'Empowering Jakarta's Other Urbanism'

URBANISME mikro





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1. Identify, catalogue and understand the strategies of micro-urbanism used by Jakarta residents at the neighbourhood level to produce urban spaces and deal with a variety of associated challenges

2. Empower neighbourhood-level decision makers and participatory local governance as the foundation of sustainable urban development for the future, initiate a meaningful shift in policy and public opinion regarding the role of 'neighbourhood'

3. Initiate interdisciplinary dialogue between local partners, industry practitioners, academics and state institutions to develop micro-scale innovations for a range of urban challenges

4. Co-produce more compact, equitable, resilient and sustainable neighbourhoods across all relevant metrics, able to effectively provide for the diverse needs of all residents for generations to come

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian capital is the world's largest developing city, and the metropolitan region of Jabodetabek is set to overtake Metro Tokyo as the world's most populated urban agglomeration in the coming decades, if it has not already done so (a significant portion of the Jabodetabek population likely remain unaccounted for by official data).

The speed at which the city has expanded has inevitably resulted in significant challenges for governance, many of which relate to the practical issues of policymaking across such a vast and highly differentiated space. The extent of divergence between different areas of the city, even those within a short distance from one another, has been publicly recognised by the provincial government as a serious issue, yet while major public transportation projects, urban renewal programs and private developments continue to expand, large parts of the city remain largely excluded from Jakarta's ongoing transformation.

Yet citizens of all walks of life continue to thrive here, drawn to the capital from across the archipelago despite the many challenges of living in this congested and highly vulnerable metropolis. For many, the strategies for dealing with perennial crises like flooding and fires, as well as chronic issues including poverty, congestion, overcrowding and a lack of public space, are generated not at the the level of provincial or municipal administration, but through the small-scale and interpersonal relationships which have traditionally defined Indonesian cultural and political life.

Innovation, collaboration and accommodation make daily life in Jakarta possible for tens of millions of citizens, whose interests are deeply enmeshed within dynamic and at times unpredictable networks of mutual dependency. Localised frameworks for dialogue, concession and arbitration on a whole range of issues has developed over hundreds of years into a tradition of small-scale or micro-urbanism, and for many citizens Jakarta's real-world governance takes place with little, if any, involvement from formal state institutions whatsoever.

The covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented disruption to the capital region and beyond, and with looming challenges such as land subsidence, water scarcity, worsening air pollution and increasing economic inequality on the horizon, recognising and ultimately empowering the hyper local micro-urbanism of Jakarta's neighbourhoods to articulate their own future is an essential part of building a fairer, more resilient and more liveable city in the decades to come.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, as an urbanizing global population places ever greater pressure on the world's cities, increasing focus has been paid by academics and researchers to the finer details of urban space, and how these might play a role in producing desirable socioeconomic outcomes for the populations of the 21st century. Twentieth century approaches to urbanism were defined by the larger scale of emerging industrial economics - city-wide spatial planning initiatives, sprawling infrastructure projects and wholescale remodelling of entire neighbourhoods, if not entire cities. Such massive investments appear increasingly unwise in an era of increasing uncertainty, and rapid transformation in key economic, social and environmental systems which underpin urban life.

Jakarta, perhaps more than most, is at the cutting edge of the global city's contemporary struggle to adapt. Floods, droughts, land subsidence, soaring temperatures and worsening pollution, widening inequality, ongoing population growth, a constant stream of disruptive technologies and the ever-present threat of earthquakes and other seismic activity - the Indonesian capital is both the world's most vulnerable city and also one of its most dynamic metropolises. The diffuse nature of these perennial crises (and opportunities) seem poorly-suited to centralized management, and indeed Jakarta has a long history of questionable success and outright failure when it comes to keeping up with it's own self-generated issues of scale over the decades.

