

Spatial contestation and Involution: A Case of the Public Transport, with particular reference to the Kampung Melayu, Jakarta

Triatno Yudo Harjoko¹, Syono Dikun², Joko Adianto¹

¹ Urban Settlement and Housing Study, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

² Transport Study, Department of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

* E-mail of the corresponding author: gotty@eng.ui.ac.id

Abstract

Various modes of urban public transport in Indonesia have caused environmental concern as a result of the competition among them in a limited urban public space, i.e., road. They give rise to usurpation of public space, blockage of the traffic and squeezing tightly into space. This study seeks to uncover such a behavior that is aggravated by the trip makers, associated activities such street vending. Findings have shown that habitus of actors and their virtual networks of illegal, informal activities sustain their existence.

Keywords: dual-society, habitus, contestation of public space, meta-space

1. Introduction

The practice of transport planning in Indonesia has been characterized by Euro-centric empirical model and denies the actual modes of the public transport in Indonesia. It denies the reality of the socio-economic practices and condition of the society as a whole in the urban formation and development. While urban population continues to increase at unprecedented rate and the gap between the rich and poor is widening, the resolution of transport problems has never conclusive. The critical state urban transport in Jakarta as a whole has been alarming. Some scholars have envisaged that in the coming year of 2014, Jakarta will risk a total congestion.

However, parallel to the issues of congestion in a macro level, there is a critical micro issues regarding the movement problems that is a blockage or obstruction of traffic due to the various urban activities that can be subsumed under 'informal sector' phenomena including public transport services. Such urban informality practices have never been seriously investigated. Despite the fact that the traffic volume has reached the road capacity, it is also aggravated by the associated urban informal activities that usurp the public space next to the road; in many cases, it goes beyond side-walk. This research focuses on this particular issue – traffic behavior and its associated issues.

The research seeks to unravel deep structure of so called 'illegal activities' associated with urban transport with a particular reference to the Transport Terminal of Kampung Melayu, Jakarta. Such a structure is conceived in terms of its spatial formation, production and reproduction. The research objectives are to uncover habitus and tactics of different actors engage in the usurpation process of public space – meta space – perceived and conceived by them; and, to establish a contextual transport analysis in Indonesia which is not empirical but explanatory.

2. Research Inquiries

Understanding urban transportation issues and system simply from its mechanism or parametric approach of design in the built environment may overlook the deep structure on how a city works – especially the lived space. This is crucially the case in the country like Indonesia where it is constituted by the dual society, i.e., modern-capitalist/traditional-bazaar, or, formal/informal sectors. Their respective structuration process evolves and competes over scarce urban space. This includes urban transport problems. Urban transport in Indonesia has long been operated two modes of services – modern/capitalistic which is very limited in service and

traditional/‘bazaar’.¹⁹ They are mutually exclusive in their existence.

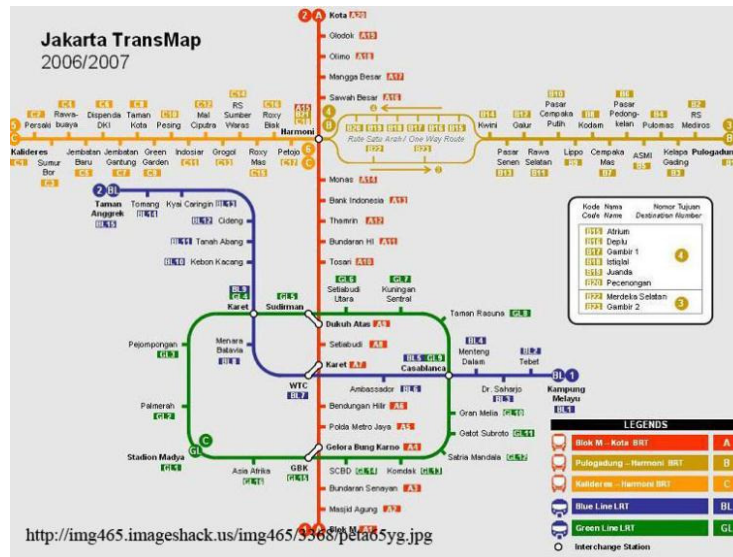


Figure 1
Ideal Scheme for the Mass Transit in DKI Jakarta 2006/2007.
 Public transport system as conceived by transport planners.
 (<http://img465.imageshack.us/img465/3368/peta65yg.jpg>)

