

2009 URBAN GEOGRAPHY PLENARY LECTURE—  
ON INTERSECTIONS, ANTICIPATIONS, AND PROVISIONAL PUBLICS:  
REMAKING DISTRICT LIFE IN JAKARTA

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*Abstract:* Primary attention to cities in the Global South tends to focus on how fast they are changing in terms of spectacular new projects, the remaking of city centers, the pushing out of large numbers of urban residents of all social classes, and the extent to which cities are becoming more alike through these major development projects. Alternately, the focus is placed on the poor, on massive slums, insalubrious environmental and social conditions, and the potential threats posed by impoverished and unsettled urban populations. What lags behind is attention to the continued small and medium-level developments of residential and commercial districts that have occupied specific territories within cities for a long time. The article examines scales and domains through which it is possible for residents to provisionally configure ways in which they can recognize collective action and its impact on the making of space and time that raises unforeseen implications for present efforts to govern the city. Additionally, it looks at how urban districts provisionally consolidate unanticipated articulations among different territories and economies across the city. [Key words: Global South, urban poor, Jakarta, urban districts, intersection.]

## INTRODUCTION

For residents of cities, a simple question remains at the heart of their engagement with the city: what can people do together and under what circumstances? What is it that people do with each other when what they do is not quite competition, collaboration, conflict, possession, or dispossession? From this question stem the critical dimensions of urban policy in terms of who residents have to deal with or talk to, are intruded upon or intruding: Who does space belong to? Who has access to what kinds of space for what purposes? As soon as these considerations are opened up, a wide range of political, administrative, and technical considerations about how cities are run also becomes more contestable and specific.

This consideration remains particularly crucial for those who continue to operate in the dense and heterogeneous central districts that still remain in many of the world's largest metropolitan centers. While many of these districts have been effaced and remade or remain vulnerable to such effects, many also continue to make significant investments in upgrading local infrastructure, diversifying local economies, and renewing important social institutions that promote cohesion and a sense of belonging. These efforts are some-

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times undertaken as a kind of hedge to defer their vulnerability to displacement but more often reflect confidence in the ability of these districts to remain viable parts of the urban system. Importantly, while residents living on a block or in a neighborhood may have much in common based on similar levels of household income or ethnic identity, these blocks and neighborhoods are usually situated in a larger territory of often remarkable heterogeneity.

The coordination of such heterogeneity—the sorting out of bodies, activities, and opportunities—relies upon local social institutions honed over the long run. These include religious institutions, unions, political, ethnic, and guild associations. While many of these associations remain, they are often a shell of their former selves. They are unable to coordinate and cohere diverse residents who find themselves in a much more direct, unmediated exposure to the complexities of urban systems, themselves opened up to uncertain connections with a larger world of financial flows, commodity chains, political manipulation, and assemblages of expertise, technique, and calculation. They are largely unable to deal with daily lives characterized by brutal celebrations of physical violence, the struggle for some space of operation that is not subject to constant interference, and the rampant boredom of routines played over and over again. Such social institutions are unable to deal with the many different ways residents make everyday decisions through increasingly haphazard mixtures of deliberation, impetuosity, calculation, gambling, and prophecy.

More precisely, even though instruments and settings of mediation may remain, the capacities of these instruments to recognize or grasp discernible realities become more limited or ineffectual. In part, this is because the ways in which urban localities are situated in a larger world of forces and possible references are more numerous and unavailable to clear apprehension. So it is difficult to make confident demarcations of what exactly is to be mediated. Households still nurture, raise, debate, and discipline. Neighborhoods are replete with talk, discussion, and gossip. Reciprocities of all kinds continue to unfold; time and energy are invested in associational membership, and residents tend to all kinds of mutually recognized needs and responsibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Still, given the multiple angles and trajectories of interpretation and implication that can be brought to bear on urban actions, each of these instruments of mediation can be subject to challenge or, more importantly, are obligated to take into consideration a more heterogeneous field of practices, associations, actors, and contingencies. On the one hand, this complexity can strengthen the resilience and the applicability of these instruments but it also puts pressure on their ability to maintain specific terms of coherence through which they are recognized as distinct points of view or practices. In addition, urban districts are domains of conflicting loyalty, expression, subject formation, impression-building, and social identification. While this has always been true of cities, the intensities of countervailing claims and competition over resources have probably become more pronounced.

As Telles and Hirata (2007) point out in their discussion of working class and poor districts in Sao Paulo, residents always have to re-adjust a center of gravity, re-align what is paid attention to and considered urgent, valuable, and important. This is because of “the critical point that today seems to have undone itself to the extent that it has emptied the

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<sup>2</sup>See Brighenti and Mattiucci’s (2008, p. 92) comment on mediation as prolongation: “Portions of elsewhere and at-other-times are constantly imported into the locale, just as portions of the here-and-now are constantly exported, projected towards somewhere-else and at-other-times.”

political imagination that can't figure out the world that isn't in the terms posted in the immediate present" (ibid., p. 186). Cities in the South do sustain insurgent planning practices based in various histories of anti-colonial struggles and urban social movements that have fought for citizenship rights, as well the destabilization of prevailing conceptions of citizenship (Miraftab, 2009).

At the same time, contemporary urban governance demonstrates an often effective ability to debilitate capacities for both grassroots and city-wide initiative and organization. This occurs largely in its unwieldy mixture of ineptness, indifference, incessant policy revisions, the partial and selective engagement of proliferating "popular organizations," and the deployment of more proficient technologies of control (Jessop, 2000; Lacquian, 2005; Healy, 2007; Coutard, 2008).

What I want to do here is to talk about some of the practices employed by residents in the northern districts of Jakarta to work with this heterogeneity in the current context of greater uncertainty—practices that might be viewed as a kind of "politics," but that are largely speculative and are thoroughly entangled with large measures of risk. Additionally, they often have outcomes that are not clear in terms of the interests served or the futures produced. They rely upon what I call a practice of "anticipation," which makes local collective life flexible and innovative but which channels the energies and commitments of residents into many uncoordinated initiatives that would seem to make life even more uncertain.

Yet, anticipation constitutes a temporality of intersection. It is about people, objects, and ways of doing things coming down to a crossroads, not knowing what else is going to be there, and no one or thing being able to completely dominate what takes place there, since there are many different ways and routes to and from. Whatever happens, people coming to the crossroads are subject to being changed; they may come with specific ideas about what they are and where they are going but the crossroads, the intersection, can change everything. It does not necessarily mean that change will happen, but this would be the exception. We are familiar with crossroads—cities are full of them, but it is not just a spatial notion. Anywhere can be a crossroads at a particular time and the key is how spaces get turned into crossroads—into points and experiences of intersection. The key is how any place in a city can become a moment, an opportunity to create the experience of a crossroads where things intersect, to take the opportunity, in other words, to change each other around by virtue of being in that space, of getting rid of the familiar ways of and plans for doing things and finding new possibilities by virtue of whatever is gathered there. Intersection is a means of posing opportunities that people may have in common and of people thinking through what can be done with them together. It is a resource for sustaining or changing particular forms of collective life, and a challenge, a problem with no easy solution that has to be continuously worked out by residents (Derrida, 2005).

What ensues from intersection is a series of "propositions," embodied in the efforts and actions of residents themselves, to create spaces whereby the various economic specializations, resource use decisions, and everyday social maneuvers that are becoming more particular and specific all of the time might find viable ways of having something to do with each other. Additionally, it is important to find ways in which these "propositions" can buy time, attract support and the attention of influential allies, but also not leave themselves completely vulnerable to the manipulations of those with power. As such, these propositions may be changing all of the time as people come and go according to

the conditions and rhythms of their lives. They may not accumulate history and force that moves toward larger scales of consolidation and, as such, do not obviate the need for political mobilization in the more conventional sense. Yet they remain spaces of operation and pushing and pulling at the “city limits.”

