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# **Politics of Housing**

Prospects for right to the city  
in Jakarta

Irna Nurlina Masron

Lee Kuan Yew Centre For Innovative Cities



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## Prospects for right to the city in Jakarta

Irna Nurlina Masron

Research Associate,  
Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, SUTD

### Abstract

Rapid urban transformation has been taking place in Southeast Asia for the last few decades. Yet, many cities in the region struggle to reap the benefits of urban development. They have inadequate infrastructure and weak political will, resulting in marginalised groups being denied basic amenities such as secure housing. In Jakarta, the high-profile evictions of kampung lands under then governor Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama (2014–2017) galvanised residents and civil society groups to oppose attempts by the municipality and private sector to displace disadvantaged populations, thereby disrupting existing state-society dynamics. This exploratory paper seeks to understand the extent to which changing state-society relations help the marginalised claim their right to the city. I posit that everyday level state-society interactions between citizens, NGOs, and state actors, informed by differential notions of the housing issue, are crucial to increasing the welfare of these urban residents and their access to the city. However, there are some limitations and implications, as societal and state actors cope with the challenges of rapid urbanisation.

**Keywords** evictions, urban kampungs, state-society relations, right to the city

## I. Introduction

In April 2018, *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, reported that the urban poor<sup>1</sup> in Jakarta were organising, with other non-state actors such as academics, architects, lawyers, and non-governmental groups, to “eviction-proof” some *kampungs* in Jakarta. Between 2015–2016, 13,800 families were reported to have had their *kampung* homes demolished for urban development and flood control (Sofian, 2018). All this was taking place in a city where the supply of housing is seriously lagging behind population growth. Jakarta is one of the five cities making up the Greater Jakarta urban area of Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi). Jakarta is also the capital of Indonesia. The resident population has been hovering around 10 million in recent years, with about 3.5 million daily commuters to the city (Kusumawijaya, 2016). The Greater Jakarta Metropolitan Area with a population of 31.3 million people in 2016, is projected to become the largest city in the world by 2030 (Demographia, 2017). With 44.6 percent of the city’s population born outside Jakarta in 2010, its urban population and economic growth is largely driven by internal migration (BPS, 2010).

However, while there is economic growth, rising incomes and poverty reduction, the World Bank reported in 2016 that Indonesia is not benefitting as much from urbanisation as compared to other developing countries such as China, Vietnam and Thailand. This is because many Indonesian cities “suffer from ‘diseconomies of scale’, such as traffic congestion, pollution and disaster risks, which lead to high costs” (World Bank, 2016). In addition, Jakarta has been experiencing severe pressures on housing, sanitation, utilities and prospects for employment, which come under the purview of the local government (referred to in this paper as the “state”). These constraints have been addressed by locals and migrants<sup>2</sup> alike through various adaptive measures such as the wider use of motorcycles for transportation, participation in the informal economy and the continuation

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<sup>1</sup> Indonesia uses the international standard of measuring poverty: “poverty is the lack of income in the form of money to maintain a basic level of household expenditure” (UNESCAP, 2017). A person living under the line is considered poor, though this has been criticised to be undercounting the poor. In March 2017, the poverty line was Rp 578 000 per capita per month in Jakarta, whereas the national poverty line was at Rp 387,000 per capita per month, and the poverty rate in Jakarta in 2017 was recorded to be 3.77% (Fitriani, 2018; The Jakarta Post, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I mainly refer to internal migrants.

or renewal of 'kampung' or village-type housing (also often known as informal neighbourhoods or settlements, sometimes in flood-prone areas) in the city.

Amidst these attempts to create and maintain a liveable community in the core of the city, residents of these urban kampungs, the majority of whom are the poor and working-class, have also coalesced into a political class of considerable power to face municipal and private capital threats and attempts to displace them from their homes and informal marketplaces (Leitner & Sheppard, 2017). The tensions in state-society relations intensify as each actor has different strategies and agencies towards their respective development goals. For instance, the urban management actions taken by Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama during his tenure as governor of Jakarta between 2014 to 2017 — constructing the first subway in Jakarta, improving sanitation and curbing flooding — were long overdue attempts at dealing with the urban challenges, but they were contentious as they involved evicting kampung residents. A different example concerns state efforts to improve kampungs "by packaging them as a commodity for tourism" in the early 2010s, leading to the gentrification of these areas and other consequent problems (Budianta, 2019, p.245).

The politicisation of urban development by citizens, non-state actors and the state has brought the question of urban governance in the context of rapid urbanisation to the forefront. Cities are inherently unequal. Inadequate state capacities, coupled with weak political will in urban management have seen marginalised groups (for example, the urban poor, informal workers and low-wage migrants) denied basic urban amenities such as secure housing. In the case of urban villages in Jakarta, the evictions and relocations of its inhabitants in recent years have cast light on the competing views of the place of kampungs in the city and the dynamics of state-society interactions surrounding it. Urban kampungs have become critical sites of state-society interactions as they remain an important source of housing for many poor and working-class urban residents and temporary migrants, even while their place in the city has been increasingly contested. Zhu (2014, p.196) notes that the "social space of the urban village has become an important site for the local state and the market to exercise their hegemonic power, and, therefore, serves as a prime illustration of the interplay between state, market, and social groups in competing for city space." To what extent can changing state-society relations help the marginalised claim their right to the city? I argue that everyday level

state-society interactions and tactics, between citizens, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and state actors, are crucial to increasing the welfare of these urban residents and their access to the city, especially in terms of housing. Because the various actors are informed by differential notions of housing issues in the city, these perceptions translate into specific modes of politics in the city. These strategies and tactics as well as their limitations will be identified. This paper also explores the implications of changing state-society relations for the larger urban politics of Jakarta in a period of rapid urbanisation.

The Jakarta case study will contribute empirical knowledge on how a rapidly developing postcolonial Southeast Asian city is coping with increasing urbanisation and housing shortages. Insights about the dynamics of state-society relations at the neighbourhood level have implications for the everyday lives of citizens and the larger urban politics of megacities like Jakarta with ambitions to become global cities. Some attention has been paid to the growing social movements against urban displacement (Irawaty, 2018) but less so on evaluating the effectiveness and implications, which arise from these interventions by residents and other non-state actors on urban politics and governance. Furthermore, while there is recent literature documenting evictions and discussing the future of urban kampungs in the city, there is less theorising on how these issues have become contentious. As Budiarti (2019, p.242) argues, the kampung “as a marginalised settlement within a larger fast-paced urban transformation process, is a strategic site to capture the contradictions, contestations, and local-global cultural dynamics in the Global South”.

This paper is organised as follows. I first outline a theoretical framework to understand state-society relations in the context of helping the marginalised access their right to the city. The methodology discussion is next. Following that, I proceed with a brief background of Jakarta’s urban condition, before presenting the research findings from the cases under study to demonstrate how the housing issue is understood by different actors and in turn how the consequent state-society dynamics in the urban kampungs help the marginalised improve their welfare and access their right to the city. Finally, I conclude, reflecting on the limitations and implications of the dialectic between different actors for the larger urban politics of Jakarta.

## 2. Seeing “housing” and its politicisation

Recent literature on urban villages in Jakarta considers the perspectives of urbanisation and typology of urban settlements (Cairns & Friedrich, 2014), legal and tenure issues (Adianto et al., 2016), residential commodification and displacement of urban residents (Leitner & Sheppard, 2017), urban resilience in the face of natural and man-made vulnerabilities (Betteridge & Webber, 2019), and more recently, grassroots organisation and participatory approaches to consider the role of citizens (Padawangi, 2019; Feruglio & Rifai, 2017). Less has been written about how competing interests between different actors have come about and how they inform the actions taken by the different actors with regard to urban villages, and what the larger implications of these are for marginalised groups and urban governance in dealing with urban challenges. These are areas which I aim to address in this paper.

“Right to the city” as an analytical concept and as a response to urban problems has garnered heightened attention by both urban scholars and practitioners worldwide (Earle, 2017). The “right to the city” discourse has undergone various explorations and (re)definitions since Henri Lefebvre wrote about the “right to the city” in 1968, rendering the concept amorphous at times. What is clear, however, is the revitalised interest in the idea from various quarters — academics, policymakers, activists, international organisations, citizens — in the face of global neoliberal urbanism and its attendant inequalities (Zhu, 2014; Shin, 2011). However, it is a concept which is especially difficult to contextualise and realise its ideal in Jakarta, as noted by some scholars (Padawangi, 2014; J. Santoso, personal communication, January 29, 2018). Thus, this paper is also an attempt to understand why that is the case, through examining the issue of housing. Furthermore, I also make the argument that through the ways housing is politicised in the city, residents are engaged in seeking and exercising their right to participation and right to appropriation, without explicitly using Lefebvre’s lexicon or its derivatives.

