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Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban and Contemporary Asia

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Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction: Place, Society and Politics Across Urban and Rural Asia

Eric C. Thompson, Tim Bunnell, and D. Parthasarathy

1.1 Introduction

The chapters in this volume concern the politics of place in four Asian nations: India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. They are about the ever-evolving relationship between and across rural and urban places. The categories of rural and urban are deeply embedded and naturalised in our imagination and in the cultural schemes of places across all the nations discussed in these chapters. One irony of what Gavin Jones (1997) calls the thorough-going urbanisation of Asia is that even as any sharp distinction between urban and rural ways of life has become increasingly blurred, the social and political implications of our imagination of rural and urban difference have, if anything, intensified. We present the chapters here as case studies of the many modes in which ideas and practices of the urban and rural play out across varied Asian contexts.

Our title, *Cleavage, Connection and Conflict*, refers to the crosscurrents, even contradictions, inherent in the rural-urban spatial relationships of contemporary Asian societies. Rural and urban are at once divided and connected. We set out, particularly in this introduction, to question the legitimacy of the cleavage between urban and rural while recognising that it is a conceptually powerful way in which many scholars as well as inhabitants of Asia continue to think about the world and

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social life. We draw attention to the connections between rural and urban, but here too, we suggest that the structure of these connections can no longer usefully be thought of as a continuum or examined mainly in the transitional peri-urban or '*desakota*' zones between city cores and rural peripheries (McGee 1991; Jones and Douglass 2008). Rather, following Castells (1996), the rural-urban relationships of contemporary Asia are configured in a complex often irregularly structured, non-linear space of flows. The dynamics of this space of flows is far from smooth and throughout this book, authors draw attention to the social, economic and political conflicts that Asian societies and the people of Asia face.

We expect many readers will be interested in specific chapters or sections which speak to themes or countries in which they hold particular expertise. The chapters are arranged according to the 4 countries in which the 12 case studies are situated: India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. However, in this introduction and the volume as a whole, we wish to highlight a set of more general concerns in the ongoing evolution of social theory in contemporary Asia. As important as the chapters here are in their own right to the concerns of the peoples and places about which they are written, they also point to an ongoing rethinking and reconceptualisation of social, political and spatial configurations across urban and rural in contemporary Asia. In the following section, we provide a brief chapter-by-chapter sketch of the topics and themes of the individual chapters. Following the outline of the chapters, we turn to the more general themes and arguments of this book as a whole – that is, the ways the case studies here, when taken together, demonstrate that social, geographic and political understandings of Asia today need to re-examine and go beyond taken-for-granted imaginings of traditional rural-urban divides.

1.2 Places and Themes: An Overview of Chapters

In the first section on India, Parthasarathy (Chap. 2) examines political networks and capital flows connecting urban and rural sites in India through which 'regional' elites are able to gain political power. Maringanti (Chap. 3) shows how ambiguities of rural and urban play out in the boom and bust of a peri-urban real estate market in Andhra Pradesh. And Louw and Mondal (Chap. 4) examine the politics of exclusion operating around the peri-urban hinterland of the mega-urban region of Mumbai.

Section two of the volume provides case studies from Indonesia. Hudalah et al. (Chap. 5) offer insights into the politics of metropolitan governance in Yogyakarta, arguing that the combination of both urban and rural sorts of governance is important in a region at once rural and urban. Writing on post-tsunami and post-conflict Aceh, Miller and Bunnell (Chap. 6) demonstrate that the dissolution of a rural-urban divide, exacerbated during years of civil conflict, is now reconfiguring the increasingly decentralised and democratic politics of one of Indonesia's most troubled

provinces. Focusing on the Javanese cities of Cirebon and Gresik as well as their hinterlands, Riwanto (Chap. 7) presents a case in which urbanisation has proceeded apace, without producing prosperity and arguably exacerbating both urban and rural poverty.

Chapters in the third section turn to Malaysia. Suriati (Chap. 8) writes on the transformation of a Malay *kampung* (village) area in peri-urban Penang and the tensions that ensue over the transformation of the landscape through land acquisitions and building of new urban housing and industrial estates. Stivens (Chap. 9) focuses on the gendered dimensions of rural-urban cleavages and connections in Malaysia. Thompson (Chap. 10) argues that the ideology of rural backwardness and urban cosmopolitan chauvinism can be seen as one of the clear dividing lines between the two largest Malay-oriented political parties in Malaysia.

The final chapters in the fourth section concern case studies from Thailand. In Sirijit's (Chap. 11) analysis of international marriage between women of rural origins to foreign (*farang*) men, we see another example of the insertion of an ideologically powerful rural-urban divide into the criticism of such marriages emanating from urban-based elites. Chairat (Chap. 12) recounts political conflict and unrest between 'red shirt' and 'yellow shirt' factions over the past several years in Thailand and the sources of that conflict in rural-urban economic and ideological division. Johnson (Chap. 13) writes on contemporary Thai experiences of the city, full of ghosts, spirit mediums and irrational fear, risk, hope and ruin, putting pay to taken-for-granted associations of cities with modernity and rationality and rural hinterlands with tradition and superstition.

Collectively, the chapters in this volume address social and political dimensions of urban-rural relationships. The sorts of relationships they describe challenge us to think beyond rural-urban divides. In doing so, contemporary Asian society can be thought about not as an urban-rural continuum but sociologically in its various political, economic and cultural dimensions, as a space of flows (Castells 1996). By evoking Castells' concept, we are not proposing that the social relations and spatial relationships of Asia today exist as an undifferentiated sea of humanity. Tremendous variations exist in size, density, extent, intensity of settlement and relationship (i.e. from mega-urban corridors to gated communities to market towns to relatively isolated homesteads). We suggest a "space of flows," in Castells' sense of a complex, networked society, rather than "rural-urban continuum," in order to highlight the multidimensional complexity of socio-spatial relationships, as opposed to linearity of more or less urban and more or less rural that earlier ideas of urban-rural continuum implied. Furthermore, the persisting imaginings of rural-urban difference are themselves more an idea (or ideology) with ideological effects that flow along with people, commodities and the like through this networked space of flows, rather than being a substantive reality. It remains important that people continue to think in terms of living in cities or villages as different ways of life, even if the substance of that difference is now diminishingly small in many cases. In the remainder of this chapter, we lay out our case in greater detail.

1.3 Beyond the Rural-Urban Divide

One of the more difficult tasks in bringing critical social theory up to speed with the fast-changing realities of contemporary Asia is grappling with the deeply embedded, essentialised idea of rural and urban difference. We need to move away from thinking of rural and urban as essentialised social difference (Thompson 2004, 2007). If they ever were distinctive ways of life, the reality of that distinction has fast dissipated in much of Asia through processes of urbanisation and agrarian transition. India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are all experiencing what Gavin Jones describes as 'thoroughgoing urbanisation' (Jones 1997). These are not societies in which there exist distinctive, dichotomous rural and urban ways of life. Rather they are thoroughly urbanised societies linked by networks of interconnections though infrastructure, media and other means among more and less dense settlements, be they villages, suburbs, city centres, housing estates or single homesteads. If urban and rural ever was a useful dichotomy for thinking about these places, it no longer is.

Distinctions between 'rural' and 'urban' communities and associated spaces have been influential in the development of a range of social science disciplines, including sociology, geography, political science and urban planning. Ferdinand Tönnies (1957) famously contrasted *Gemeinschaft* communities (built around kinship and cooperative action in rural areas) with *Gesellschaft* societies (characterised by impersonal relationships based on formal contract and exchange in urban areas). This dichotomy was largely perpetuated by Chicago School scholars such as Louis Wirth (1938) in the early decades of the twentieth century, before giving way to more graduated classifications of settlement types. However, subsequent understandings of a urban-rural (or urban-folk) 'continuum' (e.g. Miner 1952) were themselves premised on the existence of poles of truly urban and truly rural places. The underlying belief that particular forms of society were effects of population size and population density or particular types of social and physical environment – whether 'rural' or 'urban' or something in between – was eventually demolished by Ray Pahl (1966). The work of Pahl and others (see also Newby 1986) served to evacuate the causal or explanatory power attributed to rural and urban environments. Nonetheless, the terms 'rural' and 'urban' continue to have representational purchase in popular consciousness, spreading through and reflected in cinema, literature and media, as well as in academic work and census systems across the world (Champion and Hugo 2004).

Despite critiques of the polarity of urban and rural in social science, the two remain key categories (e.g. in 'urban geography' or 'rural sociology') and remain deeply inscribed in social theory so much so that we have trouble thinking our way out of this dichotomy. In Asia, this is a double inscription. The first inscription comes with the dominance of Western-based social science, forged in Europe and America at a historical moment (especially the nineteenth century) when societies there were experiencing a shift from rural agrarian political economies to urban industrial ones. In Asia, the second inscription of the rural-urban divide came with

European biases of civilisational superiority and the European reading of Asia as primitive, backwards, undeveloped, pre-modern and despotic (how long a list one can come up with!). Lazy natives in their villages entered into the social scientific imagination as a reflection of modern Europe's pre-modern past and a savage other to its civilisation. It is long past time for a thoroughgoing rejection of that imaginary of the Orient seen through the distorted lens of colonial-era Europeans (following Alatas 1977; Said 1979, and others).

Attention to the questionable distinction between rural and urban in Asia is by no means new. Kemp (1988) has argued that the concept of the 'Thai village' was a seductive mirage constructed by scholars and administrators. Writing on Malaysia, Shamsul (1989, 1991) did much the same in his examination of the 'administrative village' imposed from above through authoritative discourse. There is as well a long history of scholarship which has adopted a combined rural-urban political economy framework. Influential examples include the work of McGee (1991) in Southeast Asia and the work of Redfield and Singer (1954) in South Asia. Nevertheless, as with scholarship more generally, a tension remains in Asia between critical theorists who question the dichotomy of urban and rural and everyday discourses in which such an imagination is deeply embedded (Thompson 2007:201–204). The urban/rural dichotomy remains ideologically powerful and a part of the (cultural) consciousness of Thai, Malays and others (e.g. in conceptual differences between Bangkok and *ban nok* in Thailand; between K.L. and *kampung* in Malaysia).

Our concern in this book is not so much with attempting to undo labels or categories of 'rural' and 'urban' but rather interrogating the tendency to use them to demarcate spatially distinct and discrete domains. Work in development studies has highlighted the limitations of policies that treat rural and urban separately, suggesting instead the importance of approaches which straddle the rural-urban divide (see Tacoli 2003). In introducing a special issue of the journal *Environment and Urbanization* on links between urban and rural development, Cecilia Tacoli contends that 'the linkages and interactions have become an ever more intensive and important component of livelihoods and production systems in many areas – forming not so much a bridge over a divide as a complex web of connections in a landscape where much is neither "urban" nor "rural", but has features of both, especially in the areas around urban centres or along the roads out of such centres' (p. 3).

The divide, distinction and dichotomy between rural and urban in Asia are far too complex to capture in any simple way. Social science writing is rife with ambivalent attempts to address the cleavages and connections between rural and urban. In their comprehensive approach to urbanisation, *The City in Southeast Asia*, Rimmer and Dick (2009) unwittingly highlight this complexity and ambivalence by asserting at one point that, at least for mega-urban regions, 'There is no sharp rural-urban dichotomy. No longer is it functional to bring labour to the city. It is easier to take work to rural areas to avoid social overhead costs as bulging cities outstrip their infrastructure' (p. 36). Yet elsewhere, in the same book, they propose that 'The boundaries between urban and rural location, or perhaps better expressed as between capital cities, other cities, towns and villages have, if anything, widened. People

may now move with remarkable facility. Poor villagers can migrate in search of work, even internationally. They have the option, such as it is, to participate in the global economy. What cannot be done, however, is to bundle and miniaturise all the elements of global urban society and transfer them to small city, town or village' (p. 126). In the sort of urban studies pursued by Rimmer and Dick, rural space increasingly disappears to the margins of analytical consciousness to be replaced by an interconnected network of global cities and mega-urban regions (e.g. 2009:1–19; see also Jones and Douglass 2008). Similarly, work on agrarian transitions, such as the impressive ChATSEAS (Challenges of the Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia) Project, remains focused on rural spaces with relatively little reference to the urban places with which they are intimately connected (e.g. Hall et al. 2011; De Koninck et al. 2011; Rigg and Vandergeest 2012). These works, with their singular focus either on urban or rural places, remain important contributions to scholarship, but taken alone, they re-inscribe the rural-urban dichotomy we are questioning here. The contributions to this book do not provide a simple answer to the complex problem of cleavage and connection between urban and rural places. Rather they highlight the multiple, sometimes contradictory ways in which rural and urban are configured in contemporary Asia.

1.4 Urban Sprawl, Rural Transformation and Space of Flows in Asia

Urban sprawl and rural transformations are simultaneous processes shaping contemporary Asia. While the interaction between urban and rural is most intensely felt – and attended to by scholars – in the peri-urban fringes of large 'mega-urban' regions, based on the cases presented in this book and elsewhere, we argue that urban and rural transformations are more pervasive and more interconnected than a focus merely on the peri-urban contact zones between sites otherwise conceived as properly 'urban' and 'rural' might suggest. A generation or two of geographers and other social scientists have drawn heavily on Terry McGee's seminal concept of '*desakota*' regions at the fringes of very large cities, where the rural countryside (*desa*) and built urban environment (*kota*) are interlaced.

Conceptually, urban sprawl extends beyond the peri-urban intersections of urban and rural spaces. The tendrils of urban networks of various sorts extend and branch out far beyond the places that most people would consider to be urban fringes. Diminishingly little of the human habitat of contemporary Asia is made up of isolated or self-contained settlements, of the sort one imagines to be an autonomous village of swidden farmers or encampment of mobile foragers. Many smaller settlements, villages with their 'little traditions', in Asia have long been more interconnected with global society and the world economy than premises of modern scholarship of the twentieth century would have one believe. That said, over the past century or more, interactions via infrastructure and telecommunications have certainly become more intensive. Those areas, such as the uplands and hills which were in the past relatively

autonomous, are now largely interlinked as well (Scott 2009:324–325). Urban centres of varying sizes, whether in terms of area or population, form the nodes of these networks (Dick 2005). Dwelling at once in these nodes and in these networks, the peoples of Asia as much as anywhere inhabit a social and cultural 'space of flows' of the sort proposed by Castells (1996) in theorising the networked society.

We are not suggesting that urban and rural lose all distinction in this space of flows. Conditions of life at the heart of Mumbai, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta or Bangkok are not the same as those in the countryside, village or for that matter wildlife sanctuary to which they are connected. Yet the strength of networked connections today is such that rapid, continuous flow between them, of people, commodities, ideas and the like, constitutes the new *normal* of contemporary Asia, not an aberration. In all the nations we focus on in this book, the society's underclass is made up in large part of a 'floating population' (a term commonly used in reference to China – see Liang and Ma 2004) whose lives are defined by frequent, if irregular, movement between more or less urban and more or less rural places. People described as 'urban poor' and 'rural', for instance in Chairat's discussion of Thai politics (Chap. 12), are more often than not one and the same. Similarly, the remittance economy described by Stivens (Chap. 9), in which money flows between urban and rural, generally from urban to rural sites, has become a staple of economies and livelihoods throughout much of Asia, in many cases replacing subsistence farming.

Aceh, as described by Miller and Bunnell (Chap. 6), provides an example in which the city (Banda Aceh) and countryside surrounding it were for a very long time separated from one another to a much greater degree than found in most of Asia. The fact that this occurred during a protracted period of armed conflict between the Indonesian state which occupied the city and the Free Aceh Movement or GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka) occupying the countryside underlines the extreme and aberrant conditions that must prevail to counter the general trend of intensive urban and rural connectivity described in other chapters.

The urban, as we understand it both materially (e.g. in the form of infrastructure and built environment) and conceptually (as ways of life, attitudes and orientations – such as the cosmopolitan chauvinism described by Thompson, Chap. 10), is, for the most part, that which sprawls outwards asserting itself and transforming the rural. To a lesser extent, rural forms, such as the ghosts and uncanny of the city discussed by Johnson (Chap. 13), insinuate themselves and inhabit the urban as well. In other words, the flow, sprawl and transformation are not a simple one-way process, though as the concept of thoroughgoing urbanisation suggests, there is little doubt that Asia today is conceptually and otherwise increasingly urban and decreasingly rural.

Processes of rural transformation and agrarian transition, influenced though not entirely governed by urban sprawl and networked flows, are likewise part of the social dynamic of contemporary Asia. In their recent book outlining 'powers of exclusion' in which access to land is configured (and reconfigured) through force, regulation, markets and legitimisations, Hall et al. (2011) demonstrate the complexity and irregularity of these processes. Although certain grand-scale trends, such as commodification of land and marketisation of crops and labour, can be discerned in the current era of neoliberal globalisation, on the ground, at the fine

scales these authors' work examines, many competing forces and counter trends are evident (see also Rigg and Vandergeest 2012). The one thing that can be concluded based on their evidence is that rural social relations, economics and politics are every bit as dynamic as those located in or associated with urban centres. In considering the sorts of transformations, conflicts and dynamics discussed throughout the chapters of this book, it should be clear that social change is not simply driven by urban centres and exported to rural countrysides. Dynamics of change are as much part of or, to put it another way, indigenous to the rural landscape itself.

1.5 On the Politics of Rural-Urban Cleavage and Connection

The relationship of urban and rural across Asia has important political consequences. Several chapters in this book focus on these explicit politics (e.g. Parthasarathy, Thompson, Chairat, Hudalah, Miller and Bunnell). The rural/urban divide is everywhere culturally (or, if readers prefer, ideologically) constructed. In Chap. 4, Louw and Mondal describe the political, social and economic consequences for people classified as 'tribal' and rural, who find themselves squeezed between land classified as a wildlife sanctuary on one side and expanding urban Mumbai on the other. In Chap. 8, Suriati examines the inclusions and exclusions engendered through geographical imaginings of rurality in peri-urban Georgetown (Penang). In both of these cases, cultural ideas of rural and urban – classifications attributed to both people and places – drive diverse practices of inclusion and exclusion. Other chapters, particularly those situated in India (Parthasarathy, Chap. 2), Malaysia (Thompson, Chap. 10) and Thailand (Chairat, Chap. 12), address more explicitly political cases, ones in which identity and democratic politics (i.e. bidding for votes) are at stake.

Parthasarathy (Chap. 2) and Thompson (Chap. 10) provide contrasting accounts, highlighting ways in which the relationship between rural and urban can play out very differently under conditions of democratic, electoral politics. In the case of India, Parthasarathy demonstrates the ability of rural-based elites to capture the politics of cities by drawing on rural vote banks. It becomes questionable to even call these elites 'rural based' given that their power derives as much from their ability to negotiate both urban and rural settings as well as the connections between them. Thompson, on the other hand, draws attention to the rhetorical, ideological cleavage between urban and rural in Malaysia and how the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) attempts to capitalise on the urban, cosmopolitan chauvinism of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). A similar story is found in Thailand (see Chairat, Chap. 12), where the clash between 'red shirt' and 'yellow shirt' movements is drawn in large part along rural and urban lines.

The political dimensions of urban-rural cleavages and connections cannot be reduced to contests for votes alone. Politics is also about governance and even more profoundly about the structural conditions of societies in terms of class, gender and other dimensions through which power is regulated and legitimated. As Hudalah,

Fahmi and Firman demonstrate in their study of Yogyakarta (Chap. 5) and Maringanti demonstrates of Hyderabad (Chap. 3), concepts and classification of 'rural' and 'urban' impinge on everyday infrastructure management and negotiating risks and rewards of real estate speculation. While less spectacular than political rallies and nationwide election campaigns, these micro-level, fine-scale negotiations of urban and rural paradigms set the parameters for the politics of 'who gets what, when and how'. Similarly, ever-evolving configurations of gender and class across Asia, embedded in urban-rural networks and ideologies, are implicated in everyday politics as well, as the case studies presented by Stivens (Chap. 9), Sirijit (Chap. 11) and Chairat (Chap. 12) all highlight.

1.6 Conclusion: Promise and Dystopia of Thoroughgoing Urbanisation and Rural Transformation

Praise and condemnation for one form of human habitation or the other, rural or urban, remain commonplace: the egalitarian village, the backwards countryside, the cosmopolitan metropolis and the alienating, morally corrupt city. Authors, filmmakers or even political movements may find such polemically stereotyped places useful. One can think of the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand with its overly idealised imaginary of an egalitarian rural past (Hall et al. 2011:185–188) or the Malaysian and Singapore governments which have championed shiny, hypermodern urban landscapes (e.g. Bunnell 2004; Thompson 2007:25–28). Actual social and spatial dynamics in contemporary Asia are everywhere more complex, messy and usually contradictory, than such imaginaries would suggest. Neither valorising nor condemning the dynamics of urban and rural and of thoroughgoing urbanisation in contemporary Asia is of much value. Thoroughgoing urbanisation and the sociological space of flows across places more or less urban and rural are simply a social fact of life in nearly all of Asia today.

Urban sprawl – as the disorderly nomenclature itself suggests – is almost always figured as dystopian. Writers and scholars, overwhelmingly based in urban centres, tend towards the romantic and nostalgic in their views of the village and the countryside. Work on Asia's expanding middle classes has long noted how the more detached such middle-class cultures become from any substantive connection to rural roots, the more nostalgic they become for an imagined agrarian past (e.g. Kahn 1992). Yet, scholars who work on the ground in rural settings find that the power of urban aspirations – a genuine desire to be urbanised, either through migration or through in situ transformation of the local built environment – is almost everywhere in Asia a powerful force (e.g. Thompson 2007).

As a contribution to our understanding of the ongoing transformation of contemporary Asia, the chapters of this book set out to examine the diverse dimensions of contradictory forces involved in urban and rural dynamics: cleavages dividing rural and urban, connections through which they are inseparably bound together and conflicts arising from both the cleavages and the connections. We do not propose a

singular construct through which to understand these relationships and forces, such as the rural-urban continuum popular in the early twentieth century or McGee's influential *desakota*. Even with regard to Castells' space of flows, we suggest it as a loosely theorised concept for readers to keep in mind while considering the many intersections of urban and rural detailed in the chapters that follow. Our hope is that readers and researchers can build on the work presented in these chapters, both individually with regard to particular domains such as politics, urban planning, gender and class analysis, as well as drawing on the collection as a whole in our ongoing efforts to theorise and understand the fast-changing societies of Asia.

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Part I
India

Chapter 2
Rural, Urban, and Regional: Re-spatializing Capital and Politics in India

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2.1 Introduction

Rural-urban distinctions constitute a key aspect of social science theorizations of social order irrespective of the ideological or epistemological basis of conceptualizations. Theories of urban bias are as current and popular as are those which attribute persisting rural poverty to a range of structural factors, especially in countries of the global south. A review of studies on urban-rural interactions (Tacoli 1998) concludes that "populations and activities described either as 'rural' or 'urban' are more closely linked both across space and across sectors than is usually thought, and that distinctions are often arbitrary" (p. 160). Taking "development theory and practice" to task for ignoring rural-urban interactions, Tacoli (1998) argues that empirical evidence points to "linkages between urban centres and the countryside, including movement of people, goods, capital and other social transactions, [that] play an important role in processes of rural and urban change" (p. 147). Despite such cautionary statements, contemporary social science in or of India largely ignores rural-urban connections, networks, and linkages, often influencing policy positions, as well as those of social movements and civil society organizations. Both capital and politics deeply imbricate cities and villages with proximate and distant regions, even as these imbrications vary with time, social transformations, and economic changes. While historical factors, including British land settlements, infrastructure-influenced growth of production forces, and social reform, have shaped the dynamism, stagnation, or sluggishness of social formations and regions (Drèze and Sen 1997), their spatial implications for rural-urban and city-region

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linkages, as well as the spatiality of capital flow and political developments in India, have not been adequately studied or understood.

Capital flow-centered views of urban processes in Indian academic and political thought do not usually offer a nuanced understanding of how exactly capital flows and switches in capital circuits intersect with political and social dynamics in yielding specific urban structures.[1] One relatively neglected issue in urban studies in India has been the role of the politics of dominance and resistance, especially those centered on intra-rural conflicts (Cloke and Thrift 1987), in affecting urban processes and spatial practices. Caste-based/factional, intra-class, and other intra-rural conflicts cut across and involve both urban and rural areas, and influence political attitudes toward economic policies, global trade, and spatial planning. In explaining political support, especially at the provincial level in India for neoliberal economic policies, scholars often forget that political leaders contend with caste allies, competition with caste rivals, political rivalry in maintaining electoral dominance, and the need to sustain political power to maintain social and economic dominance at various levels of sociality and spatiality.[2] It is also to be noted that cities play a crucial role in mainstream national or regional political contestations and negotiations for diverse sorts of groups—class-based, ethnic, caste, religion or region, ideological, and political groups and factions. Despite the quite significant role that cities have played in India's nationalist movement and postcolonial emancipatory struggles, the political role of cities and its reciprocal impact on urban structures and spatial practices have rarely been studied in any great depth.[3]

For groups that wish to sustain or extend their dominant status in society, the city is an event that supports them in that process, even as the city can be an event for the oppressed and the marginalized in a way that assists them in their emancipatory struggles or struggles to resist domination. At the same time that rural groups seek to use the city in their mobility and power struggles, other groups already having a stake in the city may also seek to realize their visions of the city by exercising greater political control over urban planning and governance. The contestations, conflicts, and struggles between these create heterotopic spaces and compete with capital flows in defining and redefining urban forms and processes. The morphology of cities, the forms of urbanism one observes, the urban planning, or the lack of it—all these are affected by rural-urban connections and transitions.

Dominant castes in villages who have now become rural elites and lower-caste oppressed groups both look for greater agency with the advent of democratization processes to extend and sustain domination or to resist it. The reference here is to social and political, as well as economic domination and exploitation, which may have little to do with or only indirectly related to the capitalist economy. Especially provincial/hinterland cities and smaller towns, but also capital cities of states in India, and, increasingly, metropolitan cities such as Bombay/Mumbai, Hyderabad,

[1] See, for instance, Banerjee-Guha (2010).

[2] For a focused discussion on this and other references, see Parthasarathy (2011b).

[3] The substantial body of work by Jim Masselos on Bombay/Mumbai is an important exception.

or Bangalore are being drawn into these social and political struggles; this is happening because acquiring cityhood enables access to urban institutions—the city becomes a stake in these struggles, but also provides agency. The city provides agency by first providing access to resources, power, and institutions located there—these could be institutions pertaining to the judiciary and bureaucracy, which, despite corruption, work in less arbitrary ways; the city provides access to political parties and leaders willing to take up their causes. The city enables networking and scaling up of smaller social and political movements. The city provides access to the media and gives greater political visibility. For the dominant castes in the rural areas, in the face of a crumbling rural economy and increasing difficulties in extracting surplus using feudal forms of exploitation, the control of the city and access to wider political power and administrative mechanisms are important to fund or subsidize new economic activities both in rural areas and in cities. For the *dalits*, the lower castes, and the rural poor in general, the city is not just a place which offers an alternate livelihood but also a space where they can realize their utopias, a place where they can hope to lose their identities in the anonymity of the crowd, a place where they can hope that achievement will be valued more than ascription, but above all, spaces of justice and empowerment, where they can conceive of and deploy a politics of resistance using diverse political strategies.[4] Even as these are being increasingly recognized in the context of identity-based, regional, "nativist" movements, the regional dimension of politics and capital flows that undergirds conflicts between temporally segregated, historically determined linkages between specific cities and regions remains unanalyzed.

Economies at different stages of capitalist development and with different rural-urban demographics will have quite different class fractions and class divides. In order to understand the multiple ways in which globalization and local economic imperatives shape spatial reorganization and land use and in order to comprehend the arenas where conflicts and competition for space take place, it is essential that we first acquire a broader and more grounded understanding of how ordinary people make use of space in their struggles to make a living, and for social emancipation and political empowerment, as well as for sustaining and extending social and economic domination. We need an understanding of the "local life of global forces" (Coombe 2001, p. 298) by focusing on the unique ways in which space is reorganized by forces of globalization in collaboration with local actors, in consonance with rural-urban transitions, in turn, restructuring physical space, built environment, and land use in new ways. This entails a different conceptualization of the city itself—the city has much more of the "rural" and the "regional" in it than is usually given credit for.

In distinguishing between the rural and urban, scholars like Ashish Nandy (2001) tend to place too much emphasis on the idea of the city as an organized space, on the "formal" aspects of the city, on its institutional base, on the high level

[4] Moon (2002) offers an autobiographical account of this process. The chapter by Chairat in this book works out the implications of a political, mobilized, rural underclass for urban and national politics.

of individualism and anomie, and on the non-innocence of the city which is seen to be tainted, sullied, and corrupted. My own research brings out not only the high level of informality which disrupts organization and formality but also the various ways in which forms of communitarianism, as well as ethnic togetherness and bonds, struggle to efface individualism in the city. One also finds that far from the city being the opposite of the village, the city itself is subjected to rural influences, i.e., it is ruralized, and the rural in the city does not abjectly succumb to structural and psychological domination. The rural transforms the city, and far from being an outcome of instrumental rationality, the city is not just made by capital and the state, but also made and remade by those who migrate there. The rural migrants do not go back defeated to the village like the cinematic Bengali effeminate heroes whose examples are the basis for Nandy's arguments; rather they locate themselves simultaneously in the rural and the urban, make use of global flows, are sometimes buffeted by these and by rural-urban crosscurrents, but still retain a vision of the city as an utopian place, even as the city itself remains a heterotopic space—a site which can be used as a space of struggle to achieve utopias; a social space which makes the realization of utopias possible, where, despite individualizing and objectifying tendencies, it is possible to generate a critical mass necessary to launch struggles over livelihoods, extraction of surplus, identity, resistance, and emancipation.

Conflicts over regional, religious, and ethnic identities, political struggles and emancipatory movements, class struggles, and struggles over livelihoods play out in urban space, but they also question the "grand narratives" regarding the temporalization of space (Massey 1999). By pointing to the "unnerving multiplicity" (Massey 1992, p. 67) of space in time, the stories of conflicts and struggles in Indian cities stress a line of reasoning wherein one could analyze rural-urban and urban-regional linkages and global flows concomitantly.

This chapter seeks to interpret the post-1980s political and economic changes in India using a spatial lens. The debate over India's economic liberalization has dwarfed significant social transformations and political changes since the late 1970s/early 1980s, wherein non-Brahmin upper castes and other backward class (OBC) castes have risen to power in several Indian states, irrevocably altering the political landscape of symbols, language, styles of mobilization, and alignments. These changes have, in turn, created new urban-rural and urban-regional networks and connections or reinforced older ones. This chapter attempts to reinterpret and reconfigure notions of rural, urban, and region in light of these political trends with a special focus on the three states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. These states have also been at the center of new urban dynamics caused in part, by the global linkages fostered by economic and spatial switches in their urban centers (primarily Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad, but also other smaller cities and towns). Compared to north Indian states, they have also had a much longer history of anti-caste social reforms and non-Brahmin movements. While the rising political and economic aspirations of "regional" or rural elites have been recognized to have played a role in the regionally differentiated growth patterns of the post-liberalization period, the spatial implications in terms of domestic capital flows, their specific

iterations in space, and redrawing of the relationship between rural and urban areas and their diverse regional linkages have not been adequately researched. The interconnections between agrarian capital and global finance and their geographical effects are also not well understood.

Studies of the "region" in India have been almost exclusively the domain of geographers and demographers with a few spatially inclined economists also contributing. Such studies have, however, concentrated on a few narrowly defined problems such as regional (under)development or regional imbalances, adducing resource constraints, climate/weather, infrastructure, and demographic factors in their arguments and explanations. Significant early work in the immediate aftermath of independence notwithstanding, the role of class relations, emergence of entrepreneurial classes, intra- and inter-class conflicts, issues of power, governance, and devolution, rates of primitive accumulation, and trajectories of domestic capital flows-these rarely find mention in analysis of regional patterns of economic growth and change. This has meant that issues of regionalism and regional conflicts are also not located in their proper social, economic, and political contexts; the regional dimensions of urban politics and spatialized conflicts are not comprehended; and the politico-economic dimensions of state capture and governmentality involving specifically delineated regional groups are not recognized.