The districts I will be talking about here intersect people of many different backgrounds, incomes, residential histories, aspirations, and orientations to the city. This heterogeneity, while sometimes prompting debilitating disputes and polarization, often works as a key resource to the very survival of the district. While it is true that larger numbers of residents are pushed to the outskirts of cities or actively seek new residential locations outside of overcrowded, noisy, and dilapidated central-city areas, the capacities of residents to hang on and to undertake their own versions of remaking need to be re-explored, valorized, and critiqued.

As part of that effort, the work undertaken here has been with the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC), an association made up of 98 affiliated community-based organizations throughout Jakarta. Specifically, this work is that of seven of these associations in districts of North Jakarta and one in a more central area of the city. UPC has organized teams of residents in these districts to undertake several years of continuous research on the local economies and power relations of these districts.

#### FROM SPECIFICITY TO MUNICIPALITY

We know that cities are full of people doing specific things with each other, both voluntary and involuntary. The necessities of economic life mean that there are many people with whom one would prefer not to be in contact but that one has little choice but to do so. There are many people and stories we would like to become part of but feel that we have no basis or point of entry. Cities are full of discrepant eligibilities and statuses, codes and requirements for accessing particular experiences, places, and opportunities.

Yet cities are also about publics, i.e., about forms of being together or of being connected that go beyond the specific details of what a person does or where he or she lives and comes from. Instead of people coming together to consensually decide the common rules of participation, the public is more a matter of talking and looking at things that goes beyond the specificity of one’s life situation. This is to consider how that specificity may be something that can be recognized by others with very different conditions. It is a way of addressing a larger world of others.

When people are in direct contact—in a specific urban locality, association, or institution—they try to work out ways of dealing with others based on selectively incorporating or ignoring various aspects of their backgrounds, everyday life situations, and personalities. But they find ways to deal with these specificities, even if relationships are argued about and broken off. What people can do with each other then is the product of those everyday negotiations and the prevailing codes, rules, norms, and implicit assumptions operative in the contexts in which they actually try to do things, whether it is in the workplace, civic associations, religious institutions, or informal affiliations.

What is important about the sense of a larger public is that the ideas, actions, questions, and provocations communicated by a specific set of actors can be potentially opened up to a wider set of uses than that imagined or possible within the specific known situation from which these ideas and communications originated (Callon et al., 2009). They can

be potentially “put to work” in many different ways and affect thinking and living in a wide range of contexts. As such, they constitute a form of connection, a way of sensing that people operate in a common arena of life where specific criteria of membership and belonging need not be precisely identified, measured, or referenced (White, 2008).

The public therefore becomes a vehicle through which diverse facets of urban life can intersect, a way, as Le Gales (2005) puts it, of people coming together without having to be integrated. Action and speech are produced with the openness to be translated; they advertise their very existence to be something other than what they may appear to be. The public is an appeal to be linked, grouped together with something else.

### PROVISIONAL PUBLICS

In cities where many crucial forms of mediation and social anchorage have simply ceased to exist, the elaboration of publics—of a sense of operating in concert with known and unknown others—is something more provisional, even ephemeral. As residents consider what it is possible to do with others with whom they share a district or city, this sense of the provisional affects their calculations, decisions, and investments of time and energy.

For many residents of large cities, particularly those of the Global South, the elaboration of publics is a difficult project. Here, a particularly potent interaction of the global restructuring of capitalist social relations, the residual debilitations of colonial rule, and the partial subsuming of municipal governance to the exigencies of finance capital combine to wear away effective institutions of mediation. Without such institutions, it is increasingly difficult for people to “get their bearings,” have clear representations of how they are positioned to each other, and what then is expected of them in terms of piecing together a viable urban life.

Cities like Jakarta have pushed out hundreds of thousands of residents from tightly organized inner-city neighborhoods in the pursuit of spectacular big projects. Still, many of these shopping malls, business incubators, and office and entertainment complexes do not seem built to last, and what they can be used for and spatially or financially connected to is potentially converted into something else than the original intent. These developments do not so much “exist for themselves” as they aspire to become valuable facets of larger packages that bundle together real estate, varied financial instruments, and shifting trajectories and forms of investments. These packages are in turn expected to act like “facts on the ground,” where new conditions of management, urban politics, and taxation become inevitable.

Here the built environment embodies the disjunction of the surface from function and historical depth. The surface becomes a performance with its own autonomous operations, allowing actors and places to be tied together in ways that their relative “functions” would otherwise make improbable. The object of consumption is to be attuned to ever more particular sensibilities, inclinations and situations. Maximizing profit is seen as best accomplished through crossing the distinctions between labor in commerce, education, and the arts. Commodities are pitched to induce a sense of “rightness” for the consumer, i.e., a sense of efficacy particularly attuned to the styles and situations of specific individuals (Thrift, 2006). Architecture, design, planning, municipal finance and authority are conjoined to create insular, self-referential worlds capable of producing a specific material

environment that reinforces the sense that collusions of local politics, global finance, multinational appropriations, and technical expertise constitute the “real world.”

The built environment then operates as connective tissue in the uncertain relationships trying to balance the need to maximize the rate of profit, threatened by overproduction and rising costs of production, the need to flexibly develop and engage new fields of consumption, and the enhanced potentialities to create unforeseen worlds of consumption that ensue from what Lazzarato (2004) calls the “cooperation between minds.” In the well-rehearsed analysis of the relationship between capital and urban development, finance requires an architecture of circulation in order to move widely. Capital must be put to use to cultivate opportunities that enable it to spread out, to be applied to a wide range of situations. This is why it is also placed and positioned in, for example, real estate development, both for the accumulation of rents and as objects of speculation. Place embodies a particular interaction of knowledge, labor, technology, infrastructure, and resources. It takes time to cultivate the capacities of place but, once done, place exerts capacity quickly when knowledge is a scarce commodity (Harvey, 2006).

In a world where production systems are increasingly deterritorialized, displaced, and parceled out—where they take place among a wide range of places—they are socialized through networks. In other words, how communication takes place, how different experiences in different places are translated in terms of each other, how people in different places come to see each other as mutual participants in the same place—are the accomplishments of networks that exceed particularistic forms of identification and that create the experience of being in “one world.”

The problem for capitalist production systems is how this knowledge of networks, of mutually constitutive experiences of simultaneity, is to be priced. Extra-economic conditions of competitiveness become colonized through the value-form, yet they must maintain the creativity of the extra-economic engagements of arts, education, and psychology. According to Kuper and Al (2010), contemporary urban built environments try to mediate these challenges, as they seek to create specific experiences of being together, transformed, and enlivened without the necessary adherence to the dictates of particular places, codes, allegiances, or ideological baggage. Participants can feel like they are part of a cutting edge and a new frontier. The immediacy of present experiences becomes even more valorized, and thus the object of the built environment and architectural work.

These projects pile up unintended and un-monumental leftovers, as well as what Virilio (2007) has called an “accretion of accidents,” where wreckage piles up everywhere. And thus continues the long process of modernity making refuse, where spaces of positivity, “well-rounded lives,” and “actors with capacities” are attained alongside the inextricable by-product of wasting others.

