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Article

Cities of Uncertainty: Jakarta, the Urban Majority, and Inventive Political Technologies

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Abstract
When people inhabit a city, they situate themselves and are situated through the intersections of infrastructure and technical systems, and the particular domains and modalities of occupation – settlement and work – that are configured by them. At the same time, people are also inhabited by the city, as a kind of possession, endowment, and series of conundrum. People figure themselves out through figuring arrangements of materials, of designing what is available to them in formats and positions that enable them particular vantage points and ways of doing things. What it is possible for people to do with each other is largely a question of what it is that exists between them, and how this 'between' can be shaped as active points of reference, connection and anchorage. Infrastructure exerts a force – not simply in the materials and energies it avails, but also the way it attracts people, draws them in, coalesces and expends their capacities. If territory is a bundle of political technologies for measuring, administering and regulating the scope of what it is possible to do in the city, then other inventive political technologies are also at work in the making of urban life.

Keywords
Global South, Jakarta, political technologies, subjectification, urbanism

Cities of Contrasting Visibilities

There is a seemingly untenable form of urban life associated with mega-cities. Here human life is both almost unrecognizable and increasingly familiar: the body barely dissociable from a tangled fabric of fumes, waste, rust, sweat, tin, rain, and narcotic haze. Orders of all kinds may be inverted: places where the children are in charge; where everyone

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tricks everyone else; where social and public service becomes an extortion racket; where graveyards are considered premium housing. Certainly if mortality rates are the critical measure of viability in human life, life in many megacities barely registers. At the same time, in such desperate conditions, evidence is often found of life's resilience and courage, of the ability of the most marginal to sustain widely shared visions, moral and religious commitments.

In this discussion I want to take up some of the conundrums, complexities, and compositions of urban life within megacities, most particularly the one where I live, Jakarta. For what is nearly impossible to come to grips with is the simultaneity of immense infrastructural, political and social problems with real legacies of residential skill in the construction of viable built environments and livelihoods. Across the central city districts of Jakarta there is substantial evidence of the capacity of residents to move relationally across varied opportunities opened up by plying the density of diverse actors, materials, and ways of doing things (Abeyasekere, 1987).

The focus here is largely on this capacity to construct elastic relationships with what is available to residents at any particular time and use these relationships as platforms to access new experiences and networks. If territory is a bundle of political technologies for measuring, administering and regulating the scope of what it is possible to do in the city (Elden, 2010), then the focus of this article is how residents may operate extraterritorially. In other words, where an expanded notion of political technologies entails putting things into relationship so as to make contingent the use to which they have been put in the past; to open up spaces of contestation and experimentation (Brighenti, 2010). The intensive heterogeneity of the districts I am considering is not only a product of a plurality of incremental resident efforts to associate their assets with those others but also the very resource that could propel such a plurality of efforts. Such efforts could include the agglomeration and division of land, the continuous upkeep, repair and upgrading of the built environment, the linkage of small-scale economic activities, the circulation of contacts, impressions, and information, or the pooling of volunteer labour.

Productive Uncertainty

Across many megacities, indications of early death, of lives unnecessary cut off due to rampant violence and disease have quickly become the norm, and long lives the exception – something strange and disconsonant to the prevailing conditions. But epidemiological indicators for many megacities – when they actually exist for the 'marginal' populations – are strangely lacking medians. While environmental impacts on health may be unequivocal, they do not obviate the importance of paying

attention to long trajectories of individual and social life that manage to still attenuate the more toxic aspects of such environments (WHO, 2009). Large measures of uncertainty ensue. Megacities increasingly exert substantial power over the practices and aspirations of individual lives and cultures, as well as the economies of nations and regions. They shift individuals and communities into different gears, different modes of self-consideration and social assessment, and oscillating criteria of efficacy not easily tied together in a neat and coherent package (Bayat, 2009; Friedmann, 2007; Heller and Evans, 2010; Smart and Lin, 2007; Sparke, 2008; Watson, 2009).

Yet uncertainty is at the heart of urbanism, for urbanism is not a destination but a work always in progress (Amin, 2006; Thrift, 2004, 2005). The exigencies of dwelling require a constant process of converting what is accessible into the tools of new possibilities and attention. While the intersection of bodies, materials, and discourses – as well as what can be intersected, by whom and in what ways – may be deeply marked by unequal relations of power and capacity, the performance of intersection or assemblage can always potentially exceed those constraints, setting up the conditions for new alignments (Aguilar, 2002; Aksit, 2010; Benjamin, 2008; McFarlane, 2007, 2009; Leontidou, 2010; Pieterse, 2008). The distance between reiteration and change is always uncertain, and long histories of repetition need not constitute likely guarantees.

