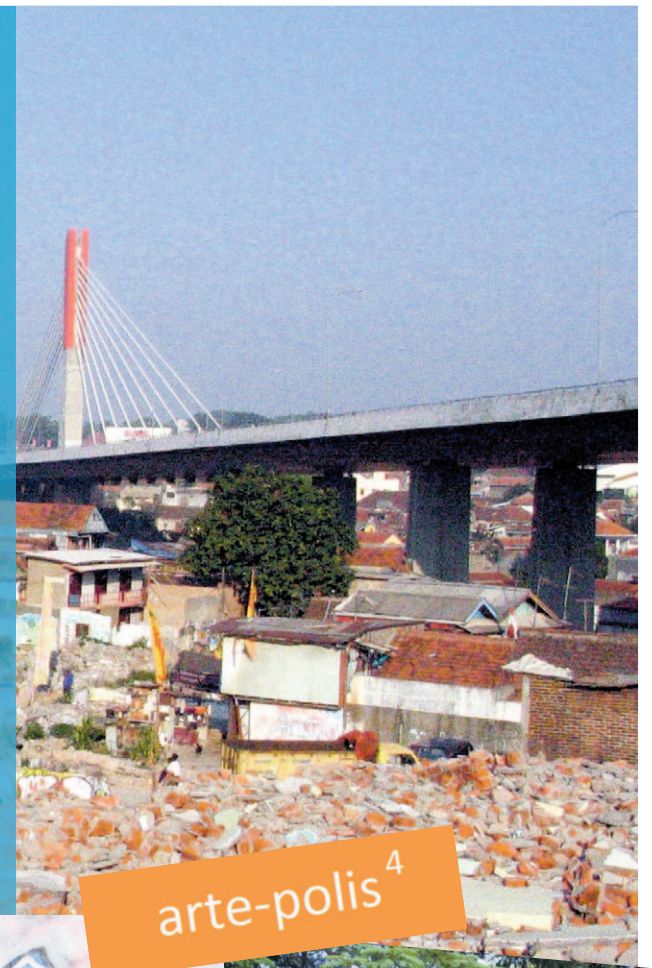


Creating places and connections

The Place-makers



Spaces and places frame life; furthermore, the ways we use these spaces and places are framed by the ways we talk about them: scientifically, aesthetically, morally, politically, economically, etc. When the stories we tell, and are being told, about our cities gain a sense of inevitability they become oppressing. There always are – and should be – alternative points of view. The last decade or so, the dominant theme has been creativity: the creative city, creative economy or industry



arte-polis⁴



Arte-Polis 4 International Conference and Workshop Creative Connectivity and the Making of Place: Living Smart by Design School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development Institute of Technology Bandung, West Java, Indonesia 5-7 July 2012 (<http://arte-polis.info>)

THE GENEALOGY OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY ITB (<http://www.itb.ac.id/en/>) dates back to colonial times and it has some illustrious alumni; for example, the first and third presidents of the Republic of Indonesia – respectively Soekarno (president between the declaration of independence in 1945 and his ousting in 1966) and Habibie (president between the ousting of Soeharto in 1998, to which many ITB students contributed with their protests – and the first post-Soeharto elections in 1999). Many ITB lecturers – who are civil servants if they have a permanent contract – work as consultants to the state and its central and local governments. The Indonesian state has had for decades a strong top-down developmentalist approach to modernize the economy, and the Arte-Polis conferences are an attempt to change this story. It therefore comes as no surprise that ministers are invited to deliver keynote speeches.

Arte-Polis aims “to bring together and to connect practitioners, academics, artists, community leaders, local government officials, policy-makers and other professionals from diverse disciplines and regions around the world concerned with the quality of life and collaborative nature of creative communities [...]. Its objective is to share and learn from international and local experiences regarding current issues, best practices and policy implications of creative connectivity on place-making.”²

I should start with a disclaimer though; in 2008, I presented a paper at one of the parallel sessions at Arte-Polis 2. And in 2010, I organized a roundtable discussion on the political nature of, and the role of, artist initiatives in public space at Arte-Polis 3. In 2003, right after my graduation from the University of Amsterdam, I left for Indonesia and I started lecturing political theory at several universities in Jakarta and Bandung, including ITB. Very soon, however, I came to realize that what I had learned and what I was teaching was rather abstract. I am not just saying that we should pay closer attention to the context,

and the creative class. Researcher and consultant Richard Florida has done much to popularize the concept of the creative city,¹ and Charles Landry for the concept of the creative city.¹ And theirs is a global appeal; Arte-Polis 1 was organized in 2006 by the Department of Architecture, and in 2008, the School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development (SAPD/SAPPK) at the Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB), Indonesia, took over the organization of the biannual conferences.