This conversion of city territory into a platform for producing the sense of direct, unmediated connection to a globalized world of efficacy reconciles the need to put capitalist knowledge to work in order to increase accumulation and profit with the openness, sympathy, collaboration, and publicity inherent to the “general intelligence” relied upon by capital to open up new worlds of consumption. But in doing so, this operation also dissipates particular modalities of representation. Through these modalities, populations were stabilized through deals where they were accorded certain rights in return for their assuming specific responsibilities to the state. In other words, they have the right to be represented by an apparatus that formally committed itself to represent their interests and needs.

But as Papadopolous and Tsianos (2007b) observed, the continuous shifts and radical re-articulations of the trajectories of individual lives affected in post-liberal sovereignty, as well as the substantial relocation of governance to individuals as self-responsible agents, has significantly worn away the capacities of representational bodies to mediate. This is not only a matter of politics being constituted in a more networked system, as Arditì (2003) argued, where there is a constellation of sites for the enactment of the political and the constitution of politics as well as a sense of regularity in the dispersion of sites of political enunciation. For a larger number of urban residents, there exists no real mediating body that sorts out, regulates, or explains how individual bodies and lives are to be coordinated with each other, how they are to share space, or what their obligations are to each other (Sánchez, 2008).

In the work of Filip de Boeck (2005), one sees this drastic erosion of mediation in one of the most drastic cities of the world—Kinshasa. In the profusion of death among young people over the years—in a city marked by various insecurities of all kinds—youth use death as a critical vehicle to articulate all of their concerns about life. Funerals become riots of lewd behavior and the frantic search for places of burial. All of the social strictures and generational hierarchies are upended, as youth hijack the bodies of the dead from families. As there is only one functioning morgue in this city of 10 million and since it takes weeks for families to raise the money for burial, bodies, whose faces remain exposed under a plexi-glass sheath, are usually in an advanced state of decomposition. Nevertheless, youth carry the coffins around in wild trajectories of movement, imploring the dead to speak directly to them as to who was responsible for their death. For in their understanding, only the dead can account for what is really taking place in the neighborhood. Still for many youth, death is simply without any particular truth, and truth without any particular finality. Whatever surrounds it, particularly the pretense of the sacredness of a funeral, can be upended and can become the object of ridicule as well as invention. Death is the greatest trick of all, played on everyone, and there can be no particular truth associated with it.

### THE POLITICS OF ANTICIPATION

The surviving inner-city residential districts of North Jakarta contain extensive mixtures of economic and employment statuses and capacities. Despite these differences, anticipation remains something important to many residents, particularly as those with traditionally middle-class incomes have had to make major adjustments in how they earn a living. Here, anticipation entails a way of thinking about what is taking place, of positioning oneself in relationship to events and places in preparation to move quickly, to make one's situation and actions more visible, or to maintain them under some radar. It is a way of reading the anticipated maneuvers of stronger actors and forces and assessing where there might be a useful opportunity to become an obstacle or facilitator for the aspirations of others.

Part of a practice of anticipation entails the ability to see the loopholes and unexpected by-products in the intentions and plans of more powerful others. In Jakarta, the configuration of power is replete with flexible norms and where the interests, finance, and decisions of public and private actors are often indistinguishable yet marked by shifting complicities and opaque contestations. The trick is to become a resource for helping those plans attain their eventual objectives or, alternately, to use the moments when these more

powerful actors are distracted to win limited gains, such as moving to better locations or taking steps to better consolidate an individual or household's present bearings.

Many of the poorer residents of these districts feel that they operate in a "game" where they have limited power to set the rules and agenda or to guarantee a stable place from which to operate. While the rules, players, and procedures may be well known, there is little access to the game, little opportunity to demonstrate any capacity to know how to play. But the poor also know that occasionally the game, with its competition and complicities among clearly delineated economic and political interests, plays to an inconclusive resolution. Alternately, the conventional rules are suspended for a brief period of time in order to determine a winner or a specific decision.

As one resident of Penjaringan remarked, "our world is that of injury time in football. We watch as the game plods along to a frenetic endgame and, as official time runs out, there is that small gap at the end, those few minutes of extra time that have been accumulated only because the game had been momentarily stopped to deal with the various wounds of the players." In these few minutes, one tries to do what one can. You know that the real game, with its rules and time frameworks, is not yours, so you know that there is not much time. You also know that it is not precisely clear what amount of time you do have. So anticipation entails the sense of looking for those moments when the conventional game breaks down or goes into overtime with its own procedures *and* the sense of knowing that, whatever one decides, the clock will soon run out.

In some instances, the inconclusiveness or unexpected outcomes of the conventional games of economic accumulation and political management are internalized by individuals as the main way in which they look upon their daily lives. In other words, they are always anticipating that the unexpected will show up somewhere and that their job is to be prepared to find some way to take advantage of it. This anticipation also involves a certain resignation that individuals can never know the entire story about how decisions are made, how the economies that shape their lives really work, or where the key powers are actually located.

There are moments when this anticipation resonates with what Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007a) have told us about the imperceptibility of the migrant who does not represent or communicate a specific identity but engages in a methodical transformation of everything that is within one's capacity to alter (e.g., voice, biography, look) as a platform through which new connections with others might be made. At other times, there is stalwart redundancy where individuals show up at the same place, day after day, regardless of the changes in their situation or in the character of the place, or who bear witness to the shifts taking place in place and "ride out" those changes, no matter what.

In worlds where things are half-said, where tricks are played all the time, and where interpreting things right is often crucial, anticipation is a vital skill in connecting people. In households, streets, and institutions, there are many events capable of disrupting social ties, and not enough time, capacity, or interest in always working out explicit procedures that specify just how people are to be connected to each other. Here, anticipation is a means of confidently signaling the ability of people to discern relatedness; it is an act of reciprocity that draws people into believing that they share worlds. Additionally, it is a way of acting in concert without that way having to be explicitly spelled out. This is important because whoever does spell out the terms acts as an authority. Where demarcations of authority are often important, there are many situations in which there is a need for people

to act authoritatively, but without risking the struggles and potentially belabored explications of legitimacy concerning which participants have authority to “spell things out” and which do not.

On the other hand, there are times when anticipation turns into the kind of claustrophobic mimetic game where it is not clear what in the end transpires. For example, take the situation in which we are dealing with someone else. We are trying to get along, trying to calibrate a way of being with each other. In the mimetic process of doubling, we know that when we act to give back to this person what we anticipate their anticipation of us is going to be, this “copy,” this “imitation” of the anticipation is more powerful than the anticipation itself. This is because the imitation is not only the image of what the other wants, hopes, or fears our behavior will be. It also confirms their sense of having read the situation correctly, that is, of making the right anticipation of us. But such confirmation is at a price, for it raises the question about what has been kept out of view, what is left out? This is because we both try to anticipate what is being anticipated of us and give back to the other what we think that anticipation is, rather than acting as if we have complete freedom to say or do anything that we want.

At the same time, this confirmation, this seeming certainty is the basis for an anxiety, even dread, because if I can do this to them, they can also do this to me. In other words, my anticipation, to begin with, is not mine. Rather, it is an anticipation of the anticipation of the anticipation—in a circular game of infinite regress. Additionally, the question is raised about whether the anticipation the other has of me is really that which they anticipate. Are there anticipations that are masked or hidden by the surface anticipation, and what latitude do I have to anticipate these more masked anticipations?

In a world of murky local politics and shifting interests and alliances, residents can continuously “circle” each other in this circuitry of anticipations. They may try to figure out who is in alliance with whom, who is cooperating together on the surface but fighting each other behind the scenes. They try to figure out where money and resources are diverted to and through whose hands and networks those resources circle back. While these maneuvers often prove quite effective in managing how various powers and money engage and recede, sustainable mobilizations of collective effort prove difficult.