Uncertainty is seldom viewed as a resource, even though various aspects of uncertainty may be at the heart of contemporary urban growth. We know that we live in a fiscal world based on the tremendous expansion of capital disarticulated from any fundamental underlying asset. Money is made by the extensiveness through which an object can be made to circulate through different networks, connections, and uses regardless of whether the object is actually mobile itself. Derivatives have been the instrument of such circulation, and they have enabled the intersection of phenomenon that need not be dependent upon their meaning, use, history, or prior valuation. Things are intersected not to fit together but to generate motion and volatility that propel the components of contracts and deals into still other experimental relations (Cooper, 2010; Lee and LiPuma, 2004; Pryke, 2006).

Cities themselves try to situate emerging uncertainty within various projects that attempt to imbue architectural significance – to orient spatial development within a larger matrix of geomancy, nationalist myth, or balance of cosmological forces. These designs attempt to address questions as to where the city comes from, its role in national and international development. Still, the proliferation of symbols and styles, the effacement of certain heritage, and the contiguities of that which is selectively retained and modified with various instantiations of the new produce their own disorientations and lend piling layers of the spectral to the city (A. King, 2007; R. King, 2008, 2009; Kusno, 2000, 2003;

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Wilson, 2008). Additionally, as cities are situated in the fulcrum of various contestations and unresolved tensions in relationships between popular beliefs, colonial pasts and postcolonial imaginaries, economic trajectories and the pragmatics of administration, there is a tendency to use the built environment as a means of intentionally forgetting these tensions, to defer them by undermining the spatial languages through which they had been recognized (Abbas, 1997; Legg, 2008).

The Urban Majority

Between the superblock and the slum, the ascendant middle class and the poor, is a 'majority' of which much less is known, perhaps because there is no essential coherence that characterizes it. Still, salaried workers in public and service sectors, traders, artisans, sojourners, petty bourgeois entrepreneurs, industrial labour, racketeers, service workers of various skills, and low level technicians and professionals make up the bulk of the population for cities such as Jakarta, São Paulo, Cairo, Bangkok, Manila, and perhaps even Lagos. Various professions, work, backgrounds, economic capacities, and livelihoods are entailed. At various historical junctures, this 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 anchorage 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 – never entirely formed or dissipated, but porous and elastic (Bayat, 2009; Berner and Korpf, 1995; Haber, 2006; Konings et al., 2006; Lindell, 2010; Lovell, 2006; McFarlane, 2007).

Perhaps more than any other megacity, Jakarta retains a large number of integrated residential and commercial districts with a highly heterogeneous population in terms of economic background, residential histories, and social ascription. Single streets often have a diverse mixture of spatial development and a dense proximity of buildings renewed and dilapidated, altered many times over the years, as well as those that have not registered discernible changes for decades. Even when areas may exude homogeneous population and building types, they are often in close proximity to areas that diverge – areas of the poor contiguous to those of a lower middle class. There are vast areas of a so-called 'working class', 'working poor' households, with well-maintained small pavilions on narrow lanes full of greenery. Even in immensely dense poor areas, it is often difficult to discern a downward spiral into greater depths of *slummification*, as small improvements are continuously made and households do what they can to stabilize residence and livelihood.

Even as historic districts persist with a highly differentiated temporal mix of middle-class stability, decline, renewal, new investment and construction, there is a persistent tendency to characterize these mixed districts as districts of the poor. Repeatedly, popular representations indicate that the middle class has already left to new residential districts further from the centre or to the large apartment blocks. But any cursory overview of these districts reveals the obviousness of stable, even expanding middle-class developments. While such expansions may participate in the same speculative sentiments that characterize high-end developments and may be driven by a particular set of actors, such as Indonesian Chinese with a long history of access to mortgage finance, it does not necessarily obviate their integration into various circuits of local interchange. Additionally, many such middle-class residents have large sunk costs – economically, socially and emotionally – in particular sites. Even if they could attain a high price for their property, they could not afford longer commute times or diminished access to reliable labour and services built over a long-term residence in the area. As escalating property taxes, particularly in high-value areas, may exert untenable pressures on certain households, the great need for accommodation enables them to convert property into multiple dwellings that then subsidize their continued residence.

Part of the issue regarding these occlusions in representation concerns the very notion of middle-class identities, associated as they are with individuation, self-sufficiency, privacy, and moral integrity. Such households are supposed to assume the status of a corporate identity, styling themselves with a sense of autonomous action, continuous improvement and attainment, and a sense of moral capacity to make decisions predicated on what is best for the corporate unit (Rose and Osborne, 2000). To focus only on this dimension neglects the possibilities of ways in which such households, as an integral part of highly heterogeneous districts, sought not necessarily to integrate themselves with others but to establish a functional co-presence.