Two key aspects of Lefebvre’s “right to the city” are the right to participation and the right to appropriation for urban inhabitants, according to Purcell (2002)’s delineation. The right to participation “maintains that *citadins* [urban inhabitants] should play a central role in any decision that contributes to the production of urban space” taken by any state or non-state entity and

at local, national and global scales (Purcell, 2002, p.102). The centrality and directness of the role is underscored, and not that it should be made entirely by the citizens. With regard to the type of decisions Lefebvre envisioned urban inhabitants to be included in, he gives an indication through the second aspect — the right to appropriation, which “includes the right of inhabitants to physically access, occupy, and use urban space” which has already been produced but also to produce urban space to fulfil their needs for a decent life (Purcell, 2002, p.103). Furthermore, Harvey (2008, p.23) argues that “[t]he right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources.... It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization”. This emphasis on collectivity is crucial to realising the right to the city because while rights may be attributed to individuals, to attain and secure them must necessarily be a shared endeavour, which is made more difficult by challenges in coordination and cooperation, especially when differential conceptions of urban issues exist.

To properly understand state-society dynamics in urban Jakarta, another concept needs to be introduced. McFarlane and Silver (2017) in their case study of sanitation in Cape Town employ the analytical concept of “seeing” or perceiving to link the use of political claims and tactics of social movements and community groups in the face of increasing inequality in urban infrastructure provision, to broader urban change. Drawing from other scholars who have conceptualised perceiving or “seeing” such as Scott’s (1998) “seeing like a state”, Magnusson’s (2011) “seeing like a city”, and Corbridge et al.’s (2005) “seeing the state”, McFarlane and Silver (2017) explain that perceiving is about how a phenomenon is understood by different actors — the various conceptions of it — and how those conceptions lead to different forms of politicisation manifesting in strategies and tactics. Like sanitation, housing is already political, but the ways in which it is politicised can be quite different when filtered through gender, race, religion, class and space. Hence, there is multiplicity in what different actors perceive as its key issues which can be conflicting.

McFarlane and Silver’s “seeing” framework comprises four parts: legibility, simplification, multiplicity and context. *Legibility* is about how the state uses its power to organise life in society as “legible, standardised, measurable and amendable to intervention” and this includes “the process of counting,

mapping, budgeting, and delivering” services (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p. 129). *Simplification* (or the lack of it) is about expectations that should be had of state provision, whether it is clear what people can expect, presenting challenges to how an issue is seen by different actors and hence politicised (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p. 129). *Multiplicity* addresses the plausibility of multiple perspectives which informs the politics of different actors, as “seeing” is “more than the presence (or absence) of state practices of simplifying and making legible”; it is also about seeing “a politics of different and often connected forms of governing that must inevitably be complex, provisional, and uncertain” (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p.129). Lastly, *context* attends to the position that “ways of seeing do not emerge from the ether” but are informed by circumstances and history, be it through one’s own past experiences or that of others’, and mediums such as radio, television and more ubiquitously now, the Internet (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p. 130).

Following their theory, the distinct conceptions of the problem of housing, or ‘seeing housing’, would lead to politicisation, resulting in different tactics as the ways of seeing collide. In the case of Jakarta, as we will see, the ways of conceptualising the problem of housing according to the different actors (urban residents, state agents, NGOs and subject experts) shape the actions that each takes to seemingly secure what each deems as their interests. While this helps to explain the tensions in state-society dynamics, understanding how housing is perceived and politicised by different actors can also inform us about the (differential) notions of the right to the city and what can be done to achieve better rights for citizens.

### 3. Methodology

In February 2018, I carried out fieldwork in three of Jakarta’s urban kampungs in the northern part of the city, following the high-profile evictions under then Governor Ahok (2014–2017) and the ensuing responses of residents and the wider public. Across ten days, I conducted 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews through snowball sampling, conversations with people on the street and site observations at selected areas. The aim was to understand how different actors (residents in different kampungs, other urban dwellers, academics, social movements, non-governmental organisations, state representatives) perceived and participated in the everyday politics of urbanisation that reveal not only

the experiences of residents, but also state-society dynamics in how different actors understood the role of the state in their different encounters with it at the “margins” (Betteridge & Webber, 2019).

The three urban kampungs in North Jakarta are Kampung Luar Batang, Kampung Japat, and Kampung Tongkol.<sup>3</sup> While more recent developments and economic activities have taken place in central and southern Jakarta, North Jakarta, which was the colonial centre, is being reimagined as the “final frontier for urban development in the city” (Kusno, 2013 in Betteridge & Webber, 2019, p. 949) by political and economic elites. While the choices of kampungs were structured by opportunity and access, they are typical and valuable to the larger understanding of state-society dynamics in other urban centres with similar challenges and conditions. Kampung Luar Batang (Figure 1), located at Ciliwung river estuary, west of the Sunda Kelapa port, is one of the oldest kampungs in Jakarta, housing a pilgrimage site of a sacred tomb, with a mixed settlement of traditional and modern buildings, and a heterogenous population. On the other side, Kampung Japat (Figure 2), the least known among the three, is near the Sunda Kelapa port, and home to many Buginese ship owners, makers and sailors, with mostly one-storey houses relatively spread out. Kampung Tongkol (Figure 3), occupying land along a riverbank further south east of the port, is a compact and hidden neighbourhood, with narrow housing units side by side, usually one or two storeys high, with extensions or fortifications added over time. The three kampungs are similar in terms of being close to water bodies, and hence face uncertainties of eviction.

Residents and agents of the state<sup>4</sup> were approached through personal contacts and referrals, as was connecting with a few of the prominent NGOs<sup>5</sup> dealing with urban issues particularly in urban kampungs and with their residents. The urban experts I spoke to were from Universitas Tarumanagara and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI).<sup>6</sup> The qualitative data from these

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<sup>3</sup> Residents from these kampungs will be labelled KLBI, KJI, KTI respectively in this paper. One urban resident interviewed not from these kampungs will be labelled RI.

<sup>4</sup> State agents will be labelled S1 (civil servant with the local government’s urban planning department), S2 (was part of Ahok (the previous governor)’s administration).

<sup>5</sup> NGO personnel will be labelled N1 (urban research and capacity building NGO), N2 (legal aid organisation), N3 (specialising in participatory approaches), N4 (specialising in urban poverty) in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Experts will be labelled E1, E2.



Figure 1: Urban kampung in North Jakarta — Luar Batang  
(Source: Author).



Figure 2: Urban kampung in North Jakarta — Japet  
(Source: Author).



Figure 3: Urban kampung in North Jakarta — Tongkol  
(Source: Author).

12 semi-structured interviews were then transcribed and translated where the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. After which the transcript was manually coded through an iterative process into categories which reflected emergent themes. The inductive coding was done by paying attention to the incidence of keywords used by respondents and their substantive responses to broad questions of urbanisation concerns, strategies and solutions, challenges faced, and interactions with different state and non-state actors. The views of the different respondents were brought together under each theme to bring out the convergences and contradictions in the ways they perceived urban issues and their key concerns such as housing and in particular the urban kampung. Their views are important, but I do not claim that they are representative of all urban actors in Jakarta. Nevertheless, key insights emerged which can be further explored. Secondary sources such as government reports and statistics, international organisations' and NGO reports, as well as newspaper and academic articles also informed the findings of this paper. While there are some quantitative data gleaned from various sources, more of such data would have been useful to reinforce some of the respondents' opinions.

## 4. Understanding state-society dynamics in urban kampungs

According to an estimate, urban kampungs provide homes for about 70 to 80 percent of residents in big cities like Jakarta, where government and private housing have only fulfilled about 15 percent of residential needs (Kusumawati, 2015). This makes urban kampungs interesting and important as sites of study because not only do they reflect the spatially dynamic movement of peoples into the city, they also capture the historical and socio-political changes of Jakarta's urban development. Urban kampungs can be differentiated from slums in various ways, though it is not always clear. This ambiguity is sometimes taken advantage of by actors to advance their own agendas. As McCarthy (2003, p.1) explains, kampungs tend to be poorer neighbourhoods contained within a city, with a mix of lower- and middle-class residents, and usually permanent buildings of original villages "upon which cities have encroached and not vice versa". Many of these kampung lands are legally registered at the local municipal administrative offices (*kelurahan*) but are mostly considered only informal housing as they are not formally registered with the National Land Agency (*Badan Pertahanan Nasional*, BPN) (Kusno, 2012; UN HRC, 2013). This is a feature of the complex dual land system in Indonesia which combines customary and post-colonial systems.

