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Space, Power and Identity: Patches of the Postcolonial Past, Present and Future Jakarta

Raum, Macht und Identität: Muster der postkolonialen Epoche, der Gegenwart und der Zukunft Jakartas.

Abstract

Physical space and the visual environment, while constitutive of social change, has been largely left unexplored in social and political analysis because they are often regarded as external or marginal products. Instead, time and temporality as signified by the notion of "post" are assigned an important position in understanding processes of social change. Yet, as critical theorists of architecture, anthropology and cultural geography, among others, have argued, social space is not merely a passive container of social relations, but it actively constructs subjectivities. Temporal change, such as that embedded in the notion of "post," could be said as conceivable only through a shift in social, and therefore also physical. Space thus does not merely convey physical and visual environments with representational content, it also contributes to the fabrication of a new assemblage and identity of the individual and the collective. This capacity of space to impose a particular order on the population and shape their individual and collective identity through (techno-scientific and economic) knowledge, socio-political ethics and symbolic rituals has made space an "apparatus" (instrument) of power. Yet, while a space, through its spatial program, might articulate a unifying and dominating power which circulates through coercion and hegemony, it might encounter different techniques of regulation and other strategies and tactics which are themselves responses to similar as well as different objectives. Moreover, the dominant spatial program, while actual and often effective, may never be directly and completely realized. This might be because there are local conflicts and other strategies distinct from the initial program which are also analyzable and equally important to an understanding of space and built environment as a specific form of power.

This essay considers the mutually constitutive relationship between space, power and identity formation from the different experiences of Indonesia since Independence. It brings into attention the role of the built environment in help shaping regimes of power, constituting social changes and forming political identities and urban citizenship. It presents some materials about the political roles of built environment and analyzes them in order to gain a sense of how they contribute to the shaping of political legitimacy and social imaginations. The aim of the essay, however, is to share a research agenda for a study of the spatial politics of post-Suharto era. Over all, through a case of Indonesian capital city, this essay encourage scholars working on other regions to consider the intermingling of global forces, the specific political economy of a place, and the meaning of an ever changing built environment.

Inhalt

Der physische und sichtbare Stadtraum wurde bislang bei politischen und sozialen Untersuchungen weitgehend unbeachtet gelassen, weil er als marginales und unwichtiges Nebenprodukt angesehen wurde – obwohl die Anlage und Struktur dieses uns umgebenden Raumes nicht zuletzt bei sozialen Veränderungen konstitutiv ist. Auf der anderen Seite wird Zeit und Vergangenes, wie sie durch die Term„Post“ verstanden wird, als wichtige Positionen gesehen, wenn man soziale Veränderungen verstehen will. Wie vor allem kritische Theoretiker unter anderen der Architektur, Anthropologie oder Kulturgeografie argumentiert haben, ist der soziale Raum nicht nur ein passiver Container von sozialen Beziehungen, sondern konstruiert aktiv Subjektivität. Man kann behaupten, dass temporäre Veränderungen, wie sie im Begriff Post eingebunden sind, in einer sozialen Verlagerung erkennbar sind, und sich damit auch in einer anderen physischen Raumkategorie ausdrücken. Der öffentliche Raum kann nicht nur als physischer und visueller Repräsentationsraum gesehen werden; er trägt auch zur Bildung einer neuen Zusammensetzung der Gesellschaft bei, indem er Identität stiftet, sowohl für das Individuum als auch für das Kollektiv. Diese Eigenschaft von Raum, nämlich einer Gesellschaft eine bestimmte Ordnung aufzudrücken und sowohl individuelle als auch kollektive Identität zu erzeugen, hat den Raum zu einem Instrument der Macht werden lassen, indem man technisches und ökonomisches Wissen, sowie sozial-politische Ethik und symbolische Rituale bewusst in der Gestaltung des Raumes einsetzt. Ein spezielles räumliches Programm kann an einem Platz oder anderen öffentlichen Raum eine vereinigende und politische Macht ausdrücken, vielleicht mit unterschiedlichen Techniken der Regulierung oder verschiedenen Strategien und Taktiken. Außerdem wird das dominierende räumliche Programm – wie effektiv es auch sein mag – nie ganz umgesetzt werden, vielleicht weil lokale Konflikte auftreten oder neue Strategien die ursprünglichen überlagern; auch diese sind wichtige Untersuchungsobjekte, wenn man dem Raum und die gebaute Umwelt als ein Instrument der Macht begreifen will.

