There is no easy answer as to whether warias in Indonesia successfully attained the belonging that they pursued through their partial integration into the technological aspirations of postcolonial modernity. In the end, their dream of walking through the streets of the city, holding their heads up high as respected members of society, was not a matter of fitting in or of somehow returning to a lost time when their status was recognized as part of a more authentic social role. This is because, for warias, their historical ability to not conform was the very thing that had made them visible and hence recognizable in public space since the colonial period. Warias understood the ambiguous recognition that their nonconforming status bestowed to also contain the kernel of a possibility for recognition. Warias’ experience shows just how crucial a site public gender is for establishing the boundaries of citizenship and for negotiating a place from which to bring new sociotechnical imaginaries into being. The practice of dandan meant more to warias than alterations made to outer appearances. For warias, the adoption of technologies of feminization became most meaningful when they led to a recognition in the eyes of others that overcame the charge that their appearances were a veneer or the imposition of a falsehood. Expanding the times of day and locations in which the public performance of dandan was possible simply allowed warias’ essential character to shine more brightly.

In becoming experts in the technologies associated with globalized norms of feminine beauty, manifest in everyday individual performances, warias emphasized the role played by the publics that encountered them. Warias commonly spoke of the desire for acceptance, usually described as a form of comfort available
to them when they moved through public space, as not only a prerequisite for but as synonymous with national belonging. Warias most often described belonging in terms of an aspirational hope to be “accepted by society” (di terima oleh masyarakat). In using the word masyarakat, warias appropriated the key technical concept that was advanced by the New Order state to regulate and govern “public culture . . . understood in national terms” (Boellstorff 2005, 212). The complex negotiations that warias made with publics as a set of regulatory mechanisms, unruly responses, and creative possibilities, emerged out of Indonesian colonial and postcolonial histories in which the qualities attached to citizenship were interpreted in relation to appearances. Warias’ studied attention to appearances and the public’s evaluation of them show how national belonging is shaped by visual and affective experiences of recognition. Their experiences highlight the need to supplement a focus on popular media and everyday speech with the body and its spatial regulation to better understand the less rational domain of politics, that which comprises what Benedict Anderson referred to as the “separate, half-autonomous realm of human interaction . . . in which mass publics share” (1990, 162).

This book has traced the history of waria and wadam as terms that drew on the postcolonial state’s deployment of the modern gender binary in a novel way. The historical emergence of waria and wadam is one example of how technological development, including the forms of knowledge that defined and in turn naturalized modern gender, addresses specific subjects in specific ways (see Haraway 1988; Strathern 1988). Ethnographic and historical attention to the relationship between technology and gender among warias demonstrates that there is no fixed, universal form of personhood in which the individual body is a natural biological entity. Attention to these histories should therefore prompt a rethinking of the conceptual deployment of a cisgender/transgender binary on theoretical terms that refer to an ontological property of a biological individual. The history of warias shows just how difficult, if not impossible, it was for the state to impose cisgender normativity as the conditions for full belonging. The state struggled to define male and female as population-level norms conceptualized at the individual level as a cluster of physiological and psychological traits that could be aligned or misaligned. That the state failed at every turn to conclusively establish a fantasy of alignment indicates the limits of addressing gender in essentialist terms. The relationship between warias and technology presented in this book makes gender more complex than claims to the universality of a cisgender/transgender binary can contend with. That the domain of the technological is such a central motif in the history of warias, moreover, contrasts with common theorization of histories of gender and sexuality beyond Euro-American contexts in relation to tradition. This book joins anthropological calls to question “the modern distinction between gender and sexuality as the truth against which local, non-Western
ontologies are to be understood” (Valentine 2007, 167), which perpetuates an imaginary that limits who is able to participate in crafting knowledge and what counts as science and technology as institutions that legitimate that knowledge. This is a problem that emerges acutely when the United States and other global empires of knowledge are presented (and, if anything, increasingly consolidated) as the norm and origin of scientific and technological development. This becomes a key question as transgender is institutionalized as both a field of knowledge and political discourse in Euro-American societies. At this juncture, it is important to ask what histories are included and excluded within transgender studies and politics, and in turn how have these shaped the ontological and epistemological concepts of personhood that are taken to be normal and natural when advancing political claims to recognition. I cannot provide easy answers, but I would ask that readers start with the way that varias’ participation in sociotechnical relations of gender led to conditional but very real acceptance from neighbors, community, and kin, forms of recognition in ways that challenged the fiction that the state ever really held a monopoly on recognition and authenticity.

