Formal-Informal DNA
Urban network upgrading, Tangerang, Indonesia

Main author
Eugene Tan, student, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Project data
Context: Landscape, urban design, and infrastructure
Client: “Rukun Warga” Community Association, Kampung Sukasari
Background: Research project

Summary and appraisal by the jury

The quasi-voluntary relocation of informal dwellers triggered by developers offering compensation typically results in the dissolution of communities, long commutes to distant workplaces, cultural disorientation of individuals and families, to mention just a few of the adverse effects of present-day large-scale urban development projects. Countering standard eviction practices, the submitted proposal for a marginalized settlement in Tangerang identifies strategies for a gradual upgrading of physical and social space.

Particularly praised by the jury are the analytical drawings made by the author to understand the “DNA” of the existing urban fabric – its form, street patterns, natural elements, collective spaces and so forth. The drawings establish the armature for a range of architectural interventions that follow and expand upon the genetic code of the settlement. The proposed strategies to regenerate the neighborhood are well-considered and include measures to improve the quality of connections, to enhance income generation and trade within the community and to allow kinship groups to take over ownership of their neighborhood.

Sustainability concept

Progress: Local materials form the elements of proposed new housing: concrete blocks, rattan weaving, hardwood timber. The assembly of these materials into tension-post extensions, atop rigid bases, represents new technology, allows for self-help, and supports the cultivation of land. At a macro scale, the ubiquity of arable plots around other kampungs suggests untapped resources, and makes this project a scalable proposition.

People: A new mode of life and work surrounding small-holding provides suitable employment for women, dislodged with regimented, corporate factory jobs. This new lifestyle is neither like the rural existence many dwellers had emigrated from, nor alienating like “modern” factories. It ensures women are meaningfully employed, while applying and improving their existing agricultural skills. The enrichment and occupation will enable them to scale social hierarchies, while the loose nature of work still allows them to meet domestic obligations.

Planet: Land around the kampung is arable, but not fully utilized. By resettling households across the site, kinship groups can take ownership working the land and maximize this resource. The earth bunds will not only keep houses above the flood plain, but transport clean water, electricity, and carry away wastewater. This infrastructure toolbox improves sanitation, the quality of life, and reduces pollution of the adjacent Cisadane River.

Prosperity: The crops from smallholding will form a new income source, while the use of local skills, labor and materials keeps money within the kampung. Additionally, new construction systems will also be an exportable, cash-creating technology. The investment in incremental housing and infrastructure draws from the existence of social self-help organizations known as “Dawis”, women groups with social funds, dispensable as loans – not dissimilar to microfinance.

Place: The new village fabric indexes traditional parcel patterns, and is true to the street quality of existing kampungs. The architecture is climatically sensitive, protecting from harsh sunlight and rain, while allowing for ample natural ventilation. The establishment of kinship groups calls into effect the “gotong royong”, or mutual and reciprocal assistance, deeply embedded in Indonesian psychology.

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