

Securing the Majority: Living through Uncertainty in Jakarta

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Abstract

Drawing on research in Jakarta, this article reconsiders the importance of heterogeneous economic practices in the remaking of central-city districts in ways that provide ongoing platforms of residence and operation for residents from wide-ranging walks of life. The emphasis on good governance and rights-based discourses have sometimes occluded the operations of urban real economies that, even if waning in the face of the proliferation of mega-developments, constitute the critical capacity of the majority of urban residents' efforts to secure a viable place in the city.

Governor Fauzi Bowo stated Monday that he refused to totally revise the 2030 Jakarta spatial planning draft as requested by a coalition of concerned citizens, who are advocating greater public participation in their city's future. Fauzi said he would only listen to recommendations of the coalition on the condition that it represented the voice of the majority of Jakartans.

Jakarta Post, 23 March 2010

Questions of urbanism in the global South

What are cities becoming across the global South? Such an overarching question has been the subject of many contentions. These contentions attempt to enrol the day-to-day urban realities as evidence of particular developmental trends, a continuously emerging architecture of extensive globalized articulation, or a stretching of the parameters through which urbanization is to be considered. As cities are the product of efforts that assemble and intersect spaces, people, things and time, questions about whose efforts count and what impact they have are critical aspects of urban life. Who has the right to operate, how, and where? What are the conditions that enable or preclude residents of cities to experience themselves as enjoined, and what practices and powers are deployed to produce commonality and distinction? If capital is the means through which specific densities among persons, materials and spaces are constructed, how do its uneven, spatially selective and experimental dispositions intersect with their various 'reworkings' and appropriations by peoples variously constituted as populations, citizens, denizens and networks?

In light of such questions, what do the histories and positions of cities in the global South say about the urbanities one might imagine and bring to fruition? From the elaboration of de-centered ordinary cities to subaltern urbanisms to urban forms consonant to emerging economic powers and to dispersed and fractured regions, there have once again been substantial attempts to theorize and document frameworks that emphasize both the specificity of Southern urban experiences and ways of thinking about

varied articulations among them (Bayat, 2000; Robinson 2002; Alsayyad and Roy, 2006; Amin, 2006; de Boeck and Plissard, 2006; Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2008; Pieterse, 2008; Wu, 2010; Ong and Roy, 2011).

Given these reformulations, how are questions of governance and rights to the city conceptualized and implemented (Mitchell, 2003; Gilbert and Dikeç, 2008; Brenner *et al.*, 2009; Dikeç, 2009)? To what extent might discourses on efficient, democratic urban governance and sustainability that purport to act in the interest of such rights actually displace the political and economic practices that make urban life at least minimally viable for the majority of residents of these cities?

The majority as a horizon

In light of this last question, I want to consider the conditions under which a possible and constantly mutating majority of these cities have attempted to secure for themselves the ongoing possibility to carve out a viable life. Political rationalities that focus on activating citizenship on the part of individuals of various backgrounds and using citizenship as a means of equilibrating differences under the provision of rights and services have been important tools in long-term struggles to improve urban lives. But it is not certain that these are always the key elements to produce spaces for maneuvering and livelihood. The capacity to ‘urbanize’ everyday practices so that they enfold diverse others into basic calculations and decisions about what is workable and necessary have also proved critical (Benjamin, 2000; Smith, 2001; Law, 2002; Elyachar, 2005). Decisions about who to work with, who to take into consideration — while subject to specific definitions and attributes — are also in many instances quite fluid and open-ended, moving at different speeds, with no fixed criteria or eligibility. It is in this continuous re-composition of everyday economic relationships that a ‘majority’ comes into view — never as a stable formation, but as a momentous possibility (Rancière, 2010).

In cities that nominally put a democratic apparatus to work, securing a majority becomes the means to legitimize authority. A majority confers its consent upon a government that is both the extension of its will and the concrete manifestation of that majority. As the majority — produced by the procedures of democracy — is primarily a statistical artifice, it exists fundamentally as an abstraction. It is an amalgamation of a count that encompasses the ambiguity of both positive and negative affirmations. A vote for a specific political party, person or platform is not equivalent to a vote against an alternative configuration. Additionally, a majority does not exist as a clearly defined, self-conscious or coherent political entity of which the democratic outcome is a univocal expression of its collective will. A majority may be ‘secured’ precisely through cobbling together disparate interests and positions by virtue of commitments to include them within the process of governing, or through manipulating fears, buying votes or extending promises.

The process of securing a majority therefore has little to do with identifying and appealing to something that is conscious of itself as a majority, although a proportion of that majority may primarily view itself as belonging to a particular group, identity or movement. Here, that sense of belonging takes precedence over any other means of understanding and acting upon one’s daily life. Neither does the attainment of a majority, one that enables a regime to consolidate its capacity to govern, provide an unequivocal opportunity for individuals and groups to experience themselves as articulated to each other in ways that posit possibilities for coordinated action in the future. As government increasingly concerns itself with the differentiated management of inequalities, political practice and policies are geared toward the individuation of the social world and the allocation of resources and opportunities through market mechanisms. Here, the insecurity of an individual’s relationships to others, to conceivable modalities of

collective life, and to social protection, instills competitiveness (Lazzarato, 2009). As security becomes more than the management of discernible populations, how urban residents engage the experimental dimensions of this individuating process become important.

Once a majority is secured — statistically registered and validated — there is no other reason for the majority to ‘speak’ as it has been constituted. ‘The people have spoken’ is the conventional phrase, regardless of whether they have said anything in particular. This does not mean that a particular regime does not actively seek to use the governing space accorded to it to cultivate specific allegiances. Decisions and policies, in order to be effective, must find traction in the interests and understandings of citizens. Individuals, wanting the actions of government to take their concerns and realities into consideration, will align themselves to others in particular modes of identification and expression that regimes will attempt to embody (Isin, 2007). Sometimes this effort will be undertaken through the tactical amplification of potential threats or through providing certain opportunities — for resources and services — to those who are defined as eligible to receive them. Interest groups and constituencies are always being welded through governance as they are also deferred and dissipated.

Still, governance relies upon notions of the majority as both a normalizing conjunction of diverse histories and inclinations, which also identifies a series of minimum traits as both the product and object of governmental intervention, and the basis of the individuation of social domains — in terms of making individuals administratively responsible for their livelihoods (Miller and Rose, 2008). The majority points to individuals. And while individuals will remain members of groups, associations, parties and networks, the culmination of ‘collected’ individual political aspirations is to take the form of ‘the majority’.