The creation of the new term wadam in the late 1960s was a possibility facilitated by the changed political and economic landscape in Indonesia during the New Order led by the autocrat Suharto, which saw the expansion of technological expertise and greater access to information through the mass media. By combining the separate Indonesian words for “woman” and “man,” varias inserted themselves into gender as a malleable system of semiotic classification. Varias perceptively made use of gender on terms that Donna Haraway has called “an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different—and power-differentiated—communities” (1988, 580). In particular, the practice of dandan harnessed a specific set of modern technologies in pursuit of a more expansive if unstable claim to participate in a mass public. In claiming feminine beauty as a field of expertise over which they could demonstrate their individual contribution to modern society, varias made a partial and ultimately transformative claim to participate within Indonesian public life. Varias’ use of gender in this way, however, was not uncontested. The New Order state, like states in other parts of the world, drew on a range of sources of expertise to claim the authority to define “what counts as a culturally intelligible body” (Stone 1992, 167). The most common disciplinary apparatus that varias encountered was in the form of vocational training programs referred to as guidance (pembinaan), which naturalized a global understanding of individual personhood as a locus of economic development (Kelty 2019, 251). Even as varias negotiated cleverly with the forms of technological modernity so central to the postcolonial state, like guidance, their claims to recognition did not easily equate to acceptance as full citizens.
The governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin, asserted that warias could move toward integration into the public life of the city through improvements made to their appearances. Translating and debating concepts used in Western medicine and psychology—overwhelmingly derived from globalized concepts related to the term *transvestite* (rather than *homosexual*)—Indonesian doctors and psychiatrists worked with municipal experts to bestow on warias a legal but nonconforming status. Early in the 1970s, warias’ and other trans women’s desires for recognition were framed in relation to a global discourse of medical transsexuality as a component of the New Order as a “technological state” (Amir 2013, 161), contributing to a national discourse of progress tied to state development as a necessary corollary of national modernity. In the view of the surgeon Kusumanto Setyonegoro and Islamic scholar Buya Hamka, the application of transsexuality as a field of knowledge could relieve the suffering of warias and other trans people and facilitate their transition into the category “woman,” drawing on the wonders of modern science to clarify what nature had left incomplete. Yet this did not mark the beginning of a march toward a wholesale incorporation of transsexuality into national modernity. The history of technology is far less linear, subject to diverse interruptions and discontinuities. By the late 1970s, what only appeared to be an enthusiastic adoption of medical transsexuality was revised significantly, as definitions of sex and gender as a complex combination of psychological, embodied, and genital states gave way to the idea that maleness and femaleness were innate, natural characteristics marked by chromosomal sex and roles in biological reproduction. This rearrangement in the state’s definitions of sex and gender—and the rise of technological expertise trained on defining the body on individual terms—marked a shift in both the stakes and possibilities of warias’ claims to belonging.

Warias’ experiences of recognition in Indonesia highlight the need for a critical engagement with citizenship and related calls for inclusion, moving beyond limited political conceptualizations of identity that hold the individual as the teleological endpoint of the political as a domain of worldmaking. In making this argument, I join recent astute observations of gender and sexual politics in Indonesia. Hendri Yulius Wijaya (2019) argues that liberal understandings of recognition premised on demands for authenticity can reproduce the very discourse through which queer Indonesians are framed as incompatible with heteronormative and cisgender definitions of state citizenship and national belonging. I am inspired by his calls to move beyond a narrow concept of authenticity as an essentialized and endless grid of difference, but to view it instead as a means to generate new kinds of “Indonesian-ness,” which reflects how “sexuality is constructed through a series of political negotiations” (Wijaya 2019, 149; see also Wijaya 2020). Any hope for enacting a more expansive format for a politics of
gender or sexuality will have to rethink an essentialist vocabulary that privileges authenticity in terms of the bounded individual. The history of warias points to one such possibility, a dazzling engagement with sociotechnical relations and strategies in ways that cannot be captured by models of individualized gender. Warias’ engagement with the possibilities offered by public participation as a route to the transformation of those very publics demands a bolder and more creative interpretation of gender, articulated as questions of class, economic participation, the governance of space, critiques of state violence, and extra-state forms of recognition by community and kin. This approach helps to move beyond a binary view of a politics of recognition as a zero-sum game of acceptance and rejection, and toward the realization that neither the authentic nor the technological provide the ground on which figures emerge, but rather it is a continual process of negotiation and revision that weaves together past, present, and future possibilities.