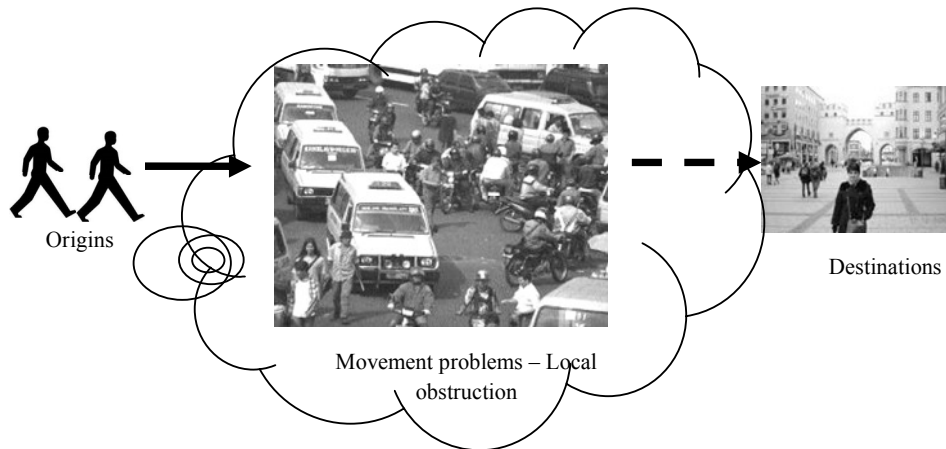


Figure 2. The ‘real world’ of people movement in Jakarta
 Space contestation amongst public transport operators and other associated activities in public space

Based on such understanding, the research inquiries are why there are enduring problems of black-spots and constrictions generated in the traffic movement in Jakarta, which are not simply caused by the technical causes?

¹⁹ Geertz argues that ‘bazaar’ economy is an economy which is based on “...the independent activities of a set of highly competitive commodity traders who relate to one another mainly by means of an incredible volume of ad hoc acts of exchange”, Clifford Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes. Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns*, 1963, p. 28.

What and who are they that generate them?

To answer the research questions and objectives, three main concepts and theories help to understand the nature of urban society, its constitution; its impacts on urban living space, especially to understand the hidden dimension of human behavior, interactions and particularly contestation over the scarcity of urban space.

Dual-Society

The theory of dual-society helps to understand the constitution of the urban society – a continuum between modern/capitalist and traditional/bazaar economy – the production as well as reproduction. In terms of a constitution of society, such a two extremity of society produces and reproduces respectively. This production-reproduction has adverse effects on urban space, while the capitalist society manage to negotiate and appropriate space/land, the other in its powerlessness manage to contest and usurp urban space as much as possible.

Herman Boeke²⁰ in his PhD dissertation in 1910 proposed an influential thesis concerning the apparent dualism of urban culture in Indonesia. His argument was based on the fact that in Indonesia there were two social and economic systems. The Westernized element in the economy is seen to be materialist, rational, and individualist, and was presented as the epitome of exploitative and unyielding capitalism. The Eastern element, by contrast, was seen to be pre-capitalist, characterized by prevalence for self-employment, was unresponsive to variations in prices, and not profit-orientated. This dualism persists until recently.

Social Closure

Parkin²¹ introduces the idea of social closure. Systems refer to reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organised as regular social practices. The social systems in which structure is recursively implicated comprise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space.²² In social systems the role of human agents or agencies are then crucial. Hence, various forms of human knowledge, worldviews, expertise including planning and design, emerge and are maintained. In this sense, localities of action can be investigated upon how these are politically allocated and dominated by particular groups in the society. They can be observed as both spatially confined and extended.

In terms of their spatiality, situated activities may signify closures. In this sense, similarly situated practices will also be investigated as a process of social closure. There can be identified three modes of social closures: exclusivity, usurpation, and dual closure (not discussed here). The distinguishing feature of exclusionary closure is the attempt by one group to secure for itself a privileged position at the expense of some other group through a process of subordination. Usurpation is that type of social closure mounted by a group in response to its outsider status, and the collective experiences of exclusion.²³ Dual closure refers to a usurping action against a higher opponent group, for example against the state, combined with exclusionary activities against presumably a lower

²⁰ The Boeke's idea of dualism was originated back to his Ph.D dissertation in 1910s. It was first specifically introduced into English by Furnivall in 1939 and the translation of Boeke's works in 1953. See *Interdependent Development*, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1975, p. 54-55; and especially Boeke, J.H., *Economics and Economic Policy of Dual Societies – As exemplified by Indonesia*, New York: International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1953, also Furnivall, J. S., *Netherlands India. A Study of Plural Economy*, Cambridge: The University Press; New York: Macmillan Company, 1944.