In diesem Artikel wird die wechselseitige Beziehung von Raum, Macht und Identitätsbildung am Beispiel Indonesiens aufgezeigt, das seit der Unabhängigkeit viele verschiedene Phasen dieses Wechselverhältnisses durchlief. Verschiedene Materialien werden herangezogen, um die politische Rolle der gebauten Umwelt zu erläutern und um darauf aufmerksam zu machen, wie diese zur Gestaltung einer politischen Legitimation und einer damit verbundenen sozialen Vorstellung beiträgt. Das vorrangige Ziel des vorliegenden Artikels ist es jedoch, die Forschungsfrage der räumlichen Politik der Post-Suharto Zeit einem breiten Publikum zur Diskussion zu stellen. Auch wenn hier das Fallbeispiel der indonesischen Hauptstadt behandelt wird, soll dieser Beitrag Wissenschaftler ermuntern, solche Zusammenhänge zwischen Raum, einer politischen Haltung und einer sozialen Identität auch in anderen Teilen der Welt zu erforschen.

¹ We just have to reflect on Sukarno's speech: "For me, this podium—podium of 17th August [Independence Day] is a podium of people [podium rakyat], a podium of revolution, a podium that orients the determination of our nation! I use this podium as a space for dialogue between Sukarno, the leader of the revolution, and the Indonesian people who are undergoing the revolution ... This is a podium where we form a dialogue. It is a place of communication for 103 million Indonesian people ... That is why every time I stand on this podium of 17 August, I am not only talking to the revolutionary people of Indonesia, but also to all human beings undergoing revolution." (Sukarno, 1964: 5-6)

Spaces of the Sovereign: City-Building in the Time of Sukarno, 1957-1966

All decolonized nations face the difficult task of new beginnings. The tension between the past and the present remains unresolved, generating a nation-building that is marked by both rejection of and identification with colonial vision of urban development. What is clear, however, is that the site for representing such a difficult task of decolonization is the city. The postcolonial city of Jakarta at the time of its early independence (1957-65) thus provides an example of the spatial dimension of power under the regime of a sovereign. Sukarno, the first president who was also a Western-trained architect, at the end of his rule put forward the importance of the capital city as not only the landmark of the country, but also the "beacon of the whole mankind" (Leclerc, 1993). This demanded not only a perfect ordering of the capital as a center but also the correct placement of monuments and monumental buildings along a grand boulevard that made the city the center. (Figure 1) The event behind Sukarno's attempt to put Jakarta on the map of the world's cities is a complex mix of rebellions in and outside Java as well as

connected with the way the new world is born. Sukarno believed that a theatrical-like arrangement of urban space, which mobilized the most advanced architectural innovation and harnessed traditional conception of space, would contribute to the formation of a new society. Like many architects with utopian vision, Sukarno believed in the cognitive capacity of the new urban environment to create new subjectivities. He had very little patience towards the resources of "vernacular" architecture, and had little interest in using any of their potential for the building of "national" character. His modernist architecture represented the idea of the supra local that transcended ethnic or vernacular affiliation. Sukarno's nation was to be released from the gravity of tradition and the weight of the past. Sukarno's utopia is an unbounded one and he insisted on new beginnings. Many of the buildings he put up in Jakarta have the quality of flying, of soaring high, and of screaming up to the sky with very little attachment to the ground. (Figure 2)

The display of buildings in Jakarta (-resembled the staging of him on a podium) was to be looked