The notion, then, of a majority as a statistical artifice nevertheless points to the possibilities that individuals and households exist in cities in ways in which they come to share certain similarities in how they conduct everyday life and manage their livelihood. All cities have specific histories of representation, of accounting for their histories and dynamics. Who and what is included in these accounts are the subjects of contestation, contrasting memory and revision. For cities in the South, such narratives can be problematic, given the varying temporalities and forms of colonial rule and the conflicts over how cities were to be represented as a critical aspect of their management (Holston, 2002; Wright, 2002; Noobanjong, 2003; Cairns, 2004; Lu, 2004; King, 2007; Alsayyad, 2008).

The changing statuses of cities in relationship to the metropolises, and the changing policies regarding the evolution of specifically targeted populations as eligible for urbanization, contributed to how the stories of cities were to be told. The cultivation of nationalist projects — those directed either towards economic autonomy, redistribution or integration into global capital markets — continues to shape and depend upon specific narratives of unity and order (Kusno, 2008). Efforts to consolidate modern, efficient and even spectacular cities are widely viewed as critical to ensuring the efficacy of the nation. Built environments conducive to the fluid intersections of capital, information and influence generate opportunities for value creation that exceed domestic resources and productive capacity, and enable vectors of accumulation that surpass the ability of state bureaucracies to enforce specific accounting procedures. This accumulation can thus drive high-end property development such as superblocks, which signal a nation’s ‘full participation’ in urban hypermodernity (Flyvbjerg *et al.*, 2003; Yeoh, 2005; Douglass, 2007; Hasan, 2007; Kong, 2007; Shatkin, 2008; Weinstein, 2008; Baidur and Kamath, 2009).

However, the restructuring of urban economies over the past several decades of trade liberalization, public-sector contraction, export-led industrial production and low-cost labor markets has, in some regions, displaced entire communities from towns and villages by undermining agricultural and craft economies. Widespread unemployment and overcrowded informal sectors have also contributed to the growth and intensification

of urban poverty. The urban poor are increasingly relegated to the periphery of urban systems and underdeveloped central-city areas on the verge of regeneration, so that past efforts to defer attention to the urban poor or to respond with largely symbolic gestures are no longer possible (United Nations–Habitat, 2003; Garland *et al.*, 2007; United Nations Population Fund, 2007).

This does not mean that widespread evictions and repression do not continue, or that appropriate policies and opportunities regarding shelter and livelihood are forthcoming. Rather, the urban poor are now ‘written into’ the narrative of the city, primarily as a ‘problem to be solved’, an imminent crisis, and the ‘next step’ necessary for ensuring the city’s status as a ‘world player’ in the long run. So while the concrete situations of the poor may not change, they have been accorded a heightened visibility in various policy, activist and academic discourses (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2004; Beal and Fox, 2007; Perlman, 2007). What is largely seen, then, when Southern cities are observed, are the superblocs and the slums. They acquire a familiarity that constitutes a locus for what cities have in common, what they recognize in each other. If a significant part of urban and national economic growth derives from the interaction of cities, plying actual and potential complementarities of resources bases, geopolitical positioning, micro-economic frameworks and labor markets, the simultaneity of the superbloc and the slum becomes a critical vantage point from which differentially situated urban actors can conclude that they are operating within a univocal space (Ong and Roy, 2011).

Yet in terms of the resultant narrative of what a city is and how it operates, what is between the superbloc and the slum — between the progressive growth of an urban middle class largely identified through its participation in new sites and forms of consumption and mobility and the growing precariousness of the life situations of the urban poor — largely vanishes. This notion of the ‘in-between’ is, of course, simply a pointer to configurations of people, resources, things and spaces that have no stable definition or mode of appearance. Concretely, this ‘in-between’ would encompass salaried workers in public and service sectors, traders, artisans, sojourners, petty bourgeois entrepreneurs, industrial labor, racketeers, service workers of various skills and low-level technicians. Thus it entails various professions, work, backgrounds, economic capacities and livelihoods. At various historical junctures, the ‘in-between’ will gravitate and become discernible through various social and political formations, such as class, race or territorial identity. Specific shared interests and vernaculars of recognition will come to the fore that enable the articulation of particular demands and form an anchor point or target for the application of particular policies, mobilization and ideological engagement. But across most Southern cities, the concrescence of political subjectivity and the stabilization of constituencies over time ebbs and flows — it is never entirely formed or dissipated, but porous and tentative (Haber, 2006; Lund, 2006; McFarlane, 2007; Bayat, 2009; Lindell, 2010).

That which is in-between points to a majority of contemporary urban residents who are neither poor nor middle class. This does not mean that for some of those ‘in-betweens’ there are not large measures of either precarity or accumulation. Many are barely hanging on to the trappings of middle-class lifestyles and have become exceedingly vulnerable to small registers of change — in the prices of basic inputs or property, to immanent changes in residential districts or to shifting labor markets. Others may experience intense oscillations in their access to income, with prolonged periods during which no money comes in, and periods of significant earning, but without consistently reliable trajectories. Many may earn incomes that might qualify them as being poor, but are situated in highly elaborated and differentiated economic networks through which they can access continuous employment even as specific jobs come and go, sectors shrink and businesses shut down. Some unemployed households may have acquired a significant asset a long time ago, hold onto it and develop it for new uses — for example, converting property and buildings into low-cost rental accommodation.

The 'in-between' is composed of heterogeneous stories and situations, and thus part of their relative invisibility in contemporary narratives of cities can be attributed to this heterogeneity. There is an absence of clear story lines, of stable class formation, ideological orientation, overarching territorial identities or ongoing institutions that embody specific collective interests and aspirations. This does not mean that these elements do not exist. Cities are full of associations, unions, political and civic groupings. But the institutional lines among them that are capable of mediating relationships have either weakened, or become more dispersed. Circulations of individuals across distinct spaces, discourses, opportunities and groups may indeed intensify, but do so through diffuse relational networks whose shifts and compositions grow more complex through these circulations themselves (Laquian, 2005; Read, 2006; Telles and Hirata, 2007; Sánchez, 2008).

If that which is in-between then is, at least by default, the 'majority' of the city, how does that majority secure itself? If the majority of residents are not living in spaces readily identifiable through the common elements of social class, ethnic identity, occupation or residential history, how are such subsequently heterogeneous districts made viable over time? Again, elements of stability gained through consistent and discernible forms of identification do exist. For example, residential complexes may be established for low-level public-sector workers, for civil servants of a particular ministry, for military personnel, or for workers of a particular industrial complex. Residents of particular ethnic backgrounds and residential histories will at times aggregate in specific neighborhoods. Still, the 'insides' of these assemblages are rarely homogenous and they are usually situated within larger contexts of intense heterogeneity and dense proximity to highly diverse compositions of land use, economic activity and residential background.