In the field of politics, regardless of a veritable industry spawned by the relative success and sustenance of the "world's largest democracy," and the attention paid to identity politics, studies have tended to accept, uncritically, state-created geographic boundaries rather than other forms of regions and boundedness enabled by the movement of people, goods and services, ideologies, and capital. This is despite the very obvious boundedness of classes, as well as caste and other identity-based groups, and the new regional linkages formed by the movement and spatial spread of sociality and power of these groups. Postmodern critiques of Western-style democracy and governance institutions have not been taken seriously, in part owing to the absence of a sound empirical basis for such critiques. The evolving social and power structures in India, its transforming demography, and collision, cooperation, and competition between sections of domestic and foreign capital all affect political alignments and activity in cities and at regional levels in diverse ways.

This chapter attempts to offer some insights into the different ways in which both politics and capital are being re-spatialized in the Indian context. While this chapter is based on primary research and secondary material, the attempt is less to draw firm conclusions and more to propose ideas for analysis and interpretation, suggesting an agenda for future research.

2.2 Capital Cities, Regions, and Spatiality of Politics

Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru—the capital cities of the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, respectively, have, from time to time, experienced nativist movements targeting migrants from other regions of the state or

country.[5] These migrants are seen as exercising economic, political, or cultural domination in these cities or are charged with taking away jobs from "locals". A number of factors have been identified by scholars and observers seeking to explain these movements, and indeed, several of these explanations seem to fit. As these movements ebb and flow through different historical phases, diverse factors are seen to be coming into play. The aim here is not so much to add to or explicate further on these causes, but to reflect on the insights one may obtain regarding rural-urban and urban-regional linkages from a reading of these movements. Such an exercise even makes us raise questions regarding the social significance of distinctions between urban and rural and brings into play diverse notions of region in attempting to answer those questions. The spatial expansion of political support for regionally specific parties across regions and from villages to cities, the nature of political activities in cities, and the political empowerment engendered by the multiple location of social and political actors all alert us to certain unique consequences of the post-1980s social transformation in India that includes economic liberalization and the political rise of intermediate *bahujan* castes.[6]

Among the several issues/questions that arise in studying these nativist and regional movements, some stand out. What is the role of capital cities in facilitating these movements? Indeed, why are anti-migrant sentiments greater in capital cities than in other cities which may in fact have greater migrant inflows owing to a more dynamic labor market? Is there a relationship to proportion of migrant population and type/nature/control of economic activity? What political dynamic explains the spatial and temporal spread of these movements and events? While it is not possible to address all such questions, some intriguing ones deserve special mention. The "region" from which migrants come into the cities and regions in question are different in each case. Mumbai's history of in-migration goes back several centuries, but the north Indian rural migrants, who are the current target of local chauvinist parties, have a history of migration that is around 150 years old. Escaping British persecution after the 1857 revolt, lured into the then Bombay city and province by promises of employment in the booming textile industry in the first half of the twentieth century, and fleeing poverty, caste, and religious persecution, migrants from the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar constitute a significant proportion of the population of Mumbai and its satellite towns. They are also politically active and influential. British rulers seeking to develop the city as their chief commercial center also attracted business communities from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Kolkata, and the city's own cosmopolitanism, its reputation for a work culture, and the presence of financial institutions attracted business castes and families to settle and invest in the city.

Migration from the coastal Konkan region of the state, with which the city is contiguous, has been more problematic. Initially resisting British overtures to migrate and find employment in the city's factories during colonial rule (Morris 1960),

[5] Weiner (1978) is a dated but comprehensive overview on this.

[6] On the latter, see Jaffrelot (2003).

subsequently brought to the city through threats and the use of force, and later finding employment owing to their higher education levels, the Konkan migrants constitute a significant force in Mumbai's middle class, its white collar workforce, and in terms of political influence. Migrants from the resource-scarce and arid western Maharashtra, on the other hand, also co-dominate the city's political scene by virtue of acquiring political and economic clout using electoral politics and the power of the state to shore up its economic fortunes. The other two regions of the state—Vidarbha and Marathwada—have had a different history, which has resulted in tenuous links with the rest of the state for a long period, and these regions continue to exercise little influence in the city's politics and economics.

Hyderabad has for several decades been the base of a movement for statehood for Telangana—the region in which it is located and which, together with contiguous regions in the neighboring states of Maharashtra and Karnataka, constituted the princely state of Hyderabad ruled by the *Asaf Jahi* dynasty until 1948.[7] Not being under direct colonial rule, it had a more feudal past and, hence, was ripe for domination by the rich peasant political elite of the more dynamic coastal Andhra region. Since the early 1980s, with the advent of the Telugu Desam Party, Hyderabad has been dominated by the *Kamma* peasant entrepreneurs of coastal Andhra, who have also transformed the city's spaces, culture, and built environment by colonizing large parts of it. The rich *Kamma* peasants of coastal Andhra historically had class and caste alliances with their counterparts in the city of Madras (since the region was part of the Madras Presidency) until independence from colonial rule and electoral democracy substantially reduced their political power in a state in which they were a minority. The movement for a united Andhra Pradesh in the 1950s was significant for the formation of linguistic states in India, but its origins lie significantly, even if partly, in the imperative need of coastal Andhra elites to wield power independently in a state of their own. The linguistic/chauvinist turn of Dravidian/Tamil politics also meant that coastal Andhra Telugus could do little to enhance their political influence. Regional linkages of elites thus changed in response to geopolitical reorganization of electoral/democratic constituencies. The domination of coastal Andhra elites over Hyderabad was preceded by intense, if not always successful, efforts to dominate over the Telangana region itself, a process which could and has been more successfully implemented by obtaining hegemony and control over state politics and Hyderabad city. While Hyderabad has a significant Muslim population and is one of India's most cosmopolitan cities after Mumbai, Muslims have had a more ambivalent attitude to the demand for Telangana statehood. The movement itself has been fairly clear about its opposition to domination by coastal Andhra. While the resistance is largely against political, economic, and cultural domination, working- and middle-class migrants from coastal Andhra into Hyderabad have also borne the brunt of attacks.

The reorganization of states on a linguistic basis has created some incongruities and contentious issues among which have been the choice of capital cities for these

[7] An excellent overview of urban development and planning issues in Hyderabad against a historical backdrop is provided in Naidu (1990).

states—location has been only one of the deciding factors. Bengaluru is located on the eastern border of the state of Karnataka, its suburbs and industrial estates in fact being located in the state of Tamil Nadu. The emergence of the city as an important hub for global software outsourcing, the location of a significant section of this sector in the city's Tamil Nadu industrial clusters and the inflow of Tamil skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor have played a key role in the emergence of anti-Tamil, pro-Kannada movements in the city, even though the anti-immigrant sentiments are not as strong as in Hyderabad or Mumbai. Even as the city has become an important node in global software outsourcing, the city itself has become subjected to increasing domination by rural magnates with a base in minerals and plantations, as well as by a landed rentier/political class with interests in real estate. Devolution and democratic reforms, accompanied by the rise of backward castes, have also created new political parties, factions, and power centers, all of which have brought in a new class of leaders who have established their base in Bengaluru and expanded their political and economic footprints in the city. In taking on the established political class, officialdom, and economic interests, these leaders and factions have also found it useful to stir pro-Kannada sentiments in their rise to and maintenance of political power.

It is against this background of economic liberalization, globalization, and reconfiguration of power structures that one must reexamine and redefine the spatiality of politics and capital to reconceptualize notions of urban, rural, regional, and their linkages. What is similar in all three cases is that while the history of nativist movements and anti-immigrant sentiments may diverge and the nature of such sentiments has been both regressive and progressive, the current resurgence has to be viewed in the context of an expansion of opportunities fueled by global linkages and economic output growth, even as opportunity structures themselves have not changed much. The sentiments and attitudes toward regionalism and migration, it is contended here, are not so much a result of absolute deprivation as of relative deprivation; expansion of a built environment for consumption and rapid growth of a middle class with a huge consumable surplus—a substantial constituent of which are immigrants—has been politicized by parties competing for votes in a multi-party electoral system that itself is being transformed by a re-spatialization of politics. There is also a difference. Mumbai's targeted immigrants are poorer and from rural backgrounds, the target of the Telangana movement is more the rural and small town elite, while Bengaluru's is a more ambiguous Tamil population identified linguistically rather than in terms of regional (urban-rural) origin. This difference, however, belies the significance the rural dimension has for (re)linking regions to cities, for explaining the ways in which the rural has implications for the spatiality of politics across regions and in cities.

Intra-rural, intra-class conflict is an important dimension that is not often recognized by scholars. Rural elites share an association at the regional level united by alliances of caste, kinship, and political interests. Political ascendancy and power are easier to attain by forming alliances at the regional level including alliances across classes and castes. Such alliances are also imperative because of the ways in which constituencies are delineated. The ascendancy of elites from one region to power at the state or provincial level, therefore, requires that they compete or

clash with elites from other regions. This happens as part of a "deal," a nonessential economic-corporate compromise (in Gramscian terms) with nonelites of their own region. This compromise requires coming to power in the state capital and diverting state finances away from other regions toward one's own region. Rural elites in all three states have followed this strategy, leading to intra-class, inter-regional conflicts, but also leading rural elites to clash with urban elites who wish to divert state finances for facilitating higher returns to their capital investments. Rural as well as urban elites also collude or work separately to exploit weaker or less powerful regions to meet their own consumption and investment needs, especially through infrastructure projects which divert local resources for distant regions.

The region-rural-urban connections are also reflected in political configurations and activities within provincial capital cities themselves. Regional political parties which have a base in particular states, such as the Samajwadi Party or Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh (UP), gain an active presence in cities like Mumbai owing to the large presence of UP migrants in the city. Migrants from north India continue to have kinship and economic linkages with their native regions, and the presence of "multi-spatial households" (Tacoli 1998) puts pressure on UP-based political parties to respond to attacks on UP migrants in Mumbai or even to just address their demands in the city, which helps them politically in their home state. Conversely, issues that affect migrants from states like UP and Bihar in Mumbai have a repercussion in their own states, become political issues, and affect party and electoral politics both in the city and in the regions. Multi-spatial households translate into multi-spatial communities and political societies and facilitate the expansion of regional parties into other areas and regions to become multi-spatial political parties. In Bengaluru as well, regional political parties from Tamil Nadu have gained a foothold in pockets of the city, especially post attacks on Tamils in the past few years. Multi-spatial households and communities also affect everyday politics and power relations at the point of migration.

Several ongoing studies reveal that whatever the initial push factor for migration, poorer, lower-caste migrants find in migration a way of escaping caste-based dependency relations; it strengthens their bargaining or negotiating power with employers, exposes them to new opportunities for acquiring skills, and opens up avenues for social mobility. This spatial aspect of migration-related power relations is often not recognized even by sympathetic scholars and critics who tend to view migration in largely negative terms. As migration routes get strengthened and expand in size, it creates new opportunities for investments and financial flows, especially in the transportation sector, and also in related real estate developments in which both rural elites and labor participate and benefit. In extreme cases, migration is seen to even result in labor shortages, forcing landed classes to also migrate to cities after disposing off their assets and bringing in capital investments.[8]

[8] These insights are based on evidence being generated as part of ongoing doctoral research work carried out by Valentine Gandhi, R. Padmaja, Sutapa Ghosh, and Binti Singh. I wish to thank them for sharing these ideas.

To return to the theme of the spatiality of political connections, it is seen that regionally specific associations loosely affiliated to political parties or floated by parties themselves emerge as seen in cities like Mumbai. Outfits representing *Uttar Bhartiyas* (north Indians), or people from the Konkan region of Maharashtra, sprout and not only mobilize the electorate for votes but also organize periodic cultural, sports, political, and religious events as a way of cultivating a regional vote bank in the city. Both national and regional or city-specific parties in Mumbai also join this game, thus splitting the city's population further along regional lines in addition to extant caste and religious groupings. The practice of ruling and opposition parties having "guardian" ministers or leaders for specific regions and electoral constituencies also adds to this process. Demands from locals in regions and constituencies and the need to cultivate such constituencies result in regional- or constituency-specific associations being formed autonomously or set up by leaders and parties in the city. As mentioned earlier, this process is enabled by the presence of multi-spatial households and communities and facilitates the formation of multi-spatial electoral and political communities which link cities to specific regions of diverse kinds and sizes. The situation in cities like Hyderabad is somewhat similar but also different. Political parties having their origin and economic/sociocultural base in other regions of the state, such as the Telugu Desam Party or the recently floated Praja Rajyam Party, find it easier to enter Hyderabad politics due to the presence of migrants from the region in the city, though this is not the only factor. Localities with predominantly migrants from coastal Andhra form associations that fight for their specific interests and maintain links with their region's leaders. More importantly, even as local political representatives at various levels may hail from the Hyderabad region itself, they begin to be increasingly funded and patronized by rich coastal Andhra elites. Local leaders trying to escape from this situation or local elites unable to pursue their own interests both then begin to fuel anti-immigrant and pro-autonomy demands and movements.

Thus, in studying various ethnic and religious conflicts in cities, we need to recognize that as individuals and households linked by caste, religion, regional origin, language, or ideology use political strategies and support different political parties in their struggles for social mobility and empowerment, the cultural movements and struggles also translate into political conflicts which express themselves in conflicts over space. It is important to understand here that political and religious imbrications are linked to rural-urban and regional flows, transitions, and networks, and to caste and regional conflicts implicated in these transitions and connections, not just to capital flows, or to being merely the consequences of government action or inaction on urban and spatial planning. Whether or not one grants the status of global city to Mumbai, Bangalore, or Hyderabad, it needs to be recognized that these cities are being transformed by forces that are not just restricted to global linkages and global economic crises. These other forces also alter the built environment and spatial practices in cities in different ways.

A key example is the celebration of religious festivals in cities. There is a significant rural, agrarian, or regional dimension in the revival or introduction of public celebration of Hindu religious festivals in India, and it would be wrong to

attribute this purely to Hindu revivalism or Hindu fundamentalism. Mumbai is the most cosmopolitan city in India, perhaps its "only city," with over 50% of the population hailing from other Indian states. Hence, over several decades, groups from other states have gradually introduced public and community celebrations of cultural and religious events and festivals into the city, with important implications for space use during festive seasons; these have emerged as a significant source of conflict between activists of chauvinist and nativist political parties and "outsiders" (Patel 1996). Until a decade ago, the major public celebration of a religious festival in India was the *Ganesh* festival, which lasted for 10 days during the August–September period. Migration from outside the state has gradually introduced the *Navratri*—celebrated publicly by the *Gujaratis* as *Dandia,* with public song and dance events, and by the *Bengalis* as *Durga Puja*—usually occurring in October. The extensive use of public space—streets and lanes being completely blocked for extended periods during these festivals—has brought with it several consequences aside from inconvenience to users of roads. Competitive use of public space soon emerges as members of different political parties, local factions, youth groups, castes, and religions begin to celebrate these festivals separately, as well as begin celebration of other events hitherto not celebrated publicly. These have included regionally specific cultural/religious festivals, as well as birth anniversaries of political leaders.

This is evident in the *Chhat Puja*—originally a rural festival from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh which has suddenly become popular over the last few years in Mumbai. While practiced in an isolated way by individuals and families earlier, it has now become a community event occupying large spaces in and around Mumbai's Juhu beach, notwithstanding the impurity of the sea as opposed to the ritual purity of the river for Hindus. The scale of the celebration and the public patronage and support for the *Chhat Puja* by Mumbai politicians of north Indian origin leave little doubt that the festival's sudden popularity and public observance are aimed as a counter to the very public violence against north Indians in Mumbai by activists of nativist political parties. Persisting rural-urban and regional linkages and their political ramifications quite clearly imbricate uses of public space in this case also. There is also a class/caste and rural dimension to this public celebration. The nativist movement against north Indians does not target professional middle-class migrants but the lower-class migrants living in slums and blighted areas. That the "urbanized" classes have not been targeted, that they do not celebrate their festivals in public, and that lower-class/caste migrants from rural north India occupy public spaces in their celebrations—these are indicative of class/caste origins as much as they reflect the nature of the city's politics. Over the last few years, the north Indian lower-class migrants have started occupying public spaces for more and more festivals which are traditionally celebrated in public spaces in rural north India, but which are confined to homes by upper-class migrants (*Pitru Paksha*, *Mauni Amavasya*, *Karva Chauth*).

Culture, religion, and politics by no means exhaust the explanations for comprehending urban-rural and urban-regional linkages and connections. These work in consonance with and are influenced by economic and material factors, particularly

related to the accumulation and flow of capital. These factors, however, need to be explained in ways that are more nuanced than those offered by Marxist/neo-Marxist or liberal/neoliberal approaches, especially as capital accumulation and flows are seen to be linked to spatial practices and urban processes in ways that do not lend themselves to simplistic interpretations.

2.3 Rural-Urban and Urban-Regional Linkages: Realigning Population, Power, and Capital

The foregoing description reinforces academic work that analyzes population movements in terms of their significance for power relations and power structures. Unlike critiques of neoliberalism, which valorize global flows of capital and their implications to the relative neglect of domestic forces,[9] the perspective outlined here enables us to develop a multipronged approach for better appreciating class, capital, and politics, and their spatial manifestations and implications in Asian contexts. To begin with, one might seek reasons to explain the relatively greater linkages and integration of cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru compared to cities like Kolkata or other tier 2 cities in India, which have historically been integrated into global production, trade, and financial circuits, but have not had the same types and rates of growth as these three cities in recent times. Why and how do some cities gain entry into or fall out of global economic networks? Why did these cities, and not others, gain from the global outsourcing of software and information technology? Do local or regional factors influence which cities are "ripe" to enter global economic networks? Raising such questions makes us aware of the limitations of approaches such as the inter-urban competition argument of Harvey (1989) in explaining the shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance. Studying regional/nativist movements in these three cities, by locating them within rural-urban and urban-regional networks and tracing their emergence as nodes in global financial circuits, provides us with an alternate perspective on urban governance and urban dynamics.

This alternate perspective assumes that certain preconditions are necessary for cities to be allowed to enter global circuits and benefit in diverse ways from integration. In the Indian context, while inter-urban competition is no doubt present, a long-term view of the growth or decline of the economic role of cities indicates the key function that classes with a specific interest in urban areas perform. While Mumbai has been linked to global financial and trading circuits for a much longer time compared to Hyderabad and Bengaluru, recent "entrepreneurialism" in urban governance also has to be explained in terms of classes which stand to benefit from global integration and so have an interest in urban governance reforms. In all three

[9] The work of Nijman (2000a) on Mumbai constitutes an exception, especially as he insists on factoring national political economies into the analysis of globalization and urban processes.

cases, the post-1990s urban governance and growth dynamics have to be seen from the perspective of rural elites who need control of the capital city not only for political domination but also to re-spatialize their economic interests by plugging into global financial circuits. At the same time, the protection of their economic interests in real estate, infrastructure, and resource-based sectors and the protection of the political bases require that they do not support a complete shift to entrepreneurialism and that they do not go all the way with purely urban (industrial) capital which may or may not have links with global capital. Rural elites from coastal Andhra, from western Maharashtra, and from different parts of Karnataka, who all may be said to compose provincial capital, play this role, whereas a city like Kolkata historically does not have this provincial capital.[10] Thus, the flight of capital and businesses from Kolkata to Mumbai and other cities is not just a result of three decades of communist rule, as is commonly presumed, but also in fact predates this by several decades.

Why, however, could this provincial capital not develop cities in their own habitats and regions of dominance and hegemony? Why did they move and take control of state capitals often outside their regions, for which they have had to overcome problems of regional linkages and networks? One answer lies in the nature of governance in India, where state agencies with the power to make decisions on contracts, permits, and licenses are located in state capitals and, hence, proximity to decision-making authorities is required. Another lies in the long history of lack of education among the rural elites, which ensures that they have little knowledge of the workings of the modern economy, its institutions, and rules of engagement and, hence, have to depend on bureaucrats (and retired bureaucrats) to work their way through the system. A third aspect which requires further study is that cosmopolitanism is perhaps present in these cities to a larger extent than many other cities in India. Provincialism maintains rural elites' dominance and hegemony, keeps down rivals and subjects, but cannot provide an enabling environment for capital accumulation,[11] especially as firm sizes increase, and hence, management has become more complicated, technological advances have become essential, and human resources need to be managed in a non-feudal style. It is not just in these three states but also in the flight of capital from Kolkata starting from the early decades of the twentieth century, and especially in the shift of the film and advertising industry to Mumbai, in which this is exemplified. This cosmopolitanism has arisen due to a complex mix of British rule, transformation of the opportunity structure, global economic and cultural linkages, and unique demographic blend and has in fact managed to survive the provincial onslaught even if it is itself under constant threat.

This cosmopolitanism forms at least one reason for poorer migrants to come into the city, in anticipation of greater mobility via a more flexible opportunity structure.

[10] I wish to thank Ananya Roy for this insight on Kolkata.

[11] Parthasarathy (1997) offers a discussion on this with reference to the provincial elite of coastal Andhra.

Mumbai traditionally has had more migrants from outside the state than any other city in India. This creates another circuit for capital flows, another route to capital accumulation, a subterranean form of capital, which is, as yet, not adequately studied. Rural poor migrants to the city are recognized as contributing to the labor force and to the informal sector, but their role in facilitating capital flows and capital accumulation is not as well-known or recognized. While remittance flows between members of multi-spatial households are well documented, what is not is that a significant proportion of households, despite their low levels of income, are able to save and invest in assets both in the city and in the native village. More noteworthy is the gradual upward mobility of migrants in the city, who use newly acquired skills and suppliers' credit to set up small businesses in the city and then act as conduits for distribution and sales in their native regions. From fast-moving consumer goods to durables, from small tools and machinery to drugs and pharmaceuticals, a steady stream of branded and counterfeit goods move and create new subterranean financial circuits between Mumbai and regions within the state and in distant states in north India. Recent media reports of "Bihar's growth story" raving about a booming economy are not just about substantially improved governance and flow of remittances but also to do with increased financial and trade linkages between cities like Mumbai and rural areas in the state.

Cities like Mumbai and Delhi are enmeshed in complex networks with rural hinterlands involving flows of people, capital, culture, ideas, and power. This is also reflected in the rise of Bhojpuri cinema, which clearly shows that the Hindi heartland is not the marginalized or subaltern "other" of Mumbai, but that in fact, Bhojpuri cinema would be impossible without Mumbai and Bollywood (Parthasarathy 2011a). Bhojpuri-speaking people have had exposure and links to Bollywood through migration and an active presence in Bombay's economy. Especially with respect to filmmaking, Bhojpuris, unlike others from the north Indian heartland, have cultural and social capital when it comes to film production. City-region linkages can also be observed in the very large, semiformal, small, and tiny manufacturing sector in Mumbai. Manufacturing everything from cosmetics to leather wear, garments, home electronics, and processed food, these start as street vending or home-based enterprises, and as they expand, they link to supply chains in their native villages or outsource to producers back in their native regions.[12] The scale of this rural-urban petty capital connection is quite large and its effects in rural regions significant, even if somewhat dispersed. Making use of caste, kinship, and village networks, these activities create new regional and rural-urban networks linking small-scale, semiformal, and informal producers and traders, extending and expanding migrant networks into fiduciary networks, spatializing capital in new ways.

At the other end, and going back to the issue of provincial capital, economic liberalization, deregulation, and political change since the 1980s have introduced another dimension to regional-urban linkages, in terms of delineating new regions.

[12] I wish to thank Deepmala Baghel whose ongoing research has contributed to this insight.

Resource-based sectors (minerals, agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, wind energy, plantations) have been opened up to foreign direct investment and private participation. As more rural-landed classes and politicians enter this sector, these and older elites already in this sector seek to expand, modernize, and establish national/international linkages for their businesses. Both within existing states and across states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, regions come to be defined by the resource base, by licenses for exploration and mining being opened up, and by the integration of agri-horticulture and plantations with processing industries set up in close proximity. New alliances begin to be formed, cutting across political parties and factions as common interests create new regional interests that seek to undermine existing political and governance arrangements, as seen in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in recent times. Politically, these interests seek to control and dominate capital cities so necessary for super profits, for obtaining licenses and clearances, and for entering into strategic alliances with foreign partners. Likewise, as rural elites penetrate the infrastructure sector that has also been opened up for private participation, regulations and institutional mechanisms are tweaked to ensure that landed elites and rentier classes are awarded major contracts, further necessitating and strengthening their dominance over capital cities and creating new spatialities of capital between and across cities and regions, facilitated by the state. Investments in urban real estate further consolidate their economic and political power, and in Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru, the traces of rural elites are clearly evident while tracking urban expansion. As the chapter by Maringanti illustrates, we need to perceive rural-urban interactions in India "against a backdrop of popular democracy in which a range of caste alliances are always at work."

Quite apart from the implications of global outsourcing, foreign direct investments, and neoliberal governance, these cities are also then important nodes in the new spatial flows of capital, which is also simultaneously linked to political expansion of diverse rural sections. These spatial flows realign the rural to the urban, regions to cities, and global to regions, they redefine regions and politically empower or disempower populations in cities, villages, and regions. This chapter has presented a descriptive account of rural-urban and regional networks and linkages in order to map the continuing and emerging ways in which capital and politics are spatialized in India. Rural-urban connections are more than just about demographic aspects of migration, just as the concept of region is dynamic and has multiple dimensions. It is perhaps, as yet, too early to theorize these developments. The descriptions and arguments above, however, help us avoid the pitfalls inherent in blindly adopting theories and concepts derived from American or European contexts to other situations (Nijman 2000b). Tirtosudarmo's historical survey of the spatial expansion of urban areas in the north coast of Java in this book reveals the ironic, juxtaposed developments of infrastructure growth and economic modernization, on the one hand, and increased "rural-urban disparity and sustain(ed) rural-urban population mobility" on the other. By pointing to the ways in which global integration and domestic social and economic transformations realign capital and politics along new spatial routes and create new urban-rural associations and regional connections, this chapter posits one possible way of theorizing such changes in Asian contexts.

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Chapter 3
Rural Youths as Real Estate Entrepreneurs in Globalizing Hyderabad

Anant Maringanti

3.1 When the Bubble Bursts

On a scorching Monday morning in late January 2010, at the end of a 3-month-long study on land records in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India, I made my way to Kondapur, a small village about 20 km from the city in a cluster of villages known as Ghatkesar, which became part of Greater Hyderabad Metropolitan area 3 years ago. Ghatkesar had been home to a medium-sized tea-packaging industry until 2004, when the company gradually started downsizing via voluntary retirement schemes and finally closed in 2008. Given that this company was the only formal employer in the area where agriculture is largely rain dependent, the plant closure should have badly hit the long-term prospects of the well-being of a number of families. Yet, it had hardly made any news. In fact, by all available accounts, the area had witnessed a tremendous growth in the last 10 years. Along the state highway to Ghatkesar from Hyderabad, I passed through a stretch of forest land, several residential colleges, and sites of new housing colonies until I reached a point where I had to take a sharp turn away from the state highway to go into the Ghatkesar cluster of villages. As I approached Ghatkesar, the secret of the area's prosperity revealed itself: shop front after shop front displayed sign boards indicating that apart from being barbers, tailors, textile retailers, or fancy stores (local name for convenience stores), each of them were also real estate agencies. Venkat,[1] my local guide, kept pointing to the developments along the way, keeping up banter all along and explaining the intricate details of who the big real estate players in the area were. Venkat was himself a small-time real estate agent put out of business by the recent international financial crisis, and now, he had returned to his original

[1] All names of individuals in this chapter are changed to protect the identity of the informants.

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vocation—car driving in Hyderabad city. Together, we began scouting the area to find his old friends in the real estate business. He said:

> The recent slump in the real estate market has destroyed many of us. I used to be a driver in Hyderabad. Nice job. And then I didn't show up for work for a few days. Then finally when I did show up, the employer said, he had already gotten a new driver. I was foolish. I could have pleaded with him. Or I could have gone and found another job. But then I didn't care. I thought I could easily make a lot more money being a real estate agent. Much more than I could ever have made as a driver. It worked for some time. You find one deal and get the land registered and you are good for the next few days. The thing is, I got used to drinking. I got used to smoking. It was just a great time. It lasted for 2 years and then it went dead. And now for the last two years, the market has been dead. No transactions. You will see when we get to the land registrar's office. There will be a number of youngsters and middle-aged men, all hoping that someone will turn up to buy land. But really it is very difficult. There is no work. And we have all gotten used to a different lifestyle. Drinking, smoking. It is difficult for us to relearn the discipline of regular work now. We are stuck. The Reddys [land-owning upper caste] are different from us *dalits* [also known as scheduled castes]. The Reddys can survive because they get dowries [bridal money]. But, I have to go back to work. In some ways I am lucky. I am just 32. If this had happened to me when I was 38 or something. And if I had had a demanding wife, can you imagine how tough that would have been? That is the state in which many of my friends here find themselves today.

This chapter explores the geo-historical context of the subjectivities of young people like Venkat in Hyderabad, a globalizing city in south India. In this city, in the last two decades, chaotic urban land markets, poor land records, historically sedimented layers of land administration systems, and low state legitimacy have contributed to new cultures of governance in which men like Venkat lead precarious lives. In Hyderabad, as in many other cities of India, the urban fringe is largely agricultural land where ownership patterns are shaped by caste-based land rights, in contrast to the urban landscape where modern property regimes rule. The laws relating to the ownership claims of these lands are very complex and layered over time. Converting this land to urban real estate is a complex process involving a number of agencies and actors. Transactions can often take a very long time, introducing invisible costs into the real estate development process and, sometimes, even rendering development impossible. It is precisely by inserting themselves into these transactions that enterprising young people in the rural fringes of the rapidly urbanizing and globalizing cities often try to negotiate new lives.

Over the last 15 years, the Government of Andhra Pradesh state, of which Hyderabad is the capital, like many other state governments in India, has adopted a fast-track approach to economic growth, front-ending the capital city as the engine of growth. To date, Hyderabad accounts for nearly 60% of the state's commercial tax collection. It is the fifth largest metropolis in the country. The growth strategy adopted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh is in tune with what many national and subnational governments across the world have adopted in the recent past. These governments receive policy recipes for facilitating city-centric growth strategies through networks of policymakers, where experiences and success stories are exchanged through international conferences, "local" experiences, showcased as success or failure stories, and experiences of particular places, distilled into best

practice regimes (Peck and Theodore 2010). Over the last decade, a significant body of critical work on such best practice regimes has emerged in geography and allied disciplines (Gertler 2003). While acknowledging the importance of this work, this chapter seeks to respond to the call from several scholars to promote research that is grounded in the messiness of localities. It takes the view that cities and urban systems, embedded as they are in national and global contexts, have specific historical trajectories of development which ought to be accounted for in policy solutions (Robinson 2006; Roy 2009) opening up place-specific opportunities for different social groups.

This chapter is meant to be a contribution to a particular strand of research on Asian urbanization - "rural-urban interactions," which surfaces every now and then in international publications from time to time only to become dormant again. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the theme fascinated sociologists, economists, and anthropologists, it was mainly in the Marxist framework of capital accumulation (Gupta 1988). Taking case studies across Asia, scholars attempted to tease out how agrarian surpluses were being reinvested in cities and whether or not the growth in such investments indicated a transition from feudal to capitalist societies. Some of the finest examples of engaged scholarship of this genre, including Terry McGee's theaters of accumulation (Mcgee and Armstrong 1985), seemed to suggest that it would not pay to render the rural and the urban as two distinct and bounded areas. They saw a continuum between the rural and the urban. In its more recent iteration, scholars are exploring how mobilities between the rural and the urban are reshaping the political repertoires of subaltern actors (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003). Continuing along these lines, this chapter makes a case for a more agent-centric approach to the study of urbanization in the rural fringes of cities. Specifically, it demonstrates how inhabitants of lands that are technically classified as rural in actuality deploy their knowledge of local histories and geographies to create opportunities in unpredictable land markets. My purpose in highlighting the role of the young men from one such area in reshaping the fortunes of an area that has lost other job opportunities in recent years is to call attention to the new geographies being crafted by people beyond rural-urban dichotomies. This chapter draws, in part, on data collected during a short-term study on the role of land records in governance systems in Hyderabad between October 2009 and January 2010. This study itself is part of a longer-term research I have been involved in since 2005. It is primarily conceptualized in the framework of "extended case methodology," a reflexive model of science that takes, as its premise, the intersubjectivity of researcher and the subject of study. The extended case study method privileges intervention, process, structuration, and theory reconstruction. It often involves revisiting sites of previous research with a grounded theory approach. To use a phrase from Burawoy (1998), the extended case study is the "Siamese twin" of positivist science, which valorizes reliability and replicability of experimentation and representativeness of the sample. In contrast to positivist science, exemplified by survey research, the extended case study method does not attempt to control for "contextual effects"; rather, it takes the context as part of the explanation and seeks to undermine "power effects" such as domination, silencing, objectification, and normalization. Specifically, the study involves revisit-

ing research subjects I have worked with previously in the year 2005. Over a 3-month period, between October and January 2010, I visited Ghatkesar, the research site, once a week to interview local real estate agents and revenue officials. The unstructured interviews conducted during this time were read and interpreted against a continuous commentary in local newspapers on corruption in government offices, particularly in relation to land deals. Further, interviews with retired government officials, especially in the survey and land records department, lawyers, and builders in the city were conducted to provide the framework for understanding the lives of the young men in Ghatkesar.