Fig. 1

political maneuvering involving economic decline which can be expressed as "turmoil in the realm." The ruler and his administration need to overcome this in order to restore their sovereignty. To overcome the turmoil in the realm, a modernist space is constructed to ideally represent and aid the workings of the sovereign. The constructive principle of Sukarno's Jakarta, the modernist architectural style it adopts – seemingly shared with the utopian iconography of Maoist and Stalinist socialism and resonating with pre and postwar architectural movements in the West, German Bauhaus, Italian Futurism and Le Corbusier's modernism – was a set of cultural forms adopted by Sukarno's regime to represent what is essentially the power of Javanese political culture. At the center of the capital city, a National Monument, inspired by the ancient Hindu Javanese form of the lingga-yoni (symbol of the creation of the cosmos), was erected as a foundational pillar of a new independent capital. As a center of power, the capital city served the formation of the circle of alliances and enemies. In the 1960s, Jakarta provided the scene of confrontation with British Commonwealth Malaysia and also as the setting for the international games based upon the alliance of the New Emerging Forces of Asia and Africa against the "Western" sponsored Olympic Games (Pauker, 1965).

By representing the capital as the locus of international ceremonies and the network of alliances, the place of the collection of monuments and the site of the most fashionable architectural style of the time, the capital becomes the center and gives what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but, in some strange fashion,

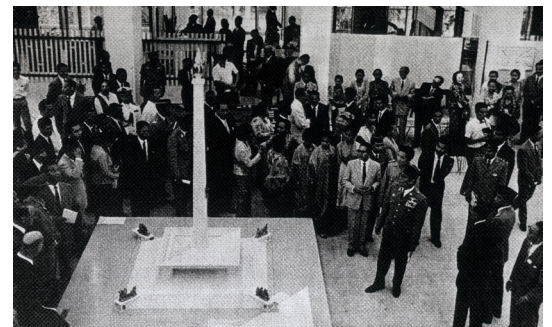


Fig. 2

at by an "imagined" audience with the effect of confirming the existence of the nation in its fully developed form¹. Built into this new spatial order is the idea of productivity, consumption and upward mobility, of development moving from one stage to the next. Attached to this new space, is the idea that the postcolony and its people are not-yet-developed but they can be made ready for development and the built environment serves as a means for representing such a dynamic.

Through modernist architecture and urban form, Sukarno imagined a moment of freedom from the past where the gravity of colonial culture was overcome. Central to his idea is the integration of fragments all to be absorbed into an abstraction of the nation. Sukarno conceived the city as the site for the mobilization of "Independence," "Revolution," and perhaps more interestingly, "anti-imperialism." Anti-colonialist to the core, Sukarno's aimed at putting Jakarta among the great cities all over the world, less in competition with them than in registering a new time. His nation-building project, which literally meant putting monumental buildings in the city, stemmed from a dream in the 1960s for a future in a country devastated by ten years of military occupation, war and revolution. It was an expression of overcoming the past colonial experience but it was also a response to the social environment of the early Independence in which the city had become an open arena of conflict between different groups searching for power, ranging from the military, the communists, the Islamic groups, and most importantly, the US under the cold war regime. The ideal city

Fig. 1, President Sukarno, accompanied by Governor of Jakarta Soemarno Sosroatmodjo, reviewed the model of Jakarta's main boulevard in the early 1960s. (Source: S. Damais ed. *Bung Karno dan Seni*. Jakarta: Yayasan Bung Karno, 1979)

Fig. 2, The model of the National Monument, Jakarta in the early 1960s (Source: S. Damais ed. *Bung Karno dan Seni*. Jakarta: Yayasan Bung Karno, 1979)

of Sukarno was thus not a manifestation of a new egalitarian social vision, but more a response to the weight of colonial past and the crisis of his political present. His city building (along with two housing projects conceived at that time: the Kebayoran and Pulo Mas) strengthen further the contrast between the modernist part of the city and the kampong that agglomerate "informally" around it. In any case, his nationalist inclination against "western imperialism" was in stark contrast to the wish of Washington, which by then had made every effort in the region to create a base for "development" under the supervision of loyal and capitalistically prosperous authoritarian regime.