The mechanics of such co-presence have much to do with orientations to notions of territory, and the ways in which historically an urban majority circumvented the institutionalization of their residential and commercial settings as 'territory' in order to secure itself in the city. For territory is the creation of space as a locus through which authority is exercised, an arena of command; it is a vehicle that occasions the application of various strategies, such as mapping, ordering, measuring, and demarcating, to establish terms of recognition and differentiation among inhabitants and spaces. Territory specifies the circulations and interchanges that are allowed as normalized through calculation, i.e. what can take place and under what circumstances, and what value different activities and persons have in relationship to each other (Elden, 2010; Rolnik, 1999).

But the very technical proficiencies that enable intensifying territorialization of the urban also render it a continuously mutable matrix of relations. As such, notions of administration, anticipation, control, and probability, while increasingly sophisticated technical operations, become increasingly uncertain as well (Parisi, 2012). The movement of people, energy, water, traffic, services, goods, and information through the city is increasingly shaped and regulated by parametric design. This brings together different data sets related to these things, modulates the variable relationships among them, and alters their properties as a result – e.g. making water and energy and sanitation and financing and transport and municipal finance and economic development all impact on each other through recursive feedback loops. New, unpredictable, and unfixable realities are produced in the very act of trying to better control things.

Not dissimilarly, urban districts of the majority, while certainly subject to various political technologies applied to administer and control them, nevertheless honed a facility over time to make varied use of the materials they had accessible to them. Things, bodies, expressions, and places were not so much fixed to specific representations. Rather, they were deployed as potential components of usually temporary but continuous mobilizations of effort to maximize household access to opportunities. Few could 'go it alone', nor was it advantageous for households to commit themselves excessively to one particular set of affiliations and obligations. Additionally, these provisional assemblages were responses to the very volatility that shifting intersections of persons, economies, and ways of doing things themselves brought about. For staying put, for securing a place in the city was often predicated on the ability of households to actively experiment with what they saw and experienced transpiring around them. Using a little of their resources and efforts at a time, there was a continuous testing of the waters, finding new vantage points and circuits to which they might connect their residential history, skills, social networks, and jobs.

Witnessing the Convergence of the Discrepant

When different actors, capacities, backgrounds and spaces come together, fixed equations concerning relative contributions and values, although present, usually have limited use in calibrating relationships among different aspirations, practices, and uses of local space. The key to make things work is for multiple activities and orientations to use each other. They can only use each other if those who perform them can witness and observe each other (Arias, 2004; Bayat, 1997; Elyachar, 2005).

The sheer fact that many small enterprises are open to the street, such as in the hundreds of small printing firms in Kalibaru, central Jakarta, and the contiguous second-hand and 'stolen' goods market means that there is no intention to keep secrets. Not that there is

absolute transparency. Individual *commerçants* have their deals and advantages, and a combination of climate and affordability also deters complete enclosure of their activities. Still, when one speaks to these entrepreneurs one by one, they all have a remarkable sense of what each other is doing, in part because word gets around, but more so by the accumulated impressions gained from being able to watch each other without the connotation of mutual surveillance. In the incessant efforts of persons, materials, and networks to manage the recalibrations to each other occasioned by their enacted relations, a seeming hodge-podge of interstices, enclosures, and openings ensue. These also constitute architectures of possibility – i.e. efforts by people and things to reach each other or to disperse or defer contact. There are places open to constant reformulation and negotiation, and there are others that easily become the purview of particularistic interests and identities.

The same practice of witnessing prevails in local markets and fosters not so much a sense of comradeship but egalitarian possibility; each knows that they cannot go it alone, that there are possibilities in what they trade and do that they cannot take advantage of, at least right away or without substantial risks, so if others are able to 'test the waters' possible implications can be learned and modifications made. Enterprise becomes not simply a matter of profit and price but of collective experimentation that is not officially institutionalized for these purposes, but ensues as a by-product of situating, even suspending, the administration of markets and sectoral specializations between various logics of control.

For example, local markets in Jakarta are not usually the purview of municipal market administration – the *Pasar Jaya*. Rather, they fall under a municipal department established for the administration of small enterprise that treats traders not as a collective block but as small-scale individual street entrepreneurs that just so happened to be grouped as a 'market'. The entrepreneurs pay nominal daily fees to use the facility, but otherwise the administration of the space is the purview of a local 'leader' who manages the security of the market and usually garbage collection. This is done with a group of 'unofficial workers', which number around 25 for a market of a hundred traders. As salaries for these workers are not insignificant, so too is the volume of trades. Local managers are established over the long run, and they secure their status by their willingness to fight over unwanted incursions and act as repositories of stories they willingly collect and share. They may organize the under-invoicing of trade volume reported to municipal authorities so that traders can retain a larger share of receipts. As a result, low prices are maintained that in turn capture consumption from both poor and middle class alike. Often prices are 75 per cent below those of major supermarket chains. Thus, these 'non-markets' constitute a space of temporary mixing of consumers from a large area.