Jakarta has a long migration history, being a port city which has attracted migrants near and far, from as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it was under the Government of the Dutch East Indies, and then later as the capital city post-independence (Hadi & Tirtosudarmo, 2016). While it experienced a mix of international and internal migration prior to independence, from 1945 onwards most of the migrants came from the Indonesian archipelago (Hadi & Tirtosudarmo, 2016). Internal movement is allowed, with little legislated barriers, though there have been some attempts to restrict such movement. For instance, a legislation enacted in 1970 required incoming migrants who intended to settle in Jakarta to register and provide a deposit equivalent to twice the return fare to their village of origin (UN DESA, 1989). On the other hand, the formal transmigration policy of the Indonesian government, a sequel to a programme started by the Dutch colonial government, saw the relocation of nearly 2.5 million people between 1979 and 1984 to the outer islands of Indonesia to reduce population pressure in densely populated islands such as Java (Sukamdi & Mujahid, 2015). Randolph and Naik (2017, p.43) characterise

the current situation as having little internal migration management, with familiar concerns about population concentration in Java “reflected in [the] anxiety over the large population of the Greater Jakarta Metropolitan Region, which crossed 30 million residents in total population in 2014”.

In Indonesia, an important document which mediates access to housing options is the national identity card (KTP – *Kartu Tanda Penduduk*) which is compulsory for every citizen to have. It is verified and issued by the local authorities at the neighbourhood (RT – *Rukun Tetangga*) and village (RW – *Rukun Warga*) levels and ties a citizen to the locality (ITU, 2016). This system was upgraded to an electronic one (E-KTP) in 2011, which includes a unique serial number, personal and biometric data and is valid for a lifetime, as opposed to the KTP which has to be renewed every 5 years. The KTP serves several explicit and embedded functions and could have far-reaching consequences for a person’s life. Without an official address, a person cannot obtain a KTP. Tipple and Speak (2009, p.177) outlines that “[N]ot having a KTP means that a person is not officially registered as a resident of the city where they live, does not appear in any official statistics, cannot carry out many legal processes such as marriage and birth registration (without which school entry is impossible) and cannot obtain formal housing”. It is a “vicious cycle: having no officially recognised address they cannot obtain a KTP; having no KTP, they cannot gain access to formal housing and, therefore, have no formal address” (Tipple & Speak, 2009, p.177).

Nevertheless, while in theory having a KTP should entitle a resident to housing, in practice it is not a guarantee as the imperatives of Jakarta’s urban development have resulted in evictions and displacements of urban kampung residents who are often living on the socioeconomic margins of the city. This is especially crucial because there is currently no Indonesian law on forced evictions, and groups defending victims have to rely on universal human rights norms against forced evictions or to seek redress. Local government and developers have little incentive to build much needed low-cost housing in the city for displaced residents, because it is not profitable and the provision of such housing is regarded as the responsibility of the central state (Kusno, 2012). However, the local government and central state agree that there is a need to “reduce the size of *kawasan kumuh* (decrepit neighbourhoods) in the city”, referring to mainly urban kampungs, and that there is little space in a city like Jakarta to build more low-cost housing (Kusno, 2012). Given these

circumstances, the question of who has the right to the city (in terms of housing) is a pressing one that seems to be increasingly determined by proof of local residency (Jakarta ID or KTP). Many permanent and temporary internal migrants still do not have identity cards for their current residential location and therefore cannot access public services such as for education and health (World Bank, 2013). Furthermore, because most of these internal migrants are living in kampungs, they are especially prone to the consequences of forced evictions since they would be denied compensation or relocation rights without a Jakarta ID.

Urban development in post-independence Indonesia has always been directed from the top. Even with significant powers decentralised to the provinces, districts and municipalities since the 1990s, “a highly complex mix of hierarchical and top-down system of development and spatial planning exist within the central Government”, which also has the authority to overrule local plans in the name of “strategic and national importance” (UN HRC, 2013, p.5). This paradox presents serious problems because development issues affecting the everyday lives of citizens can be and are often superseded by macro imperatives. Furthermore, the decentralisation process has not been accompanied by augmented institutional capacity in terms of human resources, tools and financial means in the local regions to allow them to carry out what they are supposed to do. Housing is an area in which these complex dynamics are observable. The Ministry of Public Housing and the Ministry of Public Works share the responsibility for housing policies and programmes, whereas the National Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) is responsible for ensuring that housing policies are coordinated and compatible with the National Development Plans. In these plans, the Indonesian government has “reiterated its commitment to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing and to address discrimination in access to housing” (UN HRC, 2013, p.4).

In recent years, however, observers have noted a slow evolution in approaches towards urban development in Indonesia, and the schizophrenic treatment of the kampungs over time is a quintessential example of this. The Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP) was started by the government in 1969 in Jakarta, funded and supported by the World Bank in a bid to “improve the poor physical condition of kampungs and eventually the quality of life of kampung residents” (Irawaty, 2018, p.28). However, the amount

of support and resources given for KIP over time has fluctuated according to political leadership and priorities, and in recent years eviction has become more commonplace. At the same time, more public participation in urban development seems to be on the cards for local governments, with provisions for participatory practices in budget allocation and spatial planning. Participatory budgeting, known in Indonesia as *musrenbang*<sup>7</sup>, was introduced in 2000 to engage citizens at the neighbourhood, district and city levels yearly to put forth their priorities for development projects (Feruglio & Rifai, 2017). Meanwhile the Community Action Plan (CAP) programme was inaugurated by the current governor Anies Baswedan in fulfilling his campaign promise for more inclusive planning to improve the quality of life in sixteen of Jakarta's urban kampungs (Arifin, 2018; Hendartyo, 2018; Taylor, 2018). These efforts are not without contentions, but they represent some attempts to consider perspectives from below.

The continued presence and popularity of urban kampungs in Indonesia is witness to the lack of affordable housing, especially for low- and middle-income households, in the face of high urban population growth coupled with land shortages and rising land prices. There is some government investment in public housing through the public real estate company Perumnas and selective slum upgrading, as well as some support for self-help housing in informal settlements as a way “to externalize the cost of providing low-cost housing for the poor” (UN HRC, 2013, p.6). Urban kampung, with no single definition and meaning, is often considered part of informal settlements. One definition of it has been “an indigenous urban settlement mostly inhabited by lower middle-class and poor people, a mixed-used highly densely populated area, for working and living” (UN HRC, 2013, p.6), with most of the infrastructure and houses built independently by the residents (Irawaty, 2018), spread across different parts of Jakarta. Housing conditions vary significantly but urban kampungs are often in slum-like conditions, generally “characterized by poor quality housing, lack of secure tenure, and lack of access to water, sanitation, drainage, and flood-control facilities, as well as by ambiguously defined legal status” (UN HRC, 2013, p.6). The conditions often depend on the location of these kampungs. If they are in flood-prone zones, their visibility is high and the city government would be more inclined to invest in facilities and

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<sup>7</sup> Long form: Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Meeting for Development Planning).

infrastructure for the kampung, and these tend to “house the poorest among the urban poor, including internal migrants without identification cards” (UN HRC, 2013, p.7).

Given the urban kampungs’ social, economic, historical, cultural, practical functions in the city, it is surprising that “at the national level, the only official policy towards these settlements is eviction, in some cases followed by relocation to low-cost rental apartments (*rusunawa*), ... given the limited capacity of local Government to provide alternatives” (UN HRC, 2013, p.7). This is compounded by the fact that some of these kampung communities vulnerable to eviction have been given permission by the state decades ago to occupy the land, making government and popular narratives of urban kampungs misleading when they use the term “illegal squatting” (Kusno, 2012). Some urban villages have been upgraded by residents themselves to align with spatial planning and environmental stipulations, or even the aesthetics of a ‘modern’ city (Padawangi, 2019). However, there is no clear indication that official or self-help upgrading schemes ensure the security of tenure for urban village residents given that “the current predominant housing policy” has seen “the kampung as a phenomenon to be eradicated”, with “retail and commercial buildings surround[ing] kampungs, but municipalities rarely include or prioritize the kampungs in their development plans” (UN HRC, 2013, p.8). At times residents get a sense of false security because of “decades of occupation with no contestation from public or private entities, and eventually receiving a variety of Government-provided services, as well as after years of paying land taxes” (UN HRC, 2013, p.16). There are also government programmes to facilitate land certification to gain tenure security for low-income populations but these are infamous for their difficulty in registering private transactions and the prohibitive costs of doing so (Kusno, 2012).

