



INSTITUTO DE ARQUITECTURA TROPICAL

The Relevance of Quarter Typological Approaches in the Developing Asian City The Case of Indonesian Cities

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Background

The development of China in the last decade negates any uncertainty that the modernization processes of East & South East Asia have not finally broken through. Unfortunately, not much has been said about one particular aspect of this breakthrough: the price that the Asian cities are paying for it one negative impact behind the success story is the disappearance of the traditional urban quarters in the modern cities of Asia, as witnessed in SEA cities like Singapore or Putra Jaya (the cyber-city of Malaysia). Important questions are: will Singapore become a model for other Asian cities, and will the modernization in Asian cities continue to demolish the traditional urban culture? Is it possible that modernization of Asian cities could include the actualization of their traditional urban quarters?

A substantial number of Asian urban planners no longer discuss this subject; their argument is that they should be able to implement the modern spatial pattern of the western industrial cities, especially since the pattern has a strong rational foundation on and has been successfully executed in some places in Asia, i.e. Singapore, Shen Zhen, etc¹

The Expansion of the Modern Sector and Its impacts

Since the eighties, the overall condition of major Indonesian cities like Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya has been characterised by rapid economic growth followed by a decrease in liveability. As of the seventies, the major cities of Indonesia have been the object of a growth-oriented politic, which was followed in the early eighties with the introduction of “neo libera” policies to motivate the private sector to invest in developing real estate.²

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One of the famous products of this “neo-liberalist” era is the new town Bumi Serpong Damai.³ Some negative impacts, however, have resulted from the liberal urban policy in the form of extended land speculation or monopolisation of development licenses by a select number of real estate giants. These “distortions” have made the housing market highly inefficient, as indicated by the price of houses, which has increased 3 to 4 times faster than the average income. Still, within the city boundaries, real estate developers continue to acquire land and to demolish strategically located urban settlements.⁴

The first impact of the expansion of the modern sectors is the degradation of the old quarters of the cities, i.e. the Chinese quarters and other old settlements mostly located in less strategic parts of the cities. The desolate condition of the old Chinese quarters in Surabaya and Semarang are typical for many other cities. A majority of the original inhabitants has already moved out to other parts of the city, leaving their properties behind in varying states of disuse. During the daytime, some of the buildings are still utilised for low profile commercial activities such as storage or manufacturing, but in the dark of the night, people feel threatened because the whole quarter lacks all signs of life.

Currently, the urban kampongs have two major roles. Besides the old function as “reserve area” for the expanding modern sector, the kampongs are becoming the location of the lower income groups.

The economic crisis of 1997, and the resultant nearly total stop of subsidised housing production, has made the role of providing affordable shelter more important than ever. The strategic questions related to the future of the urban kampongs are: Can we improve the economic structure of the urban kampongs in order to create lobster the new inhabitants arriving? How can we integrate their economic structure into the modernised city structure ? To be able to answer these questions it is important to first discuss the basic characteristics of a “working and living area” and the area’s potentials as a functional urban quarter. In this sense, there is an unequivocal requirement for further study of the future of the urban kampongs.

The Concept of the Traditional Javanese City as a Set of Quarters⁵

The architect of the city of Ypgyakarta, Sultan Hamengkubuwono the First (1756), knew from the moment he cut the first tree how he wanted to build his Royal City of Yogyakarta. He knew not only where he wanted to have his palace, the mosque and the market, but also where the quarters of the different groups of followers and workers should be located. He had the whole “city map” in his head and knew exactly where the Chinese, the Arabs, the Indian traders should establish their quarters and where the different handicraft groups should be located, etc. Every group which should take part in the future urban life would have a place within the city. What does this mean? It means that to every historical urban type there must be an adequate, spatial “concept of human co-existence”; Furthermore, it means that to

every historical urban type there is a composition of Quarter typology.

In terms of city administration, there are two types of urban quarters. The first are normally located in the surrounding area of or attached to the “Kraton”, the ruler palace. These quarters are under the direct administrative control of the ruler. Further down the line, there are other quarters controlled by a number of “aristocrats” or “noblemen”, so call “headmen”. A number of princes and the headmen of the foreign quarter the “Syahbandars” (or harbourmasters), belong to this elite group. Each such subsidiary quarter has its own internal administrative structure. In these parts of the city, the ruler has only an indirect administrative control.