²¹ Frank Parkin on his critique of a rigid notion of class in Marxism, argues that, regardless of any notion of class, social practices or action manifests in what he calls social closure. Social closure, as Weber suggests, means a process by which social collectivities seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles. This entails the singling out of certain social or physical attributes as the justificatory basis of exclusion. He distinguishes three types of social closure: exclusion, usurpation, and dual closure. Parkin, F., *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*, Tavistock Publication, 1979, p. 44, and especially chapters 4,5, and 6.

²² Giddens, A., *The constitution of society*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984., chapter 1 passim.

²³ Parkin, F., *op. cit.*, p. 74.

or a less-organised group, for example, against ethnic minorities or gender related groups. These closures are not static and will depend on the structuration process over time and space.

Habitus

This theory helps to answer questions concerning behavior of individual or a group of individuals as a system of disposition. In a society like Indonesia, where cultural extremities are so wide and multifaceted, different conditions for the possibility of social practices may be manifest. Bourdieu terms this condition habitus. He argues that habitus refers to a “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations”, or to a complex net of structured predispositions into which we are socialized at an early age.²⁴ Habitus is constituted in practice and “always oriented to practical functions.”²⁵ In this concept, social relations among actors is being structured by, and in turn, contributing to the structuring of, the social relations of power among different positions (of class, genders etc.). The practices happen in a space called field in which actors play out their engagements with each other.

3. Methodology

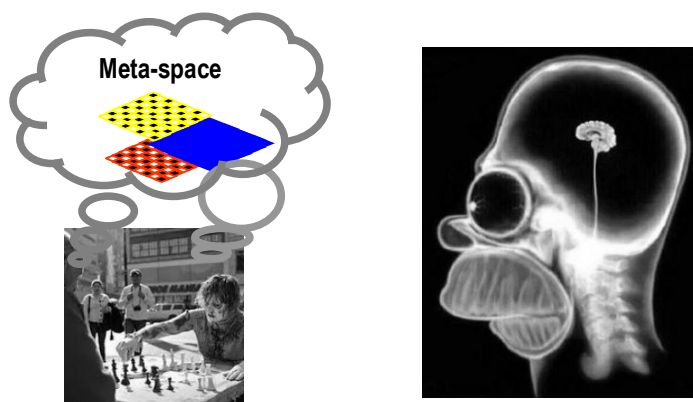


Figure 4. Uncovering *meta-space* and “X-Ray” technique

(Sources:

1) after http://d1l1stwiwz2br.cloudfront.net/images_users/articles/12938_s.2.jpg

2) http://sleeve.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/homer_simpson_xray.jpg,

Both downloaded on 28 October 2012.

²⁴ Bourdieu, P., *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 78

²⁵ Bourdieu, P., *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1980, p. 52.



Figure 3. Study Area: Bus Terminal Kampung Melayu, Jakarta
Seven Locations of Observation

The research concerns urban space contestation and seeks to understand the deep structure of enormous existence of 'informal' activities in the public space within the domain of transport in the vicinity of bus terminal of Kampung Melayu, in Jakarta. The main objective the research is to disclose a 'virtual map' or meta-space of activities generated by various actors associated with public transport services. The conspicuous and chaotic existence of such activities has caused serious congestion. It will focus on the usurpation process of public space by the intensifying numbers of the production and reproduction of 'informal' or illegal undertakings almost round the clock. In this mode, spatial structure may manifest by and in multi-layered processes.

It is a grounded research from which theses or theories are based or grounded on data. Respondents of pedestrian are taken at random. Depth interview is purposively chosen, namely those of transport operators as well as vending traders to 'capture' their respective meta-space. They are actors that may conceive different image of a space and supposedly have critical decisions on the consumption or usage of a critical space around the bus terminal.

3. Results

3.1. *Understanding Transport rakyat or People's Transportation*

The term people's transportation (transport rakyat) is more apt than a generic public transport considering that the population of Jakarta classified under the low-middle income is still the majority. They serve this majority of the urban population. This phenomenon results from the very fact of socio-economic duality. Transport rakyat emerges as part of the constitution of urban society – modern/capitalist and traditional/bazaar. Transport rakyat meet especially the demands for mobility of the urban poor in urban area. It entrenches within the society.

Despite its legal, formal existence, this type of services is, however, comparable to everything under the category of 'informal sector'. The services include Metromini, a medium size bus; Mikrolet, a van type public transport, Angkot, mini bus; Bajaj, tricycle transporters, and mobile and the omni-presence of ojek or motor-cycle transporters. These modes of transport sustain the life of the urban poor. Dominant habitus these modes of transport are peculiar, distinctive to such a community or society. They operate on 'individual' basis that result in competition between one and another. This give an image of semrawut or chaotic.