In this context of uncertain futures and anticipated evictions decided unilaterally by the local government, activists and kampung dwellers cultivate their own responses and resistances, emblematic of a changing state-society dynamic. But exactly how it is changing and to what end need to be examined. There are several interrelated issues that affect residents in the three urban kampungs which are experiencing the impact of urbanisation. Investigating the housing issue through the theoretical framework of ‘seeing housing’ exposes many of these key concerns as different actors have varied conceptions of the housing problem.

## *Employment*

The quality and security of employment is a major concern in the city, in view of the large number of people working in the informal economy. A state agent (S1) explained that the number of jobs available is not proportional to the number of people who come to the city hence there are many in the informal economy, a situation he thought to be symptomatic of developing countries such as Indonesia, where “migrants go where they want” — which is usually the city. He perceived this to be unlike developed countries where there is a need for migrants to fill some gaps in the labour force of the city and hence “migrants go where they are needed”.

With the thriving informal economy and insecure access to formal education for the urban poor, individuals over generations can get locked into informal jobs for life. An NGO respondent (N4) observed from their interactions with kampung dwellers in Jakarta that people were content with achieving personal goals (mainly earning cash) and valued leisure time so the informal arrangement suited their present needs. Even though urban development issues do concern and affect them, they do not give too much thought to it as they are fully occupied in their daily lives. This is exacerbated by what NGO respondent (N4) surmised — that the ready supply of young people coming to the cities means that there is little compulsion for industries to upgrade the skills of their workers or for the government to better access to education. This also means wage stagnation or even depression as workers have little bargaining power, seeing that they are dispensable.

That Jakarta is the capital city where jobs and development are concentrated presents a major challenge to urban management. As an NGO respondent (N2) notes, despite government measures under then governor Jokowi to divide the economy more equally and to improve the rural areas so that human flows to the cities could be mediated (Kirk, 2016), people still view Jakarta as a “gold mine”. Elaborating further, a state agent (S2) attributed misleading advertisements in the media about living in the city which would have encouraged many to migrate to Jakarta to fulfil a dream or an aspiration. NGO respondents also highlighted that the concentration of economic development in Jakarta ensures that the urban sprawl (in large part facilitated by private developers), especially of the middle-class who increasingly live in satellite cities at the peripheries whether by choice or are being priced out, continues. This visible class phenomenon of (sub) urbanisation would entrench the view of some that the urban poor are a burden

because they (especially the informal workers and migrants) would be the ones finding some way to subsist in the city because they do not have the luxury of time and money to commute and hence moving out is not a viable option. This was the sentiment expressed by a state agent (S1) and an urban expert (E2) when the former said that migrants who do not intend to be residents are “burdens to DKI Jakarta because they are clearly out of government purview but inhabit the city space” while the latter thought that the migration of especially the rural poor to the city has to be managed because they seem to bring about many of the urban problems.

Fully urbanised cities like Singapore become a cautionary tale of rapid development and growing consumerism. Urbanisation as is happening in Jakarta is perceived as a threat to the physical surroundings (with its higher densities and increased flooding), and traditional livelihoods and ways of life. For instance, in one kampung, known for its tradition of ship making and sailing, recent government regulations about illegal logging greatly reduced sources of wood, while shipping routes were being changed but they were not directly informed or involved in the decision-making. Some residents felt stuck because they do not know what else they could do, and they are also unable to sell their ships if they had wanted to. In the extreme case, urbanisation is viewed as a threat to the unity and independence of the country, especially with foreign expatriates coming in and buying up property and taking up precious land, making some residents draw comparisons with colonial invasions of the past. One resident (KTI) commented how urbanisation, which has been taking place since the 1960s with no concrete government plans to contain it, made the differentiation between rural (*desa*) and urban (*kota*) more stark, possibly creating a big social divide where there was none. In the main, the experts (E1 and E2) shared the view of the urban residents that even though rapid urbanisation began 40 years ago and the state had initiated mega urban regions, it still struggles with managing urbanisation.

### *Residency status*

A second key concern is the definition of ‘migrant’. Who a migrant is is not a clear-cut question at times because “*perantauan*” (a tradition of temporary migration<sup>8</sup>) is a common sociocultural practice among generations of

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<sup>8</sup> See Lindquist (2010) for elaboration.

Indonesians. Residents interviewed argue that all of Jakarta could be said to be migrants at some point. Drawing from their experience in Kampung Pulo where the local government collected data on residents to help in provincial budgeting for relocation into vertical housing (since it can only be used for Jakarta citizens), they (S2) found that those with the Jakarta ID have been there for 10-20 years, and those without tend to be newcomers to the kampung. Here the Jakarta ID is being used as a means for differentiation, with the implicit assumption that if a migrant has stayed in Jakarta long enough, they would have been able to get the Jakarta ID and be a citizen of the city and hence have the official right to it. This assumption is problematic as it does not take into account the barriers to getting a Jakarta ID and the ambivalence many people have regarding its utility in practice.

According to residents, the freedom to migrate has not changed since independence, and the introduction of an electronic system (E-KTP) for resident identity cards may actually enhance the movement of people because it can be used throughout the country. However, in order to change from a local (city) ID to the national ID (E-KTP), there is a long bureaucratic process which does not seem worth the trouble from the residents' point of view, though a resident (R1) said that it is "easy to get if one has family in the city or through bribes". Furthermore, despite the initial fanfare, a resident (KLBI) thought that the national ID is not as impressive ("*luarbiasa*") as it purports to be due to corruption at various levels of its implementation process. Even though a Jakarta ID is needed to access basic services and housing in the city, an NGO respondent (N4) said that residents also find it pointless to change KTPs as there is no added advantage except for the government to centralise data about its citizens. Furthermore, informal jobs which marginalised groups tend to find themselves in do not require city IDs, which are a hassle to obtain anyway and possible to circumvent through personal contacts, family card registration, and even fake IDs.

### *Land*

Among the kampung residents, urbanisation is largely viewed negatively, and having one's own land for housing becomes an elevated concern. Land has become a more contentious issue since the evictions of kampungs by the

government grabbed the headlines. Residents contest the notion that the land belongs to the government by bringing the matter to court if they possess adequate proof — which is often tricky due to generations of buying and selling land informally. One gets the impression that they are prepared to defend through legal and non-legal means their right to the land which holds multiple meanings for them — as an asset, as part of their historical identity (especially as migrants or descendants of migrants), as a means to live and earn a living. For some residents, they are aware of the complicated issues surrounding land ownership, such as informal ownership for generations which does not easily lend itself to tangible proof, complicated bureaucratic processes, and asymmetrical information access.

Land is also an issue that NGOs pay attention to because they argue that the unilateral spatial planning done by the government has resulted in the formalisation of many legal violations by developers and government agencies over the years. An NGO respondent (N2) cited that in 2016, only 9.25 percent of green spaces existed in Jakarta whereas the law states that it should be 30 percent, and the urban poor have often been blamed for floods but little of the environmental impact of urban development has been critically analysed. City residents who do not live in urban kampungs tend to have negative stereotypes of those living there, as one resident (R1) said that most slums are in these kampung lands. Yet not all Jakartans have a negative view of urban kampungs. Urban experts (E1 and E2) found kampungs to be evidence of the phenomenon that although Jakarta is no longer “a place for settling” (*menetap*), migrants and other urban residents who contribute to the city are able to find a place to stay in its midst.

An agent of the state (S2) described that the relocation of urban kampung residents from the riverbanks was a major concern of the government because they wanted to solve the perennial flooding through this method, as a government study found that the river has been narrowing due to residential build-up, causing the floods. When asked if that was the only cause and about the role of private developments, the state agent (S2) opined that Ahok knew about the private developments but had to prioritise what was within his authority, which was relocating residents, as “he cannot just crush a building that has been built”.

