plans to work before and after marriage. These findings confirm similar patterns observed for female university graduates in Yogyakarta (Smith-Hefner 2011: 163). Young women like Anis envision married life to be a combination of being a wife and mother, and earning an own income. Male and female informants alike reported that the idea of not putting their education to practice would be a considerable waste of time and money, and moreover, something that not many parents are willing to accept. For example, Ilham (26), a male university graduate currently doing a traineeship at a bank in Jakarta, gave a standard account of parental expectations: "In terms of education, my parents want their children to do better than they have. I think for now they want me to become independent from them.

They are not talking about marriage yet, but they will once I become a *pegawai negeri* (civil servant)".

Like Anis, Atul (26) who works as a civil servant, is thinking about marriage. She would like to get married next year even though there is no candidate yet. After her wedding Atul intends to continue working to add to the household budget, so she is looking for a husband who will not tell her to give up her job. She is looking for someone who is *sholeh*, who implements Islam in his everyday life. She thinks that if her husband can implement Islam in his life he should make for a good head of the family. However, rather than subscribing to patriarchal values which imply that Atul should defer to the decisions of their husbands, Atul makes it clear that she wants both of them to work and that she is looking for mutual understanding and a more equal partnership in marriage. She is adamant that she would not want to marry a partner who is unemployed. Recognising that Indonesia's economy is unpredictable and that the economic contribution of a future husband might be irregular, young women like Atul and Anis anticipate that both partners will need to work in order to sustain the family's income and (lower) middle class lifestyles. Apart from these reasons Anis also wants to earn an income, so that she will be in a better position in case of a divorce. In addition, Atul and Anis also have more personal reasons for wanting to continue to work, such as maintaining a level of financial independence and avoiding boredom at home. The stories of these young women resonate with Pam Nilan's findings about transition to marriage among middle class, tertiary educated youth, which she sees as based around discourses of faith, family and finance (2008: 79-80). Tertiary graduates like Anis and Atul seem not intent on marrying anyone with less education or income than they have, thereby firmly locating their futures in the urban middle class. Apart from love and expectations about family life, they express a preference for a financially secure, possibly upwardly mobile marriage in the context of economic insecurity, proliferation of consumer lifestyles and rising costs for education. Though they are still looking for a suitable partner, Anis and Atul, like other women in my sample, plan to marry in their late twenties, trying to avoid the difficult situation described by Poppy, namely those of young women who are approaching thirty and have not yet started a family. However, in Indonesia there is a common pattern whereby young men are reluctant to marry a partner who is better educated than themselves. This may leave more choices for female second-

ary school graduates and possibly create constraints for well-educated young women to find a suitable partner (Nilan 2008: 76).

### Navigating Cilegon's changing job market

A decade after the fall of Suharto's authoritarian New Order regime in 1998, lower middle class Muslim women in Cilegon experience an ambiguous period of youth, characterised by increased educational attainment, relative autonomy and mobility, but also prolonged dependence on their parents. Within a climate of neoliberal capitalism, Islamic resurgence and the emergence of global consumer-based youth cultures, female secondary school and college graduates enter a complex and changing labour market. As Cilegon's economy is shifting from heavy and manufacturing industries towards trade and services, employment opportunities for young men in the heavy industries seem to be stagnant. New job opportunities have opened up for young women, for instance as sales and promotion girls in shopping malls and other professions in the trade and services sector.