This politics of anticipation is not just a form of resistance or simply a politics from below. It may contain aspects of these formulations but it is also a calculated risk on the part of residents because these anticipations can also be used by more powerful actors. In some situations, more powerful actors wait until the poor make the first move so as to get a better sense of how easy it may be to force through evictions, appropriate land, or pay off leaders with specific amounts of compensation. As a strategy that looks for things, plans, and organizational efforts to break down or veer off into unexpected directions, anticipation is often used to break the collective organizational efforts of the poor themselves.

This orientation shows itself in the reluctance of the poor to work toward changes or improvements in their living environment even when they are plausible. The poor invest in the status quo as if it were something more than that—perhaps in the sense that Berlant (2006) talks about the “cruel optimism” that suppresses the risks of substantive attachment. In other words, the poor may cling to keeping things the same, not only as a form of security but as the only real condition of a possible way out. Improvements in living conditions are likely to raise too many problems or expectations and the community simply does not have the resources to deal with them. So in many respects, the politics of anticipation is a

politics of irony. Perhaps, some would argue, it is not a politics at all. But what I want to explore here are some examples of how these practices of anticipation “cut both ways”—in other words, how they constitute a game that propels different kinds of residents into varied forms of contact with each other and that results in different kinds of benefits and constraints for all of them.

So anticipation does not so much entail an orientation to a future that evolves along a clearly discernible path; it is not about anticipating the fruits of one’s efforts or the attainment of a better future one day. Rather, it is about mobilizing one’s energies and attentions to minimize disappointment when preferred ways of doing things do not work out. It is a way of sensing when things are about to take unexpected turns and being prepared to abandon what one is doing in order to change gears. It is sometimes the ability to rehearse the state of suspending hard-won stabilities in order to better test out what may be really going on in the place where one is working or living. In other words, when there seem to be major changes immanent in the conditions under which an individual lives or works, the poor are usually in no position to get the information that would clearly tell them what is going on. So sometimes they disseminate specific impressions and rumors across different circuits of information, far beyond their control, in order to see what kinds of responses it may stir up. In those responses, then, they may get a better sense of what is likely to happen to their community—in terms of new developments, infrastructure or agendas—so that they may know better how to act.

But anticipation does not just look for openings. It is also a way of putting together conditions that enable residents to act with greater confidence in a municipal space that is perceived as open to a larger world. Individuals of different backgrounds, lengths of residence, and incomes have their identities and ways of dealing with each other that have been honed over a long time. There are local religious and civic institutions that provide particular experiences of solidarity and coordination. But with so many backgrounds and ways of doing things, speech, interpretations, gestures, and actions circulate and the packaged components of established discourses and practices are disentangled in this circulation. Bits and pieces of these performances come to belong to no one and are reconfigured into temporary ways of trying to come up with new ways for coping with greater levels of uncertainty about where the city is going and what will happen to a particular district. If the components of new ways of doing things, then, do not necessarily belong to anyone, they can be intersected and operate as the basis for the intersection of residents who would not necessarily see their lives or futures as having much to do with each other. In hundreds of conversations I have had across North Jakarta in particular, residents know that the same old conventions, accords, and accommodations will not necessarily enable them to deal with this uncertainty, and that daily life is more a matter of how their differences can be strategically put together to expand networks and opportunities than a matter of according everyone their space and keeping differences aligned.

It is not thus the tactical orientations of anticipation that are most important here—maneuvers with which urban theory is well familiar—but rather the concomitant practice of discrimination. Here discrimination means nothing less than turning what has been lost—the old mediation, the old sense of belonging and orientation—into an opportunity. This is an opportunity to reclaim various forms of paying attention to things and of being receptive to what is all around, which circulate through the city as bits and pieces of different knowledge that many different kinds of residents have brought from various

elsewheres, times, and circumstances. Often reduced to the status of being “distorted traditional practices,” “magic,” “intuition,” or “street smarts,” to name a few, these practices operate as tools of inventing and implementing specific ways of thinking and feeling. Discrimination thus entails how one learns to pay attention to and engage the forces of family influence, social affiliations, and local and distant authorities of various kinds in ways that circumvent the reiteration of easy divides and oppositions—“us versus them” or “here versus there” (Stengers, 2008).

Discrimination is a way of paying attention to what one’s neighbors or associates, co-workers, friends, or acquaintances are doing, not with the familiar conceptualization of what a neighbor is or should be but through creative propositions that map out concrete shifts in the conventional patterns of how people’s relationships are orchestrated—their closeness and distance, their ability to pay attention to each other, to see possibilities in each other, or to resist temptations to get in each others’ way. As such, discrimination becomes a way of anticipating what might happen if a person decides to take a particular course of action. When we act, we do so only if we have some sense about what is going to happen to us if we do something in a particular way—otherwise, we do not do it. This is why we are hesitant to take risks or do something new. So what I am talking about here is the way that people invent probable outcomes for their more experimental actions in situations that no longer have a strong relationship to reliable institutions for interpreting what is going on. Discrimination thus proposes ways of making connections among people and ways of doing things that do not seem to go together. This, then, opens up possibilities for individual residents to make new affiliations and collaboration. Thus anticipation is something that exceeds simply “trying to get over” on the more powerful or of sneaking one’s clearly or not so clearly defined self-interests under the radar. Rather, it entails small experimentations that enable people who share an environment to concretely do small yet different things with each other.

The intensified involvement in the more provisional form of the urban public and the concomitant reliance upon anticipation as a critical element in exercising possibility stem from the widespread perception among residents that former modalities of urban social movements no longer work. Grassroots organizations that once were effective in winning political space, residential rights, and access to basic services during the past several decades have largely disappeared. In Jakarta, the once resilient and often effective coalitions of various resident-based interest groups working in partnership with NGOs and international advocacy associations have little traction either on a local level or within the larger ambit of municipal politics. The poor may not march forward with a series of clear victories toward greater justice, rights, and opportunities. But they do, in many instances, create new positions and opportunities to keep specific advantages and places of operation. Often they simply reproduce a situation where they become a “problem” that needs to be dealt with or an impediment to be overcome. But even here, the extent to which they generate new dimensions to this problematic status, as well as their capacities to extend it and change the terms of how they are problematic in specific contexts, keep them in view and in play.

#### A TALE OF KALI BARU × 2

As I have argued above, anticipation “cuts both ways.” It is a risk-laden practice that can secure new opportunities but also can leave the most marginal residents in districts

more vulnerable to the manipulations of others. I want to talk about both facets of anticipation by using the examples of two districts, both popularly known as Kali Baru—one situated on the coast of Jakarta, Kali Baru-Tanjung Priok, and one located near the historic market district of Senen, Kali-Baru-Senen.

Before I discuss these contrasting cases, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of North Jakarta. Jakarta Utara (North Jakarta) is a highly fractal landscape of various kinds of ports, industrial complexes, small factories, shop houses, warehouses, and theme and exposition parks. Its clogged arteries that run east–west across the long commercial belt articulate areas of manufacturing, shipping, labor, and storage; elevated toll roads; the gated remnants of once-thriving middle class districts; and vast new residential developments, inexplicably overcrowded in some areas and vacant in others. As the site of the original settlements of Jakarta, the area is covered with dense residential and commercial histories that are deeply burrowed into the territory and which make alterations in the built and social environments difficult. There also are areas of substantial decline and disinterest as money and business move further toward the southern and western edges of the metropolis.

Much of the north is the domain of ethnic Chinese Indonesians who largely remain the predominant commercial power. Even if their places of residence have been relocated to more prestigious addresses elsewhere, they retain their assets and psychological anchorage in the north, partly so as not to risk the dismantling of the one key place in the city that has long been consolidated as their particular sphere of influence. Another reason is because the proximity to ports and the airport permits a bit of security. They know that from here they can flee quickly if their long history of being scapegoats turns violent once again.