## Attitudes to Migrants

As mentioned earlier, due to uneven development across the Indonesian archipelago and villagers being forced off their agricultural lands because of investment projects or increasing land prices, people go to Jakarta in search of work. Many find work in the informal economy, usually through personal networks, but their basic needs are often neglected as a result of their non-resident status. An NGO respondent (N4) stated that it is not feasible for the government to control the flows of people, but it can definitely provide a better service to its citizens. In a similar vein, one state agent (S2) said that internal migration cannot be banned, and this was something Ahok conceded to because Jakarta is like the “Big Apple” for many Indonesians, but recognised that government can do a better job in facilitating and communicating rules about legal housing to residents and migrants.

An NGO respondent (N2) said that there are some efforts on Jakarta’s part to control population numbers, with “*Operasi Yustisi*”<sup>9</sup> (Operation Justice) which occurs after each Muslim festive season (*lebaran*) because many will bring family members, friends or relatives to the city to find work. At the same time, officers on duty will repatriate jobless migrants (bearing in mind that according to residents, it is not difficult to get jobs through informal channels). N2 also cited that the current governor Anies Baswedan has said that they would not accept *beca* (trishaw) drivers from outside Jakarta, though they were coming anyway. Urban experts (E1 and E2) did not think that it was easy to become a Jakarta citizen. The bureaucratic process may be long, but they also spoke of an unofficial quota of 50,000–60,000 new citizens a year and a stagnant migrant population with more circular migrants.

However, for an NGO respondent (N3), being an organisation which upholds human rights means that they fully support the freedom of movement. Another NGO representative (N4) found that locals are generally happy that migrants come to the city because they bring life and economic vibrancy. Newcomers are rare in one of the *kampungs*, where the resident (KJ1) said that everyone there has a Jakarta KTP. There were, however, the “*kos-kos*” (rooms for rent in a local residence) under construction next door, and he said there were also several other accommodations inhabited by labour migrants

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<sup>9</sup> I was told that this was inspired by *Iustitia*, the goddess of Justice within Roman mythology.

(*buru migran*) of the nearby glass factories. This shows that in a kampung which does not attract migrants to ply their traditional trade (ship making and sailing), the residents are preparing to host labour migrants who work in other sectors nearby.

### *Politics of everyday interactions: Strategies and tactics*

Given the different perspectives on housing concerns and interrelated issues amongst the residents, NGOs and the state, what have been the strategies implemented to redress these concerns? More importantly, how have they affected the marginalised residents' access to the city?

Following the river normalisation programme, which was started in 2013 to mitigate flooding issues, building vertical housing elsewhere for residents in the affected kampungs became a priority of the government and a huge source of apprehension for residents. While residents who are relocated can receive replacement homes, the state agent (S2) was unsure about what happens to residents without a Jakarta ID. Moreover, some residents were evicted from their kampungs even before replacements were ready (Huda, 2016). Vertical housing (*rumah susun or rusun*) is part of the government's strategy when it moves kampung residents from their original settlement, a solution it terms as "relocation", while others, both kampung and non-kampung residents, who oppose this action see it as an "eviction" (*mengusur*). Beyond flood alleviation, relocations are also effected to uphold the proper zoning and the legal status of the land, according to one resident (KTI), but it is not an inclusive solution because one needs to be a Jakarta citizen in order to access the replacement housing. It is also disruptive because relocated residents kept complaining about losing jobs (because vertical housing is usually in less accessible locations), with water and electricity being billed, as well as losing close-knit communities. A resident (KJI) said that these rental houses (*rusunawa – rumah susun sederhana sewa*) should be for labour migrants, and not for evicted city residents. A state agent (S2) confirmed this — that *rusunawa* is not a new programme as it used to be for migrants to purchase but now it is only for rent under relocation programmes. Because of this and also because land in Jakarta has been mostly used up, new migrants go into rental houses (*rumah kontrakan*) or rental rooms (*rumah kos*) which local residents build in their kampungs in response to growing demand for housing.

Eviction has been used by various governments in Jakarta to help mitigate flooding and land scarcity issues. An NGO representative (N2) said that due to the timing of elections, for governors who want things to be done fast, eviction becomes a practical course of action in Jakarta. This was illustrated by a state agent (S2) sharing how the government was trying to learn from its previous relocation attempts in order to manage subsequent ones better, especially since the government under Ahok targeted the riverbank kampungs in order to mitigate flooding issues. On the other hand, eviction was a tactic the next governor Anies wanted to avoid and a state agent (S1) told of a group of kampungs which were slated for urban renewal programmes in the next five years. These would involve different housing forms and more green spaces, as well as the improvement of existing kampungs. There are also different causes for evictions in different regimes — they could be due to private development or government projects, an NGO representative (N2) noted.

The different approaches to urban issues also shaped the way the residents reacted. The evictions under Ahok drove residents to organise and collaborate with other non-state actors such as journalists and academics to defend their kampungs against threats of demolition. One kampung resident (KLBI), for example, was alerted by academics to government plans to conduct massive evictions (“*kegusuran secara massif*”) and reclamation for developers in North Jakarta to “make it like Singapore”. Under the new governor Anies, this kampung resident then sought external help to try and establish the kampung as a heritage site, as a “*kampung tua*” (old kampung) because he thought that would be a bulwark against possible development plans such as the building of condominiums. Furthermore, he said Anies came across to residents as someone who was educated, and therefore this resident’s strategy was to employ “grand concepts and designs which are research-driven” to make his case.

Focusing on the process rather than only on immediate outcomes in seeking solutions was emphasised by residents and NGOs in order to resolve issues in a politically and environmentally sustainable manner. One kampung resident (KTI) spoke of the political contract his kampung, together with a group of other kampungs in the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC)<sup>10</sup>, signed with Anies Baswedan before he became the current governor as “a cumulative

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<sup>10</sup> UPC is a non-governmental organisation that works with marginalised urban communities, using participatory approaches. <https://www.urbanpoor.or.id/>

process that has to be worked on in slow progression, from kampung upgrading to legalising land rights, and improvements to the kampung will have to be co-funded by residents and the government, as well as private actors". This resident emphasised the importance of setting differentiated goals and timeframes so as to ally residents and not put off government officials with excessive demands. The NGOs adopt a similar thinking in their approach towards residents' capacity building and lobbying the government. One NGO (N1) takes a systematic approach when helping kampung residents organise themselves to provide input to the government before any eviction takes place, and for the Community Action Planning (CAP) programme which was launched by governor Anies. Another NGO (N2) provides legal training to the kampung community to represent themselves in court, which they deem as powerful in influencing public opinion through mainstream media, though this strategy takes time and mid- to long-term commitment by residents. For this NGO, having both short-term (defending cases, seeking compensation) and long-term (advocating for human rights norms to be regulated under Indonesian laws) focuses are crucial. The battle has to be won on multiple fronts.

Community leadership, non-state interventions and checks and balances form part of the strategies non-state actors recognise as addressing current housing challenges and the sustainability of urban kampungs. Urban experts (E1 and E2) believe in the resilience of kampung communities that would help them solve problems at the neighbourhood level, provided that they are given the chance to determine for themselves what the best course of action is. Government cannot and should not be heavily relied upon, and it is also in its interest to offload some responsibilities given its limited capacities and resources. An NGO respondent (N4) highlighted the common practice of *ketua RT/RW*<sup>11</sup> (head of neighbourhood or village community) who knows and takes care of his community, regardless of residency status and official allocation of social assistance funds, as it is a social obligation upon him. This is especially critical as the NGO respondent (N4) found that in many urban settlements currently, "it is 50–50, 50 percent Betawi (ethnic group native to Jakarta or 2nd or 3rd generation residents who are considered locals), and 50 percent migrants" and it is not a simple migrant-local dichotomy because there are

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<sup>11</sup> RT (rukun tetangga) is the division of villages (RW – rukun warga) into neighbourhoods and is the lowest administrative division of Indonesia.

people who have been living there for over 30 years but do not have a local ID. He also observed that NGOs seem to be the ones who are more active on the ground, providing services to residents, mediating the relationship between the citizen and the state. NGOs also serve another role — to act as checks and balances to the government of the day. Two of the NGOs (N1 and N2) monitor the annual government budget carefully to ascertain that whatever promises that have been made have indeed been budgeted for. A state agent (S2) talked about a social movement (*Kawal Jakarta*)<sup>12</sup> convened by some of Ahok’s past interns to “keep an eye on the current government” now that they have an insider’s view as to how the government works.