Young women's entry into waged work prior to marriage signals both their desire to experience modernity and the economic necessity to contribute to their family's financial situation and the schooling of younger siblings. Early marriage shortly after completing secondary school is still fairly common and for some young women this can be an exit strategy from the problem of educated unemployment. But increasingly jobs as factory workers or SPG girls are aspired to as "a key rite of passage" for female upper secondary school graduates in Cilegon. This kind of work allows single Muslim women to gain experience while remaining within the confines of prevailing ideals about femininity (Elmhirst 2007: 231). At the same time, young women's involvement in work continues to be bound to religious values and a gender ideology which sets age boundaries for marriage and emphasises girls' responsibilities as future wives and mothers in ways that differ from their male peers.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This subcontracting factory is owned by Taiwan's Pou Chen Corp., the world's largest shoe manufacturer and employs thousands of workers, about 80% of them young women (about 40% from Banten, 60% from other areas in Indonesia). Established in Cikande, Serang in 1993, it produces sport shoes for

brands such as Nike and Adidas. It also has a branch in Sukabumi, West Java. See also: Business Week, 6 November 2000, [http://www.businessweek.com/2000/00\\_45/b3706008.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/2000/00_45/b3706008.htm), accessed online 7 February 2011.

<sup>2</sup> 'Islamic Law by the Back Door', BBC News, 11 May 2007.

<sup>3</sup> While Law no. 22/1999 on regional autonomy transfers economic and political power from the central government to the regions, religion continues to fall under the jurisdiction of the central government. Nevertheless, in the wake of decentralisation conservative Islamic groups and individuals have gained momentum and in some districts elements of Islamic law are being introduced through by-laws and regional regulations, even though these districts do not have the jurisdiction to formally implement *syariah* law. Indonesia's constitution and legal system remain secular, the only exception being the special region of Aceh which was granted permission to implement *syariah* law in 1999. This means that many of these regional regulations based on *syariah* law are potentially unconstitutional, but the central government has been indecisive in addressing religious issues and many by-laws have remained relatively unchecked and uncontested (Warburton 2006: 37, 39, 44-45).

<sup>4</sup> A city in north Banten, about an hour away from Cilegon.

## 6

## Conclusions

### Introduction

This study has investigated how educated, lower middle class youth navigate the contemporary opportunities and uncertainties of Cilegon's changing job market, in particular against the background of the upcoming privatisation of the town's biggest steel factory and the high rates of youth un(der)employment in the region. The young men and women whose lives I have described were born in the 1980s and 1990s under the Suharto regime, and grew up in the 2000s during the Reformasi period characterised by democratisation, neoliberal reform and a growing influence of Islam in the public sphere. Having obtained secondary or tertiary education qualifications, they are usually equally or higher educated than their parents. Now in their twenties, they hope to study, enjoy their youth, obtain stable employment and access middle class lifestyles, but they enter a highly competitive labour market with few prospects to gain the kind of stable, office jobs which they have come to expect given their education.

This chapter discusses some of the key findings of this study in relation to the main research questions posed and reflects on some of the broader contributions of this research for an understanding of how young people navigate economic insecurity and educated underemployment in Indonesia and other parts of the world. In conclusion, I reflect on the relevance of my findings beyond the Indonesian case and discuss some directions for future research.

### Summary of the main findings

This study set out to explore the complexities and dilemmas faced by relatively educated young men and women during their entry into the labour market in the context of Cilegon's dynamic and challenging polit-

ical and economic environment. The main interest of this research has been in understanding how lower middle class youth seek to realise the ambitions and expectations they devise for themselves, as they make decisions about school, work and lifestyles, and try to plan for the future while retaining their youthful lifestyles in the present. They often do this by manoeuvring between the contemporary opportunities offered and constraints posed by neoliberal development, youth un(der)employment, and proliferation of new communication technologies, consumer goods and globalised Muslim lifestyles. While these contemporary conditions are probably characteristic for young people across large parts of the world, not just Indonesia, this research has been grounded in an ethnographic study in an industrial town in Banten. This research examined (i) how lower middle class youth are located in relation to job opportunities in Cilegon; (ii) the gendered aspirations and strategies of young men and women in pursuing certain kinds of desired employment; (iii) young people's reactions when they were unable to move into the jobs they expected; and finally (iv) the ways in which they try to meet their lifestyle needs.