The city has long felt uncertain about what to do with the north. As the central business district moves away from the north across the region known as the Thamrin-Surdiman axis to the south, and as the content of economic power shifts from industrial production to services and finance, the north becomes the site of more individualized and scattered projects. These result in fluctuating land values and more heterogeneous land uses. Several years ago the government launched a highly ambitious development program that was to reclaim two kilometers of land across nearly the entire city waterfront. The intent was to completely remake the look of the city. It was to be full of architectural fantasy, cosmopolitan populations, tourism, and high-end research and development projects. The idea was to enact a comprehensive vision of a new city over both pristine and waterfront land cleared of some of the poorest residents of the nation. The city thought it was too hard to disentangle and remake the built and social environments of the existing North. Instead, the authorities anticipated that most residents and commercial enterprises would have to relocate to the periphery in the face of rising land values. This would then free up land to be incorporated into the activities of the port and port-related manufacturing and would be replete with new infrastructure, including a network of new roads. Given the complexity the engineering feat entailed, the cost and, more importantly, the predicted rising sea levels related to climate change, this ambitious program has been abandoned even as it remains the city's official vision and policy.

The major districts of the North—Kamal Muara, Muara Baru, Pluit, Grogol, Penjaringan, Kota, Ancol, Pademangan, Warakas, Sunter, Tanjung Priok, Sempur, Kalibaru, and Cillindek—each have highly particular spatial layouts, legal statuses, and economic and residential histories. These particularities make it difficult to conceptualize any smooth

way of interconnecting these areas into one coordinated region. The North is a region quite literally all over the place or, more precisely, the site of many different and discrepant places. While such dispersions characterize cities nearly everywhere, the intensive fragmentations and insertions of different kinds of residents with vastly disparate histories in the city seem particularly remarkable in this part of Jakarta. In part, this is because Jakartans live across what appear to be many discordant references. It is an intensely religious city with its authoritative rhythms of everyday personal regulation and moral comportment but it is also a city severely lacking in well-elaborated regulatory frameworks concerning the rights and participation of citizens, basic planning, and the use and marketing of land.

It is a city where the intense discrepancies between what is permitted and provided and what actually takes place in the everyday behaviors of residents require a seemingly endless series of compensations. These compensations, in turn, generate basic livelihoods for many residents and sizeable amounts of money for bureaucrats. For example, not only is the informal selling of cooked food—an activity that involves nearly one million people—criminalized but its consumption is as well. The utter impracticality of such injunctions generate rents for those charged with “enforcing the rules.” As is, a series of unofficial fees—to sell, transport, rent facilities and carts, and use space—ends up in the pockets of various brokers. While informal entrepreneurs may thus be protected, they inevitably become unwitting “foot soldiers” in extra-parliamentary political machines that enforce particular economic and individual interests that are not theirs. They can also be mobilized to fight off new policies and governance practices that might in the end serve them better. Yet Jakarta largely remains a city of *kampungs*, small enclaves of entangled social relations, reciprocity based on ethnic origin, and mutual protection. *Kampungs* continue to persist alongside the widespread assumption that the critical world of dealing with others and belonging is located in the job that one does and not where one lives or comes from.

Municipal power remains overly centralized in the figure of a governor, who in August 2007 for the first time was chosen in a popular democratic election. The figure of an authoritarian strongman in the face of social and urban complexity is a residual feature of Javanese political history. But it is widely acknowledged that such politics does not work well in negotiating the relationship between the now typical aspirations of urban officials for a successful global, world-class city and the complicated interactions of highly diverse, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious populations. While nominally acting through a decentralized system of local governance, the only real decision-making power operates at the highest and lowest levels.

The crux of the local governance system is the Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga (RT/RW). As the basic administrative framework, Jakarta is divided into units of about 70 households, the RT, whose chairperson is a local resident chosen by consensus. The RW is made up of groups of RT and its officers are chosen by the RT chairpersons in a process that links neighborhood organization and territorial administration. As a holdover from three decades of military rule, the system of RT/RW incorporates residents into districts of 70,000 persons and ensures the proper registration (and surveillance) of residents in all domains including from births, weddings, Jakarta citizenship, schooling, and commercial licensing. The RT leader is the gatekeeper between the resident and the city.

Ostensibly a network of local governments, *kalurahan*, was to mediate between these highly localized administrative systems and municipal planning and service provision for the city as a whole. But in actuality, there is little of substance in these interstices and

the authoritarian centralization of metropolitan governance ends up limiting available knowledge about what is taking place across the city. Thus, there is little ability to tailor planning, programs, and policies to the particular characterization of the hundreds of districts across the city. As one person in the governor's office acknowledged, "we wake up each morning hoping that the fires to be put out don't completely burn us." Consequently, the governor's office ends up relying on more drastic and arbitrary measures to reshape the built environment according to increasingly "canned" images of urban efficacy, that is, large scale evictions, overbuilding, over-reliance on questionable sources of financial liquidity and on project development as an instrument for consolidating political status. As a result, government is popularly perceived as powerful but more as a private actor than as something that embodies the interests of residents. It is commonly seen as acting in the interests of individual or syndicated commercial interests who are quite frequently public officials.

*When Anticipation Serves the Powerful: Kali Baru (Tanjung Priok)*

Kali Baru (TP) is an area that has been settled for a long time due to its proximity to the sea and to a deep harbor that has long been the site of transshipments not routed through the major port of Tanjung Priok a few kilometers to the west. Much of this activity has focused on artisanal fishery and, in recent decades, the importation of wood from Kalimantan. Given the character of the area, it has been one of the most important districts in Jakarta for the Bugis, a traditionally seafaring people that have been historically concentrated in Northern Sulawesi. Kali Baru was the site of the first major modern fish market in the city and continues to be the chief supplier of dried fish products. Although the bulk of the region's fishing operations have moved elsewhere, most of the residents remain involved in either fishing or port-related activities. The majority of residents live on state-owned land where their tenancy is formally registered, although there is a densely populated quarter, Kabu Linda, which occupies abandoned private land next to a vast area of chemical storage plants and whose residents have no formal status.

Kali Baru seems situated in a prolonged period of uncertain transition. At the peak of the logging business, its many large warehouses were full of wood and its streets clogged with trucks, buyers, and carters. While the wood port is still active, national controls have attempted to place strong restrictions and quotas on the trade, given the alarming rates of deforestation in the province of Kalimantan. It is a barely disguised secret that the business largely circumvents these restrictions and that each boat load that arrives in Kali Baru mixes legally and illegally obtained wood products. The artisanal dimensions of the trade are particularly adapted to its increasingly illegal character, relying on a mixture of big patrons and their fleets of large old wooden ships and the highly decentralized networks of longshoremen, woodcutters, carters, warehouse owners, brokers, truck drivers, and middlemen.

This system has existed for a very long time, and was suited to a trade that constantly had to make highly particular deals to access forest lands, build access routes, and negotiate with multiple "fiefdoms." But it has also lacked the ability to consolidate resources and efforts to improve overall working conditions in the Kali Baru port and it is clear that little investment has been made in maintaining the conditions of the harbor and the infrastructure of roads, docks, and warehouses. Now the absence of investment is compounded by

the uncertainty of the trade itself. Volume has clearly declined. Although the wood business remains protected by very powerful individuals and the dilapidated conditions of the port itself—making it difficult to apply strict accounting procedures—there is widespread concern about the pressures being exerted on the Indonesian government to clean up the business. Rumors circulate that the government will simply construct new facilities far from Jakarta through which they are most assured of being able to apply strict controls. But there are other pressures as well. The area has a lot of advantages. It is close to the main port, is a key site for industrial storage, is close to the emerging export processing zones to the east, and anticipates the construction of new arteries within the regional transport network. Given these advantages, some major industries have made overtures to acquire large tracts of land in the district. If this were the case, not only would the major residential areas be greatly affected but a large portion of the current port facilities dedicated to storage and sales would have to be relocated.