Citizens of the City, Citizens of the Nation

Rather than attending to events that unfolded primarily at a national level, this book has traced the ways in which warias’ experience of citizenship was an engagement that took place primarily at the scale of technological developments in the city. In the postcolonial nation, what authorities viewed as the problem of gender nonconformity was largely defined and debated by municipalities, which addressed warias as a problem to be solved along with other public nuisances. In doing so, they drew on a vocabulary of public gender that borrowed from colonial-era regulations concerned with appearances based on race that had been in place since the nineteenth century. Warias were so important because they were an object of knowledge that helped to clarify the boundaries of appearances, a recognizable format for determining difference on the grounds of public gender according to an infrastructure primarily concerned with racial difference. In the postcolonial state, anxieties over the mutability of racial difference were transferred onto binary gender, serving as the locus of efforts to determine the authenticity of state citizenship. Drawing on an existing regulatory apparatus that could discipline individuals on the basis of outer appearances, city authorities made every effort to hide gender nonconformity from view on the basis that they were protecting a seeing public. The city drew on existing regulations concerned directly with spatial control to pursue this end, including the provision of additional lighting and fencing and the deployment of police to undertake raids on public places. More than this, however, a concern for warias’ visibility was central to establishing a definition of the twin concepts of “public order” (ketertiban
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umum) and “public morality” (kesusilaan umum) on the surface of the individual body in reference to public gender.

One material consequence of the recognition of warias as a legal but non-conforming status in public space was their recruitment into vocational training in beauty and sewing. Beginning in the late 1960s, city regulations developed a more sophisticated array of disciplinary mechanisms glossed as guidance. These technologies and regulations enabled participation in publics but only in a particular way, one that was focused on reformatting warias’ unruly public visibility into a contribution to economic productivity. Warias commonly referred to their integration as an experience of being made more presentable, or as one waria put it, “being polished.” Warias sought out such integration in relation not to the national government but in the more direct forms of participation possible through engagement with city-level officials and residents. Warias strategically drew on their recognition as a kind of public nuisance to ask for expanded forms of recognition. The perspectives of warias on the possibilities and limits provided through access to training in fields related to feminine beauty suggest an understanding of the modern self not as an inevitable process of individualization, but as one that is a process of continuous negotiation with the social. The concern for warias at the level of the municipality and the district in Indonesia highlights how a relationship between national belonging and state citizenship was not only imagined but actively cultivated in concert with the affective intensity of mass publics. In this book, I have developed a theory of citizenship that holds that the public meanings granted to bodily cultivation are central to understanding how participation in the city and the nation is governed and lived.

Attention to the gendered contours of the publics presented in this book has also helped to illuminate a concern often submerged in analyses focused on sexuality and citizenship at the level of the self: the enduring role of bodily appearance in modern forms of discipline. This is similar to an understanding that Nikolas Rose characterized as a modern form of discipline he calls “government through community,” which derives its disciplinary power from “enhancing the bonds that link individuals” (1999, 136). The power of this discipline comes not from pathologizing an individual, necessarily, but in the individual’s relations with others in a community that the power of discipline makes possible as a collective in which seeing and being seen is a powerful moral force. Sally Engle Merry (2001, 17) described this as a condition of discipline in contemporary cities around the world, in which “the individual offender is not treated or reformed, but a particular public is protected.” This represents a “a shift to neoliberal forms of governance” and a corresponding diminishment of the “scope of collective responsibility for producing social order characteristic of governance in the modern state” (Merry 2001, 17). Collective responsibility, including the state’s
responsibility to care for its citizens, is shrunk to ever smaller, more privatized publics, making the possibility of recognition for those within them at once more devolved and more fragile.