3.2. *Transport rakyat and the Phenomenon of Supir Tembak (Substitute driver)*

Ideally, the public transport system will primarily serve the public in a rush hour or the peak period, particularly in the morning and afternoon; and, outside these periods they normally go back to its pool garage. However, this is not the case for transport rakyat. Once they are all 'out' on the road and serve the public, they will stay on the road until late at night. Such a transport may either own by the driver himself (most are male) or drive on behalf of the owner. In fact, both drivers are driven by target of the setoran or the amounts of money or earnings per day. It varies from 100,000 to 150,000 rupiahs per day.²⁶ While pricing policy stipulated by the government states the

²⁶ One US dollar equals about 9,625 rupiahs.

maximum distance will be of about 3,500 rupiahs per person. It is a very low price if we consider the sustainability of the services, but it is transport rakyat. As a consequence, the road everywhere is crowded by transport rakyat of different sizes – Metromini, Mikrolet, Angkot, Bajaj and Ojeks. Their numbers have already exceeded the demand and as a result they compete one and another.



Figure 5. Metromini

(Sources: Left: http://www.sewatitikiklan.com/images/metro_advertising.jpg;
Right: <http://stat.kompasiana.com/files/2010/05/metromini1.jpg>, downloaded 31 October 2012)



Figure 6. Mikrolet and Angkot

(Sources: Left: <http://warungkuning.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/mikrolet1.jpg>, Right: :
<http://cerita7rizkaa.blogdetik.com/files/2011/06/angkot1.jpg>, downloaded 31 October 2012)



Figure 7. Left, Bajaj and right, Ojek
Ojek move swiftly and versatile

(Sources: Left: <http://www.langitberita.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/bajaj1.jpg>, Right:
http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-wICl4y2_VnI/T2RjLODR6rI/AAAAAAAAABk8/b03oL4TP_XO/s1600/ojek+02.jpg, downloaded 31 October 2012)

To operate the transport rakyat that is almost round the clock, the drivers of Metromini, Mikrolet and Angkot must ensure some place to park to take a rest. This is made possible by the help of preman (thugs) who have control over certain territory in the public space. This preman usually accompanied by local unemployed persons. The latter are those who are present and visible in the area – organizing the activities in the crowded public space. While the drivers take a rest, there are supir tembak or substitute drivers of their kin or friends who replace them, they desperately need jobs of whatever they can access. In the low peak period the transport rakyat breaks and rests or ngetem in the road space secured by the preman.

3.3. *Ojek the free rider*

Ojek perators are free rider – those who enjoys the benefits of an activity without paying. They are present in the urban market due to a simple principle - demand / supply. They are very agile move between traffic jams. There are two kinds of 'free riders' who take advantage of such economic opportunities ie, ojek and street vendors. Ojeks and street vendors usurp the public space side by side. In many cases, ojeks park their motor cycle at right angles to concrete curbs, which add to the narrowing of the road space. They are usually much more organized and share cohesion among themselves. This type of services is very problematic to be attached and connected into the 'formal' system of public transport. The operators are omni-present like mushrooms everywhere in Jakarta from a very localized residential areas to the hectic urban environment.

3.4. *Habitus of Trip makers*

Trip makers are the trigger and generator of this entire muddled problem. The erratic behavior of trip makers such as stopping the public transports both to get in and get off in any place they like. Pedestrians take the short-cut to move from place to another, including the risk to cross the busy roads. The situation is aggravated by the occupation the side-walk by any kind of vendors. The only space left for pedestrian is the road tarmac.

Habitus of trip makers includes crossing the streets, getting on or off the public transports in whatever places, as well as eating and drinking by the street. In so doing, they predispose responses, acts in meeting of particular purposes that are mutually exclusive among each other and in competition to one another. Crowding formed through 'consensual' acts among actors of different interests become inevitable over a limited available space.



Figure 8. Mikrolet 'ngetem'



Figure 9. A man collect money for Mikrolet that 'ngetem'



Figure 10. Ojeks wait and intercept passengers



Figure 11. Erratic and dangerous movement of trip makers as pedestrians:
Crossing the street and getting in and off the public transport



Figure 12. Pedestrian buy foods from ambulant trader

3.5. Practice of Usurpation

The practice of usurpation of various actors and activities in the public space public spaces is possible by the support of the preman. The process uncover such a clandestine operation and organization between preman and the oknum or individual authorities such as a police and those form the Traffic and Highway bodies. In return of their warranty and surety the preman bribe them. In the actual operation, the preman then employs those local thugs who desperately need the jobs. The practice of usurpation and of closures within the public space is exercised to protect against an invasion of strangers to join the usurping practices.