This chapter is divided into four sections hereon. Section 3.2 sets out the broad political context in which new urban land policies are being introduced in Hyderabad, specifically focusing on those that seek to deepen property rights. It describes how electoral compulsions and the lack of functional coordination between various government agencies, coupled with budgetary constraints arising from neoliberal fiscal policies, are forcing governments to handle such policies in a piece-meal manner. As deepening of property rights involves settling multiple claims in a chaotic environment, the process opens up space for a range of enterprising local actors to make money. Against this backdrop, Sect. 3.3 outlines the history of land tenure formalization in Hyderabad. It narrates how particular social groups, drawing on caste identity-based entitlements to land and land administration, have been able to seize the opportunities described in Sect. 3.2. Section 3.4 describes the turbulence in the urban economy that has come about because of the city's insertion into global economic networks and establishes how a new space has opened up in the city where the rural youth can draw on their local knowledge to negotiate globalization on their terms. Section 3.5 summarizes the argument and suggests that "urbanization" (and even globalization) is not so much a process of expansion of people and practices from the existing city (or beyond) as it is a process of new practices, knowledges, and subjectivities being acquired through reworking of local histories and geographies.

3.2 Popular Democracy and Urban Property Rights

Over the last decade, international financial institutions and development bodies like the World Bank, the IMF, and the UN have been aggressively pushing in reforms and streamlining urban land markets, particularly in cities in the Global South. An important element in the policy recipes that have gained some currency in India in this context is the idea that clear titling of land parcels leads to faster economic growth (De Soto 2000). A large body of empirical research has clustered around this idea by way of empirical studies of informal housing. Although there is significant variation in the findings of the literature across different national contexts, in recent years, several critical scholars have also contested the wisdom of this policy through empirical work which demonstrates that clear titling does not necessarily lead to empowerment of the poor or fire off new engines of growth (Benjamin 2005). Critics

of De Soto argue that formal mechanisms and liberal property rights, when applied to the entire urban landscape, can potentially harm the interests of the poor. In their view, ultimately, "tenure" is a social relation and transferring tenure formalization experiences regardless of the local context may prove inappropriate and may harm the existing informal land delivery systems, reduce land supply for the urban poor, and increase tenure insecurity (Payne 2001).

Yet, much of this work, both supporting and opposing clear titling, has neither dealt with the complicated histories of land tenure systems in India nor paid attention to the role of agents who facilitate the securing of land tenures through their networks in government offices and communities. Experienced policymakers and implementers in India view clear titling as only one among many alternative strategies toward deepening the liberal property rights regime. In addition, De Soto's recommendations have been followed only to the extent of computerizing records and introducing fast-track processes to resolve multiple claims over parcels of land.[2] Deepening of property rights to enhance capital mobility is not merely a technological matter of "clear titling" but a sociopolitical process in which a host of reforms in the regulation of property transactions are to be accomplished. In reality, implementation of *ad hoc* measures in the name of reforms contributing to growth-oriented urbanization without attention to the broader context of local political cultures has placed large numbers of people at risk even while appearing to create new opportunities for some. In what follows, I will attempt to provide a schematic account of these political cultures.

Manor (1993) had argued that during the 1980s, with the weakening of the Indian National Congress Party's domination in Indian electoral politics and the rise of regional and subregional political parties, a new competitive era began in Indian politics. At the state level, Manor argued, this meant that political parties sought to woo voters with ever increasing lists of subsidies without any corresponding increases in revenue collection. The populism that was documented by Manor (1993) should, however, be viewed against the backdrop of another process of state power restructuring by which local governance was effectively incapacitated across India since the early 1970s. While the central leadership of the Indian National Congress Party eliminated possibilities of any effective local democracy through this process, it was not able to eliminate local politics altogether. Grassroots-level politicians, whether or not they were elected to municipal bodies, had effectively turned into what Manor called small-time fixers in the rural context, wielding influence over the implementation of top-down development programs. In short, even as a culture of governing by executive rather than legislative power became rampant, a bureaucratic culture open to manipulation at the local level became

[2] World Bank-commissioned studies have shown that there is a marked increase in registered urban mortgages in India due to the computerization of land records. Yet, some of this increase could simply be attributed to the reduction of stamp duty, which lowers the costs of such transactions (Deininger and Goyal 2010). In other words, capitalization of landed property is subject to a variety of influences other than clear titles.

established (Benjamin 2004). As a result, over a period of time, municipal governments have become subject to a plethora of interim Government Orders which are constantly subverting the overarching policy directions.[3]

Theorists of the state have attempted to read comparable phenomena of this kind in many ways, providing possibilities for new interpretations. For example, one might argue that the postcolonial Indian state simply does not have sufficient power over its territory. That is to say, *contra* James Scott's (1999) idea of the high modernist impulse of the state to see its territory through a lens of order and calculability, the postcolonial populist state in fact operates through "selective seeing"—sometimes responding only to those who seek to be seen and largely letting the others remain unseen, and at other times, imposing a surveillance on space. Thus, the state space—the territory—is in fact a patchwork of visible and invisible spaces (Corbridge et al. 2005). Alternatively, one might argue, alongside Partha Chatterjee, that the postcolonial state is in fact composed of two different spheres: one, a civil society that inhabits a liberal democratic space and the other, a political society, the denizens of which mostly survive and, at times, thrive through mobilizing local networks of caste and kinship to put pressure via electoral politics to win provisional and unstable entitlements (Chatterjee 2004). Or yet, one might argue, alongside Holston (1998), that the law always produces chaos, not as unintended effect but rather as a strategy which opens up multiple and fluid spaces for insurgent action by the poor. While there is merit in each of these interpretations, empirical realities of globalizing Indian cities disallow any simple analytical closures. Cities and regional urban systems in India have largely been creatures of state governments for a variety of reasons.

First, city governments in India have a shallow tax base, relying mainly on property tax, while commercial tax goes to the provincial government (state government), and income tax, to the central government. Thus, city governments are dependent on grants from state governments which net larger amounts of tax. Second, without effective local elected bodies, city governments have gradually become subject to executive powers of state governments. As a consequence, the legislative powers of the elected bodies of local governments have become highly circumscribed. At the same time, the executive powers of local governments have become subject to multiple sources of control by state government departments such as revenue or municipal administration.[4] Third, in many instances, functional reorganization of

[3] The case of Hyderabad Urban Development Authority's (HUDA) master plan illustrates this well. HUDA developed its first master plan in 1977. This plan was revised in 1983. Since then, while the city has grown enormously, HUDA has not been able to pass its new master plans into legislation. However, hundreds of Government Orders altering the master plan have been issued by the state government, with the result that nobody in the government knows precisely which rule applies to which situation.

[4] City governments in India have an elected body headed by the mayor and an executive that is run by the commissioner, who is a senior officer usually of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS)—a nationally recruited cadre of officers. The IAS has traditionally been a corps of officers who defer to seniority and line hierarchy. In other words, the municipal commissioner, although he may not be technically subservient to the revenue officials, and is answerable to the Urban Development Ministry, he or she would, in practice, defer to a senior official of the IAS cadre in matters related to administration.

municipal bodies over time has led to a chaotic situation where coordination is extremely difficult between different organizations involved in urban governance such as those responsible for water and sanitation, electricity, road maintenance, zonal planning, and building regulation.

The Government of India has made two major interventions since the economic reforms began in 1991, ostensibly to strengthen city governance. The first of these was the 74th Constitutional Amendment,[5] which restored a degree of autonomy from state and central governments to local elected bodies in cities. The second, more recent programmatic intervention is known as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).[6] Introduced in 2005, the JNNURM has set up a pool of challenge grants, which are awarded to cities which embrace reform policies and propose urban renewal projects on a competitive basis. Driven by policy compulsions of bringing cities into the fold of the markets, neither the 74th Constitutional Amendment nor the JNNURM has paid much attention to actually strengthening the institutional capacities of municipal bodies and devolving actual powers to them. As a result, city and state governments have resorted to a blind race for JNNURM funds, relying primarily on consultants to produce proposals without having prepared themselves for meaningful reform processes. This new process, however, has not altered the ground reality that the pressure for maintaining political legitimacy forces governments and bureaucracies to address the public primarily through top-down executive power and bottom-up networks of lower-level bureaucracies. It is in this broad context that much of the politics at the municipal level actually revolves around land claims.

In Andhra Pradesh, as all over India, land is administered primarily by the revenue department. Although its origins lay in agricultural revenue administration, historically, even in cities, as the primary custodian of land records, the revenue department is the ultimate arbiter for all claims. Even when, nominally, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) or the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) has specific powers over land administration, or the planning and regulation of land use or development, in practice, the jurisdictional boundaries of the GHMC and the HMDA are simply not reflective of the actual city. Further, even within their jurisdictions, the GHMC and the HMDA often find that there are large tracts of land that remain in the control of various other government agencies including the revenue department.

This lack of uniform control over land arises from several sources. In some cases, it is because a particular parcel of land has not been included in the original town and municipal surveys on which urban plans are based or has been exempted from plans

[5] The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 concerning urban local bodies came into effect in India in 1993.

[6] The Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission is a nationwide program which invites city governments to submit comprehensive development plans that are then evaluated by an expert committee and granted central funds. The Mission pumps in much-needed infrastructure funds but has also received widespread criticism as one of its evaluation criteria is a set of mandatory reforms regarding governance and local laws.

by the creation of special development areas, such as the Cyberabad Development Authority and the Hyderabad Airport Development Authority, or, much more frequently, simply by interim government orders. It is precisely because this messy context threatens stable growth that the international financial institutions and global consultancy firms are advocating policies, particularly those of formalizing property rights to rationalize the urban space and increase capital mobility.[7] However, as the process of formalizing property rights is, first and foremost, an issue of settling multiple claims to any particular parcel of land, a very large space has opened up around the revenue department for small-time fixers or influence wielders to operate. In this space, it is not formal educational qualifications, but experience, local knowledge, networks, and knowledge of government orders that are the all important resources.

3.3 Capitalizing on the "Rural"

Impulses to formalize land rights to provide tenurial security in rural areas have been present in state policy debates in India since independence. Almost all state governments have pursued specific programs, from time to time, to reform and redistribute ownership as a political priority. A majority of these programs have focused on providing tenurial security to share croppers. Other than this, state governments, under pressure from various social movements, have distributed land to poor people as land ownership is seen as a sign of "dignity and self-respect." However, as poor people are considered to have low capacity to hold on to property, much of the land redistribution has been designed to take place through a system of truncated property rights, which accord usufruct rights to poor people that may then be transferred to the legal heirs but not to a third party by sale. In Hyderabad, such property rights are documented through what are known as *lavani pattas* or D-form *pattas* in Andhra Pradesh. Laws relating to this provide for the government to take back the land when (1) a reasonable case for public purpose can be made or (2) the land has been alienated to a third party by sale. In the latter instance, the government steps in primarily to ensure that the land is returned either to the original grantee or to another person who is eligible for the land on the same grounds.

In practice, however, assignment of land under the *lavani* or D-form *patta* system has been carried out in a very erratic manner over the years. The government does not have any system in place for monitoring whether or not the assigned lands are being used for their designated purposes and whether or not they are used by the original assignees or their descendants. As purchasing these lands is illegal, a very large gray market has emerged in urban real estate where one can purchase assigned lands at cheaper than market prices but without proper documentation. Several large real estate firms and developments have emerged in such lands around Hyderabad.

[7] For a review of the literature on positive links between secure property rights and long-term investments on land, labor supply participation, and women's empowerment, see Besley (1995).

Over time, a very sophisticated system of micro-entrepreneurship emerges in urban real estate, where, armed with knowledge of land histories, their documentation in revenue records, and contacts in the registrar's office and the survey department, people can make money by manufacturing land titles where none existed previously.

The absence of a single dominant spatial order, as described above, opens up numerous avenues for such entrepreneurship. In places where intense competition for land is ongoing, this kind of entrepreneurship results in violent scenarios where people hold on to and develop their claims to land in cities by three primary mechanisms: (1) physical confrontation between rival contenders, (2) appeals to the law through individual or public interest litigation, and (3) mediation by agents who have extensive knowledge of revenue records. In most cases, even though they have little documentation at the beginning of the conflict, over a period of time, claimants for land accumulate enormous amounts of documentation regarding the histories of the lands they are claiming. All of this requires specialized skills and expertise, often a variety of tacit knowledge that are accrued over a period of time in particular families. For example, families belonging to the Brahmin and Reddy castes are considered to be knowledgeable in revenue records, while families belonging to Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes (both population categories annunciated in the Constitution of India)[8] have practical knowledge of the terrain, land use, and resource management. In what follows, I describe how this tacit knowledge has become salient, especially in real estate markets.

3.4 Globalization on Local Terms

Since 1997, the Government of Andhra Pradesh began hiring international consultants for designing its economic strategy. Yet, 13 years later, these new global visions for the city of Hyderabad continue to run up against resistance arising from numerous sources in local geographies. In part, the challenges for the new policies arise from the fact that the administrative machinery of the city has suffered several disruptions in the last 60 years. In 1948, when the Government of India dethroned the native ruler of Hyderabad, the records of large tracts of land were transferred to the Indian government by the deposed native ruler, Mir Osman Ali Khan. Yet, there was no concerted effort by any government agency to systematically integrate these into the new administration. Subsequently, in 1956, a new administrative system was put in place to rule over the region with Hyderabad as the capital of an extremely diverse territory, parts of which were drawn together from the Madras Presidency and the erstwhile Nizam State only on the principle that the inhabitants all spoke a

[8] Traditionally, the upper caste Brahmins and the intermediate caste Reddys have been custodians of land records in villages in Andhra Pradesh. The Scheduled Castes and the Other Backward Classes are both categories of population annunciated in the Constitution of India. The classification of an individual as belonging to any of these groups indicates a lack of social privilege and entitles him or her to concessions in education, employment, and welfare programs.

similar language—Telugu.[9] Again, in 1983, the newly elected Telugu Desam Party abolished the traditional revenue system, in which local record keeping was a hereditary occupation, and large amounts of local knowledge were lost. Then finally, in 1997–1998, Hyderabad adopted the global city model, and many of the functions of the municipality, the urban development authority, and the revenue department were reorganized.

At each of these moments of disruption, files and papers were moved between offices, often resulting in an utter chaos which few of the officers manning important positions were in a position to unravel. Financially, by 2009, having been pushed to adopt new accounting practices and build credibility for itself in capital markets, the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was mired in debt, waiting for the state government to at least make good on funds that were due to it. Further, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Hyderabad lacked control over large pockets of urban areas as the state government declared them special development areas, e.g., Cyberabad Development Authority, Hyderabad Airport Development Authority, which were exempted from zonal regulations of urban planning. To make matters worse, even while the Municipal Corporation was having to ensure service delivery to these areas, it was not able to raise any significant tax revenues from them.

Within the first few years of its coming into existence, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, in 1956, abolished customary land rights such as service *inam* (land given to individuals for performing certain social functions such as *pujas* in temples and watching over cremations). The *inam* holders were given property rights over the land, and their services, henceforth paid for by salary from the government treasury. In some instances, lands were transferred to line departments or specially constituted boards. For example, lands granted to temples for meeting temple expenses were transferred to the Endowments Board and lands related to mosques were transferred to the Waqf Board.[10] The Government of Andhra Pradesh also abolished the Andhra Pradesh Board of Revenue which governed lands in coastal Andhra and merged the land administration of the Telangana region with the land administration of coastal Andhra Pradesh into one single department headed by the Commissioner of Land Revenue.

Despite this merger, however, as there was little correspondence between the different terminologies in different parts of the state, the government enacted several special legislations with respect to particular regions. This process of integration of land administration, however, remained incomplete as many occupants of land did not act in time to get the status of their lands changed from customary rights, e.g., *inam* lands, into proper titles. Disputes remained unsettled. Further, in many cases, as land records were primarily maintained by village officials who held their posts

[9] In the process, the Nizam State had also lost some of its territory to neighboring states.

[10] The Endowments Board is the government agency which is the custodian of all Hindu religious properties. The Waqf Board is the Islamic counterpart of the Endowments Board. Created in 1956 in Hyderabad by a central legislation, the Waqf Board is the custodian of lands dedicated for public purposes in Islam.

by heredity, revenue officials had no way of integrating them at higher levels. However, in the early years, much of this enormous diversity was governed through administrative practices known as *jama bandi*—an annual visit by the district collector to each village. It was during these visits that all local disputes were settled and new surveys and boundary markings, undertaken.

Over time, such state practices have been abandoned, and by the early 1980s, the maintenance of land records has became so chaotic that no serious attempt has since been made to rectify the situation. This state of affairs has been further compounded by occasional policy decisions of state governments to meet their political imperatives. For example, in 1982, the newly elected state government abolished the hereditary system of village officials with one stroke and transferred all land records to the revenue administration, which hired officials through the service recruitment board. As a result, while the control and power of local Brahmin families was disrupted, and technically, land records became transparent and accessible to everyone, in practice, the local revenue inspector became the ultimate arbiter for any information regarding land. The only thing that could be said with any certainty about land administration in Andhra Pradesh by this time was that due to the history of accurate and extensive land surveys in coastal Andhra, there was a reliable archive to which one could refer, while the same could not be said of the Nizam Administration, where large tracts of land were never surveyed and settled. Further, as revenues from land dwindled over the years, successive governments have had no interest in maintaining and upgrading land records in the rural areas.

Even in Hyderabad city, the first major attempt to fix land records was undertaken as early as 1965, when a town and municipal survey was conducted. The survey carried out by the revenue department was a departure from previous surveys in two respects. First, it excluded thousands of acres of land—the university campus, the army cantonment, and a string of contiguous farmlands. Second, the survey was conducted in the metric system in contrast to earlier surveys, which were conducted in the foot and pound system. This resulted in confusion because of inaccuracies arising from conversion of units. Adding to this confusion, the new system also had to confront the fact that large tracts of land belonging to the Nizam, the erstwhile ruler, did not have any proper revenue documentation to which they could be linked. Thus, the land record system which comprises three main components—the survey map, the revenue Record of Rights, and the individual title deeds and tax records—became dismantled.

Since then, the second major attempt to strengthen the land records in Hyderabad was undertaken only in the mid-1990s. This new initiative was limited to digitizing the existing land records to encourage formal transactions in land by reducing transaction costs and speeding up procedures. While the move indeed succeeded, to some extent, in increasing the number of registered transactions, it did not improve the reliability of land records, particularly in respect of title history. Further, as there was no foolproof citizen identification system in place in India, the registrar's office, the revenue department, and the municipal office became centers of enormous corruption, whereby individuals could impersonate the owner of a given parcel of land or sell the same parcel to multiple clients through forged

documents. Complicating this further, in early 2001, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, realizing that land auctions could be an important revenue source, began to stake its claims to lands that had hitherto been occupied by people for various purposes.

Builders in Hyderabad who have to interact with the revenue department frequently know that there are primarily two types of troubled land parcels which cannot be brought into construction without complicated negotiations involving extensive knowledge of local revenue records, pending court cases, muscle power, and connections with senior government officials. The first type is what is known as "gap" lands in the city, i.e., lands whose revenue records are incomplete and lands whose ownership, somewhere along the line, rest with Muslim families of the erstwhile Nizam's rule. In order to secure their own interests, therefore, most builders take a number of precautions. As Ramesh Reddy, a builder, explained:

> The way this happens is that…let us say you have a survey number 237, which is owned by a certain person. In actuality, that person will be cultivating in survey number 238. And the owner of 238 will be cultivating in 239. So, the result is that you have a problem with survey numbers which are not accurate. For example, we did a 300-acre venture in 1995. Ten to 15 acres of land. I completed the project in 1999. Now in 2009, I am going to court about that land. The problem here is that 300 acres of land have purchased from different people. We made 2,000 plots. Y sold me the land in 1995. X sold it to Y in 1985. Now the sons of X are challenging this. This happens because the registrar's office is not concerned with verifying what is going on actually on the ground. Their job is simply to record a transaction. We have all the necessary documents. Registration, MRO office, sub-registrar's office. No encumbrance certificate. We send out people to the *panchayati sarpanch*,[11] to verify that the person who is selling the land is the person he claims to be. The trouble in these villages is that we go there and ask for one Knkuru Ellaiah. It turns out that there are so many people with the same name.

Attempts to solve problems of the kind that Ramesh Reddy described above have been erratic and slow in coming. For example, sometime in 1998, the Government introduced a system where all registrations had to carry photographs of the parties involved. However, there are other aspects to the problem that are simply not resolved through the photo-identification system.

Ramesh Reddy continued:

> Part of the trouble is that after we buy the land, the person who sold it to us gets the notice. He will not act. At some point we get to know from our friends in the court that there is a litigation with our name in it. Then we move and we start funding the entire proceedings. It is possible for people to just disappear after completing the project. But if you want to continue in the business, you cannot afford to do that. You have to fight for your reputation and credibility. I have had four cases like that. I have won two of them.

As Ramesh Reddy describes, the secret to success is to maintain a network of people who have intimate knowledge of local processes and can keep each other informed of day-to-day developments in government offices, in courts, on real estate sites, in families and communities that may be staking claims, and among influence

[11] The *panchayat* is the local unit of democratic governance at the village level. The panchayat is an elected body headed by a *sarpanch*.

wielders such as politicians and government officials. Each of the nodes in these networks gets mobilized into action for a variety of motivations including money, favors, and promised loyalties.

In this terrain, sustained planning efforts by governments are superfluous. Rather, what works is gradual, incremental adjustments resulting from pressures from different lobbies. For example, although the Government of Andhra Pradesh has initially resisted pressure from the Government of India to do away with the Urban Land Ceiling Act 1976, which restricts the size of urban property ownership by a single individual, it has, nevertheless, gradually relaxed the rules and has been dealing with surplus lands and exempted lands on a case-by-case basis, whereby, gradually, over a period of time, the Urban Land Ceiling Act has become empty of all meaning.[12] Similarly, tenure security has considerably weakened in large tracts of land around Hyderabad, where scheduled castes have come to occupy land via the land reform programs in the 1970s and 1980s. In a key decision in 2007, the Government of Andhra Pradesh revoked the clauses by which the government had to reassign lands which were taken back from scheduled caste families for infringement of the condition that it be not sold. In other words, if a scheduled caste family sells the land that has been assigned to them for agricultural purposes, the government can take it back for good and release it into the market as government property. Since such takeovers are physically impossible to effect in areas which are built over, the government has created a special committee under whose auspices these lands are regularized upon payment of a penalty.

As can be seen from the above, whether it is lands exempted from the Urban Land Ceiling Act 1976, lands which have been assigned to scheduled castes, or lands whose statuses remain indeterminate because of discontinuities in land records, both within the city limits and in the vicinity of the present city, large tracts of land remain classified under various categories as rural. Their eventual absorption into the city is not merely a matter of aerial expansion of the city, but of intense negotiation among various social groups, and involves navigating through a maze of revenue rules and archives. It is precisely here that some of the inhabitants of these lands are able to deploy their tacit knowledge and tenuous claims to ownership to their advantage.

3.5 Conclusion

As Venkat walked me into the Kondapur village, we were confronted by a strange sight. The village is in fact full of new buildings and real estate developments. Yet, the electoral democracy of the village is in the hands of a *gram panchayat*, the most

[12] The Urban Land Ceiling Act 1976 prohibits any single individual to own more than 1,000 square meters of vacant urban land property. Despite its laudable intention of breaking land monopoly, the Urban Land Ceiling Act has, in reality, resulted in large numbers of land parcels being classified as agricultural lands, thereby becoming exempt from the law. Much of this land has remained locked into agricultural production, are thus rural, and therefore, unavailable for urban development until recently.

grassroots form of elected democracy in India. Much of the arid land surrounding the village is what is known in revenue categories as assigned land, i.e., land given to poor families of scheduled castes under the regime of truncated property rights described as *lavani patta* or D-form *patta* earlier in this chapter. Technically, this land cannot be transferred to a third party by sale. However, as real estate markets soared, many of the families with assigned lands had sold off the lands to developers. Under the town planning rules, the conversion of agricultural lands into real estate needs to be approved by both the *gram panchayat* and the town planning authority. Sales of such converted lands can be registered by normal procedure. Venkat's family is politically important in the village as Venkat's brother, Sateesh, has been elected as the *sarpanch* of the village and is technically authorized to approve land conversions.

As we walked into the village lands, gradually, the basis of the wealth in the village, which continued to be rural, began to unfold. In one of the sites, about 75 acres of assigned lands were frozen since 2006 without any investments either in real estate or in agriculture. The 25 families which were granted the land about 25 years ago managed to sell it for a pittance in 2004 only to discover, 2 years later, that the real estate markets were soaring. Having learnt through a friendly revenue official that they had the law on their side if they want to rescind the sale agreement, the scheduled caste families of Kondapur challenged the registration of land sale that they themselves were party to and had it declared null and void. However, their hopes of being able to sell it again at a later date for a higher price while drawing on political connections to get the sale regularized were dashed when the international financial crisis hit real estate markets in Hyderabad and all major land deals came to a standstill.

While the story of the 75 acres of assigned land reveals layers of intrigue, in which local and extra-local actors are involved, Kondapur, specifically, and Ghatkesar, more broadly, have witnessed a remarkable growth in the last 5 years due to real estate investments. The area remains outside the metropolitan limits of Hyderabad city and, thus, continues to be subject to the land regulations that apply primarily to rural areas. Yet, barely 10 km away from the outer limits of the city, Ghatkesar is ever more tightly integrating into the expanding city as new real estate developments crop up, and road and rail connectivity improves. Even though opportunities have dwindled, with investments in real estate slowing down significantly and land transactions coming to a standstill, the stock of land that is classified as "rural" and "agricultural" is still quite significant. Young men like Venkat and his coevals from other castes continue to hold on to hopes of a day when the markets will revive again, opening up another round of opportunities for them to capitalize on their knowledge of local geographies and histories.

The aim of this chapter, as stated at the outset, is to explore an agent-centric approach to understanding the rural-urban interactions on the fringes of globalizing Hyderabad. Rural-urban interaction is not a new theme in the social sciences. From time to time, scholars return to it with new approaches. It has also been established, time and again, that the rural-urban dichotomy is highly problematic. Rather, an orientation to urban studies which is not city-centric, but instead focuses on the

rural-urban continuum (Thompson 2007) will allow us to critique the implicit taken-for-granted power relationships between the urban and the rural. The particular case presented above demonstrates how assumptions of the "urban" as a force that emanates from the city and radiates outward can conceal the actual ways in which places and people are categorized in regulatory and technical discourses as rural and agrarian. This concealment, in turn, makes it difficult to see the ways in which such places and people can deploy their knowledge of local histories and geographies to negotiate, on their own terms, with the urbanizing and globalizing forces. Their capacity to hold their own ground may be limited in the face of global events such as the recent economic downturn. Yet, like the subaltern circular migrants described by Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan (2003), they gain from the experience in knowledge and repertoires of action. It is precisely in this possibility of local geographies that possibilities for new futures lie.

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Chapter 4
Livelihoods and Development: Socioeconomic Exclusion in Mumbai's Hinterland

Stephen John Louw and Parthasarathi Mondal

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between development policy and the social lives and livelihoods of marginalized peri-urban and rural peoples.[1] As is widely acknowledged in recent development studies literature, development policy cannot continue to assume that people are simply subjects of development. Instead, there is a need to understand the interrelationship between local perceptions and beliefs, transaction costs, and the development of institutions capable of ensuring social order and facilitating development (North 1990, 2005). This chapter is an illustration of what happens when these matrices are not addressed.

In the state of Maharashtra, as in India more widely today, tribal communities[2] are located at the intersection of a traditional, forest-based way of life and the competing needs of the agents of development and modernization: industrial and

[1] This study was made possible by generous funding from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NOW): IDPAD grant 5.2.67.

[2] The aboriginal peoples of India are known as *adivasi* or tribals. These communities are typically the most economically, socially, and geographically marginalized sections of society and are seldom integrated fully into caste-based Hindu society. The term, "tribals," is used widely as shorthand for "tribal communities" or "tribal peoples" in both popular and official discourse in India. We have followed that practice here.

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commercial lobbies that make alternative claims to the land and water on which these tribals survive. This study is an attempt to learn more about the lives of the tribals whose livelihoods are under threat. Specifically, it is concerned with learning more about how tribal life has been transformed in the past century, as their ability to access and survive on forest resources has been undermined and as they are forced to enter the cash economy. In this way, it is suggested that discourses of conservation and protection marginalize tribals without achieving the desired objective of protecting important ecological resources.

This chapter is based on a 3-year documentation of tribal lives, including extensive oral interviews that tease out family histories and an extensive cross-seasonal survey looking at consumption patterns; social networks; impact on the forest; beliefs and attitudes toward medicine, religion and witchcraft, among others; and hopes and dreams for the future.

4.2 Mumbai and Its Hinterland: Land, Water, and Forest

The history of Mumbai is a history of conflict and struggle over two critical and equally scarce resources: land and water. Successive indigenous and colonial governments have sought to expand the land base through a combination of land reclamation—sewing together seven previously disparate islands—and the expansion of the original island city into the hinterland. The colonial government's interest in the commercial and industrial potential of Mumbai played a major role in determining not only its growth but also the nature and type of growth. The rapid industrial growth initiated by the cotton boom, the establishment of the cotton textile mills, the long-distance maritime export trade in cotton and cotton-piece goods through a flourishing shipping industry, and the establishment of a network of railways for enabling trading activities[3] all demanded more resources like water, timber, and food grains from the hinterland. The nearby Thane district with abundant dense forest contained an abundance of expensive trees such as teak, rosewood, and sal, which catered to the ever-increasing urban demand for commercial and domestic purposes. The colonial government was well aware of the natural wealth of Thane and its demand in Mumbai, and this resulted in deliberate and systematic formulation of forest laws.

This trend continues today, as industrialists, merchants, bankers, farmers, and the construction industry compete with a rapidly expanding population for access to and control over both land and water. Soaring property values contribute enormously to the growth of the middle class in Mumbai, the most populous of Indian cities. While this brings prosperity to some—mostly the upper caste Hindus—it places acute stress on marginal industries and most rural livelihoods. As the opportunity costs of land occupancy become apparent, less profitable sectors are displaced by residential and industrial property developments. The closure of the cotton mills over the past two decades, in particular, has given huge impetus to this, as has the

[3] It is worth noting that the first railway line in India was laid between Mumbai and Thane in 1853.

construction of special economic zones in the heart of Mumbai and the gentrification of residential neighborhoods.

Central to this symbiotic relationship between the construction of the "modern" and the incorporation of the "backward" hinterland is the never-ending search for water. As the colonial city expanded, the administrators of Mumbai were forced to search for additional sources of water in response to "an agitation by the island's natives" over the drinking water problem in 1845, which prompted a search for water as far as 100 km inland (Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) 2006; Sule 2003, p. 1). The nineteenth century witnessed rapid industrial growth in Mumbai, which was accompanied by increasing population pressure. The ever-increasing population and flourishing trade put severe pressure on Mumbai's scanty water supply. The docks, drainage, as well as domestic and manufacturing activities on the island also required steady water supply. Public and private wells and tanks were the sources of drinking water for the public. In the mid-nineteenth century, the years 1845, 1850, 1853, and 1855 received scanty rainfall, which alarmed the government. In 1848, iron pipes ordered from England were laid from Cooperage, storing 15,144 gal of water and serving the troops and the lunatic asylum in Colaba.

