

Kolong Tol: Participation and Multi-Scalar Collaboration to Solve Design and Political Gaps

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ABSTRACT

Jakarta is a bifurcation of massive urbanization in both the informal and formal sectors, a juxtaposition that lends the informal to act as the 'residual'- easily disposed of whenever modernization calls for evictions and urban reclamations. New developments of exclusive superblocs and inner-city malls diminish the public realm through the continued dissolution of public spaces, even after the end of Indonesia's authoritarian regime. In recent times, the city administration promises greater community participation in forming the Jakarta 2030 Spatial Masterplan. In this context, new political processes and paradigmatic shifts in understanding informality in Jakarta can lead to new springs of urban explorations. In addition, re-thinking under-utilized physical spaces within the urban fabric such as the 'Kolong Tol' – the space underneath the toll-way – allows for a renewed public imagination.

By documenting the lessons learned from the story of Jakarta's Kolong Tol and the experiences in the Rawa Bebek informal community, this paper explores both discursive and practical modes of arguments for participatory spatial planning and the need for multi-scalar interdisciplinary collaboration to incubate a more sustainable and equitable future. Although the participatory method may have its challenges, it can become a tool for capacity building and empowerment, which may result in more resilient communities and urban spaces. On the other end of the spectrum, the government should begin to recognize the need for localized grassroots political mobilizations in order to achieve a successful synthesis of top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Keywords: *participatory planning, spatial planning, infrastructural urbanism, urban development*