At times, these markets are situated on land of uncertain and con-
tested status, and operate in a cat and mouse game of expansion and
retreat in face of ritualized surveillance by various authorities. But these
authorities, too, at times come to view these unofficial expansions as
opportunities for accumulation and thus pursue their regulatory author-
ity by maintaining doubled prerogatives. In some poorer sections of such
mixed districts, certain households will parlay connections to larger scale
businesses, such as bakeries and restaurants, to prepare and package
particular food items. With no access to commercial space other than
the narrow lanes in front of their residences, these economic activities are
visible to all, and often expansion will literally enrol neighbours in the
pursuit of similar activities, either as extensions of the original business
or as 'competitors' who develop their own networks. As these forward
linkages often vary greatly in terms of demand, the contiguous enter-
prises can then be mobilized as a coordinated unit, sharing labour, tools,
and contacts. The differentiation between households and enterprise,
while continuously marked, also bleed into each other, where it is some-
times not evident where one household or enterprise begins or ends. At
times, contiguous operations may be marked by common ethnicity; at
other times, they may involve very different residential histories and
external networks.

For large sectors, such as automobile and motorcycle parts and repair,
a limited number of local elite may own the actual enterprises. They may
diversify specializations in order to consolidate specific identity groups in
a district within a specific domain of the business – for example, Madura
ethnics in used parts, Makassar in panel beating, and so forth. This
corresponds to the practice of many households that diversify their
own presence across various facets of a business. Instead of consolidating
one specialization for the family network, family members are distributed
across several domains in order to hedge against debilitating fluctuations
and downturns in any one.

In the textile sector producing for Jakarta domestic markets, seasonal
changes in consumption and oscillating purchasing power require flexibly
configured supply systems. As such, small household textile production
may specialize in innovating new forms of embroidery and design which,
if proven popular, can be produced in larger volumes by a medium-size
production plant, usually averaging 20 full-time and 30 part-time
employees, located just down the street. Slight but discernible differenti-
ations may be made in terms of the quality of materials and the styles of
cuts in terms of addressing different levels of affordability. Some oper-
ations may be completely legitimate, with proper licensing and wage
policies, whereas others are completely illicit, operating behind closed
doors and drawing in pools of short-term, underpaid labour which func-
tion to quickly generate large volumes of 'knock-offs' that may be in
sudden and short-lasting demand. Both skilled and unskilled labour

circulates among different kinds of operations, both in terms of the seasonality but also to forge working associations between different kinds of production centres. These associations are critical in terms of regulating costs so that some operations have enough of a cushion to experiment with new designs and others have a sufficient amount of volume from different smaller workshops in order to maintain their specialization in turning out sizeable volume in short amounts of time.

So many economic activities are situated between various logics of regulation so as not to be fixed in their relationships with each other, even if the character of the work and service provides a specific identity and the conditions of access to markets and equipment comes with particular contractual obligations. It is true that this state of suspension has antecedents in the disastrous national import substitution policies of the early 1960s when, as a result, national and municipal governments, short of money, gave ministries and departments the green light to sustain themselves through the privatization of services, the accumulation of rents, and the widespread subcontracting of functions (Firman, 1999). This ethos of subcontracting persists. Markets, public institutions, and even basic governmental functions such as the registration of births, the issuance of Jakarta identity cards, and the provision of basic services is subcontracted down to the most local of levels. While this practice poses many problems of coordination and corruption, it is an infrastructure in which individual residences and commerce can be situated in multiple ways. So even when transaction costs may be increased through the need for unofficial mediation and responsibilities deferred, it is a game that can be played in different ways, occasioning transactions among individuals that otherwise would not be connected (Hansen, 2009).

Elastic Security

In many cities, Jakarta included, maintaining the salience of ethnic and regional backgrounds is an important instrument for consolidating economic opportunity and security – given the shortcuts these affiliations provide for securing trust and access to an equitable division of opportunity. The popular understanding in Jakarta is that Bataks are drivers, Padang are textile workers, the Javanese are bureaucrats, and the Chinese are the big business people – to cite a few examples. But, the more important point becomes how these various sectors of activity work out ways of relating to each other in situations where overarching regulatory frameworks are under-coded and official institutions of mediation are either few or decreasing. Therefore, education, environmental management, industrial regulation, financial mobilization, development investment, conflict mediation, social services, and residential management may take variously designed, singular forms. Such a diversity of governance might be understandably perceived as a potential nightmare,

especially for cities already struggling to provide adequate infrastructure, transportation, and basic resources.