Captain J. H. G. Crawford proposed the Vihar valley water supply system to Mumbai in 1846. He proposed a bund on the Mithi River in Vihar, which would provide 100,000 gal of water per hour to Mumbai (Dossal 1991). The Crawford plan was, however, rejected on the ground of errors in computing cost. In response, William West, in 1851, submitted a moderate practical plan with the aim of supplying water to the city only during the 3 months of summer. The government was, however, keen on a more comprehensive solution. The superintendent of repairs of the Board of Conservancy then prepared a table of heights which indicated the most suitable means of conveying water from Vihar to the city. The city planners were convinced of the commercial potential of the city and, therefore, had no hesitation in developing infrastructure resources beyond city limits. The valley of origin of the river Mithi, located near the village Vihar, was chosen for impoundage. The work was completed in 1860. This was the first piped water supply scheme in Mumbai, and it supplied 32 million liters per day. In 1872, by increasing the height of the dam and adding additional pipes, the supply was increased to 68 million liters per day. Interestingly, the Vihar waterworks were initially met with strong resistance from the merchants of Mumbai, on the ground that it would increase taxation for the Indian community. Even the very necessity of such a project was questioned. It was evident that there was a strong colonial interest in creating a centralized urban system as a prerequisite to the control over resources. Gradually, the "success" of the Vihar water scheme, the vagaries of weather, and the increasing demand for water fuelled by development in the city led the colonial and, later, the postcolonial government to further construct dams and waterworks in rivers and valleys in the suburbs and in Thane district. To this end, a number of dams and lakes had been constructed, the most important being Vihar (on the Mithi River, completed in 1860), Tulsi (upstream of Vihar on the Mithi River, 1879), the Powai valley scheme on a tributary of the Mithi River (1892), the Tansa waterworks (built in four stages, 1892, 1915, 1925, 1948), the Modak Sagar on the lower Vaitarna River (1948–1957), the Ulhas River scheme (1967), and Bhatsa on the upper Vaitarna River (1972). The seventh dam on the middle

Map 4.1 Thane District and Mumbai, Maharashtra State

Vaitarna River is under construction, and several more schemes are in the pipeline given the enormous growth of Greater Mumbai in its northernmost suburbs (almost bordering Gujarat) and in Navi Mumbai in Thane and Raigad districts to the north and southeast (Map 4.1).

With the growth and development of Mumbai, the pressure on land and water in its suburbs and in Thane has increased manifold. In this way, the competing demands of modernity intersect with and overdetermine the lives of tribal and "backward" communities in Mumbai and its hinterland. This chapter examines the livelihoods of one such affected community, Aghai and its surrounding villages and hamlets, and considers the multiple impacts of Mumbai's thirst for water and land on the tribal and backward communities that inhabit the areas surrounding the Tansa dam and wildlife sanctuary (Mondal 2004). Aghai falls under the Thane Municipal

Corporation (established in 1982) of the Konkan Division of Maharashtra. The nearest town to Aghai is Shahapur, with a population of 10,489 (2001 Census). Politically, the Aghai Gram Panchayat is part of the Dahanu Lok Sabha constituency in Thane district. The Tansa dam is located near Shahapur, about 100 km north of central Mumbai. Prior to independence, the dam was the main source of drinking water for Mumbai. At present, it provides well over a total of 494 million liters per day, which serves the needs of around 2 million citizens in Mumbai.

Large forest areas surround the Tansa dam. The most important part of these forest areas, both in terms of their value as a catchment area and their ecological significance, comprises the 216.75-km^2 Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary, which was proclaimed as a protected wildlife sanctuary under the Wildlife Preservation Act in 1970. Since then, attempts have been made to enhance the extent and quality of forest cover and to introduce new species of timber under schemes such as the general utility of timber scheme, the mixed plantation scheme, and the employment guarantee scheme. As a "notified sanctuary," the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary falls under the administrative control of the Tansa Wildlife Division. The Tansa Lake falls outside the notified sanctuary area and is under the administrative control of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Council (BMC). Over 90% of the wildlife sanctuary is classified as "moist teak bearing," although the forest also contains economically valuable reserves of *khain, ain*, and *haldu*. In addition, the forest contains a number of rare and medicinally important plant species. At one point, the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary contained a rich array of wildlife, including tiger, panther, sambar, cheetal, barking deer, wild boar, jackal, common langur, and bonnet macaque. Today, most of these have been poached, and the once pristine teak forests exhibit the signs of illegal deforestation and general neglect.

4.3 Forestry in India and the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary

The protection and commercial exploitation of forests has always involved the forceful imposition of state control on the estimated 147 million people presently living within and often depending on India's vast forest areas. Communal land rights that have existed over centuries, but which have never been defined in legalistic or individualistic terms, are ignored as the state seeks to expand its hold over precious teak and other wood. In this way, the economy and social fabric of predominantly tribal settlements have been transformed irrevocably. Adapting Milward's (1947) classification, the management of Indian forests can be divided into roughly three delineated phases. Each of these phases is marked by an ongoing tension between what Weil (2006) usefully describes as the competing demands of "extraction" and "conservation." The balance between these contrasting impulses has never been resolved satisfactorily and continues to overdetermine the relationship between forest-dependent communities and the state in contemporary India.

The first phase began in the early nineteenth century. Motivated by a search for a reliable supply of timber for the Royal Navy, the British turned their attention to the so-called teak belt, which stretched along the Malabar Coast of Western India, covering

the Bombay and Madras Presidencies. In an effort to assert ownership rights, the British proclaimed teak a "royal tree" and, in 1806, formulated the first set of policies for the conservative exploitation of teak and other timbers required for ship building. The imposition of British rule in Bombay in the early nineteenth century marked the beginning of this process in Thane, as the colonial power's hunger for water and land drove it northward out of the island city into the mainland. Its valuable forest resources and important waterways made Thane particularly attractive to the Bombay administration. In this way, the construction of the modern city would forever alter and transform the lives of tribals. Despite its origins in the search for timber, the first phase of Indian forestry was motivated by a sincere attempt to conserve natural resources and protect the environment. This was given a significant boost with the appointment of two Indian Medical Service officers as conservators of forests in the Bombay (in 1847) and Madras (in 1856) Presidencies. They were at pains to highlight the impact of over-felling, shifting cultivation, and fires on the environment.

The second phase was marked by the formation of the Imperial Forest Service (IFS) in the mid-1860s. Although it appeared that the IFS was founded on the same commitment to conservation that marked the first phase, it was clear that the emphasis shifted slowly but irrevocably toward a narrow focus on the scientific and technical management of a valuable commercial resource (Weil 2006, p. 319). The Forest Policy Resolution of 1894 and the 1927 Forest Act, in particular, tipped the balance in favor of extraction rather than conservation of forest resources, placing increased emphasis on the management of revenue-generating resources through the sale of timber contracts (Weil 2006, pp. 335–336).

This was accompanied by an analogous shift in the state's attitude toward local, predominantly tribal communities. In an important study of Thane district, Saldanha (1992, p. 2 and pp. 8–9) suggested that until the 1880s, despite its own competing demands, the colonial government had largely ignored tribal communities and continued to acknowledge their "traditional" or historic right to live in and utilize forest resources. However, Bombay's need for water and forest land proved insatiable, and the hinterland fell increasingly under its sphere of influence. The lives of previously autonomous tribals were affected as the state progressively redefined their legal relationship to the forest. Thus, by 1894, in the wake of the flooding of villages and expropriation of land to make way for the Tansa dam, state discourse reduced long-standing residence and grazing "rights" to "rights and privileges," a discretionary power that was expanded in a 1952 Government of India Resolution which spoke of "rights and concessions" and, further still, in subsequent government usage which referred simply to "concessions" (see Dhebar 1961, pp. 129–130). In Bombay, the administration wasted little time in incorporating the valuable forest resources on communal lands into its sphere of control. So extensive was this creation of defined forest areas that the 1887 Bombay Forest Commission reported the conversion of 401,566 acres of "community lands and free grazing lands" into forests. This appropriation almost doubled the size of forest areas in Bombay (Saldanha 1992).

The significance of this process of alienation should not be overlooked. It is this history of state expansion and the commodification of tribal livelihoods that must be considered as the background to any serious study of tribal "encroachment" on

demarcated forest lands today. Rather than simply condemning people for utilizing proclaimed forest resources or criticizing the impact of their supposedly destructive agricultural practices, it is necessary, first, to understand how forest resources have been appropriated by the state and, subsequent to this, how the competing needs of industrial and residential concerns have contributed further to the exclusion of indigenous peoples from the areas in which they have lived traditionally and from the resources upon which they have always depended.

This trend shaped the rest of the colonial period and continues to affect the lives of all those who depend on the forest today. Communities living in or near forests have been placed in a situation where they are forced, continually, to compete for access to the resources on which they have previously depended. Not surprisingly, this frequently brings them into conflict with the state, which views their residence in forest areas as illegal "encroachments"—premodern survivals at odds with the construction of the modern state.

If the first half of the twentieth century saw the emphasis shift dramatically toward the "scientific management" and extraction of valuable forest resources, the period after independence was more ambiguous. In theory, both the central and state governments were committed to seeking a more equitable balance between the rights of forest-dependent communities and the goals of conservation. In practice, conservation continued to be defined in a narrowly legalistic manner, which focused on demarcating protected areas and excluding tribal communities from these areas. In addition, as was the trend prior to independence, the focus continued to shift away from the protection of fragile and valuable ecosystems toward the commercial exploitation of forest resources in terms of both wood and land.

For our purposes, the most important post-independence legislation affecting Indian forests is the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, which sets out, comprehensively, to protect "wild animals, birds and plants and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto." Central to the act is a distinction between different categories of protected areas, the most important of which are "sanctuaries," "national parks," and "closed areas." Chapter IV of the act clarifies the process through which areas can be designated sanctuaries and sets out the state's legal rights over and responsibility for these different categories of protected area. In our case, what is significant is the regulatory guidance that the act provides for the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary. For the most part, the act lays the basis for a narrowly extractive form of sanctuary management, protecting the state's rights and forbidding all other parties from removing any "timber, bamboo, and minor forest produce" from the reserved forest areas. This directly undermines traditional tribal ways of life and livelihood strategies and is a powerful mechanism of exclusion that has rendered tribals more dependent on marginal agricultural activities outside the protected forest areas.

But what became of the mostly tribal communities who lived in or around forests appropriated by the state? As the state took control of forest lands, these mostly tribal communities were rendered landless and dependent on the discretionary will of forest officials for access to the two resources upon which their traditional livelihoods depended: land and water. To regulate this, the government of Maharashtra

made a provision in the mid-1950s for the granting of *Ek Sali* leases,[4] a form of annual lease granted to tribals acknowledged to have been resident in forest areas for some time. These leases made a provision for basic subsistence agriculture on demarcated land around protected forests but would restrict, radically, tribal access to the forest and ability to harvest forest resources. In 1969, a provision was made for the granting of permanent leases, although these still required annual "regularization" (Saldanha 1992, pp. 25–34). The intention of these leases was to contain rather than encourage human settlements. In other words, they granted limited rights to extant settlements while, at the same time, prevented newcomers from settling in forest areas. In this way, the demands of conservation and development were supposedly balanced. Although these leases made it possible for communities to remain on the land, they increased the discretionary power of the wildlife division officials who granted and enforced the leases. Our interviews and oral histories with people living in our study area around the Tansa Lake consistently confirm a pattern of ongoing conflict between residents and forest officials. Leases would often only be granted once bribes were paid to wildlife division officials. It was also often unclear who was entitled to a lease and who was considered as a more recent, illegal resident. Forest officials were supposed to fine illegal settlers but would often simply solicit bribes in exchange for looking the other way.

More importantly, leases were only granted to a small percentage of the affected population. Although many tribals have lived in Tansa for generations, others have migrated to the area more recently and are classified as encroachers. Currently, the law only makes for the regularization of pre-1978 settlements. As such, these "encroachers" live in constant conflict with the law. Most of the peoples in our study area have lived there for some time, often generations, prior to 1978. It is not clear how many have been formally "regularized," but it is unlikely that more than a small minority are able to satisfy the stringent requirements for the regularization process. Many thousands of tribals, therefore, continue to live illegally in the forests of Tansa, precariously clinging onto patches of land while battling against the elements that threaten their survival: erratic weather patterns that threaten agricultural and food security, wildlife division officials who demand bribes, conservationists pressing for their eviction in order to protect pristine forest resources, and their growing inability to resist incorporation into a cash economy. Faced with the choice of either surrendering completely to the dictates of a market economy they are ill equipped to deal with or seeking to eke out a miserable living on small patches of land, most tribals have chosen the latter option. The close symbolic attachment that tribals have to traditional forest land underpins this choice and determines, clearly, the rationality that underpins their livelihood strategies. Denied both voice and exit, tribals are trapped on marginal lands with no prospect of being uplifted and face the ever-present threat of complete economic collapse. Not surprisingly, this reinforces a destructive circle, bringing tribals and conservation authorities into increasing conflict over the two critical resources discussed earlier, namely, access to land and water.

[4] Government of Maharashtra, Resolutions August 20, 1954, and July 21, 1958.

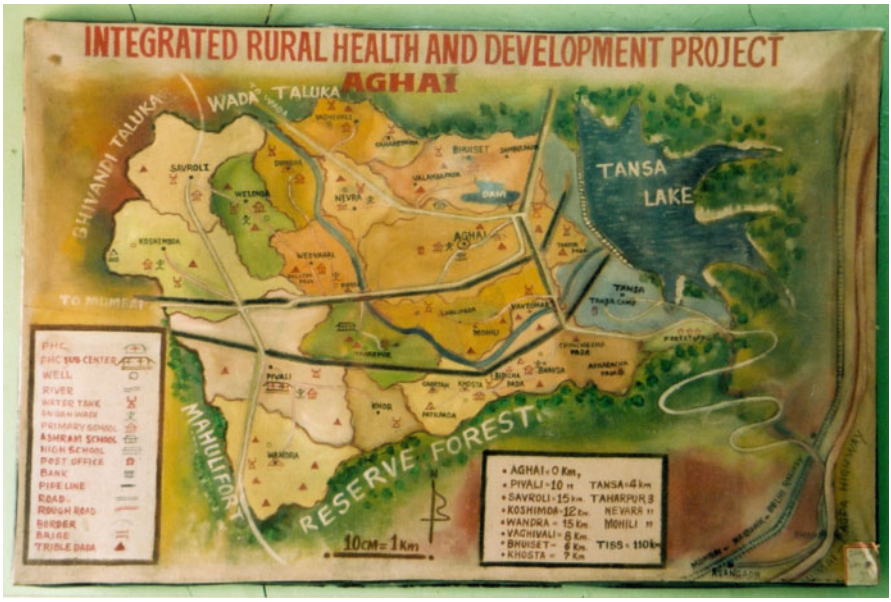
4.4 Peoples of the Tansa Forest

In order to gain a closer look into the life and times of the people living in and around the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary, we draw upon the outlines of the output of a series of interviews and oral histories conducted between 2003 and 2006, as well as 728 extremely detailed quantitative studies of households conducted in 2006. The study area was selected on the basis of the long-standing involvement of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, with the communities under review. This secured us important access, which would otherwise not be available to researchers. All the villages and hamlets (*padas*) under Aghai, Pivali, Wandra, Mohili, and Taharpur Grampanchayats were studied. As the sanctuary is a protected forest, the communities living here are forbidden to enter the forest or to collect or harvest forest products. Similarly, despite acute water shortages in the area, no one is permitted to use any water from the Tansa dam. The huge water pipes that transport water from the Tansa dam via Aghai through to Mumbai serve as a constant reminder of this exclusion. The residents of Aghai and its surrounding villages are predominantly tribal in origin. However, in order to gain meaningful insight into the caste Hindu community and, most importantly, the relationship between tribals and the latter, a slightly exaggerated sample of the main caste Hindu community—the Maratha Kunbi—was included, as well as a small sample of other backward class (OBC) families and scheduled caste families.[5] As can be expected, almost all of the Maratha Kunbi community live in villages as opposed to the less developed *padas*. We now take a look at livelihoods and their contexts on the basis of residential clusters (Map 4.2).

4.4.1 Aghai Grampanchayat

The largest and most important settlement is the small town of Aghai, which has a total population of between 1,000 and 1,500 people. Aghai is a Grampanchayat in the Shahapur Taluka, with a mixture of tribal, upper caste, and scheduled caste inhabitants. Bhuiset, Thakurpada, Valambapada, Jambhulpada, Kalkapada, Ravtepada, and Karandipada are the outlying hamlets falling under Aghai's jurisdiction. About a quarter of the total sample of the study came from Aghai Grampanchayat. Like other towns in Shahapur Taluka, Aghai is poorly developed with a very underdeveloped administrative capacity, limited and badly maintained infrastructure, and few communication linkages. However, Aghai is enormously

[5] The Constitution of India makes provision for the classification of economically and socially disadvantaged citizens according to their caste or socioeconomic status. This classification includes forward castes, scheduled castes (approximately 16% of the population), scheduled tribes (7–8%), and other backward classes (OBCs). A complex system of job reservation and incentive schemes have been developed to help promote the development of the latter three categories.



Map 4.2 Aghai Grampanchayat, showing the location of Tansa Lake

important for all the settlements because it is a large market town, with a primary health-care center (PHC), post office, primary school, and *ashram* school. Government buses and private jeeps ferry commuters (mostly traders) between Aghai and the Atgaon railway station 11 km away. Although there is a concrete road around the village, the road is not maintained properly, and there is little in the way of secondary road networks or storm water drainage. As such, the village is prone to flooding in the rainy season, which exacerbates already critical infrastructure shortcomings and increases incidences of several diseases. Medical facilities are inadequate, with the PHC having a crucial shortage of appropriate staff. Despite government promises, there is no agricultural or irrigational support available in Aghai.

The condition in the outlying *padas* is worse. Thakurpada, for instance, although only 2 km away from Aghai, has no proper road linkages, and the *pada* is inaccessible for much of the rainy season. This inaccessibility is a major barrier to development, significantly diminishing farmers' access to the local markets and reducing access of all residents to much needed health facilities. Most of the residents in Thakurpada are illiterate and very poor and live in largely makeshift accommodation. Only a minority of households have *pukka* houses. While there is little by way of public infrastructure, there is a government-run crèche (*balwadi*) and a primary school. Although many Thakur communities enjoy a relatively high social standing in Maharashtra, this is not the case here. Only a small minority own land, and the rest are forced to seek temporary employment, typically as agricultural laborers at a daily wage rate of Rs.50 ($1.1) for men and Rs.40 ($0.9) for women. Like most

padas, Thakurpada suffers from a severe shortage of potable water. There is a community well, which invariably dries up in the summer months. Although the *pada* is an easy 10-min walk from the Tansa Lake, no one is allowed to use the water. This very obvious exclusion from vital resources is a source of extreme tension in the area and simply serves to exacerbate the overall sense of deprivation and gloom. Thakurpada is a predominantly Marathi-speaking, Ka Thakur community. It remains an extremely closed community which opposes any form of assimilation, even with the locally much larger Ma Thakur group. While residents once worshipped local spirits, including *Hirva, Cheda, Vaghia*, and the *Mohili* mountain spirits, they have lately appeared to have embraced much of the Hindu pantheon, at least in terms of public ritual, as little is known about their private religious observances. Interestingly, Ganpati or Ganesha is an especially popular deity.

4.4.2 Pivali Grampanchayat

Pivali is the second largest village in our study area. It has a smaller and less developed market and similar and often worse levels of government capacity. Infrastructure here is considerably less developed than in Aghai. Koshimbapada is the only outlying hamlet here. There is a PHC which is within easy reach of the residents, but it is considered as inadequate by many and is seen as a costly source of medicine compared to alternative local sources of health care. Hence, it is invariably seen as a last resort. Water is a very scarce commodity throughout the Grampanchayat, and residents depend on unreliable seasonal wells for water. Their inability to use water from the Tansa dam for either irrigation or drinking is a source of considerable frustration. Most residents in Pivali do not own land, and of those who do, only a considerable minority consider their landholdings adequate for their subsistence needs. As such, nearly all residents are dependent on alternative livelihood strategies for survival. Most utilize the wildlife sanctuary one way or the other, typically for minor forest produce but also as land for paddy. Only one resident claimed to have permission to do so. While roughly 40% of households migrate outside the area in search of seasonal employment, individuals within households are quick to embrace local opportunities for paid labor, on other farms, brick kilns, or nearby factories.

4.4.3 Wandra Grampanchayat

The Wandra Grampanchayat includes the villages of Wandra and Khor and nine surrounding *padas*, namely, Shengepada, Kakdapada, Blanupada, Bagujipada, Bavarapada, Ghatulapada, Paradipada, Satheypada, and Alanapada. Both Wandra and Khor are extremely underdeveloped villages. Neither has proper health-care facilities, leading to residents being reliant, instead, on facilities in Aghai and Pivali. A relatively high number of residents own their land and believe that their landholdings

are sufficient for their survival. Perhaps for this reason, relatively low numbers of households migrate seasonally in search of work—only 31% in the case of Wandra and 7% in the case of Khor. Individual members of households do, however, seek seasonal employment on an ongoing, albeit, ad hoc basis. The extent to which people are able to survive on agriculture alone is unusual in the study area.

Both Wandra and Pivali border the reserved forest, and most households make use of this land, either for agricultural purposes, which bring them into frequent conflict with the forest department, or to harvest minor forest products. Nearly all respondents admitted that they did not have permission to use this land and spoke of ongoing struggles with the forest department to have the land regularized. Not surprisingly, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), which has taken up the cause of forest-dependent communities in Thane district, has a marked presence in the Wandra Grampanchayat. A significant number of households belong to the CPI(M), and most acknowledge that the Party has played a key role in supporting them in their struggle against the forest department.

4.4.4 Mohili Grampanchayat

The Mohili Grampanchayat includes the villages of Waghiwali, Nevare, and Mohili, as well as Saharepada, Malipada, and Vavegharpada. Although these villages lack basic infrastructure, especially roads, storm water drainage, reliable telecommunications and electrification, and potable water, they are relatively well serviced by the rural PHC clinics. Residents in Waghiwali have considerably more tenure and food security than residents in Nevare. Most residents of Waghiwali own their own land, and of these landowners, almost two-thirds regard their holdings as adequate for their subsistence needs. This is confirmed by the fact that the same number of Waghiwali households claims that they do not migrate as whole households in search of seasonal work. In contrast, just over half the households in Nevare own their own land, of whom the vast majority claim that their holdings are not adequate for subsistence needs. Two-fifths of the households are forced to migrate in search of seasonal work. As elsewhere in the study area, whole households that do not migrate annually in search of employment often send individual family members to neighboring farms or to brick kilns and factories in search of ad hoc, seasonal employment.

Perhaps because of these differences, membership of the CPI(M)—seen here as a main index of political tension over access to forest resources—varies considerably. While only a third of households surveyed in Waghiwali belong to the CPI(M), two-thirds of households in Nevare, and all households in Mohili, belong to the CPI(M). One reason for the relative agricultural viability in Mohili Grampanchayat is their favorable access to the river Tansa, which provides sufficient water for small-scale irrigation and the production of more than one paddy crop per year. Residents also have a variety of different sources of drinking water, including the river, ponds, and (albeit inadequate) wells. There are some public taps in Waghiwali and Nevare.

4.4.5 Taharpur Grampanchayat

The Taharpur Grampanchayat includes the small villages of Taharpur and Vedavahal, as well as the outlying settlements of Palichapada and Dimba (the last of which is not a part of our study area). All of these villages lack basic infrastructure, with only rudimentary health-care facilities, roads, storm water drainage, post office, and schools. Vedavahal has a primary school, while Taharpur has a PHC subcenter. As in Mohili Grampanchayat, there is some variance between these villages in terms of tenure and livelihood security. In Taharpur, fully two-thirds of respondents do not own land, while almost all of those with land claim that this is not sufficient for their subsistence needs. In Vedavahal, by contrast, over two-thirds of households own their own land, all of whom claimed that this land was sufficient for subsistence needs. Despite this, most households in both communities migrate seasonally in search of work, which suggests that Vedavahal's claim to food security is overstated. In addition to household migration, individuals in both communities regularly seek seasonal work in brick kilns, other farms, and factories (Mondal 2004).

Although households in both the villages do not border the wildlife sanctuary, almost all residents interviewed admitted to using protected forest land for their agricultural activities. Residents throughout the Grampanchayat see the CPI(M) as their main supporter in the struggle against the forest department. Ninety-six percent of respondents in Taharpur, and 69% in Vedavahal, belong to the Party, the differences perhaps a reflection of the latter community's relative sense of livelihood security.

The bulk of the households surveyed in our study were tribal families—some 78%—in addition to which we also included a significant number of Kunbi families (19%) and a small sample of scheduled caste families. The main tribal communities were Warlis, Katkaris, and Ma Thakurs. There were also a smaller number of Ka Thakurs, Konkana, Malhar Koli, and Mahadeo Koli. In addition, a number of forward and OBC communities live in this area, the most socially and economically important of these being members of the Maratha Kunbi caste.

The Warli community is the fourth largest tribal community in Maharashtra. There are approximately 300,000 Warli peoples living in Thane, the majority of whom depend on subsistence farming. This farming background is valued deeply and is an integral component of Warli self-identity. Indeed, the name, *Warli*, is derived from the word, *waral*, which means land or field. Although deeply influenced by the Hindu settlements in northern Maharashtra, the Warli retain much of their original identity and belief systems. Despite severe land shortages and a chronic shortage of water, Warli communities retain an extraordinary commitment to forest-based and agricultural livelihoods and are perhaps the tribal group least likely to abandon these in the face of economic ruin (Mondal 2004).

The Katkaris are an indigenous Konkan people, the name a corruption of *kat* or catechu (betel palm) that they once produced. Today, they are, by far, the poorest tribal community in Thane and face the greatest levels of discrimination. Once classified as a "criminal tribe," the Katkaris are now considered a "primitive tribal group," on account of their supposedly "preagricultural level of technology," low

levels of literacy, and the fact that their population numbers have remained stagnant or have begun to decline (see Anon 2001, p. 3 and passim). Katkaris are mostly landless laborers and have been forced into bonded labor as a result of widespread indebtedness. Katkaris are also forced to work on brick kilns and as agricultural laborers, often for more than 150 days in a year. Most of them till the fields or work in the brick kilns of the Kunbi community. Some supplementary income is secured from minor forest produce, largely from gum collection. As with many tribal communities, Katkaris have been considerably influenced by Hinduism, although their low social status reinforces a significant degree of social ostracization. They seem to have retained far more of their indigenous belief systems as compared to other tribal communities. However, like many tribal communities, women enjoy considerable social freedom and are allowed to divorce and remarry.

The Thakurs enjoy a relatively higher social standing, although, for the most part, they depend on small-scale subsistence agriculture and seasonal wage labor. In the study area, both the Ka Thakurs and Ma Thakurs are, for the most part, marginal farmers, increasingly dependent on wage labor to supplement their own agricultural activities and are invariably poorly educated. Dependent in part on the Kunbis for work, many Thakurs have abandoned any hope of increasing their landholdings and access to water, both essential prerequisites to agricultural viability, and now see education and government jobs as their main opportunity for advancement. In this regard, they have been far more successful than other tribal groups in the area, especially the Katkaris, in developing alternative, nonagricultural livelihood strategies.

4.5 Caste, Tribe, and Livelihood

As a relative socioeconomic elite at the local level and as a community linked to the Maharashtrian political elite through ties of blood, kinship, and patronage, Kunbis in Thane district are the major beneficiaries—as both administrators and recipients—of state development aid and support. By contrast, the tribal community, as we saw above, is an extremely disadvantaged community, generally struggling to retain their traditional ties to the land while being forced, increasingly, to enter the broader market economy as landless agricultural and wage laborers. The very significant socioeconomic status of Kunbis and tribals in Thane is underpinned by different access to land and water, as well as the ability of the Kunbi community to use educational and other resources to develop alternative nonagricultural livelihoods and to engage more fruitfully with the market economy.

Within the study area, almost all the Kunbi households surveyed claimed to have their own land, as opposed to 61% of the tribal community. These statistics mask, however, the very different conditions under which land has been acquired and a widespread lack of legal title to land among the tribal community. Thus, while most Kunbi households claimed to own their land, only a small percentage encroached on forest land. Among the tribal community, by contrast, over half of

land "ownership" has actually been forest land. More importantly, the size and viability of land differ considerably. Almost half (48%) of tribal landholdings are between 1 and 3 acres, although many are smaller, either 25–40 guntas[6] (18%) or 10–24 guntas (17%). Kunbi landholdings, not surprisingly, are generally larger. Almost two-thirds of their landholdings are between 1 and 3 acres, and almost a 3rd are between 3 and 5 acres.

Kunbi land is either used productively for agriculture—a reflection of *relatively* large land size, fertility, and access to water—or is put to effective nonagricultural use. The Kunbi community has, for example, been remarkably successful in developing small-scale businesses in the Aghai area, notably brick kilns and small factories. Kunbi farmers have far better access to grazing land (69% as opposed to only 17% for the tribal community) and are correspondingly less dependent on forest land for grazing. While both communities complain about diminishing land fertility, overcrowding, and a shortage of water for irrigation, it is clear that Kunbi landholdings are considerably more viable than tribal holdings. Thus, whereas the overwhelming majority of Kunbi landholders (86%) are able to produce enough food grains for their family needs during the entire year, only 43% of all tribal landholders have this level of food security.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have provided a general overview of the life and times of the various communities scattered around the Tansa Lake and Wildlife Sanctuary against the shadow of the megalopolis of Mumbai and its incessant hunger for land and water. We have also reviewed the livelihoods of these communities, focusing on their access to both land and water. Central to tribal life has been the struggle to secure a foothold on historic communal land and, especially in the case of recent migrants to the area, to have landholdings regularized. As we have seen, tribals are excluded from much local development due to the marginal size and productivity of their landholdings. On account of this socioeconomic vulnerability, tribals are increasingly forced to reduce their reliance on agricultural activities and the forest, with which they have been associated for generations, and to become wage laborers on other (usually Kunbi-) owned farms and small businesses.

Although the local state has made some effort to regularize pre-1978 land settlements, tribal households are still, for the most part, treated as illegal encroachers and an ever-present threat to the integrity of the wildlife sanctuary. Tribal farming techniques are blamed for the ecological denigration of the forest over the past half century, while supposedly "primitive" tribal social practices (rather than land hunger) are blamed for high death rates and levels of malnutrition. Tribals, in this view of the world, are simply jungle rats, a threat to the twin (and all-too-contradictory)

[6] In India, 40 *guntas* = 1 acre. 1 *gunta* = 101.17 m^2.

forces that drive contemporary Maharashtrian politics: the ever-present "march of the modern and the urban," in the sense of economic transformation, development, and expansion of Mumbai, and the rise of the violently antimodern Maratha-Hindu political movements. In both cases, tribal landholdings and ways of life are seen as a threat. The expansion of Mumbai business interests implies an increased encroachment of the few remaining open spaces of Mumbai's hinterland. The existence of indigenous (tribal/*adivasi*) communities living outside the world of caste Hindu politics implies a threat to the hegemony of the Maratha-Hindu caste nexus. In both cases, tribals and the forests within which they live are seen as a threat.

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Part II
Indonesia

Chapter 5
Regional Governance in Decentralizing Indonesia: Learning from the Success of Urban-Rural Cooperation in Metropolitan Yogyakarta

Delik Hudalah, Fikri Zulfahmi, and Tommy Firman

5.1 Introduction

Indonesia is the country from which notions of extended metropolitan regions combining what are conventionally separated as rural and urban functions were first identified. For example, McGee (1991) introduced the generic term of *desa-kota* region, referring to rural-urban corridors around large urban cores on formerly fertile agricultural soils. It has been argued that the continuity of rural-urban corridors has become the most dynamic part of extended metropolitan regions in Indonesia such as in Jakarta, Bandung, Medan, and Surabaya (Jones 2002). Past studies on the development of rural-urban corridors in extended metropolitan regions have focused on the issues of rural to urban land-use conversion (Firman 2000), large-scale development and its socioeconomic impacts (Firman 2004; Winarso and Firman 2002), and sociocultural transformation (Leaf 1996).

Hudalah et al. (2007) have argued that the planning of extended metropolitan regions in Indonesia has faced great challenges for several reasons. First, the development of the urban-rural corridor has reduced spatial cohesion and threatened regional sustainability and quality of the rural environment. These undesirable consequences have mainly arisen from the fragmentation of actors and institutional landscapes at the regional scale. The urban-rural corridor tends to be "invisible" from the viewpoint of the traditional local governmental sphere because it is essentially a "gray" area that does not fit with either urban or rural authorities (McGee 1991). Therefore, it is important to know how the urban-rural regions might be better planned by strengthening the planning agencies' capacity at the regional scale.