Spaces of the Bio-Security: Urbanism in the time of the New Order, 1965-1998

Indonesian cities under Suharto are connected to the Cold War in the Southeast Asia region in which the US made every effort to create dependent, capitalistically prosperous, authoritarian, anti-communist regimes. Under the arc of Cold War the image of the city was refashioned in order to overcome the memory of the Sukarno time. Under US security arrangements and "aid" (from Japan), President Suharto launched his own version of new beginnings. Naming the regime the New Order, Suharto points to a major difference between himself and his predecessor. One of the first things he did was the re-inscription of the "developmentalist" discourse under the tutelage of IMF. With the mobilization of oil, massive foreign aid and investment, the New Order Regime created for the first time a substantial Indonesian bourgeoisie in the capital and a few other large cities. The regime also cultivated an urban culture suitable for the depoliticized "middle class" while retrieving strategies of colonial urban utopia (-such as the "kampong improvement" project, "the new town," and the transmigration of the urban poor and radicals to the outer islands). The "development" came with an urban form that immediately overwhelmed the "revolutionary" monuments of the previous era.

There are a certain number of monuments, museums and parks to glorify the sovereignty of the state; there are also proposals and practices of disciplinary spaces for both working and living spaces within and beyond the boundary of the city. A wave of prosperity brought on by the growth of capitalism has stimulated the combination of empirical studies and calculated efforts to plan for future needs. Growth, commerce, and middle class prestige intertwine with the nationalist's claim of discipline and hierarchical order. However, in terms of power, unlike Sukarno's Jakarta, there is a shift in focus from the state toward the industrial and commercial class themselves, with their particular conceptions of growth and ideas of development. Even though the state still claims its authority over space, it is clear that the most remarkable aspects of the urban transformation of Jakarta were carried out by groups of investors working together with the president and his family and inner circle, whose common interest was the most profitable development of particular activities such as the construction of elevated highways for automobile industries, shopping malls, high-rise office buildings and condominium and the provision of real estate housing. (Figure 3) The shift from state-sanctioned planning to the in-

terests of the ruling elites in the name of market has resulted in the production of urban form and space that privilege only a small section of urban residents. The majority of urban poor (while many of whom are aspiring for the life style offered by



Fig. 3

the new urban form) are largely left with no systematic innovative urban agenda that could be consistently enforced to improve their social and economic well being. The infrastructure for public transportation, for instance, has never gone beyond the planning stage (until the era of *reformasi*).

This important dislocation reached its final form in the 1980s following the neoliberal "urban" turn in the political economy of IMF and the World Bank. (Harvey, 2005, 2006; Robison and Hadiz, 2004) The organization of space, unlike the Sukarno's period and the beginning of the New Order, now follows another set of considerations in which worldwide economic relations provide the guidelines. Often, under the guidance of the World Bank Development Project and private capital investment, the problem of space has been shifted from the ordering of a meta-concept to the organization of a series of disparate and multivalent elements of urbanism generated by market (Nas (ed., 1986, 1995). The city thus has become the locus where the state not only altered infrastructure for the business need, but also a place where the state offered its own enterprises as potential sources for capital investment. Under this circumstance the state and the city government are also pressed to play a role in creating a supportive condition for the creation of clusters of built environment that would enhancing the economic advantages of the city. To turn the city into a marketable image and a place attractive enough for foreign investments is an expensive enterprise and only very few cities are capable of doing this. Furthermore, the concentration of capital and infrastructure in particular clusters of the city has also strengthened the already divided city and region.