But such singular arrangements also necessitate ways of specifying articulations to the larger urban system. For the relative autonomy deployed to consolidate particular local economic and political practices will not do anything unless it finds ways of connecting to the city as a whole. Placing part of the onus on individuated domains and territories within the city to come up with ways to connect to the city as a whole may prove to be more productive than specifying vectors of connection from above (Boudreau, 2007; Dikec, 2005; Nicholls, 2006; Young and Keil, 2010). As for urban theory, then, understanding the systematicity of the city entails thinking of cities as many different cities at the same time, not as a plurality of fractals, but as the designs and struggles of many attempting to recognize each other as one, always imposing themselves on the other, as well as finding ways to leave the other alone.

Here security is envisioned not in the maintenance of tight boundaries and circumscribed information exchange but in the capacity of residents to imagine various circuitries for reaching each other, as well as implicating themselves in each other's economic, and sometimes religious and social lives. Residents fold in other residents – as labour, as actual and potential beneficiaries of each other's output, as extensions of opportunity that are part of efforts to scale-up economic activity, and as mutual sources of contacts and favours. Here, local leaders play a significant role. They are switchboards of information and impressions, actors willing to keep various constituencies informed. I know one market 'manager' who photocopies all correspondence from the railway company, which owns the land 12 metres either side of the rail-line and on which the market has expanded, to all traders and residents in the immediate area so that not only are those who retail on the land in question kept informed but a wider audience as well.

Local mosques, the most prolific of local institutions in Jakarta, often have a mixed membership of congregates who use the obligations of *zakat* – alms giving – as a mechanism of redistribution and thus a way of maintaining relationships between richer and poorer residents. Such sanctioned obligations also attenuate the risk that reciprocities in other areas of local life will become overburdened with obligations and disrupt the seemingly volitional character of mutual exchanges.

Keeping 'eligibility' at bay is perhaps the most important dimension in circumventing territory as the organizing principle of local life. In other words, residents could be involved in each other's lives without necessarily feeling eligible to do so. They need not have a certain education, status or background to make some kind of intervention into the mix. They could make their opinions known, their presence felt and, by doing so, became visible and, as visible, provide others with information about what they could expect from them. Making themselves known in this

way, without hesitating or feeling anxious about their capacity to do so, enables others to feel secure in their presence. Of course the unanticipated and the unknown could always occur, and is even the by-product of the multiplicity of exchanges underway on a daily basis. But even here, a tolerance for the unanticipated could gradually evolve with an underlying confidence that people making themselves visible and available to be known could then be engaged as either active or silent resources for sustaining local residence.

Granted, the elaboration of middle-class identity and urban life in general increasingly valorizes notions of eligibility. Access to opportunity and space increasingly is predicated on whether a person is eligible to have that access. Even when eligibility is not explicitly specified or enforced, the shaping and stylization of built environments implicitly intimidates those whose purchasing power or lifestyle is not consonant with the values embodied by these environments. In line with the economic logic that has long characterized urban development, specialization becomes more differentiated and individuals are encouraged to recognize the need for continuous training and education, so that insufficiency is something generalized across the urban population. People then do not participate, speak or intervene because they conclude they are not eligible to do so; they do not have the expertise or training. These conclusions are the product of territory, its codifications of static differentiation. Here, differentiation is not an occasion for interchange or a marker for potential complementarity, but of delimiting the universe of operations for individuals, enforcing the way in which they pay attention to each other.

Tipping Points and Flexible Organization

While circumventions of eligibility still widely persist across Jakarta's central city residential districts, there are critical tipping points. Increasingly, young families with professional aspirations and concern for the education and welfare of their children anticipate leaving these districts for areas that reflect their moral values, particularly in East Jakarta. Such sentiments are reinforced by religiously inflected social movements such as the Front Pembela Islam that militantly calls for the return of religious values in the conduct of urban life. While the FPI is most widely known for its attacks on nightclubs and the establishment of Christian churches in majority Muslim districts, its forcefulness lies in its capacities to mobilize apathetic youth. It demonstrates an ability to reach deep into neighbourhoods, going door to door, engaging residents who have seldom been engaged by a city-wide organization, and then remembering who they are by drawing them into some basic collective experience, such as prayer service or collective volunteer work

where they feel part of a larger scheme of things without being judged for anything other than their perseverance.