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With the enactment of Law Number 32 and 33/2004, as an amendment of Law Number 22 and 25/1999, on regional administration and regional fiscal balancing, Indonesia is currently experimenting with an ambitious decentralization policy. The implementation of this policy demands a fundamental reform of the long-standing centralized and totalitarian political system and practices into highly decentralized and democratic ones. The underlying officially stated objective of decentralization is actually to bring public services closer to the people or, in other words, to make them more responsive to local needs (Shah and Thompson 2004). However, in Indonesia, decentralization has brought negative consequences for institutions of governance in extended metropolitan regions. Decentralization has largely contributed to the inward-looking behavioral orientation of neighboring rural and urban governments in these regions (Sutrisno 2004). The conditions have in fact resulted in the growth of local egocentrism. The districts and municipalities within an urban-rural region or metropolitan area think that they have their own "kingdom" (Firman 2009). They do not realize that they are interdependent due to shared common interests as integrated parts of wider regions.

Metropolitan governance, which brings together administrations of *kota* (the urban government) and *kabupaten* (the rural government) within a functional rural-urban region, is becoming increasingly important both in policy and as a research agenda in decentralizing Indonesia. Firman (2008) has shown that currently, there are almost no examples of effective cooperation among neighboring districts and municipalities to promote urban-rural relation and regional development. Most of the urban-rural cooperating institutions function as "coordinating bodies" without clear authority and resources to synchronize and implement regional planning frameworks. As a result, most of the cooperation practices have failed to perform collaboratively in the geographical rescaling of public services, urban development, and rural environmental protection. As can also be found in other Asian countries, many decentralized governance practices have achieved success in regional plan-making but have faced extreme difficulties to further consolidate the participating urban and rural governments in implementing the agreed plans (Laquian 2005b).

As noted above, effective rural-urban cooperation strategies are rarely found in Indonesia. However, a considerable success story is currently flourishing in Greater Yogyakarta, the largest extended urban agglomeration in the southern-middle part of Java island (see Fig. 5.1). In the last decade, three neighboring urban and rural governments known as Kartamantul (the acronym for Yogyakarta municipality, Sleman district, and Bantul district) have effectively communicated with each other to improve regional infrastructure services, to deal with extended urbanization, and to protect the rural hinterland through a joint secretariat. In 2003, the success of the Kartamantul joint secretariat was recognized by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the World Bank through the Urban Innovation Management Award.

The experience of the Kartamantul joint secretariat can be seen as a best practice in the building of decentralized regional governance not only in Indonesia but also in Asia more generally. This is due to the fact that many Asian experiences have been in favor of top-down approaches that stress the role of central and state/provincial governments in designing and executing metropolitan governance reforms

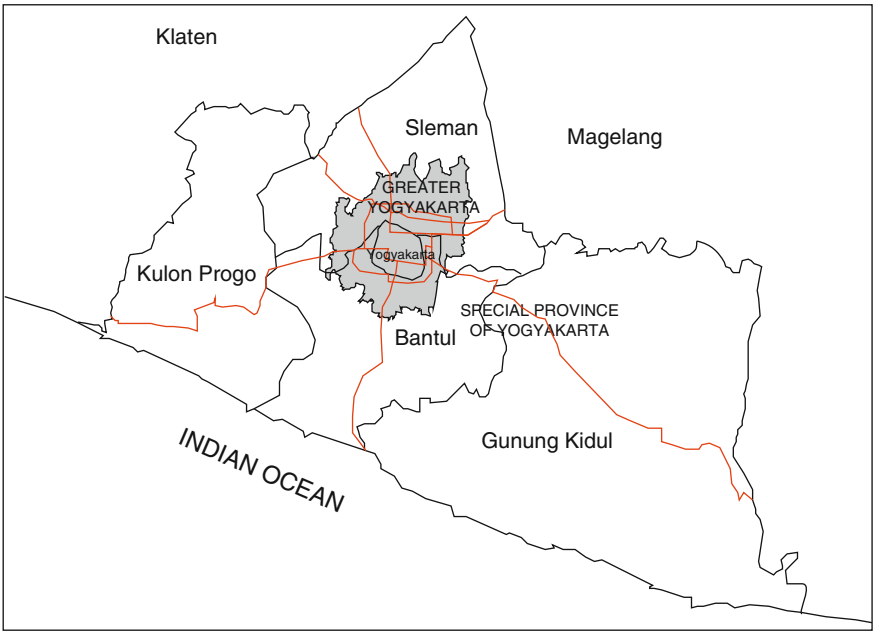

Fig. 5.1 Map of Yogyakarta Urban Agglomeration

(Laquian 2005b). These approaches may no longer fit in with the global pressure for decentralization of domestic political systems and marketization (Luo and Shen 2009).

This chapter explores the recent development of the practice of interlocal government cooperation in Greater Yogyakarta, particularly under the Kartamantul joint secretariat. Firman (2010) has outlined several general propositions regarding the key success factors of this urban-rural cooperation including a horizontal decision-making process, a transparent and open negotiation process on conflicting interests, leadership, and shared vision. This chapter aims to seek evidence of the validity of these propositions through a more detailed empirical investigation. It clarifies the key success factors of interlocal government cooperation practices in providing integrated regional infrastructure and enhancing urban-rural relations.

Following this introduction, this chapter is presented in four main sections. First, Sect. 5.2 discusses a theoretical outlook on regional governance and outlines a framework for assessing the effectiveness of the urban-rural cooperation. Section 5.3 then provides a brief overview of Indonesia's decentralization and its challenges and implications for urban-rural relations and regional governance. This general overview is followed by Sect. 5.4, an introduction to extended urbanization and its implications for the sustainability of the rural hinterland in Greater Yogyakarta. In response to these urban-rural relational issues, the structure, function, and scope of the Kartamantul joint secretariat are briefly provided in the same section. Furthermore, Sect. 5.6 explains the key success factors of this urban-rural

cooperative arrangement. Finally, Sect. 5.7 identifies some lessons that can be learned from this case study.

5.2 Regional Governance and Urban-Rural Cooperation

Asian urbanization has been typified by, among other things, the growth of mega-urban regions, in which the functional urban areas have extended beyond established city boundaries into their immediate rural zones (Hudalah et al. 2007). A major challenge for the planning of these regions is how to reclaim regional cohesion in the face of fragmentation between urban and rural political and administrative units (Laquian 2005b). This regional institutional fragmentation often makes coordination of urban-rural relations difficult to realize. From an economic perspective, the fragmentation of regional government may cause inefficiencies in which a decision made by a local government imposes externalities on its neighbors, creates diseconomies of scale of public services, and induces common property resource problems (Feiock 2009).

Due to these interlocal jurisdictional issues, the extended metropolitan areas require stronger regional governmental institutions. Traditionally, the building of regional governmental institutions implied the design of a new structure of government. Theoretically, a unified governmental structure at the regional level can create economies of scale and capture externalities of extended urbanization more efficiently. However, the setting up of another hierarchical governmental structure at a supra-local level may not fit in with Indonesia's decentralization principle that endorses the transfer of decision-making to the municipal/district and community levels (Government of Indonesia 1999, 2004). This principle is aimed to ensure that citizen participation can be easily promoted, and grassroots needs accommodated.

The spirit of decentralization and democratization in Indonesia calls for a shift in regional administration thinking from *government* to *governance*. Regional government relies on formal-hierarchical *structures* in making decisions and steering actions for the region. Meanwhile, regional governance focuses on the collective *processes* of enabling decisions and coordinating actions at the regional level (Friedmann 2001; Pierre 2005). While changing regional government often demands amalgamations or, at least, a restructuring of the existing local governments, changing regional governance requires only a shift of the behavior of these governments (Post 2004).

Regional governance can be promoted through interlocal government cooperation that emphasizes voluntary partnerships among the fragmented urban and rural governments to promote regional policy coordination (Feiock 2004, 2009). As an autonomous/self-organizing process, there are particular conditions under which interlocal government cooperation can perform well. Feiock (2007) has proposed that cooperative agreements are more likely to emerge in a country with accommodating laws. He has argued that the durability of these cooperative agreements is dependent on the homogeneity and cohesion of the region's geographic features and the historical experiences of cooperative relationships among the local governments.

A strong regional governance may also require the presence of good local leadership (Friedmann 1998; Post 2004). Practically, regional cooperation tends to occur in a region that is large enough to realize economies of scale and that is supported with financial and organizational capacities to perform the assigned services (Heeg et al. 2003; Laquian 2005a). It is also suggested that intensive exchange of knowledge and interdependent relationships among urban and rural governments are more likely to occur in the regions with different and rich political, social, and economic features (Luo and Shen 2009).

Theoretically, the institutional design for urban-rural cooperation takes the form of network-like organizational relationships, which range between market and hierarchy (Hudalah et al. 2010). The institutional settings can be as informal as oral/unwritten agreements or mutual understandings among key local officials. At a higher institutional level, however, the cooperation can be formalized into forms of fixed contract, such as joint ventures, among the participating local governments (Hawkins 2010).

The forms of cooperative institutional design cannot be separated from the actors who construct them. Luo and Shen (2009) have compared actors' relationships in the formation of intergovernmental cooperation practices of regional economic development in coastal China. Based on the Chinese cases, the cooperative relationships can conceptually be divided into three groups. The most traditional one is a hierarchical relationship, in which cooperation is promoted by using the administrative power of the central or provincial governments. In most cases, this command-and-control type of cooperation has failed to respond to the fragmentation and miscommunication among the local governments, which are influenced by globalization, decentralization, and marketization. A more efficient type of cooperation can be initiated voluntarily by the local governments themselves in accordance with their own mutual interests. This spontaneous cooperation can enable more intensive interactions and attract more actors, including from the private sector and wider society, thus improving the social legitimacy of the cooperation. The most effective cooperation, at least in the Chinese case, is believed to be a combination of the hierarchical and spontaneous types of cooperation. This hybrid cooperation can still encourage rich interactions among the local actors while retaining the leadership role of the higher governmental levels (Luo and Shen 2009).

The decision on the institutional design to be formed and types of actors to be involved is highly dependent on the objectives agreed upon and issues addressed in the cooperation (Heeg et al. 2003). Based on the characteristics of these objectives and issues, Heeg et al. (2003) have identified two general types of cooperation that are currently being experimented with in Europe. The first is territorially integrated cooperation, which links together neighboring urban and rural areas based on everyday interaction patterns such as commuting distance and area of services. This type of cooperation usually aims at constructing a new, functionally integrated region such as creating an integrated economic and cultural region. This cooperation may involve a planned division of tasks, leading to joint obligations in urban and rural policy fields. Formal institutional arrangements such as contractual commitments are required to realize this integrated cooperation.

In comparison, territorially disintegrated cooperation is a thematic form of cooperation among the local governments that face similar challenges and share common policy visions (Heeg et al. 2003). It focuses on mutual activities that involve the exchange of information, knowledge, and experiences on specific policy fields. The general motivation is usually to enhance the capacity and performance of the participating local governments in solving common policy problems such as infrastructure provision and environmental management. In realizing this cooperation, there is no necessity for setting up any formal and rigid institutional mechanisms as informal discussion tables suffice.

5.3 Decentralization and Urban-Rural Cooperation in Indonesia

Decentralization has reformed the political and governance system in Indonesia and caused the emergence of a trend of urban and rural government proliferation. This trend is a response to the challenge that the local governments have to be able to provide services closer to the people (Sutrisno 2004). It is argued that regional decentralization will diminish local dependence on the central government, improve accountability, institutionalize change, and encourage economic development (Grindle 2007). According to the Government Regulation No. 129 (Government of Indonesia 2000), decentralization can be promoted by forming new autonomous local governments. From 2001 to August 2008, 137 new districts (*kabupaten*) and cities (*kota*) have been established and have increased the general allocation fund (DAU).

The uncontrolled practice of regional proliferation implies that the urban and rural governments have tended to be inward looking in their orientations (Firman 2009; Sutrisno 2004). They think that they have their own kingdoms of authority and do not need to pay too much attention to wider urban-rural relational issues. As Firman (2009) has argued, in this decentralizing Indonesia, it is necessary to encourage inter-local government cooperation to deal with urban-rural divides by promoting incentives and disincentives for the local governments to work more effectively and efficiently for the purposes of urban-rural linkage and regional development. Cooperation does not mean the establishment of new government institutions, but principally, it refers to conducting governance tasks collectively. In the urban-rural context, this is called regional governance or metropolitan governance (Pierre 2005). The metropolitan governance institutions in Indonesia, as described earlier, have developed to respond to the challenge of extended urban development that can be more effectively addressed collectively rather than separately.

Urban-rural government cooperation has actually been practiced in nine metropolitan regions in Indonesia (Table 5.1). In conducting cooperation, a few regions still rely on program synergies without any clear cooperation institution. Such unstructured urban-rural cooperation faces difficulties in integrating different regional issues. Therefore, many other regions have attempted to formalize the cooperation by establishing regional development coordinating bodies or BKSPs.

Table 5.1 Comparison of metropolitan governance institutions in Indonesia

Region	City/district	Strategic issues	Institutional cooperation	Condition
Mebidangro (Greater Medan)	Medan, Binjai, Deli Serdang, Karo	Transportation, ecology	BKSP Mebidangro	Formally, this institution still exists, but it does not function properly
Jabodetabekpunjur (Greater Jakarta)	Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi, Cianjur	Conservation of water recharge area, waste, flood, transportation	BKSP Jabodetabek	BKSP Jabodetabek considered less effective in influencing the realization of the results of discussions
Bandung Raya (Greater Bandung)	Bandung, West Bandung, Cimahi, Sumedang	Transportation, urban infrastructure, extended urbanization	Program synergy (no specific institution)	No integration among different regional issues
Kedungsepur (Greater Semarang)	Semarang, Salatiga, Semarang, Kendal, Demak, Grobogan	Residential and industrial development, conservation area	Program synergy (no specific institution)	Lack of monitoring and control to follow up on consensus
Gerbangkertosusila (Greater Surabaya)	Gresik, Jombang, Kertosono, Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Lamongan	Extended urbanization, infrastructure	BKSP Gerbang Kertosusila	The coordinating institution does not function properly
Mamminasata (Greater Makassar)	Makassar, Maros, Gowa, Takalar	Ecosystem conservation, economic productivity	BKPRD BKSP	BKPRD was a coordinating agent with unclear job description. Then, BKSPMM was formed and has indicated a satisfactory level on infrastructure management cooperation
Palembang	Palembang	Extended urbanization	Not applicable (consisting only one municipality)	–
Sarbagita (Greater Denpasar)	Denpasar, Badung, Gianyar, Tabanan	Extended urbanization	BKPS Kebersihan Sarbagita	The population is still far below one million people
Kartamantul (Greater Yogyakarta)	Yogyakarta, Sleman, Bantul	Urban infrastructure, solid waste management	Kartamantul joint secretariat	Cooperation on infrastructure management and spatial planning in order to promote regional integration

Source: Compiled from Winarso (2006) and Suryokusumo (2008)

The coordinating bodies are symbolic institutions and are, thus, not equipped with clear authority and resource allocation. As a result, most BKSPs are unable to follow up on agreed development programs and are ineffective in conducting monitoring and control. As can be seen in the BKSPs of Jabodetabek, Mebidangro, and Gerbang Kertosusila, the form of coordinating body could not facilitate the participating local governments to act collectively in pursuing mutual objectives. Therefore, the Kartamantul joint secretariat was established as an alternative institutional form to integrate urban-rural government cooperation practices in Greater Yogyakarta. The joint secretariat has been successful in dealing with extended urban infrastructure issues in this region. This success was recognized by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the World Bank in 2003 through the Urban Management Innovation Award (IMP).

5.4 Greater Yogyakarta and the Kartamantul Joint Secretariat

Yogyakarta Urban Agglomeration or Greater Yogyakarta consists of Yogyakarta municipality (urban government) and several subdistricts under Sleman and Bantul districts (rural governments) with a total area of 18,819 ha. With a population of 907,575 inhabitants in 2005, Greater Yogyakarta is becoming a metropolitan region. Yogyakarta municipality, as the city core of the metropolitan region, functions as the urban center where education and business sectors are concentrated. However, the city has a very limited area such that it can no longer accommodate all of these socioeconomic functions, which have grown extensively, exceeding the city limits. As a consequence, urban development has extended beyond the city's boundaries covering Sleman and Bantul districts, which have formerly functioned as the rural hinterland.

Continuing population growth and extended urban development in Yogyakarta have had implications for regional infrastructure needs and the sustainability of the rural hinterland. This is a common issue in dealing with extended urbanization, but it is important to decide who will be responsible for finding solutions to the problems that arise. More effective solutions to such urban-rural relational issues are more likely to emerge from solving these together rather than independently. Therefore, interlocal government cooperation has become an important solution to respond to these issues.

The Kartamantul joint secretariat was officially established in 2001 through a mutual decree between the regents of Bantul and Sleman and the mayor of Yogyakarta No. 04/Perj/RT/2001. The joint secretariat plays a strategic role in creating balance and harmony between the urban government and the two rural governments, especially in the field of regional infrastructure development, extended urban management, and the protection of rural environment in Greater Yogyakarta. The three local governments have agreed to enhance coordination in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of regional infrastructure within the urban agglomeration of Yogyakarta. The joint secretariat has also been

established to achieve an efficient allocation of the three local governments' resources and to speed up development in the urban-rural area (Sutrisno 2004). The latter can be regarded as an application of economies of scale.

The organizational structure of the joint secretariat follows a three-tiered model of hierarchy. The first tier is where the chairman of the board sits. The board manages the daily activities of the Secretariat. This highest tier consists of the heads of the three local governments. The second tier is a steering team, which includes the secretaries and the heads of the development planning boards and relevant departments from the three local governments. Meanwhile, the lowest tier consists of the operational staff of the local board departments. The staff may include office managers, technical assistants, and administration assistants. Each tier of this hierarchy has its own tasks and responsibilities in conducting the urban-rural cooperation.

The day-to-day management of the joint secretariat is conducted by an office manager hired by the three local governments. The office manager is a nongovernmental professional who assists the local governments in conducting cooperation. This is the unique structural feature of urban-rural cooperation in Greater Yogyakarta in which the participating local governments entrust a professional from a nongovernmental institution to manage public affairs. This managerial structure was suggested by GTZ Urban Quality (UQ), the international donor agency that assisted with the organizational development of the joint secretariat in 2003–2007. GTZ UQ also helped the cooperation institution to strengthen its functions and tasks, to focus on the implementation of cooperation, to identify lessons learned in urban management and planning, to promote effective cooperation processes, to facilitate the legal and organizational formation of the cooperation, to enhance the quality of decision-making processes, and to improve stakeholder involvement in different aspects. As an operational impact of GTZ assistance, the joint secretariat is now able to document knowledge accumulation and improve their information system, which is indicated in the publication of regular bulletins and annual reports.

The Kartamantul joint secretariat is a thematic cooperation. In its early stages, the secretariat managed six themes of regional infrastructure, namely, solid waste systems, clean water, wastewater, drainage, road, and transportation. More recently, since 2006, spatial planning has finally been integrated into the cooperation in the light of the awareness that the infrastructure and urban-rural relations in the metropolitan area require better organization and coordination. As a result, there are now seven themes under the joint secretariat. This becomes the optimum limit for this urban-rural cooperation, which implies that the joint secretariat would not take care of other thematic issues.

5.5 Methodology

This chapter uses a case study approach to extract lessons learned. The urban-rural cooperation in Greater Yogyakarta is chosen as the case for the study due to its relative effectiveness compared to other urban-rural governance practices in Indonesia. The

indicators used in the analysis are built mainly from Luo and Shen (2009), who have studied interlocal government cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta, China. The indicators help to categorize information and conclude which are the key success factors.

The indicators were examined by using qualitative content analysis on several information resources, including official documents from related institutions, semi-structured interviews with key actors, and nonstructured observation. The main information includes the annual reports, the periodic bulletins, and sectoral policy reports acquired from the Kartamantul joint secretariat. Additional information was obtained from news articles and nongovernmental organization (NGO) reports. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the current office manager (R. F. A. Suryokusumo) and representatives from the three local governments. In addition, a nonstructured observation on the discussion and communication process was conducted during the periodic meetings, in which there was participation from operational staff from each urban and rural government.

5.6 In Search of Urban-Rural Cooperation Under the Kartamantul Joint Secretariat

In searching for the key success factors of the Kartamantul joint secretariat, this chapter adopts similar indicators identified by Luo and Shen (2009), who have compared three cases of intercity cooperation in Yangtze River Delta, China. They have concluded that there are three factors that influence the cooperation effectiveness, namely, mechanism, process, and typology of partnership. The *mechanism* of partnership includes how the partnership is mobilized, what the forces that enable the partnership to occur are, who is involved, and what the role played by higher governmental levels is, so that they affect the efficiency and level of partnership. The *process* of partnership can be described in terms of how the information-exchange process is conducted, which sectors become themes for cooperation, and how regionally integrated development is formed. The *typology* of partnership refers to the type of partnership that can be identified on the basis of how and for what purposes the agreement is formed and what actions are enforced.

5.6.1 Mechanism of Partnership

First, we examine and elaborate the peculiarities of the partnership mechanism. In the mobilization process, we acknowledge that GTZ UQ has become an important actor in the organizational development of the joint secretariat. However, this does not necessarily imply that the GTZ UQ assistance is one of the key success factors. Chaskin et al. (2001) have identified GTZ as focusing on organizational development in order to push the actors so that they could build their capacities. In 2007, GTZ also made a good exit strategy for their technical assistance in a way that the participating actors could still continue the partnership and run the joint secretariat.

It can be concluded that GTZ UQ has played the role of a catalyst for the partnership by assisting with the building of the partnership foundation, institutional principles, communication development, and decision-making.

Historically, the urban and rural governments in Greater Yogyakarta have demonstrated excellence in doing cooperation, which, in Indonesian, is known as *gotong royong*. In the Javanese tradition, *gotong royong* is one of the fundamental values in social life in which people help each other in solving daily problems. An example of the application of this principle in governance practice in Greater Yogyakarta can be indicated from the experience of the integrated urban infrastructure development program (IUIDP) in the 1990s (Duque and Hermawati 2004). In this program, the local governments have worked to solve their mutual problems on regional solid waste management.

While the mobilization process does not indicate a key success factor, the mechanism of partnership shows it is important to examine the initiatives of participating local governments in cooperation building. It is found that initiatives from a local government to build urban-rural government cooperation have received a positive response from others. This is, among other things, due to the interrelated interests among the three local governments. Yogyakarta municipality functions as the urban center. Located in the higher altitude land, rural areas in Sleman district have provided the water supply for the whole region. Meanwhile, Bantul district, due to its geologic condition and availability of vacant rural land, can allocate space for a waste dumpsite and wastewater treatment plant. With these interrelated interests, the initiatives have built upon common interests between the local governments. This embodied vision sharing and awareness of the urgency to cooperate in order to enhance the quality of public services. The embodiment of common interest and awareness is also due to deep and close relationships, which can be seen from the daily communication and dialogue processes. The building of common interests is essential in starting up the negotiation and communication process so that decisions can be realized responsively. The common interests have eliminated egoism and made the local governments interdependent.

In order to understand the vision-sharing and communication process, the participating actors in the urban-rural cooperation building have been identified and mapped. In doing this, we have identified all of the related actors, including the heads of the local governments, the local secretaries, the heads of the local boards and departments, academicians, NGOs, and the communities (Fig. 5.2). As political leaders, the mayor and regents could play a role in this cooperation building. However, they have not performed leading roles in deciding the direction of the cooperation. Meanwhile, the local secretaries, as the highest level of local bureaucrats, are very influential in decision- and policy-making. It is the local secretaries who first open communication with other actors, including other bureaucrats and operational staff. The local secretaries and the heads of the local boards and departments, as the steering team, are able to mobilize the lower-level staff in arranging development programs and projects. It can be concluded that the commitment and leadership of the members of the steering team or high-level local bureaucrats play an important role in determining the effectiveness of cooperation.

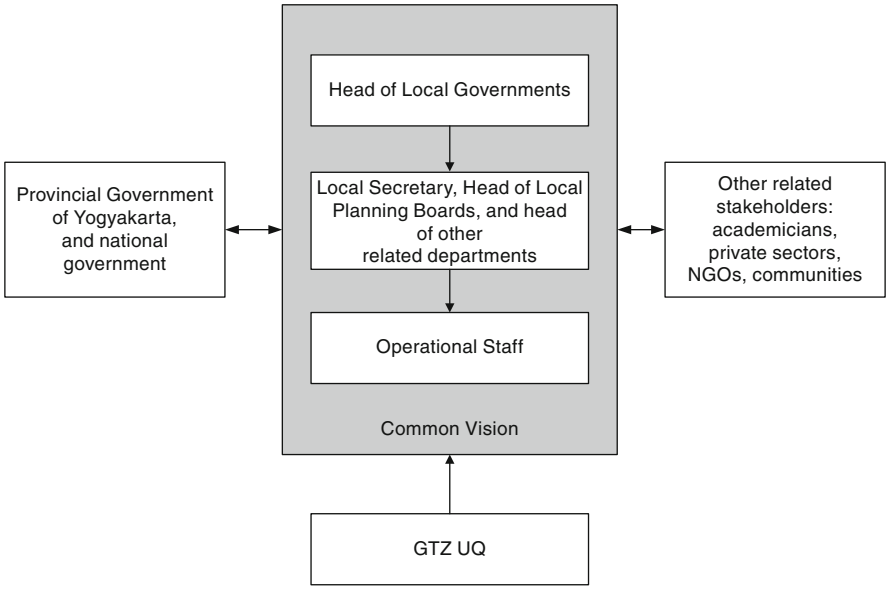

Fig. 5.2 Actors mapping in the urban-rural cooperation in Greater Yogyakarta

Other actors play less significant roles in the urban-rural cooperation. Academicians, NGOs, and the private sector function as temporary partners on thematic fields. Meanwhile, the communities and the provincial and national governments provide political and financial support in developing cooperation. The higher-level government bodies play roles on an ad hoc basis without structural involvement.

Practically, the three-tiered model helps to develop communication among the urban and rural actors. The steering team, whose roles lie in decision- and policy-making, forces the departments' staff to translate the agreed-upon policies into technical steps and programs. Furthermore, the operational staff of the joint secretariat can facilitate the local governments in building communication. Duque and Hermawati (2004) have described how the joint secretariat functions to facilitate, coordinate, and mediate the formulation of recommendation and policy development, monitoring, evaluation, and implementation. With these integrated functions, the cooperation can run properly and effectively.

5.6.2 Process of Partnership

An important part of this analysis is the explanation of the interactive process of urban-rural cooperation. First, in relation to the information-exchange process, knowledge and information sharing are essential activities to be conducted in the cooperation. In order to examine this issue, we refer back to the functions of the joint secretariat. Their mediation and facilitation functions give the three local

governments the opportunity to share information and interact with and meet each other frequently so as to build social cohesion among themselves. As an illustration, the regular meeting at the joint secretariat is held every fortnight with a different sectoral topic for each meeting. In this regular meeting, technical staff from related departments attend and discuss the issues and recommend alternative solutions. In addition to this regular meeting, the joint secretariat also arranges focus group discussions to explore strategic and urgent issues. In these interactive processes, the parties negotiate with each other in considering risk assessments and timetables (Steinacker 2004). It can be concluded that all parties have many opportunities to meet and understand each other.

In the communication process, each local government sacrifices its egoism so that it would be easier to integrate differences and create a new entity for effective action. The openness and transparency in the negotiation have supported the communication process in the face of conflicts that would potentially emerge during the process. This equality in the dialogue process increases the willingness of the local governments to participate proactively in the meetings so that collective decision-making can be conducted more easily.

Collective decision-making, as a response to common interests, results from bargaining processes in which each party assesses and decides on the costs and benefits of joining the cooperation (Feiock 2007; Post 2004). It is realized by the local governments that cooperation is a must so that issues of urban-rural interrelations can be addressed, and regional integrity, created. These togetherness and equality values are the integrating factors for the three local governments to promote institutional collective action though sharing the transaction costs and collective benefits.

Furthermore, in the implementation stage, good knowledge management has been shown by publishing important information regularly and sending the minutes of meetings so that they could be followed up through official responses. This knowledge management has helped the related departments to recreate and follow up on the information and agreements. Principally, knowledge management is aimed at reminding each party about their commitments as a basis for translating agreements into concrete actions.

Now, we will evaluate the thematic fields of cooperation between the three local governments. Solid waste management was the pioneer of this cooperation. This sector has been selected due to the common need for a dumpsite (TPA) among the various local governments. Cooperative waste management has built the foundations for the development of cooperation in other sectors such as wastewater treatment plants, drainage systems, transportation, and water. Lately, spatial planning has also been integrated into the cooperation as a field of coordination.

All of these thematic fields of cooperation have been developed based on the common interests of the three local governments to provide better services for urban and rural communities. The sectoral fields have been integrated in the cooperation based on the concept of economies of scale. For example, it was argued that it would be more efficient if the three local governments were united to build a TPA for the whole urban-rural region. In addition, these sectors are the real development sectors that can foster the urban-rural linkage and create job opportunities. Meanwhile,

spatial planning is included in order to better plan, manage, and control the extended urbanization and protect the rural environment.

5.6.3 Typology of Cooperation

Finally, we examine the typology that characterizes the urban-rural cooperation in Greater Yogyakarta. The joint secretariat is a coordinating body that plays a role in issue development and the building of agreements and their implementation. With this comprehensive and strategic role, the joint secretariat has the ability to promote good communication among the participating parties and to respond to common needs and issues. This interlocal institutional form fits into the fragmented urban-rural institutional condition of Greater Yogyakarta. It pushes cooperation beyond the table in terms of not only talking about problems but also finding solutions together. Clearly, this type of institutional form cannot be replicated instantly because the typology may not be suitable for other cases due to specific characteristics and problems (Table 5.2).

It can be concluded that urban-rural government cooperation can be initiated by developing vision sharing through interactive communication among the cooperating parties, managing knowledge accumulation, stimulating common awareness to cooperate, and promoting good leadership. The important point is that the collective action is influenced by the vision-sharing process, which is, in turn, shaped by common awareness and willingness to cooperate (Fig. 5.3). With this condition, the actors are pushed to build leadership and commitment in order to increase communication intensity as a means of achieving shared objectives. These conditional factors have to be embedded in real urban development and environmental planning sectors and well-designed knowledge-management systems, thus enabling the actors to keep the cooperation on track and consistent with its shared objectives.

5.7 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter points out that decentralization has resulted in increased urban-rural fragmentation of extended metropolitan regions in Indonesia in functional as well as administrative terms. In responding to this challenge, a number of regions have initiated different types of interlocal government cooperation. The practice of urban-rural cooperation tends to develop as an autonomous mechanism that brings together the administrations of *kota* (the urban government) and *kabupaten* (the rural government) within a functional rural-urban region.

From the discussions above, we can now conclude that there are several key success factors that underlie the effectiveness of urban-rural cooperation practice in Greater Yogyakarta. The first success factor is the existence of common awareness to develop cooperation resulting in collective initiatives of the local bureaucrats to

Table 5.2 Key findings of qualitative content analysis

Criteria (Luo and Shen 2009)	Parameter	Finding
Mechanism		
Mobilization	There is a special character supporting the building of cooperation	–
Mechanism	Mechanism has been chosen properly so that cooperation can be run	Vision sharing and awareness of urgency to cooperate
Actors	Actors have very good roles and/or big influence on other stakeholders	Commitment and leadership of steering team (local bureaucrats)
Role of higher-level governments	Role of the national and provincial governments is suitable to the needs of cooperation process	–
Efficiency	The mechanism is an efficient work system that enables cooperation to be developed by all of parties	Three-tiered model of hierarchy system, personnel of operational staff, and knowledge management
Level of partnership	Level of cooperation is high and deep among each party, and there are certain conditions that make it happen	Awareness about common interests, vision sharing, and decision-making
Process		
Information exchange	In the information-exchange process, there are conditions supporting each party in gaining clear information and benefits so that consensus can be transformed into practice	Institutional collective action, horizontal dialogue, collective decision-making, knowledge management
Thematic cooperation	The consensus can be applied in several sectors (fields), and there are certain characteristics that enable cooperation to happen	Real object
Common market	The cooperation process indicates regional integrity, and not a combination of fragmented action, and the conditions are conducive	Integral factors on institutional collective action
Typology	The chosen typology fits needs (responding to the purposes) and problem faced	–

provide regional infrastructure, manage extended urbanization, and protect the rural environment in an integrated way. This awareness is the main asset to develop good urban-rural cooperation. Such awareness may be influenced by a sociocultural context rooted in the cooperative tradition at the community and local levels.

