

Pious Cities and Orderly Feelings: Emotive Infrastructures of Religious Governance

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This chapter examines the emotive infrastructures of governance in Yogyakarta, focusing on how religion-infused signs, sounds, and spatial arrangements work as instruments of affective discipline. Through the concept of „orders of feeling“ (Stodulka, 2019; 2022; 2024), I explore how public announcements, banners, clothing norms, and curated atmospheres shape emotional orientations towards non-normative individuals and communities. Emotives (defined here as signs, gestures, speech, and objects capable of arousing intense feeling) are deployed by religious and political authorities not merely to communicate norms but to instill them affectively. These discursive and infrastructural arrangements can evoke shame, fear, anxiety, and exclusion, and contribute to shifting feeling rules within cities.

Orchestrated campaigns promoting an image of a clean, moral, and well-mannered pious city, steeped in modernist and nationalist rhetoric, stigmatize informal livelihoods, queer subjectivities, feminist expression, and any trace of political dissent. Religious emotives appear in loudspeaker announcements, veiling practices, and banner texts targeting “immorality” and “deviance,” turning the city into a terrain of moral surveillance and affective discipline. These emotive infrastructures can produce regulations and spatial rearrangements that promote hatred, shaming, and violent exclusion while disguising political intent as religious care.

In tracing how emotives function across soundscapes, visual registers, and embodied norms, this chapter situates affect at the heart of authoritarian ‘pious’ governance. Far from passive, the targeted communities persist, contest, and reconfigure the city’s affective orders, showing that while feelings may be disciplined, they are never fully governed.