Still, this sentiment to relocate to districts that offer a more homogeneous moral environment portends the challenge of eligibility. It is interesting that parents, seeing their neighbourhoods in a purported process of moral decline, would rarely limit who they would let their children play with. Such disjunctions would be too much in violation of an Indonesian ethos of tolerance. Yet they see such contacts as raising significant problems for them, and thus spur the desire to move. When pressed, it is clear that intensifying a commitment to lead a moral family life is an essential ingredient in being eligible to succeed. Economic and personal efficacy is tied to moral personal conduct, and thus if a household lives in an area where other families prioritize this same aspiration, then it will be possible to attain success. Here, amongst a certain age and class of household, economic efficacy shifts from being based on a multiplicity of reciprocal exchanges among diverse residents to the ability to mirror a certain image and norm of moral turpitude whose signs and performances are shared by other households. This disentanglement of certain kinds of households from the overall mix of residents in these central city districts may have significant repercussions in making the once inaccurate representation of them as the domains of the poor a self-fulfilling prophecy. As a result, it is possible to wonder about the implicit complicities between those who are primarily interested in large-scale land acquisition and speculation at any cost and those who issue moral outcries about the corruption of government and the greed of capitalist investment and development.

Given these points, popular economies, fragmented and overcrowded though they may be, remain forms of political contestation. They do not necessarily bring a coherent programme into view. Rather, they keep things unsettled, even volatile, and as such aim to preclude the foreclosure of possibilities, instead deferring resolution to another time since the present renders residents at an extreme disadvantage. As such, popular economic practices – as illustrated above – may connect residents in an unnamed, unrecognized collectivity; they are a tissue of shared relations woven by a shared experience of a 'loaded' temporality, an interregnum between destruction and renewal (Biehl and Locke, 2010).

The inability to see majority districts as intercalibrations of diverse transactions, instead of a contiguous series of small bastions and pockets of homogeneous groups defending their turf, also stems from a truncated sense of what makes an 'organization'. If we consider White et al.'s (2007) notion of organization as 'non-homogeneous collations of levels across embedded identities; (p. 199), the overall identity of a district subsists only through the interactions of multiple identities that are triggered by the unexpected and the erratic. Here, organization is the locus for the design and implementation of strategy, which entails mobilizing

changes in existent identities. It is not necessarily that identities are discarded, but that new registers are elaborated, and that individuals and units can shift among these registers in relationship to others. Despite the fact that local security is often attainable, as indicated previously, through the knowledge of others generated through visibility and mutual witnessing, the interchanges among different activities, histories, actors, spaces, networks, as well as between the local and metropolitan, produce large measures of uncertainty.

Take for example how basic local governance works in Jakarta. The Rukun Tentangga (RT) is the municipal government official operating at the lowest level. The RT works out accords with roughly 1200 households according to his or her relationship with larger levels of municipal authority, as the RT may be obligated to very specific local dynamics that constrain what they do with those larger authorities. On individual streets, successful economic organization may entail according dominance to particular households from particular ethnic groups to parlay opportunities for the entire street, but this in turn may undermine an essential egalitarian ethos among households of different ethnic groups. The challenge is when to ply accessible identities into advantages that may in the present only benefit a few, but become the only basis to expand opportunities for a larger area in which those few are embedded. Alternately, it may be necessary to underplay those identities so as to maintain a semblance of coherence to the area, without which most any enhancement of opportunity would provide limited use. Because of the different calculations and temporal assessments entailed, at times it is not clear to everyone what is going on or what the motivations of certain actors might be.

In the Jakarta district of Johar Baru, recent developments in the home textile industry exemplify some of these dilemmas. Because of the commercial nature of those seeking space for enterprises, many landlords are unwilling to rent a property, given its rapid depreciation in the wear and tear of the work. As such, entrepreneurs are compelled to pay a premium for rent. Once a possible tenancy is identified, and the surrounding neighbourhood knows that the landlord is attaining a significant profit from renting his or her property, others may follow, simply since the supplementary income may enable that original landlord to differentiate himself from others, and those others want to curtail that possibility. As the owners and workers of these small enterprises usually originate from a single small city in Java, they collectively face the challenge of being perceived as a block of newcomers and have to straddle their status as both welcome inputs to the area but also not be seen as a tightly bounded block of actors.

Most of these owners were originally workers in larger firms owned by Indonesian Chinese and entrepreneurs from Padang, Sumatra, both considered the commercial economic elite of the city. Having learned the

tricks of the business, they ventured off on their own as individual entre-
preneurs. Since they are the repositories of advanced skill, they cannot be
ignored. But they do not have access to the working capital necessary to
purchase large-scale bulk supplies of materials or the access to diverse
markets, which remain largely captured by their former employees. As
such, they largely work as subcontractors to their former employees or
other major firms. The costs of entry are low – some have started with as
little as $10,000 – but their room for manoeuvre, innovation, and collab-
oration is limited.