One outcome of this form of governance in Indonesia was an increased emphasis on morality, through which individuals are not only responsible for their own appearances but are required to locate and expose the moral failings of their neighbors. Sharyn Davies described these forms of discipline as a sexual surveillance that arises through “webs of shame,” a form of participation in public life prefigured by relationships with others, “neighbours, friends, colleagues, one’s village and even the state” (2015, 33). Even as warias narrated their movement from a golden age that started in 1968 as a success that heralded expanded possibilities for participation in public life, at night and during the day, more recent events suggest that their place in municipal and national public life is far from assured. Ferdiansyah Thajib (2018, 129) described how warias in the northernmost province of Aceh displayed a “mindfulness in performing/presenting oneself to the world,” which reflected the fact that “their movements within the town [were] subject to public control, enclosing them to limited timing and designated sites such as hair salons.” This oscillation between visibility and invisibility also demands close attention in a context where queer organizations are increasingly addressing themselves to a counterpublic that contrasts with the wider heteronormative public endorsed by the state (Paramaditha 2018). The growing centrality of a public defined by Islamic morality after Suharto’s downfall in 1998 has made it necessary for warias and many others to more delicately manage the relationship between visibility and political claims to recognition in a fragmented public sphere. Efforts to define who belongs in public and who does not has emerged as a crucial locus of political action after the New Order, as Karen Strassler observed, “a way to galvanize an Islamic public around questions of public morality and the limits of an open, democratic public sphere” (2020, 151). During fieldwork in 2014 and 2015, I observed warias pay close attention to their surroundings as they navigated public life, taking actions that for them served to seek out an affective state in which they could achieve a sense of “comfort.” At the beginning of the New Order, warias became more visible as a component of Indonesian public life. Warias interpreted this visibility as a reflection of shifting opportunities for accomplishing “acceptance” and “comfort” at a moment of profound historical transformation. Rather than a fixed state that conferred universal recognition, this was a form of citizenship that was conditional on the context and that warias continued to be able to access only under limited circumstances.

This emphasis on the social dynamics of recognition parallels the experience of trans women in other parts of the world. Eric Plemons’s ethnographic study
of the practice of facial feminization surgery in the United States is a powerful reminder of the stakes involved in transformations made to appearances. Plemons described the experience of recognition for his interlocutors as always in emergence, or in what he called a “dynamic process of exchange,” one that sheds light on the fact that “being seen as a woman on the street may constitute an interpersonal enactment that is very meaningful, but it is also one that is refused at the level of the state” (2017, 91). The everyday ways in which warias negotiate seeing and being seen similarly demonstrate the need for historical and ethnographic theories that grapple with citizenship as the product of an uneasy and dynamic effort, one that can place considerable pressure on those for whom social and legal recognition can diverge. The 1980s was a moment of heightened anxiety about public space and the limits of the New Order state’s vision of economic development. The photographs of practices of dandan taken during this period reflect the need to interpret public gender not at the level of the individual self, but as a crystallization and expression of desires for movement across boundaries of economy, nation, sexuality, and publics. The aesthetic form of practices of dandan usefully draws attention to the careful negotiations of warias as they move through public space on an everyday level. Throughout postcolonial history in Indonesia, the regulation of conformity and nonconformity at the level of the city—reflected in the centrality of attention to outer appearances—has shaped the boundaries of participation in a national public. As readers of this book will recognize, a concept of the public at the scale of the city is deeply ingrained in the historical construction of the meanings of public gender, setting the stage for possibilities of belonging and dangers of rejection within it.