Roy Voragen

for example, social behavior and the particularities of the political economy, which is too often overlooked. In the “third wave” literature, for example, it seems as if transition is an irreversible process from A to B if a country constructs the right institutions.³ In one of my classes I attempted with my students to accomplish the meeting of Indonesia’s national political philosophy *Pancasila* and the political theories of John Rawls, Richard Rorty and others.⁴ It was, however, not so much the local context I was missing, but the spatial component of public space in the writings of Rawls, Rorty and others. I am not saying that these theorists are too blame for this omission – some things need to be omitted to keep writings readable – but for me it meant a spatial turn, a turn to the writings of urban geographers and architects. So it was only natural for me to gravitate towards ITB’s Arte-Polis conferences.

Conference program

The British Council supported the second edition of Arte-Polis, and up to today it still organizes the Young Creative Entrepreneur awards.⁵ The ITB alumnus and architect Ridwan Kamil, founder of Urbane,⁶ was the 2006 winner. Some of the keynote speakers at previous Arte-Polis editions were professor emeritus Alexander Cuthbert from the University of North South Wales (in 2006); former Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs professor Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti (in 2006); above-mentioned Charles Landry (in 2008); professor Eku Wand from Braunschweig University of Art in Germany, which collaborates with ITB’s School of Fine Art and Design (in 2010); and professor Nezar Alsayyad from the University of California in Berkeley, from which Ridwan Kamil is an alumnus (also in 2010).

The danger of flying in well-known speakers from abroad is that their talks can be rather broad with little relationship to Indonesia. While Eku Wand’s talk showed in a very entertaining way how interactive design could work, Charles Landry’s talk discussed case studies of place-making in the UK from which it was difficult to distillate possible implications for the Indonesian situation.

In 2006, 2008 and 2012, the conference was organized at the ITB campus. In 2010, Arte-Polis 3 was organized in The Asia Africa Conference Museum, this museum commemorates the meeting of newly independent and non-aligned countries from Asia and Africa in 1955. This location was chosen to promote a different side of Bandung, as the center of the city has slowly moved

1 (main image): The Pasupati flyover after the eviction.

2 (Inset): Graffiti and two scavengers under the Pasupati flyover;

3 (Inset): Logo Arte-Polis 4;

4 (Inset): Bandung emerging creative city signage nearby the Pasupati flyover.

All photos by Roy Voragen.

A review of Arte-Polis 4

northwards. Interestingly, when a representative of the museum opened Arte-Polis, no reference was made to the colonial use of the building, this art deco-styled building used to house Sociëteit Concordia, a club for plantation owners.⁷

In 2012, when Arte-Polis moved back to the campus, the conference had around a hundred speakers from over fifteen different countries, which made it smaller than the previous edition, which was a blessing in disguise as there are only so many presentations one can attend. However, if Arte-Polis is about exchanging best experiences then it is unfortunate that previous successful program elements were not repeated this time around; this time there was no art exhibition as was the case in 2006 (ITB has an campus art gallery: Gallery Soemardja); no site-specific projects (in 2008: 'Reclaiming Lost Space' under the Pasupati flyover, which is at walking distance from the campus); and no roundtable discussions (of which I organized one in 2010). The roundtable discussions were particularly missed as these offer an opportunity to interact and discuss on a more fruitful level than a short question and answer session after a presentation can provide.

Smart cities

Every few years or so new buzz words and lingo surfaces. This time around it was 'smart': smart cities, smart design and smart thinking. One of the two workshops was titled Smart Growth Workshop. And the first keynote speaker, professor Ulrich Weinberg from HPI School of Design Thinking (Potsdam, Germany), spoke about smart design and thinking. In his talk, which seemed a bit like a PR pitch to start a franchise of his institute in Indonesia, he explained that smart design and thinking focuses on multidisciplinary collaboration and co-production; he gave Wikipedia as an example.⁸ Due to a generally strong social conformism, Indonesia could perhaps use a more individualistic spirit to achieve new ideas. However, just as with 'creative' cities, how are cities 'smart' – is that not a human attribute?