### *Challenges in executing strategies and tactics*

In executing strategies to help the marginalised claim their right to the city, one of the major challenges faced by different non-state actors surrounds the issue of claims-making. The kampung residents were aware that they lacked a tradition of keeping written records — be it with regard to history, heritage, or land transactions. Since trying to establish his kampung as a heritage site, one kampung resident (KLBI) realised that the recorded history they needed to make this claim was not easily found. Making claims through documentation affects residents in two other ways. First, the “right of ownership” (*hak milik*) certificate is difficult and expensive to obtain and without which one is deemed as an illegal occupant. This then has cascading effects on recognition of a legal residence and hence access to state funding. Second is the importance of the KTP for voting rights. With the slow processing and corruption issues of the KTP, and many in some urban kampungs not having the Jakarta KTPs, their right to vote cannot be exercised. This incapacitates their voices being heard and taken seriously. From the government’s point of view, claiming the right of abode through a period of occupancy by some kampung residents while legal is problematic because many kampung areas are deemed to be on government land and the residents do not have the appropriate legal certification. When asked whether other urban kampungs would be cleared as well in the long run, a

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<sup>12</sup> A social movement housed under PSI, a new youth opposition party hoping to change the entrenched politics of Indonesia.

state agent (S1) said that urban kampungs not along riverbanks can remain as long as they are within the right zone and land rules — though how these are decided is unclear.

Organising kampung residents was also highlighted as a challenge. One of the residents (KT1) said that in the case of defending their right through legal channels, there would always be residents who would think that it is “mission impossible” because they did not know of a successful precedent of legalising “illegal” land. In their attempts to help kampung residents organise themselves under the new Community Action Plan (CAP) programme, an NGO respondent (N1) praised the plan as ideal because it gives residents a part to decide the future of their kampungs, a right to participate. But the NGO sometimes faces challenges with the traditional authority of locally elected leaders, the buy-in of residents, or the attrition rate of participation as residents lose the momentum over a longer period of engagement. Such attrition, as another NGO (N2) which helps residents with legal aid discovered, is partly due to the fact that residents differ in the extent to which they want to work with or oppose the government because of differing perceptions. Given this, sustaining enthusiasm and passion of residents in defending their rights becomes a challenge as most cases drag on. On the side of the state, there were challenges in getting the residents to go along with relocation plans because although “kampung people are usually united in trying to make life better despite their diverse backgrounds, they tend to fall into opposing camps when it comes to relocation” and would mount a challenge if they are forced to move even though “they were told in advance” (S2). As a case in point, the same state agent (S2) stated that during the Ahok administration, the government could have done a better job in communicating with the kampung residents, as the relocation of Kampung Pulo (The Jakarta Post, 2015) “was not smooth” and people were very unhappy.

Another attempt by the government to be seen as more inclusive and encouraging of public participation in local budgeting was the initiation of consultative development called the *musrenbang* system. However, the NGO respondents found that people avoided *musrenbangs* because of the formalities imposed (such as a formal office being the designated meeting point) and the limited deliberation for funding as “timelines are tight, decisions pre-made,” and they felt that their core concerns were not really given the space to be

considered. More village chiefs stay outside the community, and this tends to produce more distance between them and the residents, as informed by one NGO respondent (N3). They also mentioned that although the *musrenbang* could be seen as a progression from the usual unilateral spatial planning by the government, it is being viewed by residents as a mere formal mechanism which is still very much top-down. Another NGO respondent (N4) observed that more young people are stepping up to become village officials and expressed the view that their usage of social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and messenger applications such as WhatsApp to directly involve more people and to achieve more accountability could help ameliorate top-down perceptions and practices.

The barriers to change are multifaceted but a few main factors were highlighted by respondents — government incompetency and legislation. The mismatches between macro policies driven by neoliberal forces and everyday realities are stark and “governments do not really want to learn”, said an urban expert (E1). This is also reflected by an NGO respondent (N2) that most policies seemed to be based on intuition and political expediency, as there is a lack of data and analysis to produce reliable information for the formulation of policies. Existing legislation is seen as a major barrier to solving urban issues because they are either enduring legacies of past governments or out of touch with reality. Hence, non-state actors believe that the law does not compel the government to self-correct and correction thus needs to happen from bottom-up. N2 pointed out for instance that the land law has remained the same since 1960 despite the massive urban development that has taken place. Furthermore, while it is possible under the civil code for residents to formally legalise the land on which they live and which is also encouraged by external actors such as the World Bank, it is difficult to implement for various reasons, such as corruption (“the national land agency is always top three in the ‘most corrupted’ rankings”— N2) and the blocking of requests by government officials at some level in the chain of command. Such a situation makes compensating for eviction or renewing kampungs almost impossible because lands are “illegal” and it would be considered as corruption under the law as it is a loss to the country (“*kerugian negara*”), said one state agent (S1).

In the three kampungs, ethnicity and residency status (local/migrant) do not seem to be salient social cleavages as an everyday reality. There is an openness to outsiders, a commitment to a multicultural harmonious

co-existence, with little talk about ethnic, local-migrant, settled-newcomer differentiations. However, class differences were often raised and class is a multifaceted issue — in different contexts different class dynamics are at play. An NGO representative (N1) made the observation that due to lack of management in urbanisation processes, the middle-class will work in Jakarta and stay on the periphery as they get priced out of the city centre and the urban poor will have to stay where they work, for as long as urban kampungs and slums are allowed to exist. This has made class and ethnic divisions more pronounced with distinct spatial effects. Politicians' rhetoric compounds the issue, as did Ahok when he stoked feelings of hostility against the urban poor and blamed them for causing the urban problems of Jakarta (Elyda, 2014). Yet another NGO respondent (N4) was pleasantly surprised, as he had assumed like everyone else that there would be tensions between middle-class residents and kampung dwellers living within close quarters. Instead what he found was a symbiotic relationship between middle-class and kampung dwellers which diffuses tensions. The former requires the labour of the latter in kindergartens and kitchens, and the latter requires such work for survival — and it goes beyond that, as he saw that people were often finding ways of being nice to each other.

Beyond the growing class tensions within society and the perennial exploitation of ethnoreligious identities by politicians, there are also new conflicts between state and non-state actors. A state agent (S2) considered that one of the major challenges in addressing the housing issue is the conflict between the government and NGOs, a few of which have been set up by urban planning experts who disagree with and want to challenge government findings. As a result, people are more confused about who to believe regarding the causes of flooding, for instance. She (S2) said that NGOs may be viewed as people-centric in their approach to policy recommendations, but they do not consider the legal implications when they propose new plans which in effect delay the river normalisation (*normalisasi*) programme that a governor has to execute before the deadline. In effect there are delays because of NGO actions that obstruct legitimate state action. Furthermore, in Anies's case, even though some urban kampungs are on illegal land, he is seen as a defender of the "unfortunate people" even though as governor "he has to follow the rules" and get them off the uncertified land. This, the state agent (S2) believed, has possibly alienated some urban residents who

are not part of the urban poor and perceive that their interests are being subordinated to that of the urban poor's.

### *Interactions with the state*

I posit in this paper that understanding the dynamics of state-society relations — how citizens and non-state actors perceive the state inform how they interact with the state, whether they carry out demonstrations, propose counterplans, pursue legal or political channels — is key to figuring out how the marginalised can claim their right to the city in the face of rapid urban development. One kampung resident (KLBI) who is active in social movements denied that he was anti-government due to his actions against Ahok when the latter was governor, because he engages with various levels of government officials and maintains good relations with them. Through social media platforms such as YouTube, this resident came to perceive Ahok (even before meeting him in person) as someone whose shrewdness was a disservice to ordinary citizens (“*kebijakan yang merugikan rakyat kecil*”) and whose offensive manners at times were an embarrassment to the nation. Hence the strategy this resident took, together with his counterparts, was to participate in demonstrations, live debates, and personal door-to-door campaigning against Ahok during the election period. Learning from the state, he was also keenly aware of the money politics of elections: if Ahok gave rice to his constituencies, their counter-campaign also did the same, though he was aware that some people might just take the goods and not necessarily cast their vote accordingly.

Playing the political game was something that another kampung resident (KTI) attempted to put in perspective. His kampung is part of the group of kampungs in the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) which signed a political contract with Anies in exchange for electoral support. He said, “Politics is only a tool. And votes are a tool for politicians to achieve their goals. Votes have always been exploited, but voters don’t get anything.” Since politics is a tool, his attitude was that voters must use it too. However, a resident from another kampung (KJI) cautioned against over-politicising every issue and that ultimately “a citizen should support whoever wins in the elections”, lending support to upholding the democratic process. Here he quoted a saying from Prophet Muhammad about being moderate in either disdain or admiration

(*“kalau benci, jangan benci sangatlah. Kalau sayang, jangan sayang sangatlah”*).