Methodologically, I have tried to balance a macro-level understanding of processes of industrial change and neoliberal globalisation in Cilegon with a micro-level analysis of young people's aspirations, choices and negotiations about education, work and marriage. This approach shifts focus away from a primary concern with the timing and sequence of young men and women's individual life course and transitions to adulthood, to an understanding of how inequality in youth and broader political and economic forces shape young people's strategies and decisions about education and work (see also Brinton 2011: 10-11 and Jeffrey et al. 2008: 202 for similar arguments). I have drawn on qualitative interviews and participant observation to gain an understanding of young people's everyday lives. The methodological approach is connected to a conceptualisation of young people not as simple victims of wider structural forces, but as actors in their own right, who are trying to realise their goals within the wider circumstances of their lives. In contrast to economic or psychological approaches which tend to see youth mainly as a preparatory stage on the way to adulthood, I have emphasised young people's concerns and ways of being young in the present, where they situated in more or less complex and ambiguous settings (Amit and Dyck 2011: 4-5; Bucholtz 2002: 529). I have used Bourdieu's notion of habitus to under-

line how young people's ideas about work and responses to economic exclusion are closely linked to both their structural location in society and their subjective experience of being young. The study has emphasised that young men and women need an income to support their lifestyles, attract a girl- or boyfriend, and contribute to their families, while also looking to the future and preparing for adult roles. While youth habitus refers to an individual or shared youth identity which is differentiated across class, gender and religious divides, this study has specifically focused on the experiences of Cilegon's lower middle and middle class youth.

### **Decentralisation, globalisation and human capital**

Much of the discussion in the preceding chapters has dealt with the question how young men and women understand and respond to the tensions between economic restructuring, jobless growth and youth unemployment on the one hand, and the steady supply of college graduates which is growing much faster than the demand for them in the labour market. A key argument of this study is that the interaction between ongoing globalisation and neoliberal reform since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and the implementation of Indonesia's programme for decentralisation in the post-Suharto period, produces new sets of paradoxes for young men and women during their entry into the labour market. When looking for a job, young men and women on the one hand encounter ideas based on a human capital framework which treats education and training as an investment with economic returns for both individuals and governments through improvements in productivity and economic growth (Brown 2001: 12). This human capital framework feeds into contemporary debates about the need for skilled and educated workers who are able to compete in volatile and competitive global markets. It maintains that the labour market should function according to principles of transparency, efficiency, personal productivity, and merit. It assumes that access to employment should be a matter of individual achievement and employability, rather than a question of ethnic, class-based or gendered privilege. I have analysed this neoliberal logic as a set of ideas which is selectively taken on and implemented, as manifested in the polemics surrounding the privatisation of Krakatau Steel and the rhetoric on human resources (SDM). Chapter 4 discussed recent efforts to end a culture of corruption and 'relaxed work' at the company, which include new pro-

grammes for employee training and recruitment. It finds that companies in Cilegon not only recruit young people on the basis of education credentials, but that they also apply age-based criteria through the notion of “fresh graduates”. Chapters 4 and 5 have described how companies combine elaborate testing and interview procedures with highly selective criteria based on education certificates and age limits. I have argued that these practices carve out an exclusive segment of salaried jobs for “fresh graduates” and jobs for everyone else. Upper secondary school graduates in particular reported feeling confused about finding job applications at their education level, and for the most part they relied on informal personal networks consisting of family, friends and other community members to access information about jobs. The notion that a market logic can be applied to the world of work is further contradicted by demands from Cilegon’s local government towards the industries to introduce quota which would guarantee the recruitment of a specified number of local people. Not surprisingly therefore, many young men and women believe that education is a necessary, but not sufficient resource to access employment. Lower middle class youth in Cilegon were widely aware that in order to get any kind of job they needed to juggle various resources: in addition to using their education certificates, they relied on personal networks of relations with friends, neighbours, teachers and family members and tried to cultivate the right connections with government and company officials. They sometimes paid bribes, and because they were not always sure if these efforts would pay off, they also mentioned that luck played a part in their job search.