The making of such a city is also a matter of the synthesis of the interests of the city ruler and the interests of the “independent” quarters. In most cases, the ruler designed the city by first defining the crucial future functions and then selecting the affiliated quarter typology required within the city.

The invitation to come to the city and to establish, a quarter included a bargaining process regarding the level of autonomy given a particular quarter by the ruler. However, all the quarter(s) remained under indirect administrative control, though they enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy (especially in socio-cultural affairs). In the early colonialist period, this principal of developing cities through a set of quarters was taken over by the the Dutch administration. It was relatively late in the colonialist period, while developing the city of Bandung at the end of the 19th Century, that the Dutch city planners first replaced the old Javanese city concept with that of the modern city. The city of Bandung was planned around a clean separation of working and living. The Dutch colonialist developed Bandung with the intention of someday moving the capital seat from Batavia to the new, modern, planned city. Following the design cannon of modern city, there was no special location dedicated as foreign quarters. Several decades later they realised that the city economy was growing so slowly primarily because there was absence of Chinese. The fact was, the Chinese did not want to come as individuals. The city invited the Chinese community to come, but they were not willing to be separated and indiscriminately placed within the city; they wanted a common location within an urban quarter. The Dutch administrators had to move some of the existing population from a chosen area and rededicate this part of the city to the Chinese. As a result of this compromise, the “Pecinan” in Bandung did not develop

the characteristics of a solid quarter. The Chinese established their shop-houses along the main road, but the backyards (the inner block areas) continued to belong to the former inhabitants.⁶

The story illustrates the difficulties faced in development modern urban system in Indonesia during the Dutch colonialist period. It reveals that the implementation of the new planning principal was not very effective because it did not match the traditional value system of the people. In truth, the urban population of Indonesia still has the tendency to live in quarters. The revival of the gated community in real estate today, and the incremental transformation of spontaneous urban kampongs (under certain conditions) into urban quarters indicate the continual existence of this tendency.

The Dualistic Character of the Dutch Colonialist City

Currently the word "Kampung" or "Kampung" is often misused as a synonym for "slum area". In the terminology of development aid "kampung" usually defines a specific type of "informally built housing area with insufficient overall living conditions" which is in need of improvements by upgrading programmes like KIP (kampung improvement Programme). This misleading misuse of terminology is widespread as a result of the popularity of KIP especially after the Kampung Improvement Programme won the prestigious Aga Khan Award in 1980.⁷

The question is, how did the traditional urban quarter, with its historical position of relative independence, develop its current position of such marginal existence? The author is in the opinion that the marginalisation of the urban kampung is not the result of the last 2 or 3 decades, but that it has its beginnings in the dualistic character of the Dutch colonialist city. In fact during the 200 years the colonialists ruled, the Dutch were successful in transforming the multicultural structure of the traditional urban system into a dualistic colonialist system. In the Dutch colonialist city, the urban Kampung areas were defined as not built-up areas (Dutch: "nietbebouwde kom"). In the structure of the colonialist city, the indigenous urban kampongs were defined as "reserve areas" for the later planned expansion of the modern city, the so-called "bebouwde kom".

This explanation is perhaps the most enlightened explanation of why the municipalities Indonesian cities can give license to real estate developers to

expropriate inhabitants of the kampong areas without suffering any ethical conflict The colonial value system is in fact still present in the everyday life of Indonesia today.⁸

The first step to overcome the misunderstandings regarding traditional urban kampongs is to compare the characteristics of the urban kampong of today with the traditional urban quarter in the pre and early colonial period. What we want to know is to what extent can an urban Kampong/settlement be classified as an urban quarter? Do they have any similar characters? The following three generic characteristics of an urban quarter can help us better understand the phenomenon of the urban kampong of today.