However, this is not to suggest that the nation-state wide spatial organization lost its importance; in fact, one could argue that, if anything, the centrality of control over domestic and nation-wide space has taken on a degree of importance unparalleled even with the history of Dutch colonization. The discourse of security and stability was central to the urban regime of Suharto's New Order. The idea behind this is not merely to create a comfort zone for national development and foreign investment, but it is also related to the creation of a new generation of disciplined citizen loyal to the ruling regime. (Figure 4) Several security measures were initiated from the spectacle of punishment through a display of dead bodies (such as in the case of *gali*) on the streets

Fig. 3. Jakarta in the time of Suharto: Brochure of Ciputra Real Estate Group celebrating the neoliberal regime with keywords such as Inspiration, Innovations and Dedication (Source: Brochure of Ciputra Real Estate Group)

to the installation of security posts in almost all real estate housing in the major cities of Indonesia. The display of discipline and punishment were



Fig. 4

also integrated into national holidays. For instance in 1995, on the National Awakening Day, the National Discipline Campaign was launched with a support of more than 2,000 military personnel and some 14,000 'volunteers' armed with clubs to help prevent petty criminals and ensure that pedestrians crossed the street properly so as not to interfere with traffic. A major consequence of this practice was the pathologization of street life, vendors and the "informal" economy of the city.

The need to transform urban Jakarta came hand in hand with the need of the state to create a version of citizenship that supports his regime. Jakarta since the late 1980s thus played out a drama of political and economy intrigues. The whole urban form can be read as a text that tells the stories of negotiation and manipulation of private capitals on one hand and political governance on the other. In the urban text, one could read, semiologically, the message that political and economic power remains concentrated in the hands of the powerful. From the streets, one could immediately feel that the urban transformation and displacements were vast and shocking. There were also many physical and symbolic resistances that still need to be studied. What is significant in the course of transformation is that displacement and development were conducted both militaristically as well as in hegemonic way. The most profound method was the utilization of the ideology of "nationalist urbanism" to legitimize the urban transformation. (Kusno 2003) under this ideology, if a kampung settlement needs to be demolished and huge malls needs to be constructed, they are all for the goodness of our nation. Isn't the city needs to express the prestige of the nation – so the argument goes.

Violence created space and in turn space also created violence. The urban form of Jakarta since the 1980s has represented voices of the discontent and violence as a result of competition for space. One could see the abandoned public spaces of the old colonial town, called *Kota*; the emergence of the golden triangle; the fortified residential enclaves of many new town; the division between the corporate zone and the urban kampung behind it; the bomb threat and the armed response security; the rampaging of red light districts; the eviction of illegally constructed shanties; the disappearance of pedestrian and the curbing of the street life. These could all be seen as products and responses to the violence of neoliberal development and its localized ideology of "nationalist urbanism." These spatial practices are part of the negotiation of citizenship: who have the ac-

cess to the city space; who have been displaced and excluded and who feels comfortable with the space given to them and who have to fight to feel they belong to the city and the nation?

Spaces of the Post-1998: Towards a Research Agenda

In less than a year time Indonesians will be remembering a decade after the fall of President Suharto (1966-1998). However, no one seems to feel sure how incomparable is the era they are now living in today in comparison to that of Suharto. A profound sense of anxiety has developed in regard to how things have changed and become different since 1998. Elsewhere, I have been examining the meaning of urban spaces in relation to the political cultures of the nation and within the context of the new era following the end of Suharto's rule (Kusno 2003, 2004, 2005). I traced how, in the context of the "looseness in the center" associated with postSuharto Indonesia, various social actors have been refashioning their urban life and strategies for power and survival in the city – the acts of which have profoundly altered the physical space in parts of the capital city. The alteration of the visual environment is both practical and symbolic. It could be seen as representing a deeply symbolic nature of politics the expression of which signifies the proliferation of multiple local centers of power competing for space – a condition that is incompatible with the (previous) centralizing symbol of Jakarta. (Figure 5)



Fig. 5

Central to this dynamic is the rise of political consciousness of the urban populations to their "rights to the city," this sense of agency, however, is also marked by an unresolved traumatic experience of violence which has divided communities in the city. One of the ways in which Jakarta residents cope with the trauma has been the repression of past memories – the forgetting of which seems to guarantee the path for living in the new times (Kusno 2003) Violence and collective memory (and not only ideas of development and progress) are hidden grounds if not generators for the articulation of new built forms and spaces in the postSuharto era. On the other hand, new imaginings have also been emerging, especially in the cultural works of artists, students and urban activists in coping and challenging the new times.