This prevalence of informal job search strategies raises the question how young people try to enlarge their personal networks and what they consider to be useful contacts. These questions are not fully answered in my research. Similar ethnographic studies suggest that personal networks along ethnic and family lines are important in getting access to jobs. Wenty Minza describes how both family and ethnic-based social networks influence the decision of young people in West Kalimantan to migrate to Pontianak to pursue education and access work (2012: 69). Sylvia Tidey’s study on local bureaucracy in the Eastern Indonesian town of Kupang emphasises the logic of reciprocal obligations which informs her informants’ social networks. She finds that her informants draw on personal connections through family, church or alumni associations as a means to access a civil service job (2012: 175). The discussion in chapter

3 hints at the importance of new communication technologies in young people's lives and the ways they use these to expand their school-based friendships and forge new solidarities. An important area for follow up research would be to see if these school-based networks continue to be important during young people's job search, or whether the competition in the labour market contradicts with these friendships. A different, but related area for further inquiry would be to examine if and how young people use new communication technologies to profile themselves on social networking and job search sites to expand their social and cultural capital during their job search.

### Young people's aspirations for work

One of the main questions that this study poses concerns young men and women's aspirations for work. These aspirations are highly gendered, as young men and women have strong ideas about jobs for males (e.g. construction, heavy industries, transportation) and jobs for females (e.g. in trade, administration, education, domestic work). The study finds that the aspirations of university graduates gravitate towards salaried employment in the government or in private companies, rather than starting their own business.<sup>1</sup> The chances for secondary school graduates to enter such office jobs are slim, since they do not possess the required college or university degree. For young men with diplomas as welders or electricians from local vocational schools, the preferred route to upwardly mobile, relatively prestigious employment in Cilegon's industries is to obtain a permanent contract as operator or foreman at the state-owned Krakatau Steel company (chapter 4). Female vocational and upper secondary school graduates have great difficulties in accessing government employment as teachers and secretaries and tend to be outcompeted by female tertiary graduates. Chapter 5 described their aspirations to enter factory employment or work as sales assistants in shops and malls.

An important finding of this research is that young people's ideas about what counts and what does not count as work can be highly flexible and are not always easy to pinpoint. Chapter 3 has documented young men and women's fluid ideas about work, money and filling time while they navigate the ambiguous zone between employment and unemployment. The chapter also highlights that rather than being idle young people endeavour to search for information, earn money through

informal economic activities, and help out in family business during periods of underemployment.

This study demonstrates that on the one hand, problems of educated underemployment among youth cut across class boundaries, affecting both upper secondary and tertiary graduates. At the same time, this study suggests that class and gender matter for young people's decisions about education and work, and their responses to problems of educated underemployment. As Jeffrey et al. (2008: 196) point out, young people have individual personalities and different everyday goals in life, so class, gender and ethnicity do not directly determine their approaches to underemployment. However, the economic, social and cultural capital that they draw on to navigate economic uncertainty is in large part a function of their class, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Chapter 3 has shown how families of Krakatau Steel managers draw on the social, cultural and economic capital of their families to provide their children with a university education at better quality universities in Java whereas the lower ranks of Cilegon's middle classes, who similarly aspired to stable jobs and middle class lifestyles, often continued to study in poor quality institutes in Banten. After completing their university studies, these graduates often leave Cilegon as they become employed in professional jobs in Jakarta or other big cities. As this study has pointed out, the mobility of lower middle class informants often took place more within the region of Banten where they could draw on family and personal networks to study and look for work. As pointed out in chapters 1 and 3, these lower middle classes often aspire to obtaining middle class lifestyles and upward mobility through education. At the same time, they are often barely hanging on to the middle classes as an income category, which sets limits on the quality and amount of education they are able to afford. Despite the importance that many parents attribute to schooling for their children, the majority of my informants were not able to continue education beyond upper secondary school, thereby landing in the group of job seekers which experiences the highest levels of youth un(der)employment.