But there is also another history, perhaps even longer, which has produced some of the most vibrant and demonstrably resilient areas of the sprawling capital region, a home-grown and highly idiosyncratic form of urbanism within which a broad range of social, economic and political issues are situated very much within the context of 'local.' Jakarta's renowned 'urban villages' or kampung, emerging largely through a combination of indigenous culture and colonial-era policy, have withstood tumultuous years of open conflict, social upheaval, economic crisis and a breakneck rush towards modernity, evolving to suit the needs of their residents for, in some cases, hundreds of years. What, then, can these heterogeneous and highly informal spaces reveal about long-term viability in a city where so little else remains unchanged?

Governed largely by consensus, and administered according to the highly-localised expertise of citizens with a deep understanding of their immediate environment, Jakarta's kampung exemplify an urbanism of a different scale, more fluid and responsive to the complexities of daily life than is possible for any centralised authority. This kind of deeply ingrained micro-urbanism can encompass everything from crisis response in the wake of floods and fires to the equitable management of limited space, systems of economic cooperation and physical security, education, cultural and religious programs, and almost any issue of significance to a given population. Jakarta has always been a challenging place to live, but the speed and scale of current and future disruptions confronting the capital demand radical innovations in urban policymaking, and further empowerment of citizens to take an active role in their own socioeconomic resilience. In essence, the future must be micro.



Urbanisme
Mikro

What is Micro-urbanism?

Micro-urbanism is a reconceptualising of the city at a smaller scale, in which the lived experiences of spaces and their use form the basis of a framework for understanding and improving them. While it may offer a smaller geographical scope compared to more traditional approaches for understanding the city, it nonetheless presents an extremely rich and highly complex urban environment, defined not only by physical size but also by changes over time, overlapping and contested functions, and even the subjective perceptions of individual residents. It is by applying this powerful lens to study the essential minutiae of Jakarta's vast urban landscape that we might identify, catalogue, replicate and empower some of the diverse strategies upon which its citizens successfully build their communities.









At its core, micro-urbanism is governed by a few key principles:

1. Defining space by quality over quantity

The value of a given space cannot be calculated based only on its size. The potential for even marginal or seemingly unsuitable spaces to offer significant use-value cannot be overlooked in a city where real, accessible, public spaces are entirely lacking for the majority of citizens.

2. Accommodating sharing and managing contestation

Overcrowding and high density mean that monofunctional urban spaces in Jakarta are essentially non-existent. Managing access to and ownership of limited space is a fundamental component of urban life at the local scale.

3. Recognising the importance of time

Jakarta is a dynamic metropolis, constantly moving through hourly, daily, weekly and seasonal cycles which influence how residents interact with the city. Understanding the interaction between these interlocking rhythms and the outcomes they generate is an essential part of understanding how the city functions.

4. Integrating Informality

Much of what comprises micro-urbanism takes place outside the boundaries of official authority, where fluidity and flexibility replace rule-making and regulation. Decision-making in matters of economic and social life is therefore more likely to emerge via consensus and agreement at a given moment, rather than by establishing rigid precedent or procedure.



5. Facilitating dialogue

Micro-urbanism takes place at the local scale, where individual concerns and the nuances of daily life are a salient component of decision making. Dialogue and communication between stakeholders is an essential part of consensus building, which promotes ongoing collaboration and a sense of engagement with urban issues.

6. Building organically, working collectively

Equal access to the decision-making process is a critical component of small-scale resilience, to ensure participation in implementing and working towards positive outcomes for all. The fundamental unit of micro-urbanism is an engaged and empowered community.



7. Accepting the 'subjective of the city'

Standardised frameworks for design and management cannot account for the highly variable way each of us interprets the urban environment. Micro-urbanism appreciates the differences in lived experience of a single space by people of different ages, genders, cultural or racial backgrounds and sexual orientations, as well as those with disabilities or significant physical and mental health issues, as a valid basis for decision-making.

By focusing on these key areas of interest, the intention is to better understand exactly how micro-urbanism is practised in a range of contexts in Jakarta, and why it has become such a deeply embedded feature of daily life for millions of citizens. Empowering and learning from citizens' existing strategies is hoped to provide valuable insight into a potentially more 'future-proof' model of urban governance for the Indonesian capital and beyond.