In Indonesia after Suharto, regulations governing participation in public life at the scale of the city continue to shape the boundaries of national belonging, creating tremors that resonate at the center of political life. Although efforts at democratic reform (reformasi) under way since Suharto’s downfall in 1998 have been uneven, the administrative levels of the city, the district, and the region have if anything increased their lawmaking powers across several domains. The form of decentralization known as regional autonomy has been an enduring theme in Indonesian politics and in related struggles that could enable the expression of a diverse “[character] of regional feeling” (Legge 1961, 1) while holding together a unified state. The period after 1998 saw a surge in the number of municipalities, districts, regions, and provinces, as well as the number of democratically elected bodies to represent them. Of the thousands of laws passed by municipalities, many pertain to public order and from the outset focused attention on questions of public morality (Butt 2010). Regional authorities, including city governments, have established dozens of regulations concerned with gender and sexuality, including many that prohibit same-sex sexuality and gender-nonconforming
behavior (Katjasungkana and Wieringa 2016). In the late 2010s, a large number of municipalities passed a number of regulations related to “the protection of the family” (ketahanan keluarga), effectively imposing, under threat of fines and forms of rehabilitation, the heteronormative form of the nuclear family and the biological conception of reproduction on which it is predicated. Such laws, introduced at the level of the municipality and the district, have in turn worked as a platform for the rapid growth in political mobilization in support of the criminalization of homosexuality at the national level, serving as a demonstration of their popular support. Although at a remove from the context of municipal law within which they emerged, these municipal legal regulations share a concern for public order and public morality, both commonly invoked to justify punitive measures that criminalize homosexuality in terms of its visibility to mass mediated publics. The clearest state regulation of non-heteronormative gender and sexuality introduced after the New Order at the national level, the 2008 Pornography Law, does not limit regulation to the practices or materials related to pornography itself. The first article of the law states its remit as “performances in public that contain obscenity or sexual exploitation that violates the moral norms in society” (cited in Lindsay 2010, 42). As Jennifer Lindsay wrote, “The criminal law thus defines pornography in terms of its effect on the perceiver/s, not in terms of objective or absolute identifiable acts, things or works” (2010, 173; see also Bellows 2011). The historical relationship between publics imagined at the scale of the nation and the municipality has opened new opportunities to be seen, but also for that visibility to become a target of surveillance and punishment.

Throughout 2016, the Indonesian news media reported widely that the LGBT political movement was a foreign—and specifically Euro-American—threat to the nation. Although this was by no means the first or only moral panic related to gender and sexuality that has transformed Indonesian society, the speed and collective force of attention given to LGBT politics were intense. The efforts of gender and sexual minorities to claim greater recognition were met with the counterclaim, made much more vociferously, that non-heteronormative forms of intimacy and embodiment should be rejected (ditolak) from the fabric of the nation (see Boellstorff 2016). These events served as the backdrop to those that took place in September 2019, when the Indonesian parliament announced that it would pass a long-awaited revision to the Criminal Code—including regulations that would criminalize all forms of “indecent behavior” (perbuatan cabul). The announcement of the introduction of this legislation to parliament and its likely passage into law was followed by some of the largest street protests that had taken place since 1998. Hundreds of thousands of protesters, including warias, gathered to contest this exclusionary vision of a
national public. Visible among the marchers’ signs were slogans invoking solidarity with transnational claims to LGBT, transgender, and feminist rights. The draft code was not passed at this time, although plans to reintroduce it have been announced and again postponed several times, with no clear path forward. As these transformations in Indonesia after the New Order have shown, democracy and the appeals to a unified public that accompanied it have not provided warias with the opportunities for recognition that they have long sought. If anything, they reflect the continued centrality of the body as a locus of competing claims to speak for and about the public, and gender as a hopeful horizon for articulating collective visions of social justice.

Transpuan

The historical efforts of warias to orient themselves toward a public within which they could achieve acceptance show how citizenship is not assured but better understood as a constant negotiation. At a public meeting with municipal officials in 1968, Indonesian warias, made up in the accoutrements of a modern femininity only recently available to Indonesians of any gender, announced that they would no longer be described officially in public as bancis, with that term’s connotation of ambiguity and public sexuality, but rather with the modern term wadam. This was a powerful claim that not only addressed but shaped the meanings of a modern public that was still in formation at that time. In the wake of these warias’ meeting with the Jakarta governor, Ali Sadikin, and thanks in part to this new term and presentable new public appearance, warias created the first organizations to promote their rights. These organizations—and their integration into the scale of the municipality—offered warias a platform from which they could protest their mistreatment at the hands of the police and neighbors.