Heterogeneity and economic practice in Jakarta

For the past several years, I have been working part-time with the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) in Jakarta — one of the city's oldest and largest constituency-based urban social movements. My job has been to work with groups of UPC members living in intensely mixed districts in the central areas of the city to assist them in surveying and documenting economic practices, local power relations and mobility. This has been done through various interviewing formats, focus groups and field observations largely conducted by UPC residents themselves. I have discussed these observations and information with teams and various configurations of local residents in the field — in homes, markets, workshops, streets and mosques. As we were particularly struck by the diverse ways in which households and groups calculated the use of limited resources, many discussions with residents centered on how this diversity functioned in daily transactions with family members, neighbors and other associates. Even when households and neighborhood groups had very small income margins to work with, there were concerted efforts to pool limited assets, basically to speculate on new income-generating activities. The diversity of calculations was viewed as a way to continuously recalibrate roles and differing exposures to various opportunities, as well as to blend different sets of skills. Focus was also placed on the circulation of labor through various facets of a particular sector, through different work settings and types of jobs.

The materials presented here are conceptual extractions from this work and focus on patterns of interaction rather than ethnographic reports *per se*. Social identities such as gender and ethnicity play a substantial role in delimiting fields of activity and possibility for individuals. If these dimensions are underplayed here, it is not to diminish their significance, but rather to place them momentarily in the background in order to focus on dimensions of everyday practice whereby individuals attempt to find ways of flexibly moving through various scenarios and spaces, rather than consolidating specific zones of affiliation, work and responsibility.

In the Karanganyar and Kartini districts of central Jakarta, for example, specific ethnic backgrounds predominate — Javanese, Sudanese and Chinese-Indonesian — but territorial consolidations are distributed across the districts in small segments where distinct territorial concentrations are always in close proximity. Likewise there are various concentrations of power — for example, decentralized local authorities that sometimes operate extensive patronage games, and branches of the major Islamic organizations. The latter include Muhamadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Hizbut Tahir and Islam Liberal Network, which cover the full spectrum of theological and political tendencies. Additionally, there are extrajudicial groups that are nominally centered on specific ethnic interests but which all act as a fulcrum for a wide range of agendas, for example, Forum Betawi Rempug (Betawi Brotherhood Forum). All these institutional elements participate in shifting alliances and enmities and, while they may dominate particular neighborhoods or sectors, they act as nodes in a circuit of exchanges across different territories, subject to ebbs and flows of influence, membership and program.

With roughly 75,000 residents, these are the old districts just to the north of the Golden Triangle — the area of the city that has been completely remade through superblock development and the development of a new CBD. It is a district folded into a vast interior of old but still dynamic commercial and market areas — with scores of small lanes with of three- to ten-storey houses. While the districts seem dilapidated overall despite widespread efforts to maintain well-tended and thoroughly greened lanes, they are replete with people from diverse economic backgrounds, occupations and educational levels. For example, the surveys found that similar percentages in categories of school leavers — from elementary, secondary and tertiary stages — existed across the two districts.

Because the provision of rental accommodation is such a key element of many household incomes, a single property may include very different social and work backgrounds. As sections of Kartini are the territories of long-term Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs, some of whom have substantially regenerated their residential areas, while others barely hold on, the dense proximities diverse residential areas have attained reproduce economic patronage networks. These networks generate a significant volume of jobs, even as they are often objects of resentment among non-Chinese-Indonesian traders and entrepreneurs. As the districts are situated within the borders of the city's largest automobile and motorcycle parts and repair business, many residents participate in various facets of this trade — and it is indeed a trade with multiple facets and specializations.

Particularly significant are the practices through which related households or neighborhood networks cultivate niche activities within this trade — for example, the refurbishing of used cars, panel beating, customization of parts for hybrid engines, the conversion of automobile parts (metal, fabric, cables) into other applications, the sale of illicitly attained parts, motorcycle leasing, to name a few — and have various affiliates circulate through these different facets.

So, for example, a family in the trade would not be as inclined to consolidate a business that integrated within it multiple facets of the trade. Rather, it would attempt to make its mark in one particular specialization and then have other family members access positions in numerous others. In this way, a family network is construed that maximizes the points of exposure to various relational networks and opportunities, preparing itself to shift 'gears', resources and emphasis when necessary or opportune, as well as to minimize the risk of putting 'all of their eggs in the same basket'. These are strategic maneuvers that emphasize mobility through various networks, interfaces, vantage points and exposures. The experience of mobility — in other words, the sense that one is actually going from one place to another, marking a space that is transverse — then necessitates a differentiated social field. If everyone were basically doing the same thing and were in the same situation, transacting among them would not easily generate an experience of movement.

Traders, motorcycle drivers (*ojek*), shop owners (*ruko*), carters, repairers, craftspeople, textile and office workers all operate in an overcrowded field, facing declines in purchasing power or profit margins, and therefore must try and supplement primary incomes through other activities or link existent incomes to other accumulation scenarios. In part, such efforts are facilitated through the management of everyday local relationships among neighbors and others who operate within a district. The management of these relationships entails in part a series of reiterative practices. For example, these would be likely to include neighbors acting as though a wide range of transgressions to official social conventions are not taking place, assuming that households have a basically equivalent social standing and a capacity to tend to their own viability, and that domestic affairs, whatever they are, are the purview of individual households and, as such, are not to be the objects of speculation or interference.

In reality, something very different is taking place. The management of local relations is not simply navigating the different information and potential opportunities that a diverse field of occupations and network positions bring. It also entails engaging with the very different stories and trajectories of household accumulation and loss, of changing, lost and new jobs, of changing household affiliations and memberships as the very materials in which districts are able to reconfigure themselves and rearrange their overall relationships to the larger city. If a family faces a prolonged financial crisis and must sell its property, neighboring households may acquire it and rent it back to the family or redevelop it for alternate uses — such as a workshop or business — or upscale its residential value and then find the family alternative accommodation within the immediate area. There is an incessant recalibration of accumulation and loss. While new trajectories of accumulation may be used by certain actors to consolidate their economic and/or political standing within a district, this gain in stature is often reinvested into developing economic opportunities outside of the district for local neighbors and associates.

Making volume: the Tanah Abang market

An interweaving of interests, positions and opportunities is also seen in the ways in which individual entrepreneurship is managed in Jakarta's largest 'traditional' market, Tanah Abang. With its nearly 10,000 established stalls and thousands of informal sellers surrounding the official market, Tanah Abang collapses conventional distinctions among seller and buyer while multiplying the possibilities of transactions. Situated on a rebuilt site after having been burned down a decade ago, the physical market is well organized, with areas demarcating sectors of goods, types of sale, delivery, parking, storage, services, management, and so forth.