Rukun Tetangga (RT) - Participatory Politics in Daily Life

The Urbanisme Mikro program identifies the RT (variously translated as ward, neighbourhood or community association) as the basic unit of urban governance and political participation for most Indonesian citizens. The lowest administrative division in Indonesia, and with few analogous structures in an international context, it is something with which almost all Indonesians are very familiar. The breadth of issues administered entirely or in part by a local RT is both expansive and often ambiguous, ranging from simple administrative concerns regarding the number and status of local residents, distribution and allocation of funds and other key resources and representing the interests of their community at higher institutional levels, to resolution of interpersonal disputes, maintaining security and enforcing collective morality.

Unlike politicians at higher levels of the Indonesian state, RT Heads remain accountable to their constituents largely due to their physical proximity, ease of access, and deep roots within a given community. For many urban citizens whose social, cultural and economic lives revolve almost entirely around their local area, the RT represents the focal point of their political experience, sufficient in scope to deal with almost any issue they are likely to encounter. Perhaps this is why the remit of an individual RT head often extends well beyond the formal provisions of their office, and why so much of Jakarta's urban governance takes place without any external oversight whatsoever.

Urbanisme Mikro is concerned with the form and function of sociopolitical participation at this hyper-local level, and the strategies through which individuals and households exert their influence over the micro-urban space. While the RT head functions as the most immediately accessible locus of formal authority, their involvement is often seen as necessary only when informal, interpersonal and often invisible negotiations between citizens fails to produce a mutually acceptable outcome. In exploring the reality of how space in Jakarta is used, shared, claimed and contested, we must enter a world in which very little is ever quite so clear-cut.



Key Issues for the Urbanisme Mikro Program

A range of interrelated issues will form the primary focus of the program, with additional insight and narrative framing to be provided by residents as part of their ongoing participation.

1. The COVID-19 Pandemic & Public Health

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated mobility restrictions have had a dramatic and highly variable impact on Jakarta's low-income neighbourhoods, both in terms of public health and wider economic disruption. UM will explore the neighbourhood-level strategies used by local residents to deal with these highly complex challenges in managing individual and collective wellbeing, and promote their integration within Jakarta's wider public-health framework.

2. Flooding & Other Disaster Events

Jakarta is among the world's most vulnerable cities, regularly facing significant flooding events which can disrupt or even displace entire communities. In addition, high-density neighbourhoods in particular are vulnerable to fires, and in some areas confronting the issue of land subsidence. UM will explore the strategies residents use to prepare, respond to and recover from these regular disruptions, and work with them to develop innovative resiliency strategies for future-proof neighbourhoods.

3. Commodity Access & the Local Economy

A vast and sprawling metropolis characterized by high levels of inequality, local access to basic essentials such as adequate nutrition, waste management and clean water is highly variable across Jakarta. UM will chart the local economic networks which provide access to essential commodities as well as livelihoods, how they emerge, and how they might be strengthened to improve human wellbeing and quality of life.

4. Density & Shared Spaces

As one of the world's most densely populated cities, true public spaces in Jakarta are almost nonexistent for the majority of citizens. UM will identify the micro-scale practise of creating, sharing, contesting and adapting limited space for a variety of local needs across a range of different contexts, and work to develop participatory and equitable models of maximizing the benefits of available space for all.

5. Gender & the Role of Women

The intersection of gender and urban development is rarely accounted for in macro-level policy frameworks, leaving most gender politics to occur at the local or interpersonal level. UM will identify and work to eliminate existing barriers to full participation by women and girls in the production and utilization of urban spaces at the neighbourhood level, strengthening existing frameworks and introducing supporting initiatives where appropriate.

6. Intergenerational Justice & Raising a Family

As Jakarta's population continues to grow, existing issues regarding the availability, accessibility and price of space are exacerbated by new generations of citizens seeking to build their lives in the city. UM will explore the intersection of age and participation in local urbanism, the sustainability and resilience of multi-generational households and the challenges of raising the next generation in a city of both scarcity and abundance.