In drawing this book to a close, I point to the historical legacy of efforts to forge new practices and new terms that draw on gender as a technology that facilitates global connection to expand the forms of participation possible in public life. Since the mid-2010s, some Indonesian activists have drawn on and integrated the terms trans and transgender—the very analytical and theoretical concepts that I deployed in this book—to advance new claims to recognition. One effect of these claims has been the creation of the new term transpuan, which sits in a distinctive relationship to waria. In the late 2010s, transpuan began to circulate on both national online news websites and social media as one term used to refer both to warias and a wider array of trans feminine populations. Transpuan was coined by activists in Jakarta, and popularized by progressive media outlets and nongovernmental organizations in the capital city. As a term
that combines the first syllable of the English word “transgender” and the last syllable of one Indonesian word for “woman” (*perempuan*), the formulation recalls the process of creating the term *wadam* as a presentable, modern alternative. Indeed, echoing the shift from *banci* to *wadam* that took place in 1968, some groups of mostly Jakarta-based transgender activists, their allies, and the progressive media asserted that *transpuan* was a more presentable replacement for the term *waria*. In some accounts on social media, *waria* was described as having an unequivocally offensive and even hurtful meaning when used in reference to trans women. But the use of the terms *waria* and *transpuan* in Indonesia, and their relationship, is contested. Some older warias described the adoption of *transpuan* to me in generational terms, an assessment that aligns with my own observations of social media and conversations with transpuan. In response to claims that *transpuan* was a more progressive term that should replace *waria*, these warias claimed that the latter was a term that already had broad public appeal and had achieved widespread recognition in Indonesian society. In different community forums and social media, I also observed senior trans women who questioned whether replacing terms had political efficacy; regardless of the term used, they said, in some public settings trans women were never going to be accepted anyway. *Transpuan* is also a term that is distinct from *waria* in several respects, but none so important as the two words that it combines. As noted earlier in this book, *waria* combines Indonesian words for woman and man. Tom Boellstorff (2007, 92) observed that, at the time that he conducted his research, the combination of woman and man reflected a shared understanding among many waria that even as they might be socially legible as women, they understood themselves in some respects to be men. By contrast, *transpuan* has no reference to men or maleness. As such, it opens the possibility for a definition of trans femininity that falls within the broader orbit of identification as women.

This places the term *transpuan* in a compelling conversation with the women’s movement and feminist activists, a conversation that has emerged since the end of the New Order. In part, *transpuan* is made possible by a semantic shift away from the use of *wanita*, the other Indonesian word for woman used by the organs of the New Order state. As a result, *wanita* brings to mind patriarchal forms of state power and the subordination of women (Suryakusuma 1996). By contrast, more widespread use of the alternate Indonesian word for woman, *perempuan*, grew out of the struggles of women’s activists in the wake of the gendered violence that took place during the New Order and immediately after Suharto’s fall from power, culminating in the establishment of the National Commission for Women, Komnas Perempuan (Anggraeni 2014). The universal promise of citizenship tied to *perempuan* was claimed as a vehicle not only by transpuan but by other marginalized feminine figures too. Describing activist attempts to grapple
with the sexual violence toward Chinese Indonesian women in 1998, Karen Strasser (2020, 78) described *perempuan* as “a category that could transcend racial, ethnic, and religious differences.” Similarly, *transpuan* brings varias and other trans feminine populations into the orbit of a specific, national understanding of woman, *perempuan*, a word that articulates a hopeful dream of the universal possibility of rights and recognition through citizenship.

Tracing the history of *transpuan* is complicated by the fact that it has been defined cumulatively and iteratively on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. The production of knowledge about *transpuan* is thus both decentralized and subject to the dynamic, if anonymous and fleeting, character of social media exchanges. The transformed media technologies through which *transpuan* emerged make it difficult to establish precisely what organizations and individuals authorized the term and why some activists have framed it as more presentable than *waria*. The first published Indonesian-language account by a transpuan activist that I have found is an edited collection of stories titled *Acceptance: Stories of Acceptance of Transpuan by Their Parents* (Halim 2019). Stephanie Kevin Halim, who is trained as a psychologist, offered a definition of “trans” in her foreword to the book:

> Trans is an umbrella terminology for describing people whose gender identity is not the same as the gender identity given to them at birth. Trans individuals refer to themselves using one or more variants of terminology, including (and not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender queer, gender fluid, non-binary, gender variant, cross dresser, genderless, agenda, nongender, third gender, two-spirit, bi-gender, trans laki-laki [trans man], trans puan [trans woman], trans masculine, trans feminine, and so on. (Halim 2019, 1)