By far the most inspiring presentation was by the second keynote speaker, Anies Baswedan, the rector of Paramadina University in Jakarta, which was founded by Muslim intellectual Nurcholish Madjid. Anies Baswedan stated that Asia is re-emerging, but that at the very same time there are many social ills that cannot all be solved by a top-down approach, even though it is our natural response to look at the state for action to deal with social problems. He tested this by asking the audience whose responsibility it is to deal with the floods that plague Jakarta. And the general consensus was that it is the state's responsibility. However, it is our garbage that fills up and blocks the sewer system, the rivers and canals. He told us not to wait for the government to step in just because we pay taxes. He continued to speak about a project he founded, *Indonesia Mengajar* ('Indonesia Teaches'), which deals with the very uneven distribution of high-quality teachers.⁹ University graduates who participate in the *Indonesia Mengajar* project are sent to remote areas to teach for a year; it is not considered an alternative career path, as the pay in the private sector is much higher, but it is seen as a rewarding civic duty. This project, Anies Baswedan hopes, is to become a hub of trust (littering and tax evasion are only two of the many signs that social trust has eroded in Indonesia) so that the fifth pillar of *Pancasila* becomes a reality: social justice.

Future urban design

The Indonesian government was represented by two keynote speakers: vice minister at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Sapta Nirwandar, and Imam S. Ernawi (Ministry of

It should not only benefit one class – the so-called creative class – within these cities. If we speak in terms of class, as Florida does, we also have to speak in terms of class interests, for which members need to recognize themselves as a class to be able to lobby for their interests.

Public Works). The first spoke about connecting tourism with the creative economy to improve the quality of life. He said very little how this is to be done other than the usual city branding through the use of landmarks, such as the Eiffel Tower (but, as professor Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, another keynote speaker, pointed out, most of us don't have a use for a landmark like Marina Bay in Singapore).¹⁰ And he said nothing about whose lives could be qualitatively improved. Moreover, how sustainable can a city be if the focus is on tourism? Since the opening of the Cipularang toll road in May 2005, which connects Jakarta with Bandung, many tourists have been coming from Jakarta to Bandung, which benefits some, but causes problems for all (traffic jams are the most visible issue).

Imam S. Ernawi, the second government representative, spoke about the plans developed by the Ministry of Public Works, but little about their implementation. The next keynote speaker formed, therefore, a good contrast. Professor emeritus and founder of the Center of Urban Design Studies, Mohammad Danisworo, talked about the need to develop a MRT system in Jakarta.¹¹ He has been discussing this topic since 1972, forty years and five presidents later he speaks about it again at Arte-Polis 4 (he mentioned that eighty percent of that time has been lost due to politicking). He hopes that the MRT can be a catalyst to transformative processes. Unfortunately, he didn't mention anything about the overlapping trajectories of the already existing Transjakarta Busway and the to be constructed MRT.¹²

The parallel sessions were conducted in more intimate settings, on average an audience would have twenty or so members. Quite a few of the speakers at parallel sessions had difficulties controlling their nerves and dealing with insufficient English proficiency (with this many speakers it wouldn't work to use translators due to time constraints). Some of these speakers failed to realize that presenting a paper to a live audience is very different than writing one. The energetic presentation by Jeanne M. Lambin, adjunct professor at the University of Florida and guest lecturer at ITB, was a great example though, as she turned it into a mini workshop. She is developing a deck of cards as a playful and low-tech tool to investigate how people use their cities, and she asked us to scribble drawings and keywords on a card we each received (the deck of cards is still a work in progress). One issue that affected nearly all presentations is that speakers talked about their own projects; for some, more critical distance would have been welcome, which was amplified all the more in those presentations by speakers who were wearing two hats: that of the researcher as well as that of the consultant. The pragmatic consultant makes it difficult for the researcher to step back and question the parameters in which they work, the political economy is then taken for granted.

Creativity for everyone

Kathleen Azali, from Co2 library in Surabaya and one of the parallel session speakers,¹³ stated: "If the concept [of the creative city] is truly about empowering, unleashing potential, turning problems into potentials," then the concept should not only be applied to a few – the lucky few – cities. And we could add to her plea: it should not only benefit one class – the so-called creative class – within these cities. This brings us back to Richard Florida, his methods, categories and findings have been widely criticized. And yet, the impact of his writings and talks is enormous. If we speak in terms of class, as Florida does, we also have to speak in terms of class interests, for which members need to recognize themselves as a class to be able to lobby for their interests.¹⁴ Florida describes 'creativity as an economic

force',¹⁵ and even if creativity, as Florida understands it, increases GDP and even if government policies to support the creative class (subsidies and easier permits for members of the creative class) help to increase GDP, it doesn't say anything about its distribution. And how sustainable are such policies if it leads to increased inter-city competition? Florida mentions that everyone can be creative and that this potential should be used – who can argue against creativity? – but that contradicts the concept of class. And he also claims – or hopes? – that somehow the gains of creativity will trickle down.