Firstly, the main criterion that indicates that an urban kampong/settlement can be classified as an urban quarter is the existence of clear territorial boundaries. The presence of a gate at the main entrance is normally proof of the existence of such boundary According to Multhaup/Santoso,⁸ a gate is an indication that the inhabitants understand their bounded quarter as a microcosmic entity with a spiritual relationship to the city, the higher macrocosmic entity. We could say that the territorial boundary is the indication of the existence of a community inside the quarter which maintains a specific relationship to the whole city. Secondly, the urban quarter is not only a living area, but also a working area. Normally the name of the quarter is derived from the profession of inhabitants. The profession of the inhabitants is in fact the fundamental basis of the relationship between the quarter and the city. Thirdly, the common profession is also the basis for the inhabitants to overcome the socio-cultural differences of the various groups living within the same quarter.

This capability of the quarter to conduct a “cross cultural consensus” is the basis for the existence of semi-public or semi-private areas within the quarter where urbanity with local cultural characteristics can take place.

The Revitalisation of Chinese Quarters⁹

Following the three characteristics described above, we can conclude that not all quarters established during the pre and early colonialist period can be revitalised as modern functional urban quarters. Sometimes this is because of the advanced state of physical destruction of the quarter and, in other cases, because the original inhabiting community no longer exists For example, the quarter of Chinese

batik manufacturers in the “Karet” area in Jakarta has lost its main function as “batik centre” because the municipality has forced the manufacturers to move the production out of the city. In cases like this, the quarter typological approach is not appropriate.

However, in other cases, such as the revitalization of Chinese quarters in Semarang and Surabaya, we can hardly avoid recommending the quarter typological approach. In both cities, it began with the decision of the municipalities to revitalise the old parts of the cities. The first revitalisation project in Semarang was the „Old Dutch Town” (Kota Lama); in Surabaya they began with the revitalisation of the islamic religious site in the Ampel Area.

In neither case did the Chinese quarters themselves stand as the direct priority. After the end of the totalitarian Soeharto regime in 1998, in different cities there were a number of initiatives calling for the revitalisation of Chinese quarters among the Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent. Soon, various non-governmental citizen groups in Semarang and Surabaya declared their willingness to realize the idea with more concrete actions. Spontaneous support has come not only from the inhabitants of the Chinese quarters, but also from the Chinese living outside the quarter, and other non-Chinese representatives of the civil society, including the business community. The idea to revitalise the Chinese quarter in Surabaya and in Semarang was even spontaneously adopted by different social groups of Indonesians not of Chinese origin.

In Semarang, the idea of revitalising the Chinese quarter “Pecinan” gained the support of various non-Chinese organisations - i.e. different heritage organisations - such as the Association of Indonesian Architects (IAI) and the Association of Indonesian Planners (IAP), as well as of various NGO's and, lastly, even the blessing and support of the city governments. Since its formation, the initiative group has repeatedly come to conclusion that, in addition to the need to conserve some valuable old buildings, efforts should focus on revitalising the function of the more than 250-years- old quarter. The latter decision is due to tourism.

This was followed with the establishment of the “Kopi Semawis”- Komunitas Pecinan Semarang untuk Pariwisata (the Community of the Chinese Quarter Semarang for Tourism). In its official declaration, the Kopi Semawis emphasises that the revitalisation of the Chinese quarter in Semarang should be seen as part of the overall revitalisation programme of the old

city, including the old Dutch city centre (Kota Lama) and the quarter of Islamic traders (Kauman). Since then, renovation efforts have been started at the religious buildings (both Confusianist and Buddhist) located inside the quarter. There are at least 9 “Klenteng” located within the Pecinan (Chinese quarter) of Semarang, all built between 1753 and 1866. During my last visit in 2004 the committee was still selecting which old houses were to be conserved in their next programme.

The highpoint of the revitalisation actions was the “Pasar Imlek Semawis” - the Chinese New Year Market of 2004. This revival of the old Chinese New Year tradition, for which all Chinese go to the “Ji Kau Meh” to buy everything they need to welcome the New Year, started from the necessity for a religious ritual and family celebration. The inaugural “Pasar Imlek” market in February 2004 was a big success because it was embraced citywide.