Their employees are grouped according to sector, with different pay
scales and temporalities. Although sewers, stitchers, ironers, and
embroiders all know how to do each other's work, they usually
remain within an assigned identity. The identity equates to a certain
kind of remuneration, from piecework, monthly salary, and weekly
salary. Thus the firm provides different temporalities of accumulation.
Some offer varying possible sums according to the proficiency of work.
Others guarantee a wage not contingent upon productivity in the short
term. While owners all know each other, in this instance, unlike some
other areas where home textile production dominates, there is little
collaboration. Part of this absence of collaboration is a way of signal-
ling to other residents in the area their willingness not to act as a block,
as a gesture of good will that may change in the long run. On the other
hand, 500 of these enterprises are organized into a formal association.
All members originate from the same city. This association attempts to
facilitate the expansion of these enterprises, provide ancillary services,
and make some small efforts to reduce the domination of specific actors
in the retailing of the clothing produced. Thus possibilities of collabor-
ation are relocated to a different scale in an effort that seeks structural
changes with broader implications than more localized collaboration
could affect.

Districts may prioritize a rhetoric of solidarity but have little oppor-
tunity, if not capacity, to act as a solid force. This in no way invalidates
the depiction or belief. Neighbours who have grown up together over a
long period of time can be entitled to feel as if they are one extended
family. But they also know that their occupations and external networks
provide access to different sites of meaning. In fact, in extremely crowded
but very centralized districts such as Jakarta's Kampung Rawa, people
hold on to this location because of the scope of contacts and opportu-
nities it brings. Existent density levels mean that there is not much room
for either excessively individualized manoeuvring or expansion of resi-
dences. These opportunities have to be exercised elsewhere and in differ-
ent forms. Consistency of place requires maintenance of a village-like
atmosphere, even if the history and location of the district has thor-
oughly 'urbanized' its population. The mismatch has to be mediated,
and at one time the cultivation of strong illicit economies constituted

the area as a kind of 'strange attractor' and continues to give rise to a certain style of street smarts and entrepreneurial verve.

Everyone may have a role, even the pickpockets in the market, and everyone may know who everyone else is. But the performance of solidarity has to take place in ironic twists upon conventional understandings – e.g. the pickpockets are the guarantors of a certain excessive generosity; they hold onto only a limited amount of their earnings, instead dispensing cash on various extravagances for their acquaintances, thus adding on local economic dimensions that exceed everyday necessities.

Part of the cultivation of identity as a means of mediating conflicts and mismatches rests again in the cultivation of particular styles. Since highly idiosyncratic, specialized and individual behaviours cannot viably be performed in the context of familiar residential neighbourhoods attempting to maintain the image of one extended family, such urbanized styles are instead deployed across a wider range of sites, still within the district itself, but in the different dimensions that it offers. Some of the most active and renowned theatre troupes are located in Kampung Rawa, as are some of the most proficient motorcycle racers, gang economies, and religious youth movements. Often the same individual youth participates in all of these activities, without feeling contradiction or guilt. There is no perceived need for synthesis or integration; the youth simply switch registers across identities that they view as strategic for operating at different, sometimes highly nuanced spatial scales.

At the same time, they contribute, along with others, to an overarching narrative that characterizes the district as a place where the number one rule is 'flow like the river'. This rule in turn infuses short-term actions with a sense of long-term vision – i.e. a sense that things are constantly changing over time and that one best adapt to what those changes bring rather than attempting to specify them in advance. This is a process that is bound to disrupt the apparent solidarity that people believe in. So solidarity may exist, but not exactly in the form which one might expect. Rather, it is an ability to use individual lives as instruments to suture the very disjunctions, plurality of opportunities and tensions which long-term residence in a highly centralized, dynamic part of the city has brought about.

This does not mean that organization does not show up in the tropes with which we are familiar. For example, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Mohammediyya – Indonesia's largest religious organizations – remain deeply ingrained in district life and offer the most 'well-organized' vehicles of articulation among scales, such that the most recent former governor of Jakarta was also chairperson of NU. There are various associations of commerce and workers, although usually at smaller scales. But there remain a paucity of civil associations, and certainly, unlike São Paulo or Bangkok, one does not find many residents

associations or community groupings even as the growing number of NGOs attempt to establish their own constituencies.