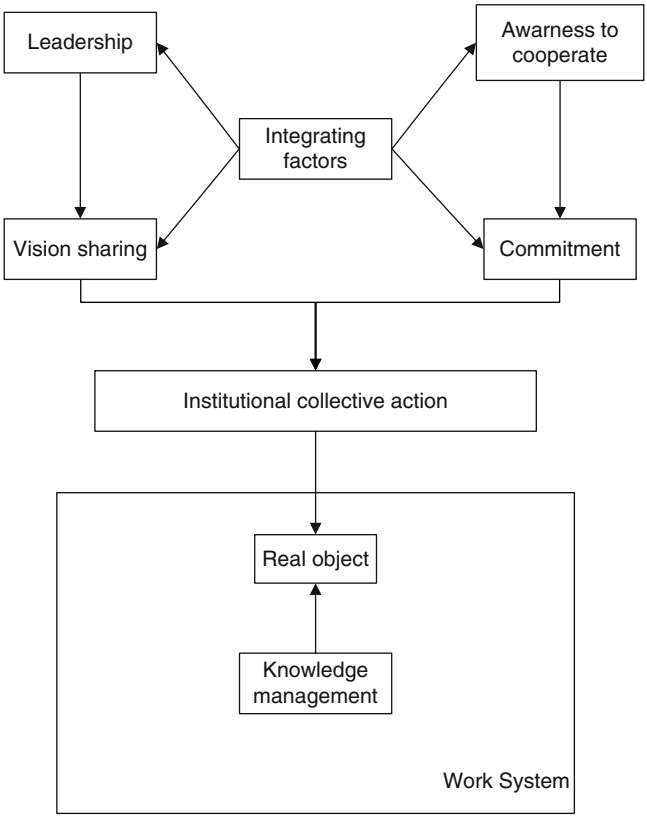

Fig. 5.3 The urban-rural cooperation process in Greater Yogyakarta

This embedded social relationship becomes an essential form of social capital for developing more complex urban-rural cooperation at the regional level.

Given the contextual factors, communication style and vision sharing play a more proactive role in pushing the occurrence of urban-rural cooperation. It is due to this awareness that institutional collective action can be developed. In addition, there are horizontal forms of dialogue style in decision-making that promote effective cooperation. Regular meetings and communication among the urban and rural actors have created a communal sense of necessity to bargain and negotiate and to build consensus. Another important factor is openness and transparency during the communication process across the urban-rural divide. Leadership and vision sharing of the steering committee is a crucial factor that enables the operational team to translate the policies that have been agreed upon into technical steps. The ability of the local bureaucrats to initiate open communication, build common visions, and realize agreed-upon decisions has encouraged the other actors to join in. Good knowledge management is also important in maintaining the commitment of the participating actors so that the cooperation becomes more sustainable. Finally,

the three-tiered model of hierarchy, as a work system, has promoted an efficient division of tasks and responsibility among actors. The work system helps each actor to focus on their own tasks while maintaining good coordination with other actors.

In general terms, the interlocal government collaboration in Greater Yogyakarta could be replicated in other urban-rural regions. However, since each form of regional governance has different characteristics, it should be stressed that replication does not necessarily imply the reproduction of the joint secretariat institutional form. It will be more important to learn how to use cultural resources, leadership, and thematic approaches in regional governance institutional building, focusing on how to initiate cooperation, develop knowledge management, and turn agreement into implementation.

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Chapter 6
Urban-Rural Connections: Banda Aceh Through Conflict, Tsunami, and Decentralization

Michelle Ann Miller and Tim Bunnell

6.1 Introduction

Most of the world was first introduced to Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh and its capital city of Banda Aceh by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004. As foreign and Indonesian journalists and humanitarian workers descended upon Banda Aceh in the aftermath of the Boxing Day tsunami, television screens around the globe broadcasted images of a city in ruins, reduced to rubble and rotting corpses. The calamity wrought by the waves was incalculable; more than 160,000 Acehnese perished, another 550,000 were internally displaced, and entire villages were washed into the sea (Miller 2009, p. 1).

What the television cameras failed to capture in the wake of the disaster, and what journalists were prevented from covering by Indonesian security forces, was the armed separatist rebellion in Aceh.[1] This conflict, which, since its inception in 1976, had largely isolated Aceh from the rest of Indonesia and claimed some 15,000–20,000 lives, persisted unabated in rural parts of Aceh for almost 8 months after the tsunami. It was not until August 2005 that the Indonesian government and armed separatist Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh[2] Merdeka, GAM) rebels

[1] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the Aceh conflict in any depth. Most sources, however, agree that Acehnese resentment toward the Indonesian state has been aggravated and perpetuated by the latter's exploitation and neglect (including Jakarta's siphoning of Aceh's vast oil and gas reserves), broken promises about Aceh's "special region" status, and human rights abuses against Acehnese civilians during Indonesian military operations. For more detailed studies of the causes of the conflict, see, especially, Kell (1995), Morris (1983), and Robinson (1998).

[2] The original British spelling of "Aceh" was generally preferred by the GAM, reflecting the rebels' rejection of the modern Indonesian spelling. Despite his outspoken opposition to most other things Dutch, GAM's founding leader, Hasan di Tiro, also used the old Dutch spelling of "Atjeh"

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reached a negotiated settlement in Helsinki that granted Aceh broad self-government within Indonesia. Prior to the start of the Helsinki peace process, violence on the ground had prevented or delayed much needed humanitarian assistance from reaching tsunami-affected villages along Aceh's battered coastline. The ongoing conflict also exacerbated preexisting cleavages between Banda Aceh and the rural interior, where about 70% of Aceh's 4.2 million people live (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS)/Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (BAPPEDA) 2000, p. 32) and where the worst of the fighting took place between GAM and Indonesian security forces.

This chasm between Banda Aceh and many rural parts of Aceh, as well as between Aceh and the rest of Indonesia, has been somewhat mitigated by the Helsinki peace process. Though the Aceh peace process remains vulnerable to diminution and is by no means assured, it has continued to gain ground since 2005 (Miller 2009; Morfit 2007). Yet, despite significant improvements to Aceh's security situation, the cleavages that once divided and isolated Aceh have not entirely disappeared and present an ongoing array of challenges as the province struggles to rebuild itself and come to terms with its legacy of social trauma.

We are concerned with the city of Banda Aceh within these broader transformations of Aceh from a theater of war into a relatively peaceful province under a nascent system of "self-government" in Indonesia. We trace the trajectory of Banda Aceh since 1998, when the initiation of a nationwide process of democratization led reform-minded politicians in Jakarta to look beyond a "military solution" to Indonesia's internal conflicts and toward the democratic accommodation of aggrieved ethnic minorities through decentralization. Within this context, we examine the shifting position of Banda Aceh from a city that was surprisingly insulated from the conflict under authoritarian rule (when most of the fighting between the warring parties was confined to the countryside) into an environment of urban chaos as the voices of Acehnese separatists flooded into Aceh's newly democratic city spaces. This democratic space gradually closed, returning Banda Aceh to eerie quietude, the more Indonesian security forces regained control over Aceh's urban centers, forcing GAM to retreat once again to the hills. We then consider the role of the tsunami in opening up Banda Aceh to the outside world and the impact of the subsequent Helsinki peace process on the city's interactions with other parts of Aceh following the introduction of self-governing legislation.

The central argument is that in rescaling our lens of analysis down to the level of the city of Banda Aceh rather than considering Aceh in its entirety, we can gain new insights into the complex dynamics of this long-troubled province through its most turbulent period in living memory. Most studies about the conflict and decentralization in Aceh and, to a lesser extent, the 2004 tsunami have focused on its often strained relations with the outside world, and specifically, with Jakarta. This has served to obscure the myriad of mutually transformative dynamics within Aceh

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to establish the "Atjeh Institute in America" and GAM's "Ministry of Information of the State of Atjeh Sumatra" (Kementerian Penerangan Negara Atjeh Sumatra). See, for example, Hasan di Tiro (1965, 1984).

itself. These have important spatial dimensions, including differences between "urban" and "rural" areas and the ways in which these are linked. Our focus on Banda Aceh not only introduces urban studies perspectives into research on Aceh but also brings into view urban-rural interconnections and networks (see also Silvey and Elmhirst 2003) which have resonances in other less internationally visible parts of Indonesia in an era of decentralization.[3]

6.2 From Authoritarian Order to Democratic Disorder

Despite Aceh's contemporary history as the scene of one of Asia's most protracted and bloody armed separatist conflicts, writings about the Aceh conflict tend to overlook the fact that the city of Banda Aceh and its residents[4] were protected from the worst of the violence. For the greater part of the 29-year war (1976–2005), Aceh was under the authoritarian rule of President Suharto's New Order regime (1966–1998), which retained control over Aceh's urban centers while waging an intensive counter-insurgency campaign against GAM and their civilian supporters in the rebels' traditional strongholds in parts of rural Aceh. It was only in 1998, when Suharto's forced resignation ushered in an era of national democratic reform, that Jakarta's grip over Aceh's urban centers became severely attenuated, thereby allowing the voices of separatists to be heard publicly for the first time in Banda Aceh and other cities in Aceh. Although the conflict continued after 1998 – indeed, it escalated as GAM used their increased political leverage to expand and consolidate their local support base – the loss of central government authority in urban spaces after the first flush of democratization enabled Acehnese separatist forces to mobilize and express themselves in ways that had been impossible under authoritarian repression.

This physical separation of Banda Aceh and its residents from the violence that engulfed parts of rural Aceh under the New Order had far-reaching impacts on the fabric of Acehnese society or at least, sections of it. One largely overlooked consequence of this uneven geography of violence was that many urban and rural Acehnese experienced the conflict quite differently. The daily experience of villagers in large swathes of rural Aceh was one of fear, fighting, forced migration, and internal displacement. By contrast, Banda Aceh residents who did not venture into the countryside were shielded from the worst of the violence, and, until the New Order's collapse, were spared difficult truths about the extent of human rights abuses and the perpetrators by a

[3] Indonesia has been an important site for scholarly work problematizing the conventional urban-rural dichotomy including McGee's (1991) concept of *desakota*, which combines the Indonesian words for village and town/city. However, this term applies more readily to extended urban regions on the densely populated island of Java than it does to the experiences of less populous cities, such as Banda Aceh, and their surrounding regions.

[4] In 2004, Banda Aceh had a population of 264,168, which was reduced to 203,553 after 61,065 Banda Aceh residents died in the Indian Ocean tsunami and earthquake (Nurdin 2006, p. 116).

heavily censored mass media.[5] All of this changed in 1998 when Indonesia's newly liberated national media began providing critical coverage of the conflict including almost daily reports on depredations committed against Aceh's civilian population by Indonesian security forces. As one Banda Aceh resident recalled after learning of the discovery of several mass graves in the countryside:

> I was really shocked in 1998. Of course, we heard rumours about bad things happening [elsewhere in Aceh], but we didn't really know *how* bad or how widespread it was. I always felt safe during "DOM" [informal acronym for Indonesian military-led operations from 1989 to 1998]. (Interview, Jakarta, 11 November 2001)

Another consequence of Banda Aceh's relative isolation from the rest of Aceh was that many local elites in the provincial capital developed closer business, political, and personal ties with Jakarta and other cities within and beyond Indonesia (see, e.g., Missbach 2007) than with other parts of the province. Although Aceh's urban-based governing elite was not entirely separated from rural areas, many were "cut off from Acehnese society by their Western education and upward accountability to Jakarta rather than by a mass base to Aceh" (McGibbon 2006, p. 325). After 1998, this translated into sharp political divisions between a sizable majority of (predominantly rural-based) Acehnese separatists and a publicly discredited tiny minority of urban-based elites who were locally portrayed as puppets of Jakarta for seeking to keep Aceh integrated within Indonesia.[6]

Rapid democratization in 1998 transformed Banda Aceh from a city that was firmly under the New Order's centralized control into a political power vacuum that was quickly filled by a forcefully resurgent Acehnese civil society. In particular, the lacunae of social and political order in Aceh's urban centers created democratic space for the mobilization of anti-Jakarta and anti-Indonesian military sentiment as Aceh's university student-led referendum movement and GAM experienced a surge in community support. In contrast to the New Order, Acehnese groups and individuals who were otherwise divided along demographic, socioeconomic, and political lines, as well as by urban and rural location, now openly united in their opposition to Indonesian rule.

Indonesia's precarious governing presence in Aceh saw Banda Aceh emerge as a space of heightened visibility for staging province-wide demonstrations and rallies.

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[5] The apparent normalcy of Banda Aceh, despite the conflict, was illustrated by regionalist architecture in the city under Suharto. As Hellman (2003) argues, during the New Order, *kebudayaan* (culture) and *kesenisan* (art) were "utilized by the government to outline the idea that Indonesia consists of a certain number of discrete cultures, each represented by a unique set of art and aesthetics stockpiled in the performing arts, architecture, textiles and clothes" (p. 13). In architectural terms, this took the form of the development of "traditional" styles including the *atap joglo* Javanese roof style, which was embellished with regionally specific decorations (Kusno 2000). In Aceh, such regional variations included designs inspired by the Acehnese royal hat and the famous Cakra Donya bell, but any symbolism related to the politics of Acehnese identity was notable only for its absence (Nas 2003).

[6] According to one opinion poll conducted in June 1999 by the Medan-based *Waspada* newspaper, 56% of Acehnese wanted a referendum on independence, compared with 23.5% who favored autonomy within the Republic of Indonesia (see Waspada 1999).

The most popular site of public protest was the iconic nineteenth-century Masjid Raya Baiturrahman, Banda Aceh's Great Mosque, which later became emblematic of Aceh's enduring religious and cultural traditions, being one of the few buildings in central Banda Aceh to survive the 2004 tsunami. The Baiturrahman Mosque was also symbolic of Acehnese resistance against Indonesian authority. For instance, the biggest demonstration in Aceh's history was held there; the so-called rally of millions of 8–9 November 1999 involved about 500,000 of Aceh's 4.2 million people who traveled from across the province to Banda Aceh to demand a referendum with two options: "To Join or Separate (Free) from RI [Republic of Indonesia]."[7]

Such public displays of Acehnese solidarity and open political expression were short-lived. Alarmed by the meteoric growth of GAM and Aceh's pro-referendum movement in the climate of democratic openness, Jakarta increasingly reverted to a hardline military approach in dealing with the "Aceh problem," an approach not dissimilar to that used by Suharto's authoritarian New Order regime. Public forms of protest were repressed with growing frequency from 1999 as Indonesian security forces adopted a new policy of shooting rubber bullets into crowds (Koalisi NGO HAM Aceh 1999).

Compared to the New Order period, however, urban-rural political networks among Acehnese separatist forces were stronger and better organized in the post-Suharto era, even after Jakarta renewed its military crackdown against GAM in the countryside. In identifying and treating both the urban-based pro-referendum movement and rural-based GAM guerrillas (and their civilian supporters) as a national security threat (Davies 2006, p. 214), the Indonesian security forces inadvertently nurtured solidarities across the rural-urban divide. Similarly, GAM and the referendum movement became increasingly united in the face of their common enemy: the Indonesian military.

Despite their close cooperation, GAM and the pro-referendum movement nonetheless remained divided by their geographically dispersed constituencies and along ideological lines. Aceh's referendum movement was conceived and driven by an educated, urban, middle class comprising mainly of university student leaders and nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives. By contrast, GAM's strongest support base was in the countryside, where the great majority of Acehnese live, where the most intensive fighting took place, and where the primary means of employment is subsistence agriculture and small-scale industry (BPS/BAPPEDA 2000, p. 32). Ideologically, too, the two groups were divided over the means of deciding Aceh's political status, with GAM preferring armed struggle and the referendum movement favoring an internationally monitored East Timor-style ballot on Acehnese self-determination (Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh/Aceh Referendum Information Center (SIRA) 1999). According to GAM, the students were naïve for believing that Jakarta would ever agree to hold a referendum on Acehnese independence but downplayed any ideological and urban-rural differences in the interests of maintaining a united front.

[7] Banner hanging on the wall of the Baiturrahman Mosque at the November 1999 rally.

As Jakarta's Aceh approach gradually hardened to include a heavy emphasis on counterinsurgency operations aimed at annihilating Acehnese separatism, the democratic space in Aceh's urban centers was lost. By 2000, the political middle ground that had briefly flourished in Banda Aceh after the fall of Suharto had virtually disappeared. The pro-referendum movement, humanitarian NGOs, and Acehnese civil society organizations were forced underground, and many of their leaders were arrested, kidnapped, or summarily executed (Amnesty International 2001; Human Rights Watch 2002).

Travel between Banda Aceh and other parts of Aceh became restricted as the conflict spiraled out of control. Extortion by GAM and Indonesian security forces was rampant at road checkpoints, and Aceh's public transport services were frequently crippled by mass strikes and clashes between the warring parties. Fearful civilians who could afford to travel by air increasingly did so, prompting regional airlines to charter additional flights between Banda Aceh and Medan (*The Jakarta Post* 31 July 1999a; and 2 August 1999b). This, in turn, served to strengthen links between Banda Aceh and cities in other provinces at the expense of links with other parts of Aceh.

The growing isolation of Banda Aceh – and indeed the entire province of Aceh – was compounded by the introduction in 2001 of travel restrictions and media controls over the flow of information coming out of Aceh. A ban imposed in early 2001 on foreign journalists entering Aceh (*TempoInteraktif* 29 January 2001) was expanded, in May 2003, to include all foreigners and most Indonesian journalists when Jakarta pronounced martial law in the province. Under military emergency rule, the Indonesian armed forces drew from the then US strategy in the Iraq war to develop more sophisticated media control techniques by establishing their own media center in Banda Aceh and "embedding" Indonesian journalists in combat battalions to ensure that the conflict was reported from a "nationalist" viewpoint (*The Jakarta Post* 29 April 2003).

Within this deteriorating security environment, Banda Aceh was transformed from a vibrant city that had sustained a flourishing civil society into a picture of authoritarian control that was reminiscent of the New Order. As Indonesian security forces struggled to regain authority over Aceh's urban centers (often through invasive strategies such as a door-to-door disarmament campaign aimed at "persuading" GAM to surrender their weapons), cities came to resemble "ghost towns," and their residents became too afraid to go about their daily activities (*Tempo* 29 January 2001; *TempoInteraktif* 4 January 2001). By May 2004, however, when Aceh's status was downgraded from martial law to civil emergency rule, the military had succeeded in reasserting Indonesian state power over the province's urban centers and forced GAM's retreat to the hills (International Crisis Group 2005, p. 4). The extent of Indonesia's restored governing presence in Banda Aceh was made poignantly clear on Indonesia's August 2004 Independence Day celebrations when the military's media machine broadcasted images, nationwide, of crowds of Acehnese civilians waving little Indonesian flags and singing Indonesian nationalist songs. If these televised images were to be taken at face value, then Banda Aceh's civilian population had been effectively subordinated to Indonesian state control. However, what the

military's propaganda apparatus tried to hide and what the large-scale post-tsunami reconstruction effort would later blow open were dramatic differences between urban and rural Aceh that would leave deep scars and present complex challenges as the province worked to rebuild itself.

6.3 Urban-Rural Disparities in Post-tsunami Reconstruction

As noted earlier, the outside world was introduced to Aceh after the December 2004 tsunami through its urban centers. In part, this was because Banda Aceh and the West Aceh capital of Meulaboh were so visibly paralyzed by the tsunami; in both cities, tens of thousands of civilians were killed or required urgent humanitarian assistance, and the physical infrastructure was completely destroyed (Nurdin 2006). In part, the disaster response focus on urban Aceh was also the result of Indonesian military intervention. Although Jakarta lifted its ban on foreigners from entering Aceh to allow for the distribution of international aid, the Indonesian military, which itself suffered massive losses in the tsunami, sought to control coverage of its ongoing counterinsurgency campaign against GAM in the countryside by requiring foreigners to apply for special permits for travel outside Banda Aceh and Meulaboh (Miller 2006, p. 310). Beyond these localized contextual conditions, however, the emphasis on urban reconstruction in post-tsunami Aceh conformed to a broader pattern of post-disaster response in Indonesia and elsewhere, which tends to disproportionately channel recovery resources into cities "simply because they may be more accessible and better-equipped than remoter rural areas" or are perceived as such (Leitmann 2007, p. 149).

In the case of Aceh, there were several problems associated with this urban-centric approach to disaster response, as well as some clear advantages. The benefits of concentrating reconstruction resources in and around Banda Aceh are evident to any visitor to the provincial capital. Five years after the natural disaster, for example, the only physical traces of the tsunami were a number of carefully maintained monuments, memorial sites, and mass graves. Apart from those carefully nurtured memories of the tsunami, Banda Aceh looked almost like any other provincial Indonesian city and was awash with neat rows of freshly painted houses, office buildings, and bustling market places that bear no resemblance to the scenes of devastation that shocked the world back in 2004.

The same could not be said of other parts of Aceh. In the West Aceh capital of Meulaboh, which was dubbed "ground zero" because of its close proximity to the epicenter of the undersea earthquake, reconstruction efforts have been much slower and patchier, especially in public service delivery and road reconstruction. Rural coastal Aceh has been particularly neglected; entire villages along the west coast had to be abandoned after the tsunami because humanitarian aid and reconstruction resources arrived too late, too irregularly, or not at all.

The urban-based development agendas and priorities of aid agencies had a profound impact on the half-million Acehnese who were made homeless by the tsunami. This situation produced reversals in internal migration trends. Many tsunami

survivors in coastal towns and villages who had family, friends, and place-of-origin connections in the rural interior tended to resettle there temporarily or permanently, thus, at least partially, reversing the conflict-driven flow of forced migration from rural inland to urban coastal areas (Mahdi 2007, p. 2). Although traditional socio-economic migration determinants certainly influenced rural-to-urban migration during the conflict, unrelenting violence in the countryside also "induced large rearrangements of the population between villages in highly affected districts, as well as strong village emigration from the geographically remote regions in Central Aceh towards the less conflict-affected coastal industrial areas" (Czaika and Kis-Katos 2009, p. 399). The continuation of the conflict for almost 8 months after the tsunami until the signing of the Helsinki peace agreement on 15 August 2005 therefore created a real dilemma for those survivors who had initially fled to the coast to escape violence in the interior. Thousands of other tsunami survivors risked missing out on disaster relief resources and "cash-for-work" programs that were being offered by aid organizations in Aceh's urban coastal areas if they sought refuge for too long in the rural interior (Mahdi 2007, pp. 16–17).

Of the hundreds of international aid agencies that poured into Banda Aceh after the tsunami, many knew little or nothing about the Aceh conflict and allocated their budgets accordingly. As a result, even those humanitarian organizations that subsequently wanted to spend a portion of their budgets on post-conflict programs often felt unable to do so because their funds had been locked into post-tsunami development and rehabilitation projects (interview with international humanitarian worker, Banda Aceh, 15 April 2008). This disproportionate emphasis on post-tsunami spending, in turn, aggravated preexisting, conflict-based, socioeconomic disparities between Aceh's less-conflict-affected urban centers and the war-torn rural hinterlands.

The full extent of these rural-urban imbalances only became apparent after the peaceful settlement of the Aceh conflict via the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement, which opened up the interior and enabled travel between rural and urban areas in ways that had been difficult or impossible during the conflict. Previously unaddressed problems in urban-rural inequities were also brought to the political fore by the introduction, in 2006, of a Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA). Loosely modeled on the terms of the Helsinki agreement, the LoGA led not only to the realignment of center-periphery relations between Aceh and Jakarta but also between Banda Aceh and other areas within Aceh. As the following pages will detail, Aceh's self-governing status created new opportunities through which to start dealing with the legacy of conflict and social trauma affecting much of rural Aceh and to initiate restorative development policies.

6.4 Decentralization and the Recentering of Banda Aceh

The introduction, on 11 July 2006, of the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) (Law No. 11/2006) was set against a background of broken autonomy promises by previous Indonesian governments. Following the New Order's collapse in 1998, most political

leaders in Jakarta viewed decentralization, or regional autonomy, as an appropriate way of containing centrifugal forces that were threatening to tear Indonesia apart and were prepared to recognize a "special" place for problematic provinces like Aceh and Papua (formerly Irian Jaya) within the unitary state. However, the introduction of "special autonomy" (*otonomi khusus*) legislation for Aceh, first via Law No. 44/1999 and later through a more comprehensive Law No. 18/2001,[8] failed to provide redress for long-standing Acehnese grievances against the Indonesian state or reduce local support for GAM. In part, this was because a series of weak civilian post-authoritarian administrations were ambivalent about implementing special autonomy and tended to give the military a free reign in Aceh. In part, Aceh's dysfunctional and war-ravaged provincial infrastructure prevented special autonomy from being implemented, as did Aceh's urban-based ruling elite who were plagued by allegations of poor performance and corruption (McGibbon 2004, pp. 28–30). Moreover, there was a lack of strong grassroots support for Jakarta's limited offer of special autonomy, which did not address the roots of the conflict or provide any respite from ongoing atrocities committed against Aceh's civilian population by Indonesian security forces personnel. As such, the conciliatory spirit of special autonomy was delegitimized even while aspects of it were implemented (Miller 2004, p. 334, p. 342).

Although the 2006 Law on Governing Aceh excluded or diluted several core provisions of the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement upon which it was based, it, nonetheless, rectified some of the key weaknesses of special autonomy before it. In particular, a new provision in the LoGA to hold direct democratic local elections enabled GAM and Aceh's referendum movement to reap political benefits from the new system and to work within its legal parameters to engage constructively with Indonesia's democratization process rather than in opposition to it. The importance of this provision in protecting the Helsinki peace process is clear today, with former Acehnese rebels ruling over a democratically elected self-government of Aceh that enjoys broad popular legitimacy among Aceh's civilian population as well as at the national level.

The LoGA devolved far more state powers and resources to Aceh than separate 1999 regional autonomy laws (as amended by 2004 legislation)[9] conferred to Indonesia's other provinces. At the time of writing, Aceh is the only Indonesian

[8] Introduced on 22 September 1999, Law No. 44/1999 was the first of its kind to formally acknowledge the largely symbolic "Special Status of the Province of Aceh Special Region" in the fields of religion, education, and customary law. Law No. 18/2001 was passed by Indonesia's national parliament on 19 June 2001 and changed Aceh's name to Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (lit; Abode of Peace). The so-called NAD law conferred more extensive powers of autonomy to Aceh including generous fiscal decentralization provisions that were barely implemented and the right to enforce aspects of Islamic law (*Shari'a*), which was partially implemented.

[9] Two regional autonomy laws governed decentralization in Indonesia's other provinces (except Papua): Law No. 22/1999 on "Regional Government" and Law No. 25/1999 on "Fiscal Balance between the Central Government and the Regions." These 1999 laws were amended by Laws No. 32 and 33 of 2004, respectively.

province allowed to implement Islamic law (*Shari'a*) for Muslims within its borders and to form local political parties. Financially, too, Aceh has fared well under the new system, being granted the lion's share of its natural resource revenues[10] and a substantial special autonomy fund (*Dana Otonomi Khusus*). This fund derives from a central government discretionary block grant called a general allocation fund (*Dana Alokasi Umum*, DAU), which was created at the start of Indonesia's decentralization process with a view to reducing economic disparities between rich and poor regions. However, whereas Indonesia's other provinces each receive 1% of the DAU, Aceh is entitled to an additional 2% of the DAU for 15 years under the LoGA to assist its recovery from the conflict and tsunami. This will be reduced to 1% in the sixteenth to twentieth years (2023–2028).

Banda Aceh's role and responsibilities in the context of Indonesia's decentralization process differ markedly from those of Indonesia's other provincial administrations (except for Papua). Under the LoGA, state power and resources are devolved directly to Banda Aceh's provincial administration before being redistributed among Aceh's 21 sub-provincial administrations. In contrast, decentralized state resources in other regions bypass the provincial administrative level and go directly to districts (*kabupaten*) and cities/mayoralties (*kota*).

In Aceh, problems were created by a bottleneck of decentralized state authority and resources at the provincial level. The LoGA was not the first legislation to devolve most state power and resources directly to Banda Aceh as this system had been in place under Aceh's former special autonomy arrangement (Law No. 18/2001). During the conflict, the primary beneficiaries of special autonomy were Banda Aceh's urban-based governing elite, whose financial mismanagement and costly "vanity projects" earned Aceh an infamous reputation as the most corrupt province in one of the most corrupt countries in the world.[11] Yet Banda Aceh's discredited ruling elite were by no means the biggest obstacle to the implementation of special autonomy. Conflict-related factors such as massive infrastructural damage were generally regarded as the greatest impediments to decentralization, along with Jakarta's refusal to release all of the revenues to which Aceh was entitled under special autonomy.[12]

[10] Under the LoGA, Aceh is entitled to retain 70% of oil and gas revenues generated within its borders, compared with the other provinces (except Papua), which receive 15% of oil profits and 30% of natural gas revenues (Law No. 25/1999). Aceh is also awarded 80% of revenues in the forestry, fisheries, general mining, and geothermal mining sectors, like Indonesia's other provinces.

[11] This was the finding of two national corruption reports in 2003 produced by Bank Indonesia's Center for Research and Education of Central Banking (PSPK) and the Economics Faculty of Padjadjaran University (FE Unpad). See Sinar Harapan (2003).

[12] A key problem under both the special autonomy law and the LoGA was that neither the Finance Ministry, which was responsible for collecting and redistributing revenues back to Aceh and Indonesia's other provinces, nor the stated-owned oil and gas companies in Aceh, namely, Pertamina and ExxonMobil Oil Indonesia, publicly disclosed the latter's profits, with the result that Aceh's political leadership did not know how much resource-generated revenues Aceh was entitled to receive.

Following the introduction of the LoGA, however, it was no longer possible to blame the shortcomings of self-government and decentralization entirely on Jakarta or the conflict. Rather, as the Helsinki peace process gained ground, Banda Aceh gradually supplanted Jakarta as the new "center" to which Aceh's sub-provincial administrations looked, both for development funds and to air their grievances. While Jakarta continued to largely honor its part of the implementation of the LoGA, whatever problems that arose within the context of self-government would be seen, first and foremost, as a matter internal to Aceh and not something that required outside involvement or intervention. As a new regional "center" (rather than as merely part of a Jakarta-centered polity's "periphery"), however, Banda Aceh has encountered numerous challenges in its relations with other parts of Aceh. Direct democratic local executive elections held on 11 December 2006 brought to power a provincial government comprising former Acehnese rebels (from GAM as well as from Aceh's pro-referendum movement) who enjoyed strong popular support. Yet, despite its political legitimacy, the new Aceh administration faced the unenviable task of rebuilding a province that has been devastated by two disasters – one human-made, the other natural – which have destroyed much of the provincial infrastructure.

Massive injections of foreign and Indonesian capital into Aceh since the tsunami (about US$8 billion in total)[13] have not dramatically reduced poverty, which remains far higher in Aceh than in the rest of Indonesia. Statistics from 2006 show 26.5% of Acehnese living below the poverty line, compared with the national average of 17.8% (World Bank 2008, p. 13). Poverty is a particular problem in Aceh's rural interior and remote districts, especially in Central and South Aceh, where over 30% of rural households live below the poverty line. By comparison, less than 15% of households in Aceh's urban areas are in poverty, with areas in and around Banda Aceh experiencing the lowest poverty levels. Little wonder, then, that post-tsunami, post-conflict Aceh has seen a continuation of traditional economic migration flows toward "growth poles" in urban areas (*Ibid*: p. 8, p. 12).