During the three market days, nearly every citizen of Semarang was more or less involved as either organiser activist, or as visitor. At the same time, it became a political event as many local and national political leaders and high-ranking government officers demonstratively visited the year market to underline their willingness to help end discrimination against the Chinese. Furthermore, the success of the Chinese New Year Market 2004 has supplied the Chinese quarter with the necessary support to revitalise its position as an integrated part of the city of Semarang.

In the case of the Chinese quarter in Surabaya, this was started even earlier than in Semarang, events are quite similar to Semarang. Again, the focus is on the revitalisation of the quarter. The attention of the initiative groups in Surabaya, however, is focused more on the main problems, such as how to stimulate activity in the old Chinese quarter during the night hours. The initial idea of the community organisation was to open a night food bazaar called, “Khia khia”.

The concept is that the bazaar-like activity would be able to stimulate new life in the downgraded quarter. In 2003, the initiative group sponsored by numerous prominent citizens - among them Mr. Dahlan Ishan from second largest newspaper in Indonesia, Jawa Pos and big spenders from outside Surabaya began with the construction of a one-kilometre-long food bazaar on the main street of the Chinese quarter. The bazaar strip, officially opened in May 2003, is decorated with representative gates, one on each end. The bazaar area between the two gates is festooned with electrical lights with ornamental Chinese lam-

pions and accessories. Since the food bazaar is open in the night, the overall security conditions of the area have improved; during the daytime, the bazaar area still has its old function as a trading area.

The desired positive impact in form of individual renovation efforts by the house owners themselves has, in both cases, not yet followed, but the experiences had in Semarang and Surabaya shows us that such activities can support the Chinese communities in regaining their cultural identity. It shows, at the same time, that such specific cultural events as the Chinese year market or bazaar are almost impossible to organise without the existence of the appropriate place: the Chinese quarter.

The Reinventing Urban Kampong as Functional Quarter

We have mentioned before that the misleading misuse of the word “kampong” already existed during Dutch Colonialism when the kampong area was defined as an “exterritorial area” to be used later for the expansion of the modern city. The clipping of a colonial city map shown here indicates the low value status of the “niet bebouwde kom” reserve area; the kampong area has the colour green.

Still, despite 60 years of independence and 30 years of “KIP” (Kampong improvement Programme), the urban kampongs have failed to overcome their low-grade status. Likewise, KIP has failed to protect the kampongs from the expansion of the modern sector. In many cases, the improved kampongs disappeared from the earth’s surface before the payback instalments to the donor agency were even completed. What conclusion is to be drawn here? The existence of the kampong is grounded only on a weak moral obligation. Kampungs are “housing areas with insufficient facilities” for “people with lower social economic status” and, as such, their existence is of a temporary character. The moral obligation to save them can be easily substituted by other priorities.

The position had by the urban quarter in a Javane-se city is exactly the opposite. The concept is that each urban quarter has its specific function for the city. This specific function of the particular quarter gives it a guarantee of existence. This guarantee will remain as long as the city still needs the products or services provided by the quarter. In the second and third Generation of KIR the programme has tried to integrate both the social and economic aspects in order to strengthen the socio-economic base of the

inhabitants. However, these efforts have had insignificant effects on the existential position of the urban kampong in relation to the city.

Currently, the Government of Indonesia is preparing the implementation of a new generation of KIP under the name “NUSSP” (Neighbourhood Upgrading and Shelter Sector Programme) with financial back-up from the Asian Development Bank. This NUSSP programme is designed for the poorest people living in urban kampongs (30% of the population). The NUSSP however, will produce the same failures as KIP if the assistance is distributed person to person amongst the inhabitants - as if they are only accidentally living in the same quarter - and if the economic improvement is only an isolated internal action of no effect on the relation between the quarter and the city.

The people living in kampongs are the marginal part of the urban society. They are substitutable, and their living area is vulnerable because its existence is not important to the city. In regard to this, some recommendations made by the Project Preparation Technical Assistance (PPTA) are very interesting. They have suggested facilitating the kampong area with a “communal land certificate” which would strengthen the legal status of the houses but, at the same time, protect them from incremental expropriation by developers. Another interesting PPTA proposal is to create what we call “the community business centre” which has the goal of strengthening the economic base of the community. The last interesting proposal is a decentralised upgrading programme, the so-called “neighbourhood blockgrant”, which, in fact, has been put in trial under different names by several cities in Indonesia (i.e. Jakarta and Tangerang).