What I want to emphasize is that while such organizational efforts – of slum dwellers, resident associations, women's savings groups, urban development cooperatives, and massed based rights organizations – are important, their absence does not necessarily mean the lack of local organization. Across the cities of the South, the social movements and organizational forms that have attained the greatest notoriety tend to subsume various identities into the overarching framework of common residence – and residence usually in poor communities faced with numerous threats. Many have succeeded in building alliances across classes but from separate vantage points and locations across the given city (Eckstein, 2000; Fernandes, 2010; Mahon and Macdonald, 2010; Walton, 1998). Where they have not had an elaborated presence is in the kind of heterogeneous areas that continue to prevail across much of Jakarta, and many other megacities (Dasgupta and Beard, 2007).

Where such organizations prevail, along with certain legislative guarantees of participatory planning, they are either dominated by middle-class capacities or tend to crowd out other forms of mobilized association (Holston, 2008; Purcell, 2006). Often policies of inclusion – in political decision-making and education – only serve the ongoing rationalized bureaucratization of existing institutions. This is because they tend to devalue the contributions of non-middle-class participants through commitments to the enforcement of rules, procedures and principles of tolerance that simply cover up exclusionary intentions. At the same time, they enable them to extend their influence because actors who may have formerly contested the legitimacy of their existence are now 'inside' (Charlesworth, 2009). Yet, despite these limitations, there remain various instances where local vernaculars and spatial value systems are worked through as a means of mobilizing place-based advocacy and then connected across places through the simultaneous existence of broader based rights and advocacy movements (Boonyabancha, 2009; Chuang, 2005; Milbert, 2006; Mitlin, 2008).

Trajectories of Urban Transformation

What is particularly important for the discussion here is the way in which dynamic relationships between the local and extralocal become important even for the most seemingly marginal of urban inhabitants. It is not that a specific volume of space and city size becomes necessary, but given all that is presently contained within large cities, how can a sense of expansive spatialization be put together for the different kinds and needs of mobility (Bourdeau-Lepage and Huriot, 2008; Healy, 2007). In environments where people's vulnerability can be manipulated and traded for political advantage, where divisions within localities can be

easily cultivated, and where individual assets and capacities never are sufficient to change much of anything, collective solidarities are important instruments of diligence, focus, and step-by-step concrete change.

While residents will seek to defend their gains and protect the fruits of hard-won struggles, preservation alone is oriented toward the constant alert for possible threats and thus potentially limits what residents within a given locality do in relationship to the larger city, thus risking an atrophying of the very capacities that went into the collective struggle in the first place. New exteriors have to be made, new intersections with the city, and these intersections often are exploratory, experimental. They involve individual and small initiatives and not the outgrowth of collective decision-making; after all, the locality in its entirety cannot be 'tied up' with any one experiment.

Indeed, these individuated trajectories of engagement with the larger city are the 'ultimate actualizations' of that commonality that exists among residents. On the other hand, each of these individuated trajectories, built as they are on the platforms of improved conditions which are the product of collaborative efforts, contains within them varied aspects of that commonality – inclinations, capacities, and techniques – that are not used or made visible in these trajectories. This excess is the very material that goes into further developing the collective life of these residents, an excess that wouldn't exist without the tendencies of individuals to forge their own particular pathways out of the locality which is nominally the 'territory' of that collective (Virno, 2009).

In the space between the applications of political technologies as territories, frameworks of administration, control and pre-emption, and more inventive applications of political technologies as ways of enhancing mobility by exposing residents to new trajectories of relationship-building, there are many provocative questions: Is territorial proximity necessarily an important condition to produce relations of intimacy and finely attuned collaboration? Does the consolidation of working relationships amongst residents require some kind of densification of everyday contact within specific spatial parameters that facilitate face-to-face transactions? Instead of conventional governance mechanisms that divide, manage, and then integrate geometric designations of place, is it possible to identify and institutionalize 'corridors' that transverse urban and regional spaces, introducing new forms of proximity and access? How do the solidities of locally based relationships interact with larger institutions (affecting norms and regulations) in terms of producing economic growth? How do individuals manage the increased plurality of belongings theoretically accessible to them and the simultaneous circumvention of spaces of operation brought about by an intensified specification of expertise, eligibility, and niche worlds?

The mega then is not a trajectory of expansion as much as it is a frame to mobilize a multiplicity of potentialities, most of which remain

dormant, provisional, and subjugated yet still embodied in one way or another by the majority of inhabitants of megacities – neither necessarily poor, middle class or elite, but perhaps aspects of all three. Only by relocating the tools and possibilities of urban development – its infrastructure, economy and governance – in diverse assemblages of scale, subjectification, history and place and according to appropriate competencies and commitment can these potentialities be brought into view and thus be resources for transformation processes that must come.

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