Yet these demarcations bleed into each other, in part because the crowded neighborhood in which the market is operating generates various congestions, concentrations and traffic flows that are compensated for by creating new densities and hubs. For example, buses full of shoppers from outside the city are only able to access and park at the market through a rear entrance behind a nearby *kampung* (as historic residential districts are usually called) to offload passengers. This has created new retailing possibilities for both residents and outsiders in the *kampung* itself, which now specializes almost exclusively in the current 'hot ticket' item — women's Islamic dress. Fading commercial infrastructure in the surrounding areas is still viable as the demands for storage spaces increase. Traffic congestion across the main thoroughfares has swelled the number of handcart pushers and porters who make continuous trips between storage spaces and trucks that are parked at the periphery and the market.

The market itself is largely devoted to various forms of re-packaging. Large bundles are delivered to stalls, their items unpacked and then re-bundled in various volumes and then passed along. While customers do approach specific stalls to buy small quantities within the supposedly retail section of the market and large quantities in the surrounding wholesale areas, in practice, these distinctions are thoroughly mixed up. The situations of long-term customers of a particular seller can be quite volatile. Their capacities to acquire specific amounts of items become contingent upon the marked oscillations of other traders who opportunistically acquire goods in different international markets, await inventory in backlogged delivery systems at different ports, or experience shifts in sales according to various holidays and institutional calendars. Sellers in Tanah Abang must be prepared to deliver various quantities flexibly — both directly to their established consumer base, which could be located anywhere in Indonesia, and to other sellers in the market itself, in order to cover shortfalls and smooth out any growing imbalances in exchange transactions. Items are then sold according to highly differentiated volumes, as well as temporalities — as a loyal customer base can be cemented through versions of ‘future contracts’. Mutual participation of sellers in such flexible practices is therefore necessary to coordinate pricing structures.

While competition certainly drives the market, sellers, who basically deal in the exact items that hundreds of others are also dealing in, cannot afford to undercut each other, given that the profitability of the market as a whole is linked to the creation of excess. Here, excess is the expansion of consumption opportunities that come from penetrating areas across Indonesia — and for some sellers, across the world — and making it mechanically possible for 30 people in a remote village in Flores to acquire a particular shirt in July 2009 as opposed to just five people the year before.

In a version of just-in-time delivery, tens of thousands of small retailers across the country get their hands on the volume of items they think they can sell. As these calculations about prospective market demand can never be exact, they also do not want to waste time and money by repeatedly coming to Jakarta, and so they hedge their acquisitions by going in with other retailers in their areas — each of whom may have their own long-term relationship with different sellers in the market. Here an overall volume at advantageous prices must be assembled from various sources, without each discrete seller feeling that they are being forced into a hidden discount on the price. So these arrangements, too, become a feature of coordination among sellers and the ebbs and flows of various movements of goods among them.

Additionally, an individual from a *kampung* in Jakarta might take orders from neighboring residents. These orders could be acquired singly from various sources in the market. But to save money and also pay for the services of the purchaser, these items are bundled at a single wholesale-equivalent price. What ensues is a notion of wholesale volume that is not calculated in terms of a single sale or even customer. Rather, sellers create an expanded space of selling, flexibly adjusting to highly differentiated forms of consumerism, and within this space, being able to afford to calculate a wholesale-equivalent price across a range of different hourly or daily volumes and customers. Instead of counting on 100 shirts to be sold at a particular price to a specific customer, putting those 100 shirts ‘into play’ across various deals that bundle different items, sellers know that they will be able to ‘make their volume’ — which allows them to maintain a low price for a particular consumer. Such practices not only respond to specific consumer demands but, for example, have largely been responsible for generating the enormous market in Islamic-styled clothing that has become the ‘uniform’ of a new middle class, as well as those who aspire to be part of it.

Any cursory assessment of markets such as Tanah Abang would find vast inefficiencies. Even though the local authority responsible for the market estimates that it constitutes 7% of the domestic product of Indonesia, there are constant reports of its immanent closure and relocation. The local authority turned over the day-to-day

management of Tanah Abang to the city's largest private developer, the Pomodoro group. This group largely depends on an intricate network of informal authorities — *preman* — to manage the interlocking relationships between the acquisition and subleasing of stalls — each of which costs around US \$100,000 (for a 5–7 year lease), traffic management of delivery and shipping, parking, storage, security, compensation deals between 'formal' and 'informal' traders, and unofficial taxation systems.

Worrying about the poor?

An overarching dynamic of cities such as Jakarta is that it is characterized by a deep anxiety about the poor on the part of the middle class. It is true that there is a pervasive anxiety about the urban street — one that propels many Jakartans into shopping malls and high-rise residences (Nas and Pratiwo, 2003). Still, it is the very willingness of many residents to live in close proximity to people of other residential status that translates into more resilient and potentially enduring livelihood strategies. In the lower middle-class area of Warakas, populated largely by teachers, nurses, civil servants and office workers at the nearby port of Tanjung Priok, formal earnings once enabled the consolidation of a well-maintained area of small pavilion dwellings, the ability to provide for a good education, the accumulation of some savings, and the acquisition of the trappings of a middle-class lifestyle. People's formal income has not been sufficient to maintain this middle-class status for at least the past decade. As a result, households must supplement their salaries through additional earnings derived from small-business ventures that necessitate drawing upon a pool of low-wage, flexible labor. At the same time, lower working-class and working poor areas that abut these districts of Warakas, such as Bahari, depend upon activities that entail pooling meager household assets and sometimes labor. Spatial proximities then frequently translate to economic ones, as there are intersections of interests and various projects. Many schemes do not work and have to be attempted again, with different resources and actors. But this continuous replenishment and intersection of initiatives generates both basic livelihoods and necessary supplements. The concrete arrangements may not always be fair or consistent, yet they are manifestations of a willingness on the part of diverse residents to deal with each other.

This is true for some segments of an emerging middle class too, although in potentially more problematic ways. For example, an increasing number of young middle-class professionals are 'quietly' investing in historic working-class districts of the central city as a means of attaining strategically located inexpensive space. The long-term risk for these districts is widespread gentrification if saturation of investment reaches a tipping point that threatens the sustainability of existing residents. For now, the insertion of these projects is based on the maintenance of significant volumes of lower-income property so as to keep ancillary costs affordable. Because the bulk of residential and small-enterprise space is not located on major thoroughfares, but recessed in layouts that are not navigable by automobile, the costs of comprehensively remaking these districts for superblock development are presently prohibitive — although this could change.