The name of the programme in Jakarta is PPMK (Programme Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Kelurahan), which, in English, is “Empowerment Programme for Neighbourhood Community”.

In Tangerang they call it BLM (Bantuan Langsung Masyarakat) or, in English, “Direct Assistance Programme for the Community”. The main goal of these kinds of “Neighborhood Blockgrant Programmes” is to short-cut the bureaucracy and distribute the resources directly to the community living in the same neighbourhood. Both programmes propose that the municipalities provide each neighbourhood with a certain amount of funds yearly. As long as it is not against the general regulations, the individual community can utilize the funds for whatever it wants.

For the time being, the funding amount is not big- it is between (U.S.) \$5000 in Tangerang and (U.S.) \$25,000 in Jakarta for every Kelurahan - but according to statements of high ranking government officers, the programmes will have the highest priority in the near future.¹⁰ Through the successful implementation of these “blockgrants” the existence of the kampongs as urban quarters will be strengthened. Furthermore, some optimism should be shown in case of the NUSSP.¹¹ The programme has a budget of more than 100 million US dollars and will soon be implemented in more than 30 different cities throughout Indonesia. We hope, nevertheless, that the programme components “communal business centre” will have a positive impact on the legal and economic basis of the urban kampongs.

Closing Remarks to Cultural Diversity

The current structure of the urban kampongs and urban quarters in Indonesian cities regarding their religious and ethnic composition are relatively heterogeneous. The semi-rural and vernacular character of the traditional kampong of the past has developed a highly urbanized character, as indicated by the mixed structure of working and living areas, which are in turn bounded by relative high-density environments. These structure can only exist through the support of a sufficient level of cultural dynamic and tolerance, which is in fact the basis of community life.

In short, we can conclude that the urban kampongs, as long as they still have their basic character as a functional quarters and still enjoy a certain degree of independence, are in fact the only place where a process of “consensus” between different multi-cultural and multi-ethnic inhabitants can behind the development of a “place making” human co existence.¹² Without the existence of such communal “places”, no urban can exist. The semiprivate members of the community, are dedicated to the sense of urbanity. In the semi-public and semi private areas, community life can exist. Where else in the so-called “public space” on a city level can we find nothing but business as usual.

Footnotes:

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For a more in-depth discussion of the vernacular characters of the traditional urban quarter in Indonesia see Santoso, Jo S, (1999).

2

See Santoso, Jo S, (2005), in Roseman J./Paresthu A (Editor), *The Transformation of Asian City*, publish by Department of Achitecture - TU-Delft 2005 (in preparation)

3

See Santoso, Jo S, (1992), in *Trialog* Nr 32 /1992.

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For further discussion regarding the inefficiency of the housing market in Indonesia see the so-called "HOMI Report" Directorate General for Housing and Human Settlement-Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, (2001).

5

See further Santoso, Jo S,(1981), especially the description of the structure of the Javanese city of Banten in Kapttel C.

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Santoso, Jo S., (2000), p.7-8

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Sungkono, B /Fischer, B /Witoelar, E., (2000)) "Lessons Leading to Strategies for the Future, Part One Opening Remarks" in: *Proceeding international Workshop on Kampong improvement Programme - MHT III*, 2000, p 1 – 8. Multhaup B./Santoso, Jo S; (984).

8

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For further discussion regarding the revitalization strategy of the Chinese quarter in Semarang, see Santoso, Jo S, (2004)

10

This statement was made by Dr.-Ing Fauzie Bowo, the Vice-Governor of DKI-Jakarta during his opening lecturer of "The Graduate Programme for Urban and Real estate Development" in Tarumanagara University - Jakarta, on february 15. 2005.

11

Directorate General for Housing and Human Settlement - Ministry of infrastructure and regional Development (2003).

12

The terminology "place making" is cited from Meesiri P, Perera P; (2004) in: Perera P, Pradhan P, (2004), p 18.

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