Among the kampung residents, there was a strong sense of citizenship and ownership which emboldened groups of residents to contend with the state on the issue of relocation. One resident (KLBI) expressed that they were using their right as a citizen to put forth the data they collected and question government plans, and this is a consistent theme across the three kampungs. A state agent (S2) cited the Bukit Duri eviction case where the government was brought to court because some residents had land certificates to prove their ownership. Separately, an NGO respondent (N2) said that the residents won a class-action lawsuit in Bukit Duri because the government did not have the land certificates to prove that it owned that land but had evicted the residents anyway, even though some of them had proof of ownership (The Jakarta Post, 2017). In considering whether there are different notions of rights and citizenship among locals and migrants, a state agent (S2) reflected that Ahok did not really take into account equality from the perspective of citizenship though he was focused on achieving “social justice for the residents”, and that citizenship rights are also not prevalent in public discourse on urban development.

Speaking to the residents revealed their varied perceptions about how different politicians and levels of government viewed them. One resident (KLBI) commented that the divergence between Ahok and Anies’ attitudes towards kampung people in Jakarta was “black and white”, clear enough for all to see the former is negative and the latter is positive — based on their rhetoric and actions towards the kampungs. This led many to have high hopes for Anies to do right by marginalised citizens, though experts and NGO respondents interviewed cautioned that while the kampung residents seem to have some power with Anies as the governor, the real power to negotiate with the state may lie in wealthy urban citizens and private developers who have close relations with the political elites. An NGO respondent (N2) said that even though Jokowi and Ahok shared similar development goals, people also perceived them differently due to their divergent approaches in dealing with people and according respect to ordinary citizens. Even though there are different layers of political representation and governance which may conflict with each other, the ordinary resident does not usually see this and their view of the state tends to be monolithic due to limited direct exposure to the state. An NGO respondent (N4) found that some residents of targeted

kampungs have grown accustomed to being evicted from time to time and there are some variants of a patron-client relationship between residents and the lowest levels of government such as the municipal police (“*Satpol PP*”):

“People don’t like them [the municipal police], but they [the police] are also giving some protection. As long as you are not seen from the highways or there is no media blowing it up, it’s ok, they let you live there, and these people pay some security money. Sometimes they are also given some access to electricity and clean water. So there is some business going on there. And people are not sure whether he is really a government officer.” (N4)

Non-state actors work with the government to varying degrees — whether it is to collaborate, mediate or monitor, depending on their perception of the state and their previous interactions. One NGO (N4) which does immersive research collaborates with the government on commissioned projects, but ensures that in their fieldwork protocol they listen to the people beyond the scope of what the government wants them to cover, and they maintain their independence and distance from government through mixing commissioned research and their own research agendas in the field. There were comments from several NGO respondents about a certain NGO, active in Community Action Plan (CAP), being closely affiliated to the current governor Anies. This has led some to perceive that the renewal and upgrading plans of urban villages during Anies’s campaign might have been externally derived, and not something that originated from him. There were mixed reactions to this. An expert (E1) said that if an NGO was too close to the government such as possibly in this case, it should not be considered an NGO, whereas another expert (E2) had the opinion that NGOs must support the governor in solving urban issues. An NGO respondent (N2) said that his organisation did not oppose NGOs being close to the government because it is important that non-state actors employ a range of approaches and interventions in urban governance. He emphasised, however, that NGOs, whatever their relationship is to the government of the day, should be transparent and argued that many NGOs in Jakarta are not transparent about their funding and political affiliations. Urban expert (E1) observed that there is a growing gap between the government and the ground, and advocated that academics

of today, as the other set of non-state actors, need to work as mediators to solve urban issues, not just “thinkers with normative ideas” of how the world should work.

Working with government can be complicated due to various reasons. An important strategy NGO respondents highlighted in order to enact change in a larger and substantial way on housing issues is to get buy-in from political parties with parliamentary representation, especially since there is a paucity of legislation to deal with victims of eviction and relocation. However, according to an NGO respondent (N2), it may not be easy to gain the buy-in of the political parties as they may not agree with all of an NGO’s stance on other politically sensitive issues such as LGBT and Ahmadiyya rights, and hence view supporting their work as a political risk. Furthermore, even though some alumni from NGOs eventually join politics, N2 is of the opinion that they tend to move away from civil society activism, and the “ideologues who stay true to their civil society activist ideas” are not usually the ones going into politics. Another NGO respondent (N4) was not so sure who actually holds the power to shift policy in Indonesia because the government is so complex. Therefore, their strategy in getting support and making an impact is to reach out to different levels of government for different purposes, being “very opportunistic” according to him. In October 2017 a presidential decree on mass organisations was passed (*Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang tentang Organisasi Kemasyarakatan* or PERPPU ORMAS) in light of growing hardline groups disrupting established practice of religious tolerance in Indonesia (Kominfo, 2017; Da Costa, 2017). This decree allows the government to disband NGOs which it deems as going against the secular state ideology (*Pancasila*), causing concern among many civil society organisations. Many civil society actors reportedly opposed what they perceive to be a reactive response that violates the constitutional rights to freedom of expression, organisation and assembly.<sup>13</sup> To what extent this new decree impacts on NGO politics in urban issues remains to be seen.

Integral to state-society dynamics is the nature and degree of the presence of the state in everyday life — where and how the state is being seen. In the urban kampung spaces, the presence of the state may vary to a large extent because of the legal status of the land, the land’s commercial value, and the

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<sup>13</sup> See for instance Hafiz (2017).

visibility of the kampungs. Respondents from the three kampungs reflected on the presence of the state in both the physical and more abstract sense. One resident (KLBI) said he sees public works being done but is not sure who was doing the planning or where the money is coming from, and other than free schooling and medical care, he does not perceive much presence of the state in everyday life.

In another kampung, a resident (KTI) said that everything there is done through self-help (*swadaya*), by organic effort to build up and maintain the kampung. Examples include sanitation and the roads, whereas water is often purchased from a private supplier, though in Kampung Japat, the residents said that their electricity and water supply were being provided by the government and they pay monthly fees. The presence of the state in well-maintained but hidden from plain view Kampung Tongkol is limited to the times when state officers came to measure the road, presumably for planning and redevelopment purposes. The resident (KTI) said they would be happy for the state to be more present but were aware that the land is “illegal” in the eyes of the state, though he added that residents do pay some form of land taxes so he was not sure what legal or illegal right to the land really means in theory and practice.

Given the various housing challenges affecting the residents, it might be expected that they would make unrealistic demands through channels of representation available to them, such as their elected RT leader and the *musrenbang* process at the community, district, provincial and national levels. A kampung resident (KJI) estimated that about 35 percent of their demands would usually be met because they “have to be realistic and community demands can be many”, and the time taken from discussion to implementation takes about a year — with which they seem to have little issue. An NGO respondent (N4) whose work involves living with kampung and slum dwellers found that people are rarely demanding of the local government as long as they are allowed to seek their own livelihood, and that NGOs are the ones who are usually asking the government “to do this and that”. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, people want to improve their lives but do not want to be involved in “formal meetings” which seem to them like fulfilling a checklist for officials who have to be accountable for the funds to the district office, rather than to people’s needs. The NGO respondent (N4) gave an account:

“So they got the money and worry that if they do something wrong with it, they may go to jail. So what are the other village officials doing with their money? If they are making roads, others will also make roads. So everywhere now there is a massive road construction in the village. It’s either roads or water sanitation. Is that what people want? No. Because they need to disburse money as soon as possible, within a year.”

## **5. The politics of housing and prospects for right to the city**

In this paper I examine the current state-society interactions in selected urban kampungs in Jakarta to understand how changing state-society dynamics, in the face of rapid urbanisation, can help the marginalised access their right to the city, and in particular, housing. The issue of housing has become central to the urban politics of Jakarta because of increasing evictions seen alongside a growing urban population and weak urban governance unable to ensure adequate access to basic housing. Yet, what constitutes “housing” may not be as easily and uniformly understood across different groups in society, with competing views on the place of kampungs in the city. I argue that everyday state-society interactions between citizens, NGOs, and state actors, informed by differential notions of the housing issue, are crucial to increasing the welfare of urban residents and their access to the city, though not without some limitations and implications on the larger urban politics of Jakarta.