Refuting the logic of traditional rural-to-urban migration in search of better living conditions, the World Development Report of 2007 (World Bank 2007) points out that the greatest decline in poverty (around the world and especially in Asia) has been because of improved conditions in rural areas through agricultural revitalization. Aceh's provincial government, too, has made some attempts, since the start of decentralization, to reduce rural-to-urban migration flows and generate sustainable employment in rural areas by reviving the agricultural sector. This has been especially challenging in Aceh, where a significant correlation exists between poverty and agriculture, which employs 50% of the population as the main household occupation (World Bank 2008, p. 21). Aceh's governor (until February 2012), former GAM

[13] According to the World Bank, US$4.9 billion in projects and programs had been allocated for the post-tsunami reconstruction effort by June 2006, and an additional US$3.1 billion had been pledged, bringing the total reconstruction budget to about US$8 billion. Of these allocated projects, most were funded by donor organizations (US$2 billion) and NGOs (US$1.7 billion), while the Indonesian government contributed US$1.2 billion (World Bank 2006, p. xvi).

rebel, Irwandi Yusuf, sought to alleviate rural poverty and stimulate sustainable agricultural growth by pumping provincial government funding into oil palm plantations.[14] According to Irwandi, the benefits of oil palm are at least threefold:

> First, there is an endless demand for oil palm, so there will always be a market. Also, the Acehnese people are very bossy and lazy. If Acehnese can grow their own oil palm then they can run their own business. And, oil palm is a low maintenance crop that only needs tending twice a month, so for the rest of the time they can sit around doing nothing. (Interview, Banda Aceh, 10 April 2008)

While the environmental impact of Aceh's expanding oil palm plantations is already starting to be felt through deforestation,[15] it is too soon to assess its effect on sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation in the rural interior. What is clear is that although Banda Aceh's provincial government has broadly identified rural development and pro-poor growth as a policy priority, Aceh's hinterlands continue to be mired by substantial structural constraints to long-term investment; the lives and livelihoods of villagers are still disrupted by widespread conflict and tsunami-related infrastructural damage to roads and transportation, running water, electricity, irrigation, and sanitation.

Decentralization has also made few improvements to the uneven delivery of public services, especially in education and health. Education levels, which are linked to poverty, are substantially higher in Banda Aceh than elsewhere in Aceh. Public spending on education has quadrupled under decentralization, and Aceh has the second highest per capita education expenditure in Indonesia (World Bank 2008, p. 42). Yet the education system in remote and rural areas has seen few improvements. This is partly because after the 2004 tsunami donors and aid agencies prioritized education programs in Aceh's coastal urban areas, where some 2,000 school teachers and more than 200 university lecturers died, disrupting the education of about 180,000 students. However, donors and Aceh's provincial government alike have been slow to rebuild education facilities in rural conflict-affected areas. In the post-conflict era, sporadic and delayed post-conflict reconstruction, ongoing poverty, lack of access to education, and teacher absenteeism and shortages are the primary causes for low levels of school attendance in rural areas. Although there are enough teachers in Aceh, many do not want to work in under-resourced and remote parts of Aceh and have not been offered financial incentives to do so.

Beyond its negligible contribution to reducing urban-rural economic imbalances, decentralization has brought a number of symbolic and cultural changes to Banda Aceh that have not traveled widely to rural parts of the province despite the high degree of freedom of movement following the Helsinki peace process. For instance, the introduction of Islamic law under decentralization, which applies to 98% of

[14] This strategy was inspired partly by the experience of Malaysia's Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), which, from the 1950s, expanded agricultural production and alleviated rural poverty through the resettlement of mostly landless Malays onto land newly opened for cultivation (see also Phelps et al. 2011).

[15] Land degradation and conversion point to future problems associated with rural poverty and reduced economic opportunities (Budidarsono et al. 2007, p. 35).

Aceh's provincial population who are Muslim, legally requires Acehnese Muslim women to wear Islamic headscarves (*jilbab*). Yet this is largely an urban phenomenon and is most visible around Banda Aceh, where *Shari'a* enforcement agencies have the strongest physical presence. In comparison, many Acehnese Muslim women in villages wear looser headscarves (*selendang*) or leave their hair uncovered. Street signs in Arabic text, which began appearing in Aceh after the start of Islamic law, are, likewise, mainly confined to Banda Aceh and a handful of urban centers along the east coast but are rarely seen at the village level.

Although Aceh's self-governing status has, thus far, done little toward reducing urban-rural disparities in the distribution of human and material resources, the peacetime conditions under which decentralization is currently being implemented have at least enabled greater freedom of movement and expression. Banda Aceh residents who were too afraid to travel to rural areas during the conflict now journey to villages to visit friends and relatives and for business. While Acehnese living in rural and remote parts of the province still travel to Banda Aceh and other urban areas in search of employment and better living conditions, just as they did during the conflict, those who remain behind now look to the provincial administration in Banda Aceh, instead of Jakarta, for improvements to their localized living conditions.

How this re-centering of Banda Aceh plays out in the political imaginings and practical realities of inter-Aceh relations will depend, in the first instance, upon Jakarta's ongoing resolve to honor its commitment to the LoGA. It will then depend on the extent to which Aceh's provincial administration is responsive to the needs and aspirations of sub-provincial administrations and their residents. If Banda Aceh is sensitive to the expectations of its constituents at the sub-provincial level, or is perceived as such, then urban-rural relations as well as urban-urban relations (between Banda Aceh and Aceh's other urban centers) are likely to improve. Conversely, if Acehnese living in other parts of the province feel as though their political and economic development needs and interests are being marginalized or neglected by Banda Aceh, then new forms of horizontal conflict could easily manifest.[16]

These political and economic considerations aside, within the context of Aceh's post-conflict environment, there are many subtle and less tangible implications for the revival of interactions and networks between Banda Aceh and other parts of the province. How will Acehnese identity and culture be affected by the renewal of travel and communication flows between urban and rural areas? What forms of

[16] This could even manifest into heightened demands for partition, as has already been shown through the demands by a locally based "ALA-ABAS" movement for the partition of Aceh into three separate provinces. As an interviewee at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) put it, "I said to Aceh colleagues, be careful. When you treat the *kabupaten* [districts] and *kota* [cities/mayoralties] disproportionately, you will be in trouble because the southeast Aceh will say, 'why we should obey to Aceh, we are not so Acehnese, we should make our own province'—that's the danger. As long as there is no prosperity approach, I'm afraid it will happen like that" (Director, Regional Government Affairs, MOHA, Jakarta, 15 January 2008).

"Acehneseness" will emerge and disappear as a result of dissolving barriers between Banda Aceh and the rural interior? How will the character and appearance of Banda Aceh continue to change through infusions of the rural into urban spaces? What can rural and urban Acehnese survivors learn from one another by sharing their diverging and overlapping experiences of the conflict and tsunami? And, how will these new forms of engagement help people come to terms with and make sense of their intertwined histories of social trauma? These are questions that have, so far, been glossed over in the rebuilding of Aceh. Yet such questions are becoming increasingly relevant as the self-government of Aceh looks less toward the outside world for help (and to blame for its problems) and more toward factors internal to the protection of Aceh's hard-won peace and newfound sense of renewal.

6.5 Conclusion

Few urban environments in recent history have been exposed to as much upheaval as Banda Aceh. We have considered, in this chapter, the understudied role played by Banda Aceh and its residents in the remaking of Aceh through the conflict, tsunami, and decentralization. Looking beyond Aceh's often fraught relations with outsiders, we have highlighted complex divisions and interrelations between the Acehnese themselves. In this, this chapter has, at least partially, sought to deconstruct simplistic standardized representations of the Acehnese as a homogenous grouping with a uniform set of needs and expectations; ironically, this is how the Acehnese have been most commonly portrayed by those who have done the most to help them in the large-scale post-tsunami reconstruction effort.

In particular, we have shown how Acehnese living in Banda Aceh and people in rural areas have experienced the conflict, tsunami, and decentralization very differently from one another. During the conflict, Banda Aceh residents were generally exposed to far less violence than people living in the rural interior, thus leading to the production of different memories and accounts of that period from within Aceh itself. Similarly, proximity to the 2004 tsunami produced divergent geohistories between individual Acehnese, as did place of residency at the time of the natural disaster (in urban or rural coastal areas or the interior), which affected levels of access to post-disaster resources. The benefits of decentralization, too, have been felt more strongly by people living in Banda Aceh and other urban centers than by Acehnese living in rural or remote areas, many of whom have, so far, experienced hardly any advantages of self-government.

How, then, should these diverging geographies lead us to view the transformation of Banda Aceh? On the one hand, they illustrate the comparatively privileged position of Banda Aceh, within Aceh, as the area least affected by the conflict and as the biggest beneficiary of post-tsunami reconstruction and decentralization resources. These combined factors have helped to establish Banda Aceh as the new "center" of self-government, replacing its former reputation as the troublesome "periphery" of Jakarta. On the other hand, the uneven distribution of state and non-state resources in

Banda Aceh's favor should serve as a reminder of the heightened potential for future horizontal conflict with other parts of Aceh. Political elites in Banda Aceh have many reasons for seeking to address spatial imbalances through prioritizing development and public services in rural and remote areas. Apart from the specter of violence and/or resuscitation of demands for partition, rural areas remain important sources of votes for former GAM candidates in provincial elections. Like many other aspects of Aceh's transformation, this suggests the importance of adopting an "integrated rural-urban approach" (Parthasarathy 2010).

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Chapter 7
Urbanization Without Development: The Cases of Cirebon and Gresik on Java's North Coast

Riwanto Tirtosudarmo

7.1 Introduction

Urban studies in Southeast Asia tend to overlook medium and small cities, focusing instead on megacities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Manila, and Ho Chi Min City (Jones and Douglass 2008; Rimmer and Dick 2009). As flows of goods, labor, and capital often originate in and are transferred from small and medium cities, observation of these urban areas is undoubtedly important. Michael Leaf describes medium and small cities as "the transition zone, or interaction zone, where urban and rural activities are juxtaposed, and landscape features are subject to rapid modifications, induced by anthropogenic activity" (Leaf 2008, p. 1). This observation appears to fit in the case of Indonesia. As Firman (2003) has noted, urban development, particularly in Java, is typically associated with a pattern in which corridors of development blur the differences between cities and villages (see also Chap. 5 in this volume). Based on the observation in Cirebon and Gresik—two medium-sized cities in the urban corridors along the northern coast of Java—this chapter demonstrates that the notion of urban and rural features continues to haunt perspectives on urban studies in Asia. Observations made during a short period of fieldwork in mid-2009 are drawn upon to demonstrate increasing social unrest among the urban poor emanating from a combination of obscure city planning and the unchecked penetration of the commercial economy.[1] A description of rural-urban migration in Java based on previous studies follows, after which this chapter turns to discussion of current urban dynamics observed in Cirebon and Gresik.

[1] Fieldwork in Cirebon and Gresik is part of a larger study on social transformation in the cities along the northern coast of Java, which is being conducted by the Research Center for Society and Culture, Indonesian Institute of Sciences. The abridged version of the complete research report is published as Tirtosudarmo (2010).

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7.2 Rural-Urban Disparity and Population Mobility in Java

From the colonial period up to the late 1970s, population mobility in Indonesia can be classified into five major types. The first type concerns population mobility into plantation areas, mainly during the Dutch colonial period. The second type is international migration. This movement has had very limited impact on contemporary population growth in Indonesia. The third type is the induced rural-rural movement, or what has been known as the transmigration program. This program is essentially a continuation of an earlier, so-called "colonization" program established by the Dutch. The fourth type of movement is voluntary migration or *merantau* among highly mobile ethnic groups such as the Minangkabau. The fifth type of population movement is rural-urban migration (either permanent or circulatory) and this is the type which is central to the concerns of this chapter. The decreased availability of land can theoretically be offset by investing in technology or intensifying cultivation. Unfortunately, the modernization of agricultural production in some rural areas in Java has created unemployment (Sinaga 1978; Singarimbun and Penny 1976; White 1976). For example, in rural Java, the use of the huller (or rice husker) and small tractors has drastically reduced the number of farm workers. There has thus been a shift of labor from the agricultural sector to nonagricultural sectors such as domestic service or petty trade, mainly in urban areas.

In this part, we turn our attention to one of the most important components of all disparities in income distribution, namely, the disparity between urban and rural areas. Widening rural-urban disparities, especially in Java, were noted by Booth and Sundrum in the early 1980s (Booth and Sundrum 1981). An urban-rural disparity in nonfood expenditure is much greater than in food expenditure. As far as food items are concerned, there is very little disparity in expenditure on basic foods such as cereals and casava. The disparity is greater in the case of middle-range foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and greater still for high-end foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and milk. Among nonfood items, in 1970, the disparity in housing expenditure was quite low, while it was very high for items such as consumer durables. In all cases, urban-rural disparities have been higher in Java than in the Outer Islands. As a result of the government monetary stabilization policy and the concentration of development areas, urban incomes have increased much faster, especially in Jakarta and other large cities, than in rural areas. Such changes have given rise to migration from rural to urban areas.

There is no doubt that during the Suharto era, many improvements were made in almost every aspect of social life in Indonesia. The government emphasized the development of infrastructure and communications, that is, roads, railroads, harbors, and airfields. In the social sectors, the growth in education and health was also dramatic. In their studies of East Java, Tirtosudarmo (1985) and Tirtosudarmo and Meyer (1993) have concluded that various structural changes in East Java not only create a dichotomy between the rural "push" and the urban "pull" at the broad societal level but also affect individuals by changing the costs and benefits of migration. For example, the young, educated, and unmarried population would be more likely to migrate than their older, less educated, and married counterparts, primarily

because the former are able to adapt easily to the new conditions that result from structural changes in society. In addition, it is likely that the personality characteristics of the migrants, such as more adventurous behavior, willingness to take risks, and ease of adjustment, are also important factors in migration decision making. The presence of relatives and friends in urban destinations have played a critical role in migration decisions, especially in mediating information about the urban destination as well as providing assistance for migrants in the new place of destination.

The young, educated, and unmarried people from rural areas and small towns are the groups who have been pulled by the extension of job opportunities in the urban centers. In addition, the decreasing availability of jobs in the agricultural sector has pushed these people to seek work in the cities. Movements of a large group of people from a community usually have dramatic effects on the demographic characteristics of places left behind. The movement also influences the social and economic growth of the place of origin. Hugo (1978), among others, has studied, in detail, the impact of migration on villages in West Java. The out-migration of people from the village, mostly the young, has led to problems of selecting village leaders and raising enough labor for "cooperative work" projects. The rate of divorce also seems to be increasing in places from where a large number of males have migrated.

In the literature on rural-urban migration, urban destinations have received more attention than rural origins. Several migration studies in Jakarta have shown that in-migration is very important for the growth of the city not only in terms of population growth but also for urban development (Mamas and Komalasari 2008). History shows that Jakarta has been built by migrants. Undoubtedly the large number of migrants has led to increasing demands on public facilities, such as housing, transportation, and hospitals. As early as 1975, Montgomery has shown that Indonesia has been experiencing a serious urban unemployment problem among the young, although the evidence has been based on rough and unsatisfactory data (Montgomery 1975). Even though there is a high risk of not getting a job, migration to the cities has continued to take place. Another impact of large numbers of poor migrants in the cities, which has not received much attention from academic researchers, is the sociopolitical impact on national political stability. Jones (1983) has argued that in the case of Jakarta and Surabaya, a true urban proletariat divorced from any rural roots is unlikely to develop. The migrant poor continue to compete for jobs and services with the locally born poor and also with the urban middle classes. It is clearly possible for this situation to lead to social unrest and political conflict.

As shown by Manning (1998, p. 96) based on the data up to mid-1990s, urban areas, especially in Java, have been characterized by increases in non-waged employment, particularly in the services sector, such as petty trades and transportation, widely known as informal sectors. Manning (1998) argued that expanding economic opportunities in the urban areas in the 1970s and 1980s attracted many rural landless to seek employment in the cities. Manning (1998), who published his book just before the collapse of the Suharto regime, proved to be too optimistic in predicting the likely positive impact of the overall economic development, especially with regard to the labor market transformation in Indonesia. The economic crunch prior to the step-down of Suharto in Indonesia in 21 May 1998 coincided with social riots in many big cities especially Jakarta.

Table 7.1 Level of urbanization in medium cities of Java, 2000–2005

	Population size					
	Total		Urban areas		Level of urbanization	
District/city	SP 2000	SUPAS 2005	SP 2000	SUPAS 2005	SP 2000	SUPAS 2005
Sidoarjo	1,563,015	1,697,435	1,339,311	1,453,608	0.857	0.856
Mojokerto	908,004	969,299	379,984	402,026	0.418	0.415
Ngawi	813,228	827,728	72,624	77,412	0.089	0.094
Tuban	1,051,999	1,063,375	198,377	203,610	0.189	0.191
Gresik	1,005,445	1,118,841	500,960	573,847	0.498	0.513
Blora	812,717	827,587	171,099	185,117	0.211	0.224
Rembang	557,781	563,122	145,757	143,390	0.261	0.255
Pati	1,148,543	1,160,546	348,159	354,002	0.303	0.305
Kudus	703,721	754,183	477,509	513,338	0.679	0.681
Jepara	968,963	1,041,360	491,910	535,264	0.508	0.514
Demak	973,674	1,008,822	266,976	264,142	0.274	0.262
Tegal	1,382,435	1,400,588	755,651	761,167	0.547	0.543
Cirebon	1,931,066	2,044,257	1,082,736	1,135,530	0.561	0.555

Source: Research Center for Population Studies, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (2009)
Notes: Level of urbanization = percentage of population living in urban areas in respective district or city. The number of population represents the combination of people residing in the district and city with the similar name, such as Tegal and Cirebon

As calculated by Firman (2004), urbanization and spatial development have not only been experienced by major cities but have also occurred in medium and small cities in Java. More recently, the Research Center for Population Studies, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (2009) has drawn upon the 2000 Census and 2005 Intercensal Survey to calculate the urbanization process (defined as the proportion of population residing in the urban areas). Some areas show very high rates of urbanization, with more than 50% of the population living in urban areas (Table 7.1). These include Sidoarjo (>80%), Kudus (>60%), Jepara (>50%), Tegal (50%), and Cirebon (>50%). The high level of urbanization in Java is most likely a result of migration from the rural hinterland as people move to look for a job in the cities. Rural-urban migration, as an important aspect of urbanization processes in Java, is, therefore, more often than not, merely an indication of increasing numbers of poor people in the cities. The assumption of urbanization as indicating improvement of economic welfare, following the experience of the West, might be little more than an illusionary view of urban planners and state bureaucrats in many developing countries, including Indonesia.

7.3 Social Transformation in Cirebon and Gresik Compared

A report by *Kompas* (2008) on the economic history of cities along the coast of Java over the last 200 years, following the development of Java's longest asphalt road, has identified two broad categories of cities. The first category constitutes cities that are currently experiencing economic growth. These include Jakarta, Tegal, Tuban,

Gresik, Surabaya, and Pasuruan. The second category consists of cities that are experiencing economic decline. These include Anyer, Cirebon, Pekalongan, Kendal, Semarang, Pati, Probolinggo, and Besuki. In relation to these two broad categories, Cirebon and Gresik are experiencing very different trajectories of economic development. Despite the differences, however, Cirebon and Gresik do also show several similarities. Both are historically very important port cities. As port cities, Cirebon, in the west of Java, and Gresik, in the east, played important roles in international trade during the colonial period. Besides their important roles as port cities in insular trading networks, Cirebon and Gresik have also been centers for Islamization in Java and Indonesia more broadly. One of the nine Javanese *walis* (apostles), Sunan Gunung Jati, resided in Cirebon, while two other *walis*, Sunan Giri and Sunan Maulana Malik Ibrahim, resided in Gresik.[2] The glorious past of these cities as important ports and centers of Islamic teachings remains visible till today, particularly in the form of symbols in the built environment. Another similarity between Cirebon and Gresik concerns the fact that they are both located within the longest urban corridor, perhaps not only in Java but in all of Southeast Asia. This is the urban corridor that sprawls from Anyer to Banyuwangi. For more than 200 years, this corridor has been connected by the asphalt road constructed between 1808 and 1811 by Dutch Governor Willem Hendrik Daendels. In the last two decades, a toll road has been developed along the route of the old asphalt road and along the existing railway line. All of the cities located along the north coast of Java may be understood to form part of an integrated urban economic zone.[3]

Although Cirebon and Gresik are conventionally understood to be urban areas, from an administrative point of view, they are actually different. While both are autonomous regions according to the current regional autonomy laws, administratively, Cirebon is a city (*kota*), while Gresik is a district (*kabupaten*). Socially and economically, the boundaries between Cirebon city and Cirebon district as well as with other neighboring districts, such as Indramayu, Sumedang, and Losari, are in fact blurred. It is through the implementation of the current regional autonomy laws that each administrative unit has come to emphasize its political autonomy. Such trends among local political elites in city and district governments as well as members of the local parliament (DPRD) have led to a new isolationist and exclusive local politics (see Chap. 5) that, more often than not, run against the fact that social and economic spaces extend across regional administrative boundaries. Local political elites assert their autonomous power and authority in order to increase economic incomes in their own region, that is, within the boundaries of their own city or district. Cirebon city, which forms the focus of this study, constitutes an urban space

[2] See Hadi (2009) on symbolic aspects of cities in the cases of Cirebon and Gresik.

[3] Up to now, the Trans-Java toll road has connected Merak-Jakarta-Cikampek, Palimanan-Kanci-Pejagan (Brebes), Kendal-Semarang-Ungaran, and Gresik-Surabaya-Sidoarjo-Porong. Surabaya is also now connected by the newly inaugurated bridge, Suramadu (completed in August 2009), to Bangkalan in Madura. In addition, in 2009, a newly created development consortium began the construction of a bridge connecting Merak in Banten and Bakauheni in Lampung. On the political economy of the Trans-Java toll road, see Davidson (2010).

with a very high population density, historically a locus of power marked by a plural society. Apart from the so-called local Cirebonese (a mixture of Sundanese and Javanese), there are also a large number of Chinese and Arab-Hadrami communities.[4] As reported by Thung (2009), the Chinese have conducted their business activities—mostly as traders for agricultural products—not only in Cirebon city but also in neighboring Cirebon district and the surrounding hinterlands. Such transborder economic activities provide one example of the problems with rigidly confining an urban space to a limited administrative boundary as perceived by the local political and bureaucratic elites propagated following the introduction of the post-Suharto decentralization policy.

Cirebon is formed from two administratively autonomous units, Cirebon City and Cirebon district. Gresik, on the other hand, is a single autonomous district region. The downtown of Gresik district is constituted by two subdistricts (Kebo Mas and Gresik) that are located in the oldest settlement associated with the port. The urban part of Gresik is also the location of government offices and businesses as well as trading activities. Contestation, as experienced by Cirebon City in its relation to Cirebon district, does not exist in Gresik as the whole space of Gresik is under one autonomous district government. The apparent tension in Gresik with regard to the implementation of the decentralization policy concerns its relation to the city of Surabaya, which politically and economically constitutes the second largest urban region in Indonesia. Gresik and Surabaya are functionally intertwined urban spaces. The blurred and increasingly artificial administrative boundary between Gresik and Surabaya is a fact of life as economically Gresik is becoming a satellite city of Surabaya through regional cooperation with the official label of "GerbangKertosusilo(Gresik-Bangkalan-Mojokerto-Surabaya-Sidoarjo-Lamongan)" extended region (see Chap. 5). If Cirebon district is the hinterland of Cirebon City, Gresik is the hinterland of Surabaya. Again, in the current regional government arrangements following the post-Suharto decentralization policy, the problem is that cities and districts tend to claim their regional autonomy too strongly.

Spatially, the expansion of urban areas in Gresik has mostly resulted from the economic influence of Surabaya as a megacity, while in Cirebon, the expansion has originated from Cirebon City and has spread into Cirebon district. The nature of economic activities in Gresik—mostly manufacturing industries—is also very different from the business activities in Cirebon City that are mostly dominated by trading and services. Since 1957, Gresik has been the home of one of the largest cement industries in Indonesia (Semen Gresik), while trading and services have become the main economic features of Cirebon. Cirebon and Gresik are, however, similar in their characteristics as transit cities with constant flows of people, goods, and capital. The distinction between the main economic activities of the two urban regions—industry in Gresik versus trading and services in Cirebon—has influenced the character of social and class relations.

[4] On Chinese communities, see Thung (2009), and on Arab-Hadrami, see Patji (2010), as part of the research report on the social transformation in Cirebon and Gresik.

The different economic bases of Cirebon and Gresik are sources of communal and political tensions experienced in these two urban areas. In the past, Cirebon was the economic hub of agricultural and plantation production for its hinterland, with production catered mostly for export: sugar, tobacco, and coffee as well as indigo. The strategic location of the Cirebon port contributed to the vibrant economic life of the city and its inhabitants. Independence and the decolonization process, however, resulted in a decline of Cirebon as an important location for international trading networks operated through insular sea-trading networks. The contribution of plantation agriculture that became the economic icon of Cirebon has now largely vanished. Only small sugar plantations still exist, and these have much less economic significance in international trade networks. In the 1980s, rattan-processing industries flourished in Cirebon, but they slowly declined subsequently as the government decided to change the regulations concerning the export policy for processed products. While Cirebon's role in international trading networks no longer exists, trading and service sectors continue to dominate the economy of the city. The legendary role of Chinese business communities in Cirebon in the past as "economic middlemen," reported by Thung (2009), apparently continues as the backbone of the current trading and service sectors.[5] The very different economic pattern in Gresik, where manufacturing and processing industries dominate the economy, produces social tensions different to Cirebon. Conflict in labor relations features strongly in Gresik.[6] Cirebon has experienced more sporadic and less-organized communal conflict, mostly between people working in the so-called informal sector of the economy and city government police apparatuses.[7]

The industrialization process in Gresik began in 1957, when the cement factory was built, but its rapid growth occurred from the beginning of the New Order regime in the early 1970s. Small and large manufacturing industries, mostly privately owned, flourished, and these continue to dominate the economy. In this process of becoming an industrial city, Pratikno (1996, p. 58) has observed an existing pattern of power relations between the city government and the owners of big companies:

> …these big companies do not have strong ties with the district government. They have no great interest in local government, apart from obtaining a location, a building construction certificate and land clearance if necessary. Large enterprises are mostly owned by business people from Jakarta and Surabaya who have no social contact with communities in Gresik.

Pratikno (1996) has also noticed the difference in ownership patterns between big industries and medium/small companies. While the former are mostly owned by

[5] In 2003–2008, Subardi (PDIP) was elected by the local parliament (DPRD) as the city mayor of Cirebon, while Agus Al-Wafier (PAN) became the vice mayor. In 2009, Subardi was reelected as city mayor through direct election.

[6] See *Kompas* (2008), "Gresik, Kota Industri Berbalut Masalah Buruh dan Lingkungan (Gresik, An Industrial City That Is Plagued by Labor and Environmental Problems)," and a doctoral thesis by Pratikno (1996), especially Chapter 7, "Participation by a Poor Community: The Emergence of Urban Protest."

[7] See Chapter 5, "PKL, Potret Rakyat Kecil di Kota Cirebon (Street Vendors, A Portrait of the Urban Poor in Cirebon City)," in Kodir (2006).

people outside Gresik, "[m]iddle and small size businesses, however, are still owned mostly by Gresik people, especially those from *santri* families. Retail businesses for various goods such as food, textiles, petrol, construction materials, and construction business are still under local ownership and control" (Pratikno 1996, p. 58). The growth of industries observed by Pratikno (1996) in the mid-1990s apparently continues till today. The number of laborers, estimated at around 40,000 in 1966, has increased to 136,000, a threefold increase over a single decade (*Kompas* 2008). It is not surprising that labor unrest has become a major public concern in Gresik. The sources of labor unrest are mostly related to unfair treatment by employers such as the abrupt termination of working contracts, changes, without prior notice, from permanent to contract workers, the insufficient level of labor insurance, small bonuses during the New Year and during Muslim holidays, and labor's clear lack of legal status (*Kompas* 2008, p. 140). The issue of changing labor status has risen to prominence as many companies sub-contract their labor recruitment through outsourcing in order to lower wages. Apart from issues related to labor and industrial unrest, the spatial expansion of manufacturing industries has led to rapid conversion of agricultural lands—fish and shrimp ponds as well as land for salt production—into locations for manufacturing industries. In addition to the direct marginalization of peasant communities, massive land conversion from farming and agriculture into industrial complexes has also increased ecological destruction. Both in Gresik and Cirebon, environmental problems caused by physical development have increasingly become one of the social issues brought forth to the public by environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The role of the media—local press, radio, and television—is very important in bringing local issues to public attention at the national level.

The very different processes of economic marginalization and social exclusion experienced by lower socioeconomic groups in Gresik as compared to Cirebon are easily observable. The different natures of the dominant economic activity have resulted in differentiated forms of economic engagement of the urban poor and, in turn, their response to the dominant economic class and local government. While manufacturing industries in Gresik have attracted migrant workers, mostly from rural areas, and multiplied the number of low-wage laborers, trading and services have induced the growth of the informal sector economy in Cirebon. In a book which is highly skeptical about development in Cirebon, it is noted that:

> The construction of shopping malls is unstoppable like the growing of mushrooms in the rainy season. Civil society groups and public intellectuals protested as the development of such buildings needs public space and often resulted in evictions from historical and cultural sites. The public space is shrinking without a clear alternative in the city's spatial planning. (Kodir 2006, p. 31)

In the post-Suharto implementation of regional autonomy, Cirebon city government is trapped in the need to obtain as much tax revenue as possible from trading and services. Kodir describes Cirebon's development as follows:

> …the city government only paid attention to the big businesses. People said that this is a capitalistic development model, thinking only about profit and asking for contributions from the business people. This kind of thinking will only bring us into the trap of economic

> globalization that eventually will marginalize the local people. Even though government leaders and members of parliament were periodically changed, the policy is similar, never really thinking of the people. (Kodir 2006, p. 49)

In addition to creating regional autonomy, post-Suharto political reforms have also opened space for the expression of public grievances (see also Chap. 6). Such a situation was never experienced under Suharto in the New Order period. Theoretically, the changes have allowed the public to influence and participate in decision-making processes, replacing the so-called top-down approach practiced in the past. "Transparency" and "accountability" are the new buzzwords, and public scrutiny is supposed to be applied both formally and directly at the parliamentary level, as well as informally and indirectly through the mass media and NGOs. In the post-Suharto era, people's representation may thus seem to have been strengthened, but the reality is in fact often very different.

Critical NGOs and public intellectuals are mushrooming as a result of post-Suharto political reform. In Cirebon, a new public forum has been created to represent the voice of the people on matters of city development. This City Council Forum (*Forum Dewan Kota* or FDK) is described by its leader as "the extra parliamentary forces of Cirebon's civil society" (interview with Ipah Jahrotunnasipah, formerly, founder and executive secretary of the FDK, July 2009). Aside from the student movement, it is this new forum that has come to represent urban voices, especially those of marginalized citizens. Among the public issues raised by the forum is the development budget's corruption scandal involving local Members of Parliament (DPRD). This corruption issue brought together various elements of civil society during 2003–2004. Although the eventual court decision was disappointing, with the case being frozen and the perpetrators going scot-free, the action has been a successful rallying point for urban social movements in Cirebon.[8] Another issue that has been brought to the attention of the public by the forum concerns the treatment, by the city government, of the informal sector, which continues to increase rapidly. Kodir notes that "[t]he mushrooming of street vendors in almost every street in Cirebon is a quite distinct social phenomenon…" (Kodir 2006, pp. 121–122). The problem of street vendors, according to Agus Al-Wafier, is only part of a complex Cirebon City problem, which he has termed "14 K and 1 S." This refers to a composition of 5 K (*kaki lima* or street vendors), 4 K (city public transport, *angkutan kota*, or *angkot* that has four wheels), 3 K (*becak* or pedicab that has three wheels), 2 K (prostitute that has two legs), and 1 S (one S means *sampah* or garbage) (interview with Agus Al-Wafier, July 2009). It is clear that the burgeoning number of street vendors and members of the informal sector economy more generally relates to the inability of the city government to manage urban space. The rapid proliferation of shopping malls and shophouses (*ruko* or *rumah-toko*), which have

[8] Cirebon's Student and Youth Caucus (Kaukus Mahasiswa dan Pemuda Cirebon), The People's Community of Youth and Student of Cirebon (Komunitas Pemuda dan Mahasiswa Kerakyatan Cirebon), Student and Youth United Action Against Corruption (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa dan Pemuda Anti Korupsi*), and Cirebon's Socialist Student Union Action (*Barisan Aksi Mahasiswa Sosialis Cirebon*).

encroached on formerly public spaces such as religious buildings, public cemeteries, city parks, and other productive lands, has also induced the burgeoning of street vendors and other informal sector economic activities that are trying to get some "breadcrumbs" to feed their families. A survey on the livelihoods of people who have been engaged in the informal sector economy shows that their income is at mere subsistence level and has not improved despite periodic city government changes. Results of this survey form the basis of a campaign by NGO activists to press the city government to stop evicting street vendors and to provide them with space in the city in which to trade safely (interview with Obeng Rosyadi and Yunus, NGO activists, Cirebon, July 2009).