To a large extent, the securing of a majority — the way in which a majority of residents secure themselves — is to act as if they are a majority — but a majority of a very particular kind. In other words, the intersections among heterogeneous histories, occupations, networks, practices, statuses, capacities and places may be the critical element that sustains the viability, however limited, of most urban residents, keeping in abeyance the quotidian uncertainties and miserable conditions of being poor. At the same time, these intersections of actors and their circulations through different opportunities and spaces do not in themselves produce an overarching institutional body capable of univocally representing a 'majority' or of being a majority. It is difficult to envision institutional forms that are able to incorporate these mobilities or articulate a coordinated

agenda necessary to maintain coherent definitional boundaries. Although these institutional bodies are theoretically important as a possible vehicle for mobilizing the attentions and political sentiment of residents, and thus affect the policymaking process, it is not clear what they would concretely do, and what their prospects would be in today's urban conditions.

Nevertheless, if a majority of residents secure themselves through the very heterogeneous compositions of the territories — physical and social — through which they operate, what kinds of urban politics are possible? What kinds of urban politics might effectively secure residential and economic opportunities that are presently secured through a dispersed relocation of politics in the circulations of different statuses and practices in the context of multiple negotiations of everyday collaboration? While there seem to be no ready answers to such a challenge, it is important to get a sense of recent historical changes in cities to see what kinds of levers, deals and tipping points were available to sustain broad-based residency in the central city.

Ongoing post-colonial dilemmas: forging an urban politics

There are, of course, historical antecedents to these practices on the part of a majority. Despite a wide range of differing arrangements and dynamics, some key common patterns exist across post-colonial urban dispositions. Chatterjee's (2004) analysis of post-colonial urban governance in India rings true for many cities of the South. Unions at independence did provide an active link between middle-class residents and workers living in low-income districts. While usually homogeneous in terms of language, ethnicity and religion, neighborhoods were highly mixed in terms of class. But these links and mixtures had limited impact on shaping the scope of citizenship and diversifying the vehicles in which claims could be staked. Faced with such mixtures, government administration of development and welfare translated intersections of differing interests, aspirations and groups into a heterogeneous social field where population groups were to be recognized and addressed through different policies. Residents were steered into categorizations, not based on the specificity of life experiences and moral claims but in terms of producing specific outcomes and considering the costs and benefits entailed. As those calculations change, Chatterjee emphasizes, so does the composition of specific groups.

As mass-based organizations increasingly became a target of state repression, local districts sought out interlocutors who were able to mitigate the punitive intrusions of the state and to open up channels for the inward flow of public resources. Many low-income districts were accommodated and tolerated, not as legitimate expressions of urban citizenship but rather as populations to be effectively managed and eventually socialized into the prevailing laws and norms. This management entailed the usually messy business of striking deals between municipal authorities, the police, residents, hawkers and landowners. Central-city mixed districts became the purview of shady politicians, whereas the middle class, as 'proper citizens', retreated, as Chatterjee points out, to the civil society and the world of NGOs (Heller, 2001; Auyero, 2007; Benjamin, 2008). These moves widened the distance between social classes, particularly in the absence of viable forms of mediation. Given the anchorage of the middle class in civil society over the past decades, and in some contexts, the substantial re-entry of the middle class into the city from suburban areas, the middle-class claim to a well-ordered urban environment and unhindered access to public space is being translated into revisions of property and tenancy laws that result in a substantial remake of crowded and dilapidated areas of the city.

Demands for a more ordered environment are mirrored in demands for more transparent and accountable municipal governance. Such a demand theoretically concedes the possibility of more broadly democratic practice through which a majority

of urban residents might concretize specific agendas and interests. But it also entails a move away from the deal-making and clientelist politics that have largely maintained low- and working-class districts within the city as domains that circumvent strict adherence to many aspects of formal regulatory structure. While such politics did not enable low-income and working-class residents to enhance their long-term possibilities in a changing urban system as a whole, it did to a large extent open up flexible patterns of adaptation (Cocquery-Vidrovitch, 1991; Eckstein, 2000; Kudva, 2009).

In Indonesia, with the exception of 8 years of volatile parliamentary democracy following independence, a majority did not count in urban politics until the beginning of the twenty-first century, when democratic governance was restored. The changing mixtures of Javanese political culture, Islam, militarism and corporate governance tended to consign most Jakartans to locally based social and economic interdependencies. The arrangements of these interdependencies were highly egalitarian on the surface, but their operations were also tightly structured in clear hierarchies of status and obligation (Abeyasekere, 1987).

Through much of the anti-colonial struggle, the consolidation of popular aspirations was most effective when varying strands of diverse ideologies and value systems were strategically intersected. For example, Sarekat Islam, formed in 1912, was the first mass-based organization in the East Indies, from whose 'left wing' eventually emerged the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Even if effective at various historical junctions, such intersections were always tentative, given the different sectors from which collaborating actors emerged. For example, Islamic activists largely came from the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie — and were concerned primarily with their vulnerability to the emergence of larger commercial forces and potentially threatened by a socialist economy. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of cross-fertilization between Islam and the left, infused by significant commitment to Islamic values of justice and fairness. As a result, ruling regimes expended a great deal of effort to dilute it. This is evidenced by the mobilization of key Muslim organizations to end the threat of communist access to state power opened up by Sukarno's suspension of parliamentary democracy in favor of a populist and authoritarian 'guided democracy'.

Export-led industrialization underpinned the authority of Suharto's 'New Order' upon his ascension to power in 1967, as he crafted a highly centralized military government. Organized Islam, shaped largely by petty bourgeois interests, became increasingly threatened by the way in which the New Order steered decision making and resources to the widespread acquisition of assets and economic opportunities by multinational corporations and Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs. At the same time, these macroeconomic shifts not only produced the platform for the New Order's vast patronage system, which became a key vehicle of accumulation for the petty bourgeoisie, but also generated substantial opportunities for the creation of a new middle class of bureaucrats, technicians and other professionals. This new middle class has increasingly appropriated Islamic practice as a means of consolidating a specific class identity and renewed nationalist sentiment. As the economy contracted in the face of the Asian crisis of 1997, increasing levels of unemployment swelled the numbers of the urban working poor, who became an increasingly important constituency for Islamic groups. Efforts to advance the interests and/or reconcile various constituencies are the basis for competition among various Islamic organizations, many of which recognize the political potentials of using Islam as a vehicle for intersecting different life situations and groups (Hefner, 2000; Basweden, 2004; Hadiz, 2010).

Such organizational efforts are often difficult, despite the heterogeneous composition of many urban districts and the extensiveness of syncretism with nationalist political practices. Not only did the New Order severely curtail associational life, it also instituted the system of 'functional groups' (*golongan karya*) based on selective distillments of Javanese political hierarchy, whereby individuals were distributed into specific corporate structures that clearly delineated alignments, responsibilities and powers (Robinson and Hadiz, 2004; Wilson, 2006). On this basis, the military was not only the purported

defender of national interests but was also obligated to act in its own interest, and thus as the primary engine of domestic economic accumulation.