7. Migration, Ownership & Identity

The majority of Jakarta's resident population are first generation urban migrants, who often come to the capital seeking better economic opportunities. The nature of their relations with existing communities is a defining feature of the city's economic and social life, providing potential income sources but also increasing competition for space, jobs and other critical resources. UM will explore the complex nature of identity, ownership and economics in the context of Jakarta's mass-migration phenomenon.

8. Disruptive technologies

The rapid adoption of disruptive technologies has fundamentally altered relations of space and the economic structure of Jakarta. In particular, 'super-apps,' online transportation and e-commerce have precipitated a shift in the way people live and work across a range of economic sectors. UM will investigate who benefits from this shift and how, but also who is at risk of being left behind by the progress of Jakarta's industrial revolution 4.0

Urbanisme Mikro Path to Change

A methodology for initiating systematic change

The Urbanisme Mikro program is a multi-year investigation into the production and utilization of limited urban spaces by tens of millions of citizens through their interactions with one another on a daily basis. The intention is to understand how and by whom the Indonesian capital is continually transformed into a place for living, working, and raising the next generation.

The initial program is expected to take place over a 3-year period.

Phase 1 - Setting the Micro-urbanism Agenda (Year 1)
Observation - challenges, solutions, capacities and limitations
(RRJ team in collaboration with local stakeholders).
The Rame-Rame Jakarta team will expand on existing observations and community outreach with target communities to identify the challenges of living in high-density, lower-income neighbourhoods over a 12-month period. This timeframe is intended to allow for the highly variable conditions and responses which occur over the course of a year, including in particular seasonal flood events, fluctuating supply and demand for certain key goods and services, and the city's dynamic sociocultural calendar.

Key issues outlined in this report will be the starting point for the program, but it is expected that additional and unforeseen themes will arise as a result of ongoing dialogue with each individual community. The program retains a wide scope and flexibility, and therefore a high level of deviation between each individual study site in terms of key focus areas is expected, while continuing to gather comparative data on issues common across all participating communities. Of particular interest will be the strategies used by communities in different physical and socioeconomic environments to respond to major disruptions, and manage the everyday challenges of life in Jakarta. The program will also explore the real-world limits of these hyper-local capacities, in both practical and legal terms, identifying areas in which empowering actors at the micro-urban level can make a meaningful impact on the human wellbeing of residents.

Initially the observations will be led by the RRJ team, introducing the scope and primary themes of the UM program to local partners and developing an awareness of the intended outcomes. As the program progresses, training and awareness raising by the field team will focus on developing community ownership of the program and wider participation, encouraging local residents to identify, document and narrate their own individual perspective on the issues facing their community and the strategies used to overcome them. Throughout the observation phase insights and preliminary findings will be shared widely via social media and RRJ publications.

Phase 2 - Establishing the Role of 'Neighbourhood' in Jakarta's social economy (Year 2)
Public awareness - Publication, dissemination, narration

The first project phase will culminate in a month-long series of webinars, workshops and exhibitions to promote the idea that Jakarta's future must be local, sharing stories, insights and perspectives regarding the centrality of the neighbourhood and local community in managing the urban space at a micro level. The intention will be to introduce the concept of micro-urbanism to stakeholders at all levels of society, including academics, local and national media, industry practitioners and state institutions, and explore the extent to which a renewed focus on the neighbourhood can be integrated within Jakarta's future development agenda.

The primary output of this dissemination phase will be the release of RRJ's 'Framework for Micro-urbanism,' a handbook and research report outlining the causes, forms and function of micro-urbanism in Jakarta neighbourhoods with recommendations for actionable solutions for local empowerment and targeted external interventions. This will lead directly into the interdisciplinary collaboration which defines UM phase 3.

Phase 3 - Resilient Neighbourhoods and Jakarta's Micro Future (year 2-3)
Participatory Innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration

Having established the centrality of 'the neighbourhood' and developed a deep understanding of how urban governance and place-making is practised by residents as the micro level, the UM program will come full circle, bridging the gap between this local expertise and more traditional approaches to urbanism in Jakarta through collaboration with a range of stakeholders on several 'participatory innovation' projects.