Even though Kali Baru retains the largest dried fish market in the city, the majority of the facilities for drying the fish are no longer located in the area of the market, as this land was sold and developed for residences attached to some of the recently developed industries. The country's former vice-president, Yusuf Kalla, is one of the largest investors in the area with the construction of a Mitsubishi car port and there are reports that Humpus, the shipping company belonging to Tommy Suharto, son of the former head of state, may acquire a large amount of land in the area. As the economic character of the district changes, so does the intimate relationship that has been developed between residents, labor, and local politicians.

Fishing and logging were activities that brought in large numbers of outsiders as customers, transporters, and often brokers. A wide range of ancillary activities grew up around this transience. The alliances between local leaders and gangsters that largely administered these activities plowed an important portion of the proceeds into the area, enabling residents to assume powerful bargaining positions with the regional government, planners, and local economic bosses. While these relationships remain important, they are disrupted as the area increasingly becomes a site for large industrial plants and is targeted for more. Residents of the areas that abut the Mitsubishi carport, for example, have grown concerned over the limited influence they have had in winning jobs at the carport. The frustration has been expressed in some symbolic acts of vandalism that have prompted Kalla to use ambiguities in the community's tenancy status to threaten the area with eviction. These maneuvers have been extensively talked about across the district. Gestures on both sides constitute a kind of "trial balloon" through which to read what is likely to happen elsewhere in the district. The development trajectory of Kali Baru is further complicated by the uncertain plans of just how major road systems will be extended across this area of the north. It is clear that major improvements are required in order to better circulate the traffic that connects the port at Tanjung Priok to the emerging industrial areas in the east, as well as to the major commercial centers to the west and south. But how these changes will actually be routed remains an area of controversy. Major storage facilities, factories, and container docks would be displaced—and so part of the overall task is how to minimize such collateral damage by cutting through residential areas.

The climate conditions associated with global warming are an important issue in these projects. Jakarta experiences rising tides that flood many areas along the northern coast. Many infrastructural improvements are necessary, including further dredging of the

harbor, the repair of existing seawalls, and the construction of new ones. Given the massive repairs, improvements, and new construction necessary across the entire northern part of the city, there is much debate among planners and national and municipal officials as to the formulation of priorities and where the money will come from. None of the major political or economic actors are making clear moves. Those involved in transportation planning and investment appear to be watching to see what moves the industrialists will make as the latter, in turn, wait and see what kinds of plans emerge from various ministries and municipal authorities to mobilize the investments needed for new roads and coastal engineering works.

Situated in the midst of these hedges are the residents of Kali Baru, many of whom expect to be forced to move within the next two years. These expectations are stoked by rumors that are intentionally circulated by local strongmen signaling their availability to deliver particular pieces of land to new economic uses or to mitigate possible resistance to them. Some gangsters, labor brokers, local bosses, and municipal officials, expecting major transitions ahead, try to position themselves to cut the best deals in terms of favorable relocations for the businesses they are involved in or in terms of winning new positions, markets, or labor quotas for new projects and industries. Although the district's reputation as a place of illicit commodity chains, questionable business practices, prostitution, extortion, and transient customers would seem to leave it highly vulnerable to redevelopment, this reputation also implicates some politically powerful individuals who profit from prolonged and uncertain changes.

A critical question in all of this is the history through which residents became convinced that they had to move and that specific acquisitions, deals, and development projects were in process, when in actuality very little in this regard has been concretized. In other words, residents have been cultivated to anticipate that a specific future is immanent. This anticipation limits their options and takes away any negotiating leverage they might have. Here, anticipation acts to constitute residents as those who will make the first move, who will decide that they will have to move and that they must get what they can now in terms of compensation before it is too late.

At the same time, more powerful actors can sit back and hope to minimize the costs of their own maneuvers through a cheap displacement of residents. But this matter goes beyond simply manipulating the dispossession of residents. The powerful actors trigger the anticipations of the residents and watch just how these residents think about and concretize their own next moves. How far are households willing to relocate? How adept are they at finding other jobs, and how much are decisions collectively deliberated among neighbors or individuals working in the same economic sector? In this process, interested parties get a better sense about what the likely ramifications might be for their own possible plans. They get to know where possible points of resistance might come from; they get to know the extent to which an existing labor force could be rearranged and redeployed for new uses; they discern how residents are connected to local power brokers and how far their influence runs across a larger spectrum of political and economic spheres.

Again, North Jakarta is an area of great uncertainty in terms of environmental conditions, future investments, the functionality of the built environment, and the configurations of deal-making among a very diverse set of economic interests and actors. Economic development requires the ability to develop new businesses, provide secure working conditions and reliable transportation of goods and services coming in and out, and piece

together a network of small producers, casual labor, and ancillary services that keep production, labor, and storage costs low, as well as minimize payoffs often required to keep the “wheels going.” All of this necessitates fine-tuned assessments about the “ins” and “outs” of a district. These assessments entail more than demographic information and more than a reading of the local political and social dynamics. Instead, knowledge is required about what people living and operating in a particular place are willing to do, how they get things done, what they are prepared to do to with each other, and how they continuously position themselves for alternative futures. The anticipations of residents become a resource for others, resources that do not necessarily work in the interests of the residents themselves.

*Intersecting the Insides and the Outsides: Kali Baru-Senen*

The Kali Baru-Senen district of Jakarta is strategically located at the intersection of important train lines and highways in an historical commercial district of the city. There are over 600 small enterprises that have something to do with printing and digital reproduction. For the most part, owners and workers live in the area. Thus, there is a mixture of highly developed residential blocks and poorer quarters, all attached to several large markets that bring in large numbers of consumers not necessarily linked as clients to the printing sector.

Districts such as this relied for much of their history upon local authorities who embodied their particular ways of doing things. These authorities connected the district’s labor, craft, and social mores to a larger world of patrons and politics. Local authorities often assumed positions within municipal government, particularly as the running of cities became increasingly decentralized to local levels. Yet, there was not usually a strong relationship between local municipal positions (i.e., mayors and councilors) and those of the “real” local authorities who remained outside of administration and often even of municipal politics per se. Rather such “real” local authorities would broker the terms of the relationship between local dynamics and those at the municipal level, within the framework of prevailing municipal law and policy but also with flexible measures. These authorities were deal makers and the deals aimed to exempt districts from certain taxes, rules, policing, or other municipal obligations. They also aimed for at least some unofficial recognition by the municipal government of local ways of doing things (e.g., managing property, running businesses, organizing local associations) that for all intents and purposes acted as a compendium of “local law” and were applicable only to the district itself.

These patterns of brokerage continue to exist along with increasing levels of participation in municipal administration and thus a more extensive harmonization of local practices with municipal policy. But there is also a shift in the character of the articulation of districts like Kali Baru to the larger municipal space and even to spaces beyond. This is true not only for mixed-sectored, mixed-income districts like Kali Baru but also for other localities made up of different mixtures of the “urban poor” or the “middle classes.”