Although the Kampung Improvement Program, initiated by the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1969, and implemented in three phases until 1993, proved to be one of the most sweeping low-income urban regeneration projects ever initiated, the New Order itself barely invested in low-income districts, and government was largely seen by residents as a source of constant extraction. Without being acknowledged as a 'functional group', much of Jakarta's population was relegated to being a 'floating population' (Douglass, 1997; Dick *et al.*, 2002). This status was reinforced by the crackdown on unionism. The All Indonesia Worker's Union, established by the state in 1985, was the only trade union allowed under Suharto, although there were incessant attempts to resist and strike during the early 1990s. But throughout the post-colonial period, even when trade unions experienced momentary political strength, trade union density never exceeded 3% (La Botz, 2001; Viajar, 2009).

In the years just prior to the demise of the New Order, following the economic crisis of 1997, a rapidly growing economy not only added implicit legitimacy to the regime, but also sowed the seeds for new social possibilities whereby Jakartans sought to escape the intricate densities of working-class districts (Cowherd, 2002; Nas and Pratiwo, 2003). The gross regional domestic product of Jakarta grew by 9.12% from 1994 to 1996; market capitalization from IDR Rp6.98 trillion in 1980 to Rp40 trillion (in 1993) to Rp264 trillion in 1997. The crisis, exacerbated by excessive short-term financing of long-term development projects, the overexposure of banks on property markets and the overvaluation of the national currency, which curtailed domestic production, had profound effects on Jakarta's economy (Firman, 1999). Just as large numbers of residents were culturally and physically moving away from long established patterns of residence and sociality, the rug was pulled out under them, leaving many uncertain about the bases upon which to rebuild their lives (Firman, 2002; Houweling, 2002; Kusno, 2003). Many hedged their bets, making investments of time and emotion into various modalities of affiliation, entering into and cutting short-term provisional ties, or attempting to find ways to reinvigorate the ethical practices of *kampung* life (Saptari, 2003).

Jakartans tend to be immersed in tensions between an egalitarian ethos that prevailed in interweaving everyday interdependencies among neighbors and the ingrained practices of political authoritarianism that dominated official government at even the lowest level. This dynamic constrains cross-cutting collaborations among different *kampung* and districts at a more city-wide level (Firman *et al.*, 2007). In Bangkok, by contrast, different histories of land occupancy and local organization have produced possibilities of broader forms of organization among low-income residents. A brief reference to such a distinction here is important, especially as municipal authorities and urban activists in Jakarta pay a great deal of attention to Bangkok's recent urban development history and its efforts to address the situation of the urban poor.

In Bangkok, the historic use of land to cultivate cooperative allegiance to the monarchy and the responsibilities of those to whom land had been allocated to develop their own articulations to the larger city meant that highly particularistic configurations of residence and commerce often grew through specific holdings. While in the 1960s many of these holdings were sold off and divided, a complex leasing system continued to prevail, whereby the rights to use and develop particular plots were leased and subleased in multiple ways, generating highly heterogeneous spatial and social arrangements (Evers and Korff, 2000; Evers, 2007). Because proximities were incessantly renegotiated in a context in which large tracts of land belonged to actors who, because of that holding, acquired authority and status, there were seldom overarching principles of residency and commerce that had to be sustained. Thus, when landowners died or sold plots to new owners as the spatial character and uses of districts changed, it was easier for low-income and middle-class residents to recalibrate their associations and cooperation across various translocal lines (King, 2008). So when the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, and later the government-sponsored Community Organizations

Development Institute (CODI), initiated widespread upgrading programs throughout greater Bangkok, of which inter-linkages among community-based organizations was a critical component, a facility and readiness for these efforts already existed (Boonyabancha, 2002; 2009; Yap and de Wandeler, 2009).

Klong Toey in Bangkok has been the site of important accomplishments of Thai urban activists for the past three decades. But as the port, the primary economic anchor of this vast district, is being closed and redeveloped by major Singapore developers, many residents will be forced to leave, even if it is to follow the port jobs further out along the eastern metropolitan corridor. Despite many accomplishments, many problems have also ensued from years of collective mobilization.

In 2005, I arranged for Ellen Boccuzzi, a researcher at Thammasat University in Bangkok, to spend two years participating in meetings of community organizations in the Klong Toey district of Bangkok. She interviewed almost one hundred residents, community leaders and technicians to assess what has happened in the aftermath of an accord to share land in the district between existing residents and new developments that will ensue as the port is closed.

From this work, it is clear that community mobilization efforts have facilitated the consolidation of political and financial capital that has led to concrete improvements in material and social conditions, as well as to establishing mechanisms to equitably distribute the responsibilities of decision making and fiduciary obligations. Enhancements of security, living conditions and political power have been negotiated through community organizations and the networks forged among them. The critical challenge is whether individuals, having improved their conditions, will continue to participate in the labor-intensive and usually contested deliberations necessary to keep collective politics going in the district. The initial impression is that the kinds of clarity, deliberative processes, collective consultation and 'empowerment' strategies that were initially effective tend to fall away as organizations attempt to negotiate a much more diverse set of emerging aspirations and capacities. Alarmed by an increased emphasis on wheeling and dealing, and fights over influence, many supportive NGOs have pulled out of Klong Toey.

The repercussions of attaining better services and greater political visibility, manifested in more solidified platforms of access to and integration within the larger city, mean that individual residents — the components of these collective organizations — may use them in ways that cannot easily be subsumed by the agendas and coordinating mechanisms of those organizations. In other words, people use better material conditions and infrastructural inputs as a means of expanding their economic and social horizons. They engage the larger urban space in ways that existing collective organizations may find difficult to engage, monitor and influence. It is here that the issues of security become tricky.

Collective organization then becomes the vehicle through which specific localities 'step into' the prevailing practices of municipal governance. Residents become accountable and manageable as fiscal subjects, who have accrued indebtedness. This indebtedness is not only in terms of the money they owe in future; it is also in terms of their obligations to particular modalities of self-presentation with its concomitant discourses of working in partnership with others, subsuming certain aspirations and ways of doing things in order to sustain those partnerships and valorizing patience and incremental gains.

This is perhaps why some associations of the urban poor insist upon 'stepping outside' such corporate arrangements and taking matters into their own hands. While this resistance may have little effect on influencing policy, projects and the overall direction of urban development, it reaffirms the city as a place of intense conflict. This resistance draws out, in an era of preoccupation with urban ecological security and its concomitant obsession with consent and partnership, the fact that impoverishment is a product of conflict, and a particular assault on life. Thus, for many members of Jakarta's Urban Poor Consortium, self-valorization and nomination

of the poor is the only real opportunity in that it restores urban space as a battlefield about what can be done and said.