Based on the results of ongoing observation and dialogue with participating communities, UM will identify one key issue in each of the four target neighbourhoods to serve as a laboratory for integrating micro-urbanism within the wider planning and policy framework of Jakarta. The intention is to target specific issues or areas in which collaborating with external partners to empower participating communities can generate significant benefits and improve overall neighbourhood resilience in the face of Jakarta's perpetual transformation.

Urbanisme Mikro Local Partners

Participating communities in the shift towards a better Jakarta

The UM program will work with 4 target communities across the Jakarta metropolitan area, building upon existing relationships and expanding collaboration into new areas. Each community presents a range of different social, economic, geographic, cultural and legal factors which will form the basis of a comparative investigation to explore the diversity of micro-urbanism practised in Jakarta's neighbourhoods.





In order to provide data more suitable for drawing comparisons and isolating key variables, four neighbourhoods have been selected from RRJs existing network of local partners. Two represent the typical ‘kampung’ typology of highly irregular residential mixed use neighbourhoods, while two represent the increasingly common ‘rusun’ typology of standardised social housing blocks administered by the government. One of each typology is located in a relatively strategic location not far from Jakarta’s economic and cultural centre, while the other two are located a significant distance away. All target communities represent high-density settlements with relatively low average incomes.

Empowering these individual communities with the knowledge, networking and institutional support to develop their existing micro-urbanist strategies is intended as a model for neighbourhood-level development across the capital, demonstrating the capacity for local residents to participate fully in the processes, as well as the capacity of state and private sector actors to respond effectively to their needs. The collaborative frameworks developed as part of the UM program will inform future policy orientation and strategic resource deployment in pursuit of a more liveable Jakarta for all.

Participating Communities

Kampung Poncol, South Jakarta
Located in the heart of Jakarta's bustling South-Central district, Kampung Poncol represents a historic community facing a wide range of urban issues. Hemmed-in on all sides by new developments, and tightly packed following a succession of evictions to make room for them, this neighbourhood is largely isolated from the surrounding city despite its strategic location. Situated on low-lying ground at the confluence of two of Jakarta's rivers, the area also experiences regular flood events, many of which result in mass evacuations and leave entire neighbourhoods inundated for days at a time. Despite these challenges Kampung Poncol remains a vibrant and highly-resilient community, with a diverse cultural and economic landscape within which residents of all ages and backgrounds find a place to make their lives.

Rusun Aquarium
Constructed following a contested eviction process taking many years, Rusun Akuarium is located in Jakarta's historic Northern port area, and is a reimagining of Jakarta's typical social housing model. Designed in collaboration with RRJ founder Andesh Tomo, this newly-inaugurated 'vertical kampung' provides a unique opportunity to study exactly how a community occupies, utilizes, and adapts to life in contemporary urban spaces. Having been forced to reorganize their economic and social life following the destruction of their previous settlement, residents of Rusun Akuarium will once again have to reconfigure their unique micro-urbanism, negotiating new conventions, establishing boundaries and adjusting their economic strategies to suit their new environment.



Rusun Tambora
Rusun Tambora represents Jakarta's archetypal social housing complex, and is home mainly to residents evicted from informal settlements in other parts of the capital. Located in Pesakih, far from the city centre and with limited access to key transport and economic infrastructure, it nonetheless provides a wide range of facilities and services for its residents. Communities previously accustomed to the highly-informal and community-orientated 'kampung' typology have adjusted themselves to this new and more individualistic environment by various means, both within and outside official frameworks provided by the government, and have begun to develop new models for collaborative micro-urbanism in various areas.

Kampung Duri Kosambi
Just a few hundred metres from Rusun Tambora is the much longer-established community of Kampung Duri Kosambi. Similarly lacking in terms of access to infrastructure and economic opportunity, the kampung has developed a symbiotic relationship with the expanding social housing complexes nearby, establishing networks of trade and services provision which benefit both communities. Affected by periodic flooding and a lack of integration within the wider urban infrastructure, Kampung Duri Kosambi is nonetheless a resilient neighbourhood defined by a high level of inter-household collaboration, familiarity, and interdependence.