### **Gender and the transition to adulthood**

To date, most studies have analysed the gendered effects of labour market restructuring for young men and women separately, thereby sometimes obscuring that they may face similar conditions which are

characteristic of the Indonesian economy in general (Manning 1998: 267). As Manning points out, upward credentialing in the labour market, low wages in manufacturing and service industries, and crowding into low paid, precarious jobs in the informal economy, affect both young men and women and have little to do with gender discrimination per se. Yet, as mentioned above, although they may share certain conditions in the labour market, young men and women are likely to respond differently to those conditions based on their class background as well as gendered, and religious expectations about 'proper' trajectories towards adulthood for young men and women.

In this dissertation, I have argued for the need to further investigate the links between youth, gender and employment and start questioning women on their responses to economic uncertainty and unemployment. Just because they enter a more flexible working situation and their experiences of unemployment are relatively hidden, we should not assume that these issues are not important to them. Chapters 4 and 5 have analysed the gendered tensions and contradictory effects of economic restructuring. Privatisation of the town's largest steel company and a decline of jobs in heavy industries produce a hostile and competitive environment for young men. In the absence of stable work, young men are sometimes anxious about their abilities to marry and become breadwinners for their families. They maintain that under the current economic conditions it is not enough for the husband to be the breadwinner and the family would need both incomes. They claim that they "are not ready yet" to take on the adult responsibilities associated with becoming a husband and head of the family. By taking more time, young men hope that their financial situation would gradually improve. Postponing marriage also enables them to maintain their youthful lifestyles and relative freedom as single men.

Chapter 5 has shown how diversification of the economy produced by a shift towards service industries and introduction of new consumer lifestyles seems to offer a more flexible work environment for young women. Yet, as with most youth jobs, it is not clear to what extent these jobs offer young women stable prospects for the future. Chapter 5 has also noted that jobs as sales and promotion girls in the mall are only open to unmarried, single girls, meaning that young women often move out of these jobs when they marry or become pregnant. The extent to which these young women are prepared to marry their future husband

who is unemployed varies. Many women said they would not marry someone who is unemployed. Other young women said that they were willing to consider it as long as their boyfriend is making serious efforts to find an income. These examples illustrate that young people's employment and income status can become an important factor in marriage decisions. As these issues are negotiated by both men and women and their families, they automatically become relevant for both genders, not just men.

### **Beyond the Indonesian case**

The first part of this chapter has discussed the findings of this study mainly in relation to the local context of Cilegon and Indonesia. But what is the relevance of this study beyond the context of Indonesia? In this section I highlight some implications of my research for a broader understanding of youth and educated underemployment.

First, in line with the findings of available studies which have explored the capacity and limits of education to facilitate access to employment and social mobility for young people in Asia and Africa (Jeffrey et al. 2008; Jeffrey 2010; Mains 2007; Morarji 2010), my research offers a means for understanding and rethinking the interconnections between education, youth transitions and the economy. On the one hand, this study could be read as a critique of the contemporary education system, which is built around a human capital model which is outdated and does not correspond to the realities of young people's lives and the economy. My research demonstrates the limitations of a human capital framework with its narrow focus on the role of young people as future workers and entrepreneurs, for understanding young people's education-to-work transitions. Of course, the value of education goes beyond mere training for the job market, not least of all because education is also a right and a more or less subsidised public service (Tomasevski 2003: 108). More importantly, education does more than simply preparing young people for the job market. Schooling often changes young people's aspirations for the future, the kinds of jobs they value, and their idea of themselves as 'educated persons' (Jeffrey et al. 2008: 62; Mains 2007; Morarji 2010). In this sense, my study reinforces the findings of available ethnographic research which show that young people often not only expect that education will enable them to access high-status government employment, they also hope that education will transform their