The hurt caused by being “rejected by family, rejected by society, and rejected by the nation” (Halim 2019, 25) animates a desire for acceptance by a public that is experienced as proximate. Halim’s emphasis here recalls moments when belonging for varias seemed within reach during the New Order. Recall that Ali Sadikin pleaded with residents of the city to see varias “as human beings, with rights as citizens of the city, and rights as citizens of the nation” (Atmojo 1987, 18). Both formulations call for empathy from a public who is immediately present, encouraging citizens to imagine the deep hurt that exclusion from public life must cause.

In a rhetorical stance that linked transpuans’ struggle for acceptance directly to national belonging, Halim also pointed to Indonesia’s effort to achieve independence from Dutch colonial rule. Folding transpuan into the revolutionary origins of the Indonesian nation, Halim opened her book with reference to her
hopeful anticipation of transgender rights in Indonesia, drawing a comparison
to Indonesian independence from the Dutch in 1947. She wrote, “It has been
seventy-four years since Indonesia declared independence, but until now in 2019,
I rarely hear stories about parents accepting their trans children” (2019, 1). The
relationship between national belonging and transpuan also helps to explain to
prominence in the title of the book of the word “acceptance” (penerimaan), which
Halim tied closely to the family, a paradigmatic form of modern recognition in
the history of the modern Indonesian nation (Siegel 2006, 158). Considering this
early and likely first published Indonesian account written by a transpuan, it is
notable that the concept of acceptance emerged at the outset as part of a critical
vocabulary for making a claim to rights and recognition. Despite its relationship
to a global transgender imaginary, then, transpuan appears to be imagined as a
term that is also national in scale, reflecting one way in which gender continues
to shape the boundaries of participation in public life as well as to agitate for an
expansion of it. Nevertheless, the dream of establishing a unified viewing public
who will admit the presence of warias and transpuan on unconditional terms
remains as yet unrealized.

This emphasis on acceptance as pivotal to national belonging and the parallel
that Halim drew between trans rights and a national Indonesian revolution of
independence also bring to mind the formation of the name given to Indonesia
itself as a term of identification and its entanglement with science and technology.
The term *Indonesia* was first developed in the fields of ethnology and geography
in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century to describe inhabitants and geographical
features of the archipelago (van der Kroef 1951). It is a combination word,
drawing together the word *India* and the suffix *-nesia*, derived from the Greek
*nēsos* (island), and emerging as part of a classificatory matrix for insular subdivisions among ethnologists and geographers, including those of Polynesia and Melanesia. Throughout the colonial period, distributed through networks of
scholarly and popular knowledge, *Indonesia* served as a fashionable replacement
for other terms previously used by scientists, including the “Malay Archipelago”
(Wallace 1872). The popularity of the term was precipitated through its use and
distribution by Indonesian nationalists engaged in anticolonial struggle from the
early twentieth century onward. They quickly appended *Indonesia* to the names
of their organizations, including the first nationalist organization, Perhimpunan
Indonesia (Ingleson 1975). The Dutch colonial government was so concerned
about the revolutionary potential invoked by *Indonesia* that it attempted to ban
the word’s use in official documentation (van der Kroef 1951). The colonial
state’s efforts to control the use of *Indonesia* and the multiplication of *Indonesians* was futile.
Emerging as an arcane reference to a geographical area and drawing on racialized scientific divisions that attempted to categorize and classify human difference into graspable units for analysis, Indonesia gave birth to a form of consciousness and means to contest political exclusion. This is a characteristic it shares with the terms transpuan and waria, both of which have a fractured relationship to global forms of scientific and technological knowledge about sex, gender, and sexuality. In noting this parallel, I draw attention to the conceptual possibilities that emerge by attending to citizenship and attendant claims to recognition not within a teleological framework of technological determinism, but as a capacity to draw together, translate, and create new and more inclusive visions for participation in public life. These struggles demonstrate that Indonesia, along with warias’ place in it and the opportunities to obtain citizenship that result from the collective struggle to see and be seen, remains a work in progress that continues to be made and unmade in new ways.