

Panel 5: Religion and Gender, Saturday, 27 Sept, 14:30 – 16:00

Moral participations at the Margins: Muslim queer and trans religious agency in Indonesia

Ferdiansyah Thajib
FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg

This contribution examines the affective and moral dimensions shaping Muslim queer and transgender lives in Aceh, Indonesia —the only province governed by Sharia law. Drawing on ethnographic data from a decade ago, it explores how *transpuan* (transgender women) and gay men navigated moral boundaries and social stigma in constrained spaces such as salons, cafés, and semi-private gatherings. Rather than simply resisting or submitting to dominant norms, they cultivated ethical lives through affective ties, care-based relationships, and shared moral reflection. Debates over *salat* attire and religious conversion illustrate how affect enabled moral participation and community-building within a tightly regulated religious context. While rooted in past ethnography, the study extends to present-day Indonesia, where religious conservatism and expanding moral surveillance now extend far beyond Aceh, intensifying precarity nationwide. Despite these challenges, Muslim queer and trans communities in the country actively create inclusive spaces of faith and belonging, emphasizing a humanitarian Islamic engagement grounded in compassion, human dignity, and cultural rootedness rather than traditional religious authority. Together, these accounts reveal the enduring entanglement of emotion, ethics, and politics, offering a nuanced understanding of how Muslim queer and trans subjectivities cultivate piety and moral boundaries while navigating the harsh realities of religiously inflected violence.