lives so that their future will be better than the present (Mains 2007: 665; Morarji 2010). On the other hand, the problems that I have studied are only partly related to skills training and education and will not be solved by changing the education system. The point made by these studies and my own work, is that the education system, under certain circumstances, may help to prepare young adults for their job search and future adult responsibilities, but only if the government positions and jobs in manufacturing and service industries that these young people are aspiring to, are actually there. Much of the policy literature supposes that more training, better education and more information will help to include and advance young people in the job market, but the question is: to where? An implicit assumption in World Bank reports on youth (un)employment (2006, 2010) seems to be that the jobs are available and that the problem is in the transition phase: in connecting young people to the jobs that are waiting for them (see also Li 2009). That this is not the case, and that economic growth does not necessarily translate into employment opportunities, has become increasingly clear in Indonesia's current period of 'jobless growth'.

A second contribution of my research is that it highlights young men and women's everyday concerns, practices and strategies during their often difficult entry into the world of work. Unlike their counterparts in Egypt, Tunisia and Spain, young people in Cilegon have not been staging mass protests to demand government action on issues of youth unemployment, corruption, or educational reform. Some young men in Cilegon may respond to underemployment by taking the *javara* route or by joining violent, ethnic-based organisations, such as the Forum Betawi Brotherhood (Leksana 2009) or militant splinter groups like the Islamic Defender's Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam). But like widespread demonstrations, violence seems a rather unique response to problems of youth un(der)employment. This does not mean that I want to foreclose the possibility that in the future young people in Cilegon might turn to collective protest or violent action based around issues of socio-economic justice, corruption or unemployment. At the moment, however, young people do not seem to unite and act on these issues as a generation in the way that Karl Mannheim envisioned in his classic work on the problem of generations (1952).

A more common reaction to problems of educated underemployment among my informants is to question their abilities and self-confidence

and blame themselves for their failure to obtain stable work, as has also been noted for youth in other settings (Brinton 2011: 183; Jeffrey 2010: 91). Amit and Van Dyck (2011: 17) note that one of the reasons why young people do not necessarily resort to protest or violence in the face of their difficult employment situation has to do with their desire to fulfil mainstream values about work, respectability and adult independence. Despite the challenges to obtain stable employment, young men and women often continue to insist on so-called “benchmarks of adult respectability” (2011: 19). My informants’ goals for the future typically followed the linear narrative of moving from education into stable work, getting married, finding independent housing and starting a family of their own. These goals persist, despite an everyday reality characterised by a high degree of fluidity between various jobs and informal activities and limited planning. As these realities are far from exceptional, and have become an increasingly normal condition for youth in large parts of the world (Roberts 2009: 24-25), there is a need to better understand the ways in which young men and women try to realise their aspirations for youth lifestyles, work and marriage under conditions of neoliberal development and cultural globalisation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Though starting a business might not be their first choice, many young men and women are in fact self-employed. Typical activities would be operating a mobile phone counter, selling food, or becoming an *ojeg* driver.



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## **Curriculum Vitae**

### **Suzanne Naafs**

Suzanne was born in The Netherlands in 1979. She came to the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in 2007, when she started as a PhD candidate specialising in Children and Youth studies. Her study on the employment trajectories of relatively educated youth in Cilegon on the island of Java is part of a comparative research programme between various Dutch and Indonesian universities. This programme, called 'In Search of Middle Indonesia', aims to study the dynamics of social life in several provincial towns in Indonesia, with a specific focus on lower middle classes and youth.

Prior to joining ISS, Suzanne worked as a secretary at Oxfam Novib in The Hague, following an internship at Oxfam Novib's Indonesia desk as an MA student. Her interest in youth in Indonesia was sparked during her studies in Cultural Anthropology in Leiden, when she went to Indonesia for the first time to study the circulation of video clips of regional and national female pop artists on video compact discs (VCDs) in Padang, West Sumatra.

Suzanne is currently living in Singapore, where she is affiliated as a post-doctoral fellow to the 'Changing Family in Asia' research cluster at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore. She hopes to expand her research into educated youth underemployment and changing family dynamics in Indonesia and plans to work on a book manuscript based on her dissertation.

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