Figure 13. Traffic and Highway Authority 'in action'

Ambulant Traders



Figure 14. Arena of 'Trans-action':
Preman is distributing 'shares' to those engaged in the 'business'

Habitus and symbolic interaction can be traced as a web of connectivity among actors interested in the ‘businesses’ of usurping public space.

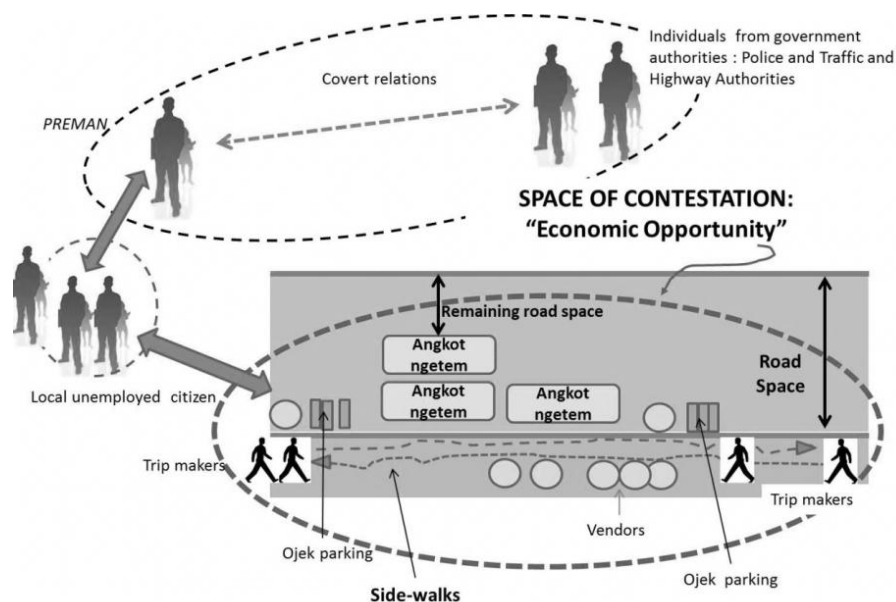


Figure 15. Web, Connectivity and the Space of Contestation:
 Meta-space and deep structures of various different actors

4. Concluding Remarks

Dual society, its production and reproduction, has a spatial implication. While the modern/capitalist is capable of negotiating the scarcity urban space, the traditional/bazaar is not. This is no exception in the sphere of public transport services. In Indonesia public transport can be distinguished into such a binary undertaking. I will term the traditional society/bazaar economy bazaarism – to refer to social attitudes where social institution and way of life are one. This usually manifests in huge numbers, individual and unrelated economic form of petty commerce. Consequently, understanding public transport in Indonesia requires deep comprehension of the society as a whole – an archipelagic nation and its dualism. Traditional society and its bazaar economy straightforwardly will address those of poor community – rural or urban. In other words, bazaarism in the public transport sector means also the engagement traditional society in transportation. The services of transport rakyat are provided by and used by the majority of urban poor as the trip makers. The latter further complicates the bazaarism in the urban transport services.

The presence of enormous number of trip makers in the vicinity of the Bus Terminal in Kampung Melayu further invites bazaar economy in the area where people are gathering in various locals in the area. Usurpation of limited public space is then intensifying by various modes of transport rakyat, vendors and ambulant traders. This contestation over limited public space is mediated by the preman; and the preman organize the area through clandestine deals with corrupt individual policeman and those from the authorities of the Local Traffic and Highway Bodies. Habitus of those engaged in the ‘businesses’ and their metaspace are connected amongst them. This creates as a virtual web of bazaar economic undertakings.

Space around the Bus Terminal involute and turn into some kind of ‘barricade’ in the public space, i.e., road. The severe problems of congestion in Jakarta are then complicated further by such practices

The political issue of the public transport in Indonesia results from the socio-economic conditions of a country, especially related to those of the low income or urban poor. The choice for improvement between the current public transport system adopted either i) to continue and let individual operators involved in the public transport system; and to strictly enforce the traffic laws and regulations. However, problems remain that the government

lacks of capacity to detect clandestine operations of bazaar economy in the grassroot level, that, in fact, also involves corrupt government officials; or ii) a more unpopular, authoritative measure, to take over current 'informality' of public transport system (i.e. individual operators of the public transport) into the formal system under the local government as well as private management.