Going out and coming in: the intricate balances of maintaining stability

In Jakarta, emergent housing movements and citizens' coalitions are attempting to accomplish some of the limited gains made in Bangkok — namely, elaborating frameworks for a national housing policy, and establishing a national housing fund and housing council. These efforts persist despite the ways in which urban policymaking and the deployment of law are used to upend emergent affiliations and mobilizations of residents, always producing 'new rules of the game' (Kooy and Bakker, 2008; McGee, 2009). The law is enforced selectively, and legal authorities often act arbitrarily and outside the law. Generalized social policy, such as the basic income grant, while ensuring critical elements of household welfare, can often homogenize and thus limit the vehicles through which particular problems and potentials on the part of this highly diverse metropolitan region can be explored and expressed.

In the poorer sections of Karanganyar, everyday mobilization remains centered on the intersection of often highly differentiated stories, vantage points, networks and relations. If a basic 'basket' of goods and services is essential in order to maintain the viability of any residence, how this basket is secured becomes the purview of multiple configurations of relationships and practices. These configurations depend upon the distinction of legal and illegal, if only in that it marks the elaboration of spaces of collaboration and compensation that stretch different stories, places, authorities and institutions 'into each other' in ways that cannot be specified by any official framework. At times, of course, the state and municipality, with its policies, basic grants, services and welfare are an essential node in such a relational architecture. But as these are shifting configurations, with the efforts of individuals, associations, gangs and networks continuously exerting new effects, the positions of formal institutions in the day-to-day strivings of households also shift (Telles and Hirata, 2007).

Specific local actors use certain connections, mobility and jobs to articulate disconnected pieces of resources and opportunities into the 'collection' of a basic 'basket', and then become authorized to act in terms of a larger collective interest. At the same time, as indicated earlier, residents cannot 'put all of their eggs into one basket'. In terms of everything a locality needs — food, transport, recreation, services, information, security, work, and so forth — provisioning comes through multiple channels, and each of these channels is subject to modification, competing claims and diversion. Initiatives have to be undertaken, but usually without recourse to law, policy or formal protection.

Yet these operations have to be secured, and that security is largely ensured by making the practices and actors involved relevant to others, but again without clear institutional forms. Proliferating webs of implication are critical to any possibility of accumulation, but they can be interrupted, and interruption is then a modality in itself through which the critical games can be changed — where resources can be accessed without clear eligibility and where residents have little recourse to higher authorities.

Entrepreneurial initiatives, schemes and cobbled collective projects of various local actors need staging areas and impacts beyond the local districts — as spaces to work out new arrangements or to avoid excess competition at 'home'. However, local districts themselves have to be prepared to enfold the activities, investments and practices of external actors and identify ways not only to adapt to their presence but also to find ways of using them to their advantage — although there can frequently be great variations in people's understandings of what these advantages might be. To a certain extent, more powerful actors are always intruding upon what is familiar to local residents, always prompting new circumstances and challenges. This has been the case even when

localities welcome external associations and NGOs, which endeavor to drive various improvements in the built environment or to facilitate the development of new projects.

Particularly in fluid central-city areas, where the infrastructure remains viable, land is sometimes available cheaply and turnover is high in terms of commerce and residence, there is always a risk involved in the extent to which these insertions tip the balance of local economies based on intricate networks of relations and the flexible use of space and resources. At times, insertions are problematic in terms of their legal standing and thus subject local practices in general to more diligent scrutiny by police and other authorities. At the same time, these insertions come from somewhere else, and are connected to somewhere else, and thus open the possibilities of new exteriors for local endeavors already underway. By virtue of bringing new capacities, money and connections, such insertions can either speed along a more substantial and threatening transformation of the district or provide new kinds of insulation that defer more radical changes, and thus keep things fluid and open for longer periods — for example, as a hedge against widespread gentrification or revaluation of property.

In Karanganyar these insertions have come in the form of new stores and warehouses, small-scale industrial plants, new commercial operations taking advantage of location, and individually constructed upscale residences. There is even a wide range of illicit operations, to which residents turn a blind eye, assured of established complicities with authorities to regard parts of a district as being outside intense scrutiny. Legal loopholes, ambiguities in tenure and zoning, the indifference of absentee owners, the ‘silent conversion’ of designated property into alternative uses under official radar, and various geophysical and infrastructural constraints — all are used at various times as a means of permitting the insertion of largely speculative or, in one way or another, experimental activities into the district.

At the same time, these ‘instruments’ are used to shape the probable impact of these insertions on the district. Thus in wide-ranging ways, an intricate relational politics is the vehicle through which the concrete articulations of territories and people — thus constituting a majority, if only by default — are actively composed. In Latour’s (2005) sense, the politics of this composition, requiring as they do the simultaneous mobilization of various technical instruments, discourses, sensibilities, bodies, places, things and institutions, are not that of a stable subject.

Reconciling politics? Navigating the real economies of everyday life and protecting spaces for their operation

The practices upon which central-city Jakarta has relied to ensure spaces of maneuverability and of acting in concert with others are focused on the intricate interweaving of different practices, opportunities, positions, actors and stories. Security is ensured through the interpenetration of life situations and maintaining dense proximities to differentiated built environments and activities. If this security depends heavily on the characteristics of an interwoven built and social setting, how is that setting sustained in the face of pressures to maximize ground rent and regenerate the city as a world city? Neither the politics of mass mobilization, patronage or local associationalism are consonant to the ways in which most residents seem to make their everyday collective lives.

The dissonance in and of itself is perhaps not prohibitive of imagining effective organizational efforts. While many of these efforts are often believed to be marred by the manipulations of residents from below and/or agendas dictated from above, it seems reasonable that the needs of local residents of any particular district to constantly find ways of exceeding the various territories in which they find themselves can be drawn upon to explore innovative connections among different actors across the city. This may be the case particularly if such connections are focused on

reciprocal exchanges of capacity, information and opportunity. Urban politics are largely about the hunt for resources and advantage, and too many community mobilization efforts in the past have been about winning opportunities to show up at negotiating 'tables' as 'partners', and then being stuck there. More attention needs to be paid to how existent intersections of different walks of life can be extended and given new momentum and direction without reifying these abilities into corporate forms of governance.

Rule and resistance seem to converge towards uncertainty. Jakarta no longer has any room to grow if it wants to avoid facing debilitating floods and traffic gridlock. But it is uncertain how it will deal with these constraints without becoming a closed city — which in itself is unrealistic. Because the municipal government is convinced that it must move almost half a million poor people who reside on the banks of the Ciliwung and Cipang rivers for flood-control reasons, there is uncertainty about where to move them, as the city has already overbuilt existing water catchment areas. In a spatial plan for 2030, which labels citizens as 'shareholders' and neighborhood administration as 'estate management', there is uncertainty as to whether the critical decisions of land disposition will be 'subcontracted' to developers.