7.4 Ports and the Surrounding Communities

Cirebon and Gresik are well-known in the history books as port or harbor cities. Recently, the existence of ports appears in public discourses on the idea of Indonesia as a maritime state. Observers, such as A. B. Lapian (a maritime historian, personal communication) and Sulistiyono (2003), have argued that the failure to develop a strong state is associated with the failure of postcolonial Indonesian leaders to construct Indonesia based on its geographic character as an archipelagic state. While the role of port cities in economic development has declined through neglect, it is argued that Indonesia's economy should be based on maritime rather than continental economic perspectives (Dick 2010). The literature on port cities and interisland economies is very limited, although several attempts to revive scientific interest have been conducted by Indonesian academics through research collaboration with Dutch universities, including KITLV in Leiden. These studies focus on Dutch archives and, understandably, provide more historical than contemporary analysis. Several studies focus on the development of port cities after independence. Dutch-Indonesian research collaboration on maritime history provides scholarship for Indonesian students to write their Masters and Doctoral theses on the history of port cities. Publications from this project, among others, include *Perkembangan Pelabuhan Cirebon (The Development of Cirebon Port)*, Masters Thesis by Singgih Tri Sulistiyono (1998); *The Java Sea Network: Patterns in the Development of Interregional Shipping and Trade in the Process of National Economic Integration in Indonesia, 1970s–1990s*, Doctoral Thesis by Singgih Tri Sulistiyono (2003); and *Cilacap: Bangkit dan runtuhnya suatu pelabuhan di Jawa (Cilacap: The rise and fall of a port in Java)*, Masters Thesis by Susanto Zuhdi (2002). Even a casual observer will appreciate that the port cities have played less important roles after independence. The current condition of port cities along the north coast of Java, particularly as observed in Cirebon and Gresik, strongly indicates that the national government pays little attention to the role of port cities in economic development. Rather, the national government, especially since the early 1970s, has given priority

to construction of the so-called Trans-Java toll road, which will connect Jakarta and Surabaya before 2015.[9]

The neglect of port cities by the government is clearly shown by the lack of economic linkages between the harbor on the one hand and the city's economy and its hinterland on the other. The poor conditions of communities surrounding the harbors in Cirebon and Gresik, dominated by slum areas, also provide a clear indication that harbors are no longer significant in the city's economic development. A study by Wahid (2009) on the livelihoods of people surrounding the harbor in Cirebon showed that they were economically prosperous as a result of vibrant economic activity associated with the port before independence. It is well-known that harbors tend to be surrounded by migrant communities that are attracted partly by the economic activity in the harbor and that seafaring communities also traditionally develop around harbors. In Cirebon and Gresik, for example, Bugis people are found, besides the Madurese. These two ethnic groups are seafarers and are well-known as migrant groups that have settled in almost every harbor in the archipelago. Apart from the Madurese and Bugis migrants, the Bawean are the dominant migrant ethnic group surrounding the harbor in Gresik.[10] The harbor and downtown areas—also known as *Pecinan* (Chinatown)—are generally known as the locations for migrants to settle, with many of them engaged in various sorts of informal economy activities. The informal economy that has developed around the harbor consists mostly of unskilled labor that provides manual services needed in harbor activities such as porters, rickshaw and hired motorbike drivers or *tukang ojek*, and fishing boat laborers (*buruh nelayan)*. Street vendors sell food, drinks, and cigarettes to the port's unskilled laborers.

Many of the port's unskilled laborers have settled in the area for several generations and have become the main "local" communities surrounding the harbor. Apart from the ethnic groups mentioned above, who originate from different islands—the Bugis, the Madurese, and the Baweanese—most migrants come from the rural surrounding districts. In Cirebon, these local migrants come from Indramayu, Losari, and Brebes. In Gresik, there are many Baweanese and Madurese who come from the island of Bawean to the north of Gresik and Madura Island, east of Gresik. The ethnic Javanese come from many parts of East Java in particular. While *Cirebonan* has become the dominant language in Cirebon (interview with Nurdin, former journalist and local public intellectual, Cirebon, July 2009), Javanese has become the *lingua franca* in Gresik, although Bawean and Madurese are also

[9] On 26 January 2010, President Yudhoyono inaugurated a newly constructed part of the Trans-Java toll road that connects areas between Cirebon (West Java) and Brebes (Central Java)—see *Tempo* (2010).

[10] While the local Javanese constitute a majority in Gresik, the term "local" in Cirebon is complex. The dominant group call themselves *Orang Cerbon* or Cirebonese, but their language reveals a mixture of Javanese and Sundanese influences. Geographically, Cirebon (city and district) is located on the boundary between Tanah Pasundan and Tanah Jawa, which influences the emergence of *Orang Cirebon* as a distinct ethnic identity of its own.

commonly used there. In the last 10 years, national passenger ships (PELNI) have stopped calling at Cirebon and have been shifted, instead, to Semarang harbor in Central Java.[11] At present, Cirebon port functions only as a transit point for coal from Kalimantan before it is distributed to several places in West Java, mostly for the generation of electricity.

While Cirebon port has clearly lost its function, the port of Gresik, on the other hand, continues its role as the transit point for passenger ships, mainly from Bawean island (a service that operates daily), as well as for the transportation of various trading goods, and as the port for traditional fishing boats. In Gresik, the government allows companies, state or privately owned, to operate their own port facilities in order to serve their particular needs. This part of the harbor is known as a *pelabuhan khusus* (special port). The existence of one of the largest cement factories, Semen Gresik, clearly dominates the spatial pattern of the harbor where the special port of Semen Gresik is located. As the authority and management of the port is in the hands of the national government, the local government in Gresik only derives a limited share of the port's revenue. Such a condition is obviously unfavorable if there is an expectation of economic linkages between the port and the city. Harbors, as noted by Sudjana, a senior local historian of Cirebon, "…used to be the prime mover of economic activity in Cirebon and its surroundings" (cited in *Kompas* 2008, p. 109). Yet as can be observed from the condition of the old and poorly maintained buildings there today, the harbor now only symbolically represents past glory.

A report by *Kompas* (2008, p. 109) on the development in Cirebon has noted that "[a]fter [I]ndependence, Cirebon has continually grown as the city of business and trading. At one time shrimps became one of the main export products and these were traded in US dollars, yet the high demand for shrimps has destroyed the mangroves as the farmers need to expand their shrimp's ponds." Besides shrimp-farming, rattan-manufacturing industries also grew rapidly in Cirebon from around the mid-1970s. Cirebon became the number one place in the world for producing rattan furniture in 1986—the year that the national government banned the export of unprocessed rattan (*Kompas* 2008, p. 109). According to the *Kompas* report (2008), after the golden age of plantation crops, rattan-processing industries are finished, shrimps have gone, and no ships are arriving in the harbor, such that Cirebon has become a "forgotten city" (*Kompas* 2008, p. 112). In the words of Agus Al-Wafier, the former vice mayor of the city, the Cirebon city government now gets only what he has termed "*uang debu*" (ash money), referring to the ash from coal that is transported from Cirebon's harbor by open trucks through the city's asphalt roads, polluting the environment. The reality is that the city government effectively receives compensation money to ease the people's protests against the harbor authority (PT. Pelindo) as the ash pollutes the air. In the business and official language, *uang debu* is a kind of corporate social responsibility (CSR) of the PT. Pelindo to the people who are living in the vicinity of the harbors. The ash money is distributed by PT.

[11] The decision was made by the central government through PT. Pelindo—a state-owned business company (BUMN) in charge of managing port authorities in Indonesia.

Pelindo directly to the so-called representatives of the community around the harbor, who often compete with each other to get their hands on the money. According to Agus Al-Wafier, behind the protests against PT. Pelindo are thugs (*preman*) who exploit the people in order to secure more ash money by threatening the harbor's authority (interview with Agus Al-Wafier, economist, former vice city mayor, Cirebon, July 2009). Apart from ash money, the harbor authority provides free medical services to the people around the harbor and repairs the roads that are damaged by trucks overloaded with coal passing through the city (interview with Arif Kurniawan, City Development Planning Board, Cirebon, July 2009).[12]

Compared to Cirebon, where the harbor is practically no longer in function except to unload the coal-transporting ships from Kalimantan, the harbor in Gresik is far more functional and shows economic linkages with its surrounding communities. The presence of traditional ships, both for fishing and for transporting goods and people, indicates the continued vibrancy of economic activities in the harbor. Gresik, apart from its function as a "traditional" harbor, is also the location of perhaps the largest milkfish (*bandeng*) market in East Java. Fishing communities are an important part of the traditional harbor in Gresik. Both the traditional and modern harbors are important parts of the city economy in Gresik. The spatial and social relationships between the ports and their surrounding societies are partly influenced by the functions of the ports within the wider complex of the city's economy.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

My observations of social transformation in Cirebon and Gresik—two coastal cities in the north of Java—reveal some preliminary findings which build upon previous work by Firman (2003, 2004), Jones and Douglass (2008), McGee (1967), Nas and Boenders (2002), and Rimmer and Dick (2009), among others, on the spatial expansion of urban areas and the persistence of their dual economies. Urbanization continues without resulting in the development of prosperous and modern cities. Dramatic changes have occurred in the landscapes of cities along Java's north coast during the last 200 years as they begin to become connected by asphalt roads and railways, and, in the last 30 years, as a result of the construction of the so-called Trans-Java toll road. While such developments have strengthened the position of Java as the key location of modern economic sectors, it has also sustained rural-urban population mobility.

A close look at the dominant economic sectors in each of the two cities considered in this chapter reveals interesting features of social relations between the urban poor on the one hand and employers and city authorities on the other. In the case of Cirebon, the dominance of trading and services induces the growth of informal sector

[12] According to Arif, British American Tobacco (BAT), which owns a packaging cigarette company in Cirebon, also provides CSR by making city parks.

economic activities. This, in turn, creates tensions with the city government, and public space becomes an arena for class conflict. Labor unrests have become a major public issue in Gresik following the expansion of manufacturing industries that are apparently not accompanied by proper social welfare policies urgently needed by the industrial workers. The uncontrolled spatial development and the narrowly perceived regional autonomy are issues that should be subjected to further critical scrutiny. An alternative solution to the protracted problems of urban development in the cities along the coast of Java should be initiated in the light of welfare improvement of the majority of citizens. What is currently observed, however, as one of the local intellectuals in Cirebon has described, is "a city without citizens—*sebuah kota tanpa warga*."[13]

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[13] Rethorically alluded to by Achmad Alwy, a local poet, during a focus group discussion, Cirebon, July 2009. *Kota Tanpa Warga* is also a book by Santoso (2006), which argues of the need to understand urban development in Indonesia not only from the perspective of city planning and infrastructural development, but more importantly, from the perpective of social history and cultural development. In this regard, an interrogation of the notion of citizenship and urbanism, as has been discussed, for example, by Evers (2005), should be the agenda for further research.

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Part III
Malaysia

Chapter 8
Sense of Place and the Politics of "Insider-ness" in Villages Undergoing Transition: The Case of City *Kampung* on Penang Island

Suriati Ghazali

8.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the impact of village folks in surrounding expanding city regions in Penang, Malaysia on the urban environment and ways of life. These village folks have brought rural ways of life into extended urban regions, but these ways of life have been threatened by continuing urbanization. Rural-urban linkages and transitions in the case of Penang, Malaysia, as discussed in this chapter, are the consequences of an incorporation of the former village population into the city. As a result, there is an important vital spatial articulation of rural and urban activities and linkages that are found in city villages.

The incorporation of the village population into cities has changed livelihoods and the use of village or "*kampung*" land in and surrounding urban areas. The livelihoods of *kampung* people have become increasingly dependent on nonagricultural activities in urban areas. To define what is rural and what is urban is problematic because in censuses, rural and urban populations are usually defined by residence in settlements above or below a certain size. Agriculture is assumed to be the principal activity of rural populations, whereas urban dwellers are thought to engage primarily in industrial production and services. In reality, things tend to be far more complex. A number of households in urban areas rely on rural resources, and rural populations are increasingly engaged in nonagricultural activities in rural or urban areas (Ghazali 1999, 2000; McGee 1989; Tacoli 1998). Especially in Southeast Asia, numerous studies have pointed out that there are rarely homogeneous and easily identifiable rural and urban economic centers (Rigg 1997). Here, metropolitan regions extend into areas with a radius as large as 100 km, where, in some key areas, there is a mass of interlocking activities. In such regions, agriculture, cottage indus-

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tries, industrial estates, suburban developments, and other types of land use coexist side by side (McGee 1989, 1991).

The extended metropolitan regions, termed *desakota*,[1] have resulted in urban and rural activities occurring on the same geographic territory (McGee 1989). This happens particularly in countries in which the government has adopted a growth strategy that concentrates on industrialization rather than agriculture. This strategy leads to a relatively slow growth in rural income and encourages the surplus rural population to seek work associated with urban-based industrialization. In Penang and Malaysia as a whole, a development strategy that favors industrialization over agriculture has resulted in the expansion of metropolitan regions deep into the countryside since the 1970s.

In addition, aspirations, which are driven by changing needs, are the outcome of knowledge and experience. This is, in turn, linked to expanding networks of communication. The availability of cheap transport, which enables rural people to travel widely and easily, leads to rising aspirations and also enables these aspirations to be met (Rigg 1997). The improvement in transport has resulted in a large number of commuters traveling daily from villages to work in urban areas. This has blurred the "rural-urban divide" and has allowed for the transformation of rural villages into urban suburbs (Brookfield et al. 1991). Industry also spreads into the surrounding countryside in search for cheaper land as land prices and urban taxes in the city increase (Gugler 1992a), while people from both urban and rural areas are attracted to the relatively cheap accommodation in the city fringe. As a result, villages surrounding cities become increasingly attractive.

These changes are regarded in some studies as negative and village folks as victims of processes beyond their control. Poor, peripheral village people usually have little access to the main arenas of development planning and tend to be the objects of development rather than agents and active participants in programs and projects (King and Parnwell 1990). In villages surrounding Jakarta, Manila, and George Town, for example, farmers have no rights on the land they have been occupying for centuries, which are subsequently chosen for the development of industrial sites, new towns, housing estates, and golf resorts, with their houses being demolished (Abeyasekere 1987; Kelly 1998; Ghazali 1999, 2000).

Another feature of rural-urban transitions and linkages in city villages explored is the extent to which *kampung* people in the city area retain rural elements which help them develop a collective identity and sense of belonging. Studies suggest that the social capital of networks and relationships of trust is an important rural element that maintains villagers' solidarity, and this value is strongly exercised by rural-urban migrants in Third World cities (Gugler 1992b; Jellinek 1990; Murray 1992). In villages incorporated into cities, this network persists and, to a certain extent, is modified and commoditized (Ghazali 1999). Some of the *kampung* features, such as the homogeneity of population in terms of race, culture, and religion, enable

[1] *Desakota* is a coined Malay/Indonesian term taken from two words, *desa* (village) and *kota* (town) (McGee 1989, pp. 93–94, 1991, pp. 23–24).

kampung folks to maintain rural elements of neighborhood and social organization (Selat 1993).

The politics of "insider-ness" is also explored in order to discover how *kampung* folks see themselves and others, specifically, those whom they regard as threatening their *kampung* land and lifestyles. In relation to this, elements of feelings, emotions, and images of the people toward their land and lifestyles will be discussed. Since the 1980s, the village land has become a site of conflict and contestation, being acquired for the purpose of urban and industrial development. The *kampung* people, who consider themselves "insiders," protect their homeland and beloved lifestyles by reinforcing some aspects of the rural economy, networks, culture, associations, and built environment.

The research areas that form the focus of the research drawn upon in this chapter are the Malay *kampung* surrounding the Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone in the south of Penang Island. In these areas, a few Malay villages still exist, although many have been demolished for the development of a new township, housing and shopping estates, and industrial sites. These villages have been absorbed by urban extension. Ongoing qualitative studies, using in-depth interviews and participant observation, have examined issues concerning the adaptation of local people to changes in this area (Ghazali 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003). These include aspects of people's love for and fear of the place that can be observed and expressed by the villagers, either verbally or nonverbally.

8.2 Imaginative Geographies Revisited

Imaginative geography concerns the ways that places, people, and landscapes are represented. These imaginings reflect the preconceptions and desires of their inventors and the power relations between these inventors and the subjects of their imaginings (Gregory 1995a, b; Nash 1999). The figuration of place, space, and landscape may differ between "insiders" (the local people) and "outsiders" (other interested groups). Senses of identification, both subjective and imposed, are shaped by social positions and by images. Images, on the other hand, turn on how people organize themselves to make sense of the world, to make sense of others, and to make sense of the culture that surrounds them (Driver 1999).

The divergent values held by people toward place, space, and landscapes can be explained in Edward Relph's (1976) "insideness-outsideness" distinction. Relph argues that the relationship people have with place ranges from one end of the spectrum, a feeling of "insideness," to the other end, a feeling of "outsideness." Relph clarifies that:

> To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place…from the outside you look upon the place as a traveller might look upon a town from a distance; from inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it. The inside-outside division thus presents itself as a simple but basic dualism, one that is fundamental in our experience of lived space and one that provides the essence of place. (Relph 1976, p. 49; see also Chang 2000)

The feelings of "insideness" and a sense of belonging are pitted against feelings of "outsideness" and non-belonging, thereby giving rise to irreconcilable visions of the way space ought to be used and developed (Chang 2000). However, Chang (2000) argues that "insider" and "outsider" boundaries are not as clear-cut. Instead, they are fluid and open to negotiation. This is because different people possess differing conceptions of "insideness," in turn, giving rise to varying senses of attachment and belonging to place. Different people are either "insiders" or "outsiders" depending on their goals, ethnic ties, or economic links to a place. "Insider-outsider" relationships are, at times, conflicting and yet, at other times, complementary. Kong (1991), meanwhile, sees Relph's concept as suggesting many subtle shadings of "insideness" and "outsideness" rather than simply a static dichotomy. Human interaction with place is seen to fall somewhere along a continuum between two polarities. The boundaries between "insideness" and "outsideness" are porous rather than concrete, and people's relationship with place may be transformed over time from one end to another and vice versa (Kong 1991, p. 54, cited in Chang 2000).

The effect of images, on the other hand, is to shape how people understand themselves spatially and recall the world in mental maps in order to situate themselves (Crang 1999). These images are the community's own experiences as they are remembered or memories of images produced by others (Wolford 2004). These remembered spaces are shaped by people's experiences, tasks, and roles that they have at hand. Images create a relationship between the perceiving subject, the viewed object, and the relationship between them (Crang 1999). This leads to feelings of love for and fear of place, space, and landscape.

People's love of place, *topophilia*, meanwhile, explains the affective bond between people and their place in the world. People's relation with nature, their geographical behavior, as well as their feelings and ideas with regard to space and place appear to have an effect upon the differences in the ways that they perceive and are attached to the place (Tuan 1974, 1979). Human experiences, awareness, and knowledge raise different levels of consciousness and perceptions toward place. This results in the various ways in which people respond to place such as personal and lasting appreciation of landscape and awareness of the past that generates patriotism (Peet 1998). This explains why people protect and preserve their place and beloved landscapes and why nonmaterial culture is preserved in language, religion, and other tradition and customs. All of these give a certain social atmosphere that is appreciated by its residents and is sometimes advertised as an attraction (de Blij and Murphy 2003; Driver 1999).

Rapid urbanization and industrialization from the twentieth century have brought about drastic changes to natural environments and old settlements. Relph (1976, p. 81) argues that the technical approaches of much physical and social planning are clearly inauthentic, in which objects are manipulated for public interest and decisions are taken in a world of assumed, homogenous space and time. Inauthenticity is the prevalent mode of existence in industrialized, mass society. Inauthentic sense of place involves no awareness of the deep and symbolic significance of places and no appreciation of their identities. Inauthentic attitudes encourage "placelessness"—an

environment without significant places and an underlying attitude which does not acknowledge the significance of places as people's homes (see also Peet 1998).

In Penang, rapid urbanization and industrialization since the 1970s has resulted in drastic changes to old settlements established many centuries ago. The physical and social landscapes of the old rural villages have now changed. State- and private-owned agencies have taken over the land for developing new towns, industrial sites, and housing estates. People have been resettled in new homes, in the form of a flat, an apartment, or a cluster house. A few older villages remain, becoming under-developed islands in the city and sites of conflict and contestation (Brookfield et al. 1991; Ghazali 1999, 2000).

Both organized and unorganized resistance among local people, including those in Penang (Ghazali 1999, 2000), are related to the dynamics of space and place (Wolford 2004). This is especially the case on matters with which the local people are directly concerned. It is important to note that the term *topophobia* includes the element of fear and hatred toward the place and environment (Xing and Hogben 2007). The new environment dominated by concrete walls and crowded streets eliminates the sense of place and place identity. In this case, space is reduced to a common place, flatscape, or placeless geography (Peet 1998). Gonzalez (2005) highlights the importance of perception of place in the production of positive and negative emotions. Positive links established between people and the environment may stimulate *topophilia* (love of place and sense of place); on the other hand, negative emotions, such as fear and hatred, may induce *topophobia* (fear of place, no sense of place). Modern cities from the twentieth century onward are often said to have failed in providing a safe environment (Xing and Hogben 2007) such as in health and security (Leach 2007). These have resulted in the unsafe feeling of the urban dwellers or the feeling that they do not belong to the place (*topophobia*, no sense of place). Particular understandings of space, or what Wolford (2004) has called spatial imaginaries or cognitive frameworks, both collective and individual, are constituted through the lived experiences, perceptions, and conceptions of space itself. In the case of the *kampung*, which forms the basis of this study, such individual and collective understandings have influenced the formation of village-level grassroots social movements in order to sustain the aspects of the village they love.

The issues of resistance and conflict among local communities associated with capitalist urban development are also discussed by Mondal, Maringanti, and Parthasarathy in their Indian case studies in this volume. For example, in Mondal's study, there are conflicts between village people and the development agency when the village people are forced to compete with the latter on access to the resources on which they (the village people) have previously relied. In such conflicts, rurality persists in rapidly expanding city environments, with the result of people with strong ties to the land having to reimagine their futures (see Chap. 3 by Maringanti). The city itself remains a heterotopic space—a site which can be used as a space for struggle to achieve individual objectives (see Chap. 2 by Parthasarathy). Similarly, my Penang stories of conflict and resistance stress a line of reasoning that could be analyzed in terms of rural-urban linkages.

8.3 An Urban *Kampung:* A Village in the City

In Malaysia, the word *kampung* carries the impression of a rural settlement dominated by Malays and practicing a rural way of life in many social and economic aspects. *Kampung* in the cities are sites of research interest due to their complexity. City *kampung* may be understood as rural settlements trapped by urban development, with the result that they are seen as under-developed islands in the cities (Brookfield et al. 1991; Ghazali 1999, 2000). A *kampung* conventionally portrays an image of rural, agricultural settlement, a place of real Malay tradition and culture (Thompson 2004), and has long symbolized the seat of traditional Malayness (Bunnell 2002). Thompson (2004) argues that Malay *kampung* are socially urban spaces, in which the lived experience of their residents largely conforms to characteristics of social life typically figured as "urban." These include socioeconomic relationships characterized by occupational stratification, consumption, and production based on commodification rather than subsistence and social interactions marked by formal and attenuated social ties as much as by informal and intimate relationships.

The encroachment of urban land use at the fringes of urban areas makes *kampung* increasingly prominent in the norms and forms of urban development in Malaysia (Bunnell 2002; Ghazali 1999, 2000). *Kampung* in the cities also connote a wide range of supposedly "inadequate" or "improper" living conditions and issues of urban poverty (Nooi et al. 1996, cited in Bunnell 2002).

In this chapter, the *kampung* studied are settlements already established since the nineteenth century, inhabited by the Malay of the Malay Archipelago (the Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, among others). The term *Malay* refers to the Malay race (*bangsa Melayu*), which includes all ethnic groups inhabiting the Malay Archipelago. The subgroups of Malay in the Peninsula, among others, are Kedah Malay and Perak Malay, while the subgroups in the archipelago, among others, are Achinese, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Javanese. The early colonial censuses listed separate ethnic groups such as Malays, Boyanese, Achinese, Javanese, Bugis, Manilamen (Filipino), and Siamese. The 1891 census merged these ethnic groups into the three racial categories of Chinese, Tamils and other natives of India, and Malays and other natives of the archipelago. After a period of generations being classified under these groups, individual identity formed around the concept of *bangsa Melayu* (Malay race) (Reid 2001). The Malaysian nation was later formed in 1957, with *bangsa Melayu* having the central and defining position within the country. The Malay is then defined, by Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution, as someone born to a Malaysian citizen who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, adheres to Malay customs, and is domiciled in Malaysia or Singapore (Neo 2006; see also Kessler 1992). The term *kampung*, on the other hand, has been defined specifically as "a Malay hamlet or village in a Malay-speaking country" (Merriam-Webster Online 2010), while according to Thompson (2002, p. 57) Malaysian schoolbooks portray *kampung* as "…the residue of an unchanged past, where residents 'still' (*masih*) engage in gotong-royong mutual self-help activities,

where the doubly inflected 'old people from the past' subsist outside of a consumer economy, and where a modern infrastructure remains to be completed (*dilengkapi*)." Since historical times, the characteristics of a Malay *kampung* are known to be under the leadership of a *penghulu* (village chief), contains a *masjid* (mosque) or *surau* (pray house), has rice fields, Malay houses on stilts, and *kampung* residents practice the culture of burden sharing called gotong royong (Geertz 1983). The fact is that being a Malay and a descendant of the early generation shape feelings of "insider-ness" among the villagers, with others being seen as "outsiders." However, "outsiders" may become "insiders" through their marriage to the *kampung* folks, or if they have lived, bought, or built houses in the village for many years, and have established good relationships with existing residents through social networks such as *gotong royong*.

Most of the *kampung* in Penang existed long before British settlement in Penang in the eighteenth century (Clodd 1948; Ghazali 1999; Lubis 2001; Newbold 1971; Rashid 2001). Before the arrival of the British in 1786, it was recorded that several thousand inhabitants were living on Penang Island. At least eight different places around the island had been given names, which was proof that the island had been inhabited well before the British arrived.

George Town, locally known as Tanjung, had been a stopover for traders from Kedah to Perak and to Pidi, Sumatra since the sixteenth century (Fig. 8.1). It was also a stopover for Malay fishermen from Kuala Muda, Kedah. The Malay settlements, mostly situated outside Tanjung, were agriculture based. The highest concentration of Malays was in Kampung Batu Uban, Batu Maung, Sungai Batu, Teluk Kumbar, and Balik Pulau (Fig. 8.2). Batu Uban was the earliest settlement, and it was a stopover for Aceh traders (Rashid 2001). Indonesian Malays and also Indian Muslims migrated to Penang Island since long before the arrival of Francis Light in 1786 (Lubis 2001; Merican 2001).

Prior to the arrival of Francis Light to Penang, three brothers connected with the royal family of Minangkabau in West Sumatra migrated to Penang Island and lived with their followers (Lubis 2001). They dominated the coastal areas of Balik Pulau, Bayan Lepas, Gelugor, and Tanjung and established settlements (*kampung*) there (Fig. 8.2). They have made a significant contribution to Penang history, and their efforts can still be seen in today's landscapes. One of them, Nakhoda Kechil, opened the Jelutong settlement and established Jelutong Mosque. He also helped Francis Light in building a fortress, the Fort Cornwallis. His brother, Nakhoda Intan, opened the Batu Uban settlement and founded Batu Uban Mosque. He is considered as a sacred person, and his grave is frequently visited by his descendants and tourists. This memory of the past creates the basis for the development of patriotic and emotional attachments between villagers and their place. Memories are shared from one generation to the next, and this has been an important matter of discussion in workshops and conferences in the present day. Events organized by the Penang Heritage Trust, for example, have sought to rectify the conventional historical idea that Penang was founded by the British and, on the other hand, to ensure that Penangites appreciate the history and culture of Penang (Penang Heritage Trust 2002).

Fig. 8.1 The location of Penang Island as a stopover for traders from Malay Peninsular and Sumatra since the sixteenth century

8.4 Population Changes

The British established an entrepot and base in Penang in 1786. Penang, Malacca, and Singapore were united under a single administration and formed the Straits Settlement in 1826, with Penang (George Town) as its capital. The capital was then transferred to Singapore in 1832 (Gosh 1977). Penang attracted Malays from the Peninsula to seek work as laborers, while Malay traders from the Peninsula began commuting to Penang in order to trade foodstuffs. Chinese were among the first to take advantage of this new outlet for trade, and Light encouraged immigration from China to help boost the economy (Clodd 1948; Turnbull 1972). Since George Town was founded as the capital and harbor, Penang underwent economic and population booms.

From a population of only 10,310 in 1801, Penang's population increased to 14,000 in 1805 and 58,000 in 1858. Of this, 34% were Malays, 41% were Chinese, and 21% were Indians (Newbold 1971; Turnbull 1972). The remainder were

Fig. 8.2 Early Malay settlements in Penang Island before the arrival of the British (*Note:* Fort Cornwallis is not a Malay settlement, but its construction has involved the help of earlier settlers (Malays))

Europeans, Arabs, and Siamese. In the postindependence era in 1970, of Penang's 0.77 million population (including the Seberang Perai mainland), the ethnic composition was 30.6% Malay, 56.3% Chinese, and 11.5% Indian (Malaysia 1973). In 2010, the population is projected to be 1.77 million, in which 43% are Malays, 41% are Chinese, and 9.5% are Indians (Malaysia 2000). The large increase between 1970 and 2010 is the result of rural-to-urban migration after the industrialization policy of the state from the 1970s.

8.5 Land Use Changes and Issues in Study Area, 1960s–2010

The study area extends from Kampung Batu Uban in the north to Kampung Teluk Tempoyak in the south (Fig. 8.3). In the 1970s, the majority of the population were Malays who inhabited dozens of *kampung* in this area.[2] The villages' land use was dominated by rice fields and coconut plantations, except for fishing villages such as Batu Uban. Half of the village populations were employed in agricultural sectors of rice growing, fishing, and vegetable and mixed farming. The others were employed in nonagricultural sectors, especially in services and in sales. A few worked in administrative and professional sectors (teachers, officers). Many of them commuted to George Town at that time (Ghazali 1999).

Malaysia has experienced massive industrialization since the 1970s, when the government made serious efforts to attract foreign manufacturing companies to invest in Malaysia. Tax incentives and free-trade zones were offered, facilitated by cheap labor. Master plans for the development of specific regions were created from 1970 to 1975, including the Penang Master Plan, which guided the development of industrial sites and new towns around existing cities. The aim was to have a large number of rural Malays benefit from urban growth through the opportunities created for an expanded range of jobs, services, and amenities (Malaysia 1976; Penang Development Corporation (PDC) 1982).

The Penang Development Corporation (PDC), which is the state government's principal agency in spearheading economic development programs, has actively developed and promoted industrial areas, new towns, and urban renewal development. This has involved the beginning of massive acquisition of land by the PDC to establish industrial estates and new towns. In 1972, the acquisition of 974 acres of land surrounding Bayan Lepas was made for industrial, housing, and town center developments.

Land acquisition persists till today, and expansion of the city has encroached even further to Batu Maung in the southwest (Fig. 8.3). In the cases of those for whom land had been their source of livelihood, it has become necessary to search for new ways of making a living. Some with capital have become small-scale business persons, but many have sought work in factories as low-skilled laborers, usually because they lack the skills to get better-paid jobs or the capital to start small businesses (Ghazali 1999, 2000).

However, land acquisition issues have raised tensions and conflicts among villagers. The Land Acquisition Act 1960, Part II, Section 3 (Acquisition of Land)

[2] Historically, these villages were known to have been used by the Malay farmers who occupied most of the flat rice land long before the eighteenth century. Their land was subsumed under a customary land tenureship authorized by the Sultan of Kedah. The issues and problems that were involved as a result of changes in land system from customary land tenureship to individual land ownership introduced by the British have been discussed by Zaki et al. (2010), Brookfield et al. (1991), Lim (1977), Wong (1987), and Ghazali (1999).