No matter what activities they may engage in, operating costs are increasing for small and medium-scale businesses. This is true even when labor and production are informalized to keep costs low. There is increased competition not only from local competitors but also from those operating at larger scales who can afford continuous technological and marketing innovation. This means that keeping a business afloat may require new abilities to identify and sustain niche customers. These customers would include not only those

who are interested in basic technical proficiencies at a good price but also those who can request outputs better designed to recognize the special character of their needs, who can enter into flexible payment plans, and who feel that they have a good rapport with the business.

For the workers who clean the offices, repair the machines, make tea, or fetch snacks for the customers, guard the facilities at night, deliver finished jobs, or make sure that the business has the materials it needs readily available when they are needed, they can no longer necessarily count on the solidity of patron–client relations or common belonging to a particular ethnic group, family, local history, or religious organization. Not that these attributions don't count. In fact, in many instances, common membership in something becomes a key criterion through which someone can get a job. But the status of shared membership as a kind of guarantor does diminish and, as a result, lower status workers, along with more technically proficient semi-professionals and professionals, have to be prepared to do more in terms of the kinds of work they imagine possible and the locations in which that work might take place.

In a district such as Kali Baru, many ancillary activities are attached to the formal printing industry. Because it is an area of relative economic dynamism, many informal economic activities attempt to attach themselves to it, from food vending, automobile repair, and the marketing of all kinds of consumer goods. Increasingly these more “informal sectors” also become overcrowded, with too many people selling the same goods and services. Thus, informal workers have to cultivate greater flexibility, mobility, and adaptability to shifting conditions. When workers of all kinds attempt to cultivate a flexibility to respond to a proliferation of particular needs, situations, and preferences, they, in turn, face a greater particularization of their own needs and practices. If they have to design special services and bundles of things for their customers, they will usually have to seek out special brands, parts, and components, to the extent to which they are able. Taken as a whole, these practices of adaptation and flexibility introduce a large measure of volatility into economic life. This volatility, in turn, has to be compensated for with even more flexible measures.

The question becomes where and how managers and workers develop the capacities to provide themselves the competitive edge necessary in order to maintain their positions, let alone develop the capacities to circulate through different jobs and opportunities. In all of the situations mentioned here, these capacities would come through a more widely and differentially engaged relationship with the city. It is true that districts like Kali Baru provide an information-rich environment, as they operate as a kind of “strange attractor.” In other words, Kali Baru uses its dominance over one particular and important urban economic activity to pull in customers from all over Indonesia. Given that customer base, it also pulls in vendors and marketers of all kinds who rely on this captive market as an opportunity to sell a wide range of other products and services.

Thus the district operates as the intersection of many different kinds of actors and activities in place. But there is no preconceived way available to make this intersection work. Even if there are rules for people dealing with each other, it is not so much an arena for following rules but for anticipating what might take place if certain strategies, interests, and alliances are pursued by specific persons. The intersections have to be negotiated in order to keep competing claims—for space, customers, services, and prerogatives—from getting out of hand. Streets must not be so clogged with hawkers that it is difficult for trucks

to come in and out with essential supplies and to ship out merchandise. Security must be maintained in order for customers to feel safe. A reworked framework of belonging has to be continuously reapplied in order to cultivate and stabilize particular affiliations and loyalties, and in order to guarantee some predictability in the relationships that residents, workers, business owners, service providers, and various community leaders have with each other.

At times, resources, equipment, space, and labor have to be shared when particular tasks are either larger than usual or where markets contract and people have to smooth over the situation in order to last until conditions improve. All of this means that districts come up with particular ways of doing things that combine historical memory, bits and pieces of local cultures, consensual determinations of what are considered to be “best practices,” specific hybrid forms that combine religious sentiments, entrepreneurial styles, and customs, and a set of tactics honed in the contingencies of specific problems faced by the district over time. Here, the particular setting gives residents, workers, managers, officials, and authorities a framework for dealing not only with themselves but also with the larger city.

Now this does not mean that everyone gets along or that the intersection gives rise to new consensually determined ways of relating, deciding, or sharing. Part of every intersection is the prospect that things will not come together and take something from each other. Some fundamental divides and impossibilities of translation will remain. An absence of consensus does not mean that people are not paying attention to each other or taking each other seriously. People do seem to often act at cross-purposes. But it is these very cross-purposes that provide a concrete demonstration of the different things that can be done and anticipated in any given place. This is a materialization of different possibilities, different routes in and out toward the rest of the city. It is an important reminder that specific projects can be pursued by individuals and groups without being perceived as threats and competition by others, and that their effectiveness need not be predicated on having to somehow appeal to or integrate what others are doing.

This situation of proximity among different daily performances does not mean, obviously, that fear, threat, and anxiety about others simply disappear. There will be contestation over rights and resources, access to opportunities and privilege, as there will be times when it seems that one’s way of doing things cannot proceed without the other being eliminated in some form—even if symbolic. The aspirations of residents for more space, resources, time, support, and opportunities will often be conceptualized as entailing a diminution in the capacities of others. Conversely, residents will completely ignore each other and not consider what the other is doing as having any importance whatsoever to anything. People will just get on with what they are doing, heads down, mouths and ears seemingly closed. The density of diverse residential and economic situations is never a guarantee that the constituent players will necessarily take each other into consideration.

So the point is not that intersection is some kind of a cure or developmental resolution for heterogeneous actors and activities operating in close quarters or that fights and contestation are a reflection of the inadequacies of intersection. It is not even the case that intersection has to come up with some consensus about how things will be done from now on in order for everyone to get along. Rather, it is a locus of anticipation; it is an arena where different kinds of residents attempt to calculate what they think it is possible to do in terms of the calculations and “figurings” of others who are also trying to anticipate the

characteristics of the field in which they attempt to get things done. These possibilities exist side by side and in different kinds of relationships with each other—relationships that go beyond cause and effect, or compensation, or development.

*Beyond the Familiar—Playing the Larger City*

Districts like Kali Baru have a discernible set of livelihoods, customs, sensibilities, and social arrangements that can be predictably identified with the district. But what is important is not the reproduction of the specific content of those social features per se. Rather, what is important are the skills and capacities that are at work in attempts to ensure that those features associated with the distinctiveness and viability of the district can be sustained. For if these features are to be engaged and consumed—not as a stable series of unchanging elements but as a series of possibilities with widely drawn parameters—then what is important are the strategic practices through which the district demonstrates that its existence can be relevant to a wide range of different needs, styles, realities, actors, and situations.

On the business side, processes like digital reproduction in Kali Baru can be made relevant and affordable to a wide range of small organizations or traditional printing values and mechanics could be marketed so as to have an appeal to large corporations. On the social side, successful owners and managers, tempted to escape to wealthy outlying districts in the face of local environmental inconvenience—traffic, flooding, disrupted services—remain in the district because of its proximity to a wide range of low-end services that reduce the costs and strains entailed in the domestic management of the household. Given the proliferation of consumer choices, the district must convey to the larger world that it is still worth maintaining some kind of affiliation with this district. In part, this is done by displaying the capacity to reconstitute itself in various ways while retaining a stable identity.

These exigencies of sustaining local coherence and economy order urban space as well as producing what we can see, in an oversimplified way, as a particular set of urban mentalities. In Kali Baru, for example, the owners and managers of the 600 printing businesses must continue to preserve the coherence of a territorially based and articulated economic sector through practices that do not undercut the viability of any individual business. This is done through price regulation or by solidifying local networks for information exchange, problem solving, and dispute regulation, as has been evident in commercial guilds and associations for a very long time. At the same time, the viability of any business is rooted in its ability to offer both generic and highly singular services. The latter is reflected not so much in the proficiency of the product but in ancillary sensitivities, engagements, and accommodations related to the idiosyncrasies of specific customers. Workers of all kinds must become more flexible, given the nature of competition, shrinking labor markets in specific sectors, the mobility of labor, and the overcrowding of informal work. The performance of that flexibility generates its own volatility that must be flexibly addressed through largely locally negotiated accommodations in order for all actors that are perceived as legitimate to have their space, opportunities, and livelihood.