Concomitantly, uncertainties about the eventualities of land use and its price are connected to uncertainties about what actors will get to do what and where future development rights are dissociated from notions of ownership or tenancy. The financial underpinnings and eventual uses of existing and planned mega-developments are shifting all the time. Even with great legislative specificity, the relations between the various tiers of municipal government are not clear; the more competencies are specified, the greater confusion there is about not only whether a specific tier has the capacity and resources to carry out its functions, but whether it has the clear authority to do so in the face of a vast set of conditional powers reserved for the governor and national government.

In these ambiguous relations, municipal governance depends upon networks of extrajudicial brokers, fixers and enforcers, who usually have their feet in many different worlds. I once met a heavily tattooed 'Major' Bimo in one of his offices in Jakarta's most notorious sex hotel. He was a practitioner of traditional healing, the provider of security services for several nightclubs, the patron of a major Islamic school, a 'consultant' to a major *lura* (district local authority), a famous boxer and the owner of a chain of Dunkin' Donuts outlets. If people like Bimo are relied upon as intermediaries, then whatever defense of territories or interests they may serve is only predicated on their ability to cut across different networks of activities and influence in ways that parallel the economic practices I have called attention to throughout.

While the municipality pursues evictions of households of poor neighborhoods situated on public land and in situations where they can argue that residency poses a public risk, it is far more risky for it to move against more mixed districts, if only because it has no clear idea what the ramifications of such action might be. The strata of intermediaries it relies upon to get things done are also the very strata that are difficult to 'read' if the municipality and its bevy of private developers want to make a major move.

The interfaces between the long-term mixed population, mixed-use districts and the mega-developments of a 'new central city' are becoming more volatile. As the Thamrin-Surdiman-Kunigan corridors reach maximum density within the next decade and exert significant footprints in terms of land use and land valuation across Jakarta, there will be great pressure to redevelop historic poor, working- and middle-class districts in the north and center of the city. This process is likely to be accelerated by significant inward flows of middle-class residents leaving the suburban areas in order to avoid long commutes and by the development of new intermodal transportation systems. New developments are likely to take place along the Jalan Gunung Sahari, Jalan Kramat Raya, Jalan Letnan Jenderal Supranto and Jalan Biak corridors, to cite a few examples. These corridors cut through dense, highly mixed commercial and residential areas (Silver, 2008).

During meetings in the past year, municipal authorities have registered their surprise over the volume of economic productivity generated in these districts. They also believe that these local economies can simply be transplanted to other areas, albeit more vertically structured, as again, there is almost no space within the metropolitan region for expansion. There is little recognition that such productivity may depend upon the layers of sedimentation, spatial memory and diversity within the built environment that is not easily replicable in intentional designs in new locations.

Just as spatial arrangements and social identity are mutually constituted (Kusno, 2000; Keith, 2005), uncertainty and speed participate in a recursive loop. As uncertainty grows, the speed at which alliances and the dispositions of finance change, also grows, and this speed produces more uncertainty. Various citizen coalitions, district associations and community groups are advocating not only to participate in municipal decision making, but more importantly, to step into the space opened up by these various uncertainties. They are proposing to develop new uses for underutilized public facilities, to reorganize small, decaying local markets, to clean up degraded land, to foster local network hubs for hundreds of textile and furniture-making workshops, to name a few. These proposals come from networks of local mosques, from small business groups and from residents who share a street or lane.

While there is resistance at the top, among many *kelurahan* (district-level governments) there is broad support for such proposals. The idea of municipalities enfolding different actors at various scales and providing opportunities to help manage different functions is not to stabilize particular associations, territories or identities. Rather, it is aimed at providing leverage for specific collective groups to pluralize their transactions with the city, even if this is simply a process of incessant deal making and accommodations. If no actor at any level can get a real handle on where Jakarta is going, then an urban politics must try to eke out productivity from the prolific spaces of uncertainty. The governor says he must wait for a majority of Jakartans to register their voice in order to modify a spatial plan that has almost nothing in it for a majority. If this is the case, then the majority must actualize itself within the ebbs and flows of how the volatile edges of different challenges, economic logics and governance techniques are provisionally worked out on a day-to-day basis.

Here, security is a process of extending the ways in which matters are implicated in each other. Discrepant places, things and experiences are articulated and circulate through each other not merely as matters of speculation, but as a complex architecture of accumulating and dissipating energies and attentions. Usually we would assume that districts rely upon concepts such as 'property', 'neighbor', 'co-religionist' or 'co-worker' to help specify and regulate social distance and responsibilities among individuals. But for districts that are usually full of people who are coming and going, the sense of habitation does not rely upon plots, cadastral and social demarcations. Rather, residents imagine security and stability as located beyond what they can see and figure out — in dense entanglements of implication, witnessing and constant acknowledgements of other residents, whether physically present or not.

On one level it is clear in Jakarta who the elite are and who the poor are. But even when classifications are generated in elaborate local vernaculars, these tend to change continuously — so it is not always clear who is poor and what criteria constitute being poor, or middle-class, for there are prolific gradations. This relative absence of certain categorization tends to make people more willing to pay attention to each other, to take certain risks in their affiliation and to try out various ways of using local spaces. From this willingness stems a plurality of local economies — namely, different scales at which things are made, distributed and sold — from furniture, textiles and foodstuffs to building materials and household items. Different potentialities of consumption are concretized through residents' ability to access different quantities of goods and services within a district.

This does not mean that everyone necessarily gets along or talks to each other. It is not a social economy based on easy reciprocities and well-honed collaboration. Rather, it

stems from often highly opportunistic maneuvers that use the very tensions in such heterogeneity to continuously remake temporary accords, deals and trade-offs that, in turn, remake the local built and social environment — a remaking that precipitates new tensions and accommodations. These are the conditions in which the majority does its work.

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Résumé

À partir de recherches menées à Jakarta, cet article réexamine l’importance des pratiques économiques hétérogènes en matière de remaniement des quartiers centraux selon des modalités qui offrent des bases de résidence et d’activité permanentes à des résidents venus d’horizons très divers. L’accent mis sur les discours prônant une gouvernance efficiente et le respect des droits a parfois bloqué les opérations des économies réelles urbaines qui, bien qu’en déclin face à la prolifération des méga-aménagements, constituent la capacité cruciale dans le cadre des efforts de la majorité des résidents urbains pour se procurer un lieu viable dans la ville.