I drew upon the theoretical framework of “seeing” or perceiving (McFarlane & Silver, 2017) to understand state-society relations, undergirded by notions of the right to the city to make sense of the key concerns raised by the various actors. Housing has been used as a vehicle to explore several interrelated issues (employment, residency status, land, attitudes to migrants) that affect urbanisation, governance, and urban residents. Urban villages have attracted a lot of attention recently from various quarters, but there are competing views about what to do with them — whether to conserve, renew, evict, or relocate, informed by varying conceptions of housing as an urban issue. These issues also shape differentiated experiences of citizenship and understandings of the state, as they are “important sites of encounter and negotiation” (Rodina & Harris, 2016). The distinct conceptions and experiences

of the housing problem, “seeing housing”, also shape the actions that each actor takes. These impact on state-society dynamics, which can be understood not only through evidently political arenas such as elections and social movements, but also perhaps more directly through everyday life and ordinary needs as citizens and state encounter each other and formulate notions of their roles and responsibilities (Rodina & Harris, 2016).

Legibility and context play a major role in how housing issues are perceived by residents, with some expectations of state provision (simplification) and recognition of different forms of governance. The impulse to make society more visible and organised can be seen through the adoption by various actors the state’s discourse on dichotomising “residents” and “migrants”, particularly in terms of who the government should be looking after and has the right to the city. By controlling Jakarta ID through unofficial quota, it gives the state a semblance of enumeration and hence control. Such attempts though were not always successful due to insufficient data (such as the exact numbers of available jobs and people coming into the city), how a migrant or resident is considered by society through history and traditions conflicting with the state’s official stance, a flawed system and people finding ways to circumvent it for their own benefit. Analysing how actors viewed the housing issue brought to light the contexts in which these views were formulated. What is considered “locked” into informality from a macro point of view, is viewed differently by individuals who may be content with informal jobs because better options are not conceivable. Perceptions of Jakarta as an alluring capital city, fed by the media and continuous development of its built environment, would be difficult and slow to change. Colonial history also has an impact on how foreigners are singled out to be the main beneficiaries of urbanisation, and how meanings of land have increased in importance in such rapid urban change. There is some expectation of the state to involve or, at the least, inform its citizens of changes which would affect their livelihoods, as well as expectations that the state meets its own standards. For instance, in terms of having proof of legal ownership of land or ensuring there are enough green spaces in the city as envisioned in the master plans. However, it can be seen that where NGOs’ expectation of the state is concerned, it consists of fulfilling its responsibilities towards citizens’ basic rights, whereas the state’s self-reflection is different — it recognises that the housing situation has a more pointed diagnosis — that citizens need to know the law better.

We have seen the various strategies of residents and NGOs, balancing the need to rally residents together (which may require hyperbolic emotional appeals) and to keep the state close (which may require presenting more rational approaches), depending on how they perceive the housing situation. The role of non-state actors is pertinent so as not to create a heavy reliance on the state, and to recognise and protect the resilience and agency of kampung communities. Evictions became a practical strategy of governors who wanted problems to be quickly dealt with, and to better organise society according to proper zoning areas and legal status of land. Yet this exercise in increasing legibility, including the use of vertical housing as a relocation solution, further exposes the varied meanings of housing which the state needs to contest with because housing is also closely linked to livelihoods and lifestyles, as well as the unappealing history of vertical housing in the city. The uncertainty of evictions has led non-state actors to come up with alternatives, and in doing so, to “see” their living space as more than just a roof over their head, such as the kampung as a heritage site, and to focus on the process rather than only immediate outcomes, such as signing a political contract; hence breaking free from following the same simplistic structural script as the state in dealing with the issue of housing. Communities on the ground very often know how to manage in-migration better because they tend to know the residents well and do not have the simplistic dichotomy of local versus migrant which government systems like the city ID seem to adversely perpetuate. The piecemeal efforts by the state to control inflows indicate some desire to manage them, without the same emphasis on addressing the causes of these movements and focusing solely on treating the symptoms and consequent issues. Difficulties in defining residency status tend to have an inclusive effect in terms of non-state actors taking action. This is primarily because they view such a narrow definition as an infringement on the freedoms of movement and to seek a livelihood as a citizen of the state and especially as part of the urban poor.

The instances in which perceiving translated or did not translate into certain types of politicisation could be explained by challenges faced by the different state and non-state actors in carrying out their objectives. The lack of a tradition of written records made implementing some of the solutions by the non-state actors challenging because the right of ownership and legal residence depends on documentation, which also affects voting rights. The corruption and accessibility issues of the KTP also reduce the power of residents to stake their

political claims through electoral voting. The increasing legalistic and formal approaches over informal institutions and attention paid to documentation may be appropriate in the long run for better governance, but the transition needs care in order not to exacerbate the current situation and compromise well-intended solutions. Another instance is the advent of the consultative development (*musrenbang*) practice which has served to underscore the importance of informal horizontal relationships and everyday realities which should not be ignored and wholly replaced by formal mechanisms which have not been well-received by residents. Modifying the medium of engagement that is not set by or closely associated with state control, such as social media platforms, seems to yield more positive results, at least among the younger generation.

The state, NGOs, and residents each face organisational challenges. Resident groups have internal conflicts, buy-in issues, and face attrition rates of participation in defending their right to the land or planning for the future of their kampungs. State actors found that their plans to carry out actions such as relocation often get stalled by residents and NGOs, notwithstanding the inter-agency coordination and internal tensions the government faces. NGOs may be deemed as being too “people-centric” because they do not consider the legalities. Yet the paradox is that the state sometimes acts arbitrarily with regard to which legislation needs to be followed exactly and which need not, such as in the case of easing the process of formalising land ownership of residents, allowed for under the civil code but which has faced various implementation issues.

In the interactions between society and the state, the perceptions that non-state and state actors have of each other shape their engagement strategy, whether they carry out demonstrations, electoral politics, legal defence, mediation or capacity building of communities, to various degrees of success. Non-state actors learn how to view and conduct politics according to the state’s playbook, and at the same time, to send a clear signal that they intend to alter the lack of citizenship rights in public discourse by employing a citizen-centric political discourse more strongly. The presence of the state in everyday life is dependent on state capacity, but also on the legal status, land value, and visibility of the kampungs — in essence how the kampung is “seen”. Though in the three kampungs the presence of the state is intermittent and non-standardised, residents are largely self-reliant and appreciative of government

efforts to improve access to education and basic infrastructure.

The patterns of perception and politicisation in the context of housing and rapid urbanisation outlined in this paper have implications for the larger state-society dynamics that can be further examined. Beyond helping to explain the tensions in state-society dynamics, understanding how housing is perceived and politicised by different actors can also inform us about the (differential) notions of the right to the city and what can be done to achieve better rights for citizens. The strategies by the different actors and interactions between society and the state have helped to address, to some extent, the right to housing of marginalised residents who face the threat of evictions and relocations, and limited access to basic urban services and employment options. The urban renewal programmes for some kampungs give hope that the housing challenge can also be alleviated. Residents, regardless of whether they have formal city citizenship, take ownership and a longer-term view with different strategies to actively claim their right to participate in the city, instead of merely reacting when something severe such as an eviction occurs. These efforts are buoyed by the thriving social capital in kampungs which helps keep rapid urbanisation and its attendant effects at bay, and also by the involvement of NGOs which help empower residents and keep the government on its toes. What has been discussed in this paper demonstrates the challenges of achieving right to the city at a level that would be adequate for all residents especially the urban poor when differential conceptions of urban issues exist. Perhaps the changing state-society dynamics may foster new ways of seeing and engaging with the other which would harness the collectivity crucial to the realisation of the right to the city for all.

Given the exploratory nature of this paper, there are several limitations to the theoretical and methodological approaches. First, while the adaptation of McFarlane and Silver's (2017) "seeing" framework is useful in elucidating the housing issue in Jakarta, a further step to be explored is to theorise how the actors could try to influence each other's perceptions of the housing issues, especially since it is established that perceptions are key to the course of action adopted by the different actors. Second, due to limited access and a short timeframe for the research, the small snowball sampling method employed could be increased and improved upon with more time spent on-site to observe day-to-day interactions under different conditions, such as seasonal weather and political events, to ascertain whether the

explanations are generalisable across more cases and can hold under varying circumstances and the reasons for why or why not. Third, related to the second point, changes in state-society relations as well as people's views on urban kampungs could also be more rigorously tracked over a longer period. Furthermore, since most of the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and transcribed by the author into English for data analysis, it must be acknowledged that some sociocultural meanings behind the usage of certain vocabulary might have been lost in translation. This aspect can be given closer attention in further research.

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