The result of these accommodations is that any particular sector, activity, and domain within the district will largely embody the nature of that accommodation. In other words, it will take on a complexity that reflects the concerns and ways of doing things of others.

Thus, owners of printing shops, technicians, domestic workers, informal hawkers, local youth gangs, imams, street sweepers, and local power brokers do not simply have their own rules, sectors, domains, and spaces. To a large extent, they take on the realities of everyone else as part and parcel of their ability to do their job and stay in place. And then they do something else when that time inevitably comes because of the volatility their capacities for adaptation have brought about. Their sheer ability to “roll with the punches” seems to guarantee that “more punches will be thrown.”

On the one hand, this kind of mutual citation or bringing others into one’s own fold can better synchronize the different things that take place in a district. At the same time, however, different actors, feeling that they now have what they need from others, can be more inclined to go their own way, not really taking into consideration what others in the district are actually doing. New dynamism must be introduced into social relations: an impetus for motivating co-residents to see each other in a different light, to suspend the old categories, and to take each other seriously in new ways, yet have some sense of confidence about what such new interactions might lead to. To a large extent, this dynamism depends upon different actors folding new experiences into the district—experiences attained in the larger world outside of it. So in an important way, it is the ability to find out about, engage with, and operate in a larger world of economic and social transactions that is necessary to ensure the ongoing viability of the district as the embodiment of a particular way of life. It is the ability of residents to operate in larger spaces outside the district that provides the information and experience that will enable the district to intensify and extend its connections not only to the city at large and beyond but also with itself.

The question then becomes: where do people from the district go if they want to experiment with engaging places in the larger city? On the business end, there are networks, associations, and commercial structures through which such exteriority can be exercised. But even here, supplemental efforts may often be necessary to find out particular pieces of information that often are the purview of highly personal and localized relationships. The case of Kali Baru shows us that residents—from the owners of print-shops to the tea makers to the motorcycle repairpersons—find a wide range of small ways to insert themselves in various fissures and openings in districts across the city. This may take the form of a collective investment in a trading place in or near a particular market or the construction of a small informal house in an available backyard in a district that is seen as up and coming. It may entail taking over a food-selling operation near the parking lot of a new shopping mall, appropriating abandoned space for storage, or inserting small trades in the fringes along busy thoroughfares. Sometimes small social fractures and conflicts or divergences in residential conditions among contiguous micro-territories create underutilized “no man’s land” within districts that “outsiders” take advantage of by using these spaces as platforms from which to offer, for example, repair or protection services or to set up gambling games. These small incursions may serve as a platform on which it is possible to gain a broader overview of what is taking place in this external district. Information is relayed back to residents in the district who may be better resourced or positioned to anticipate and cultivate larger opportunities over the long run.

These initial insertions—these “trial balloons”—constitute active peripheries within the economies and social relationships of other districts. Let us for a moment assume that the ongoing viability of individual districts depends to a large degree on what happens to this region of Jakarta as a whole, where the futures of different districts are tied together. If

this is the case, then the viability of individual districts would also seem to stem from their actively making themselves as peripheries for the exterior operations of residents from other districts whose behavior and activity can markedly diverge from that to which they are accustomed in their own residential districts.

If the economic and social exigencies wrapped up in the sustainability of places require residents to anticipate different ways of being in the city, and concretely experiment with them in places outside the district to which they are most linked and familiar, then there must be places across the city where this experimentation can be done. These places cannot be those that are well developed, thoroughly claimed, or whose futures are clear. Otherwise, they are just not accessible or are subject to conflicts among different interests that go nowhere. This ability to go out into the larger world is situated in the messiness of built environments—the seemingly haphazard, incomplete, and strewn-out arrangements of buildings, infrastructure, and activity that continue to persist in many cities. For this environment provides a visible rendering of what things are and what people are up against in dealing with them. It shows how water and power appear and disappear; it shows that people living, playing, working, eating, sleeping, moving, and interacting together have an effect on places—the land, the buildings, the air. It shows how residents crisscross and side-step the markings and physical traces of all these different activities and movements. When a place shows all of its wears and tears, its memories, and the impacts of what people have done to it, the place then shows that it is always available to deals, small initiatives, and renovation. It is a messy environment and people have to step through and around each other but it is an environment that is available to be “messed with”—that is, open to engagements of all kinds.

Residents in these districts undertake hundreds of small efforts to become involved in places away from home. They bring these experiences back home, where they face the imported experiences of neighbors, co-workers, and other associates, as well as those of outsiders who have come to wage their own experiments. All of this propels residents back into the larger world in still different ways, and all constitute wide-ranging propositions for how different districts might deal with each other over the long run, how they might put together a different kind of city.

#### CONCLUDING NOTE

The residents of these districts in North Jakarta do not enact the dream of urban cosmopolitanism. It is not simply a crossing of paths, histories, and ways of doing things among people of various backgrounds, statuses, and capacities. It is not the *cityness* of Richard Sennett's work (1994, 2006) that has focused on the ways in which the city is a place of diversity, where diversity strengthens individual capacities and generates new forms of thought, feeling, and action. In a place of strangers delinked from ties to clear pasts, traditions, and a well-organized universe of beliefs and behaviors, urban dwellers have to find ways of making use of the relative anonymity and autonomy that urban life affords as well as continuously adapting those uses to the ones made by others with whom they also share tenuous social ties.

Rather, intersection is a machine-like process that appears inevitable when relationships, economics, and ways of doing things become so densely entangled that it is difficult to talk about a formal versus informal economy, adult versus youth, citizen versus

stranger—whatever terms you want to use. Here, residents, relationships, and ways of life are forced out of their particular identities because they have to deal with an enlarged world of causes and effects, powers, influences, and considerations. How in this era can one draw a line between what is relevant or not, what is a causal factor or not?

Intersection, in the use I make of it here, does not assume that the city is headed toward any new kind of social harmony. Rather, a certain dystopian dread always hangs over the city, always makes it seem that the city is either veering off the tracks or building more secure walls behind which its residents must hide. It is a matter of looking at the different potentialities that are produced when bodies, feelings, and ways of doing things are no longer tied to any particular meaning, do not belong to anyone in particular, and do not necessarily have to make sense.

It is difficult to see these “machines”—these intersections of bodies, places, things, and speech—as households, groups, or institutions but they are collectivities of some sort. We have to remember that by definition the city goes toward many different futures at once. It is not hinged, not anchored to any specific plans, economies, or future, no matter what residents or powerful players and money may do. So in part, these machines are brought to life only because they have to deal with the unexpected crossings of noise, information, people, and materials that such a city entails. In other words, the very lack of “real” social trust and conviviality can be the basis for ways of being together that are potentially productive and dangerous at the same time.

While urban policymakers have always warned against messiness, the breakdown of social cohesion, and the dangers of an ungovernable city, there is much within these apparent dangers that is the very resourcefulness of urban life. For those who rely on a capacity for anticipation do have opportunities to affect the course of events in situations when different kinds of residents are trying to figure out what to do with each other. There are many situations in city life where no one has enough power or money to impose their complete stamp and where there is no ready-made map or policy that dictates the kinds of accommodations that should or will ensue. This describes the realities relevant to many urban districts across the world. In such intersections, what urban residents can do with each other remains up for grabs.

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