Fig. 4, The guardhouse and the "healthy housing environment," Jakarta, 1990s. (Photo: Fransiska Prihadi)

Fig. 5, The vendors' carts challenging the National Monument, 2001 (Photo: Fransiska Prihadi)

As far as the analysis of power, space and identity is concerned, the postSuharto era has opened up research project in at least two ways. One could focus on the role of architecture and urban spaces in defining social changes associated with postSuharto Indonesia, and by examining the role that such spaces play in the formation of social and political identities, particularly in relation to contested practices of urban citizenship (Dean, 1999, Isin and Wood, 1999; Holston, 1989, 1999). One could begin to examine the spatial characteristics that the new Indonesia has produced, and which techniques of power have become the bases for modes and processes of social control and identity formation in contemporary Indonesian society. One could do so by bringing together the ways in which people of various backgrounds conceptualize and represent their urban environment in response to profound and uncertain social and spatial changes brought about by the transformation in political regimes.

The various urban programs and practices of the governor of Jakarta, Lieutenant General Sutiyoso (1997-2007), developers and investors, architects and planners, community organizers and urban activists as well as the urban imaginings of various cultural workers such as artists, members of the urban poor, architectural students and writers are all valuable materials for a tracing of space, power and identity in postSuharto era. The works of these social actors in various sites represents the ways in which the city is differently conceived, lived and imagined. They represent not only attempts to critically capture the image of the city but also to re-imagine it anew and reconfigure its significance for the reordering of postSuharto Indonesia. The current urban projects and sites such as the busway transportation, the new architecture and urban design, the preservation of old town and the concomitant discourses of identity and urban violence are specific phenomena that the new Indonesia have produced.

One could explore the methods, the institutional framework and socio-cultural conditions, in which architecture and urban space are produced and the ways in which they are conceived, lived and re-imagined. What have been the reasons for the reconceptualization of the built environment? What theoretical, cultural or political shift does it imply? What kinds of spatial tactics and strategic built spaces do people constructed for themselves to negotiate a place in the ever changing city? How do the political elites in the context of postSuharto Jakarta, attempt to turn the population of the city into a particular kind of subject for new forms of social control? How does the new generation of architects, planners, artists, activists, community organizers, the urban poor and city dwellers represent and re-imagine their city in the context of perceived new time and space?

My sense is that the psychic life of city residents today seem to have been shaping the urban governmentality of Jakarta and thus, also the physical form and space of the city (Kusno 2004). Part of the reordering of meaningful worlds since 1998 could be said as aiming at formulating moral authority and politics in ways that would represent the postSuharto order as something different from before. In many cases, this has meant both a renewal and a transformation of the idea of the city and the nation by various social actors ranging from the professional and artists (architects, de-

signers and planners), the political elites (the city governor and the state), business circles (developers and investors), community organizers (activists and leaders of social groups) and the general urban population (residents of the city). (Figure 6)

An analyst of power, space and identity could consider these various social groups as both urban activists and entrepreneurs of moral authority who, each in their own way, seeks to regulate public conduct and social memories of the past, present



Fig. 6

and future. As guardians of morality, these urban entrepreneurs also negotiate among themselves and with the state (through coercive measures and cultural consent) "the right to the city" on the behalf of the social groups they claim to represent. In asserting influence, they reenact not only earlier forms of politics and representations, but also new mode of governing the urban population and imaging the nation. A series of research is needed to illuminate their strategies in appropriating, claiming and negotiating a space for themselves with the social and political environment of postSuharto Jakarta. In what ways such production and practices of space might have contributed to the production of and contestation over particular forms of subjectivity? The conditions, possibilities and problematics of the present remain to be analyzed and reflected on. But in the interim a good deal of discourse has been carried out in the urban space of post Suharto Indonesia. In that spatial and political struggle for a different social form, is to be found, I believe a new attempt to articulate space, power and identity.

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Fig. 6. The rights to the city: Vendors appropriating the fenced walkway (Photo: Abidin Kusno)

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