And because every one can potentially be creative, creativity is a great lobby argument. The danger, though, is that policies aimed at the creative class further increases inequality, and not only in terms of wealth distribution, but also in terms of access to space. The danger, then, is that the uncreative people will be evicted to make room for members of the creative class and their interests.¹⁶ Many families were evicted from the center of Bandung, for example, to make room for a shopping mall and the above-mentioned flyover.¹⁷ Once more, I am obviously not against creativity, but that should not warrant another blow to the fragile state of solidarity in Indonesia. And to merely state that the urban poor are capable of creativity and also have the right to the city isn't enough,¹⁸ it will require building bridges as Anies Baswedan would have it.

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Notes

- 1 For Richard Florida's consultancy firm Creative Class Group see: www.creativeclass.com and for Charles Landry: www.charleslandry.com.
- 2 See <http://arte-polis.info> (accessed 15 July 2012).
- 3 Henk Schulte Nordholt. 2003. 'Renegotiating boundaries. Access, agency and identity in post-Suharto Indonesia', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 159:551.
- 4 The five basic principles of Indonesia's state ideology: the belief in one God; just and civilized humanity; the unity of the Republic of Indonesia; democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation; and social justice for all. At first, my students responded with cynicism to my proposal to re-interpret their state philosophy as they have come to see *Pancasila* as a propaganda tool.
- 5 tinyurl.com/cwuh3ap (accessed 15 July 2012).
- 6 www.urbane.co.id.
- 7 Built along the *Groote Postweg* (i.e., Great Postal Road), today called *Jalan Asia-Afrika*.
- 8 A parallel session speaker, Chong Keng Hua, also emphasized this multidisciplinary aspect, which he oddly called crowd sourcing, but a group of a dozen specialists is not a crowd.
- 9 <http://indonesiamengajar.com>.
- 10 Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and her partner Andrés Duany, also a keynote speaker, are proponents of New Urbanism, which is a sociological approach to architecture and urban planning that seeks to end urban sprawl and urban disinvestment. <http://www.dpz.com>.
- 11 <http://psud.web.id>.
- 12 <http://www.transjakarta.co.id>. The Transjakarta Busway is modeled after a similar system in Bogota Colombia, and the first route has been operational since January 2004.
- 13 <http://c2o-library.net/?lang=en>.
- 14 And if we speak in terms of class interests, we also have to speak in terms of class conflicts – which only occurs below the radar in Indonesia, as it became a taboo after the elimination of the communist party in 1965-1966.
- 15 Richard Florida. 2012. 'The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited', *The Atlantic*, 25 June 2012, tinyurl.com/6qz4uhp (accessed 13 July 2012). In the same essay he sweepingly writes: "The Creative Class has become truly global, numbering between one-third to nearly one-half of the workforce in the advanced nations of North America, Europe, Asia, and around the world." That is for sure not the case in Indonesia (but I will use the term creative class for reasons of brevity). Furthermore, he refers to the political scientist Ronald Inglehart and his concept of the 'post-materialist values', but it is highly questionable whether it applies to Indonesia.
- 16 The academic term for this process is gentrification; Belgium artist Reinaart Vanhoe calls this the colonization of the city, which leads to a populist backlash. Reinaart Vanhoe. 2007. 'A Plea for an Uncreative City: About Rotterdam', *Metropolis M*, no.1; tinyurl.com/cnphx5 (accessed 15 July 2012).
- 17 Gustaaf Reerink. 2011. *Tenure security for Indonesia's urban poor, A socio-legal study on land, decentralization and the rule of law in Bandung*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.
- 18 Dr. Tita Larasati and her student Prananda Luffiansyah Malasan presented a project, which they claim, reclaims the street. However, it is one thing to criticize the middle class of spending too much time in shopping malls, it is an altogether different matter to claim that the streets are vacant. <http://keukenbdg.com>.

5 (below): Graffiti by Irwan B. Dharmawan under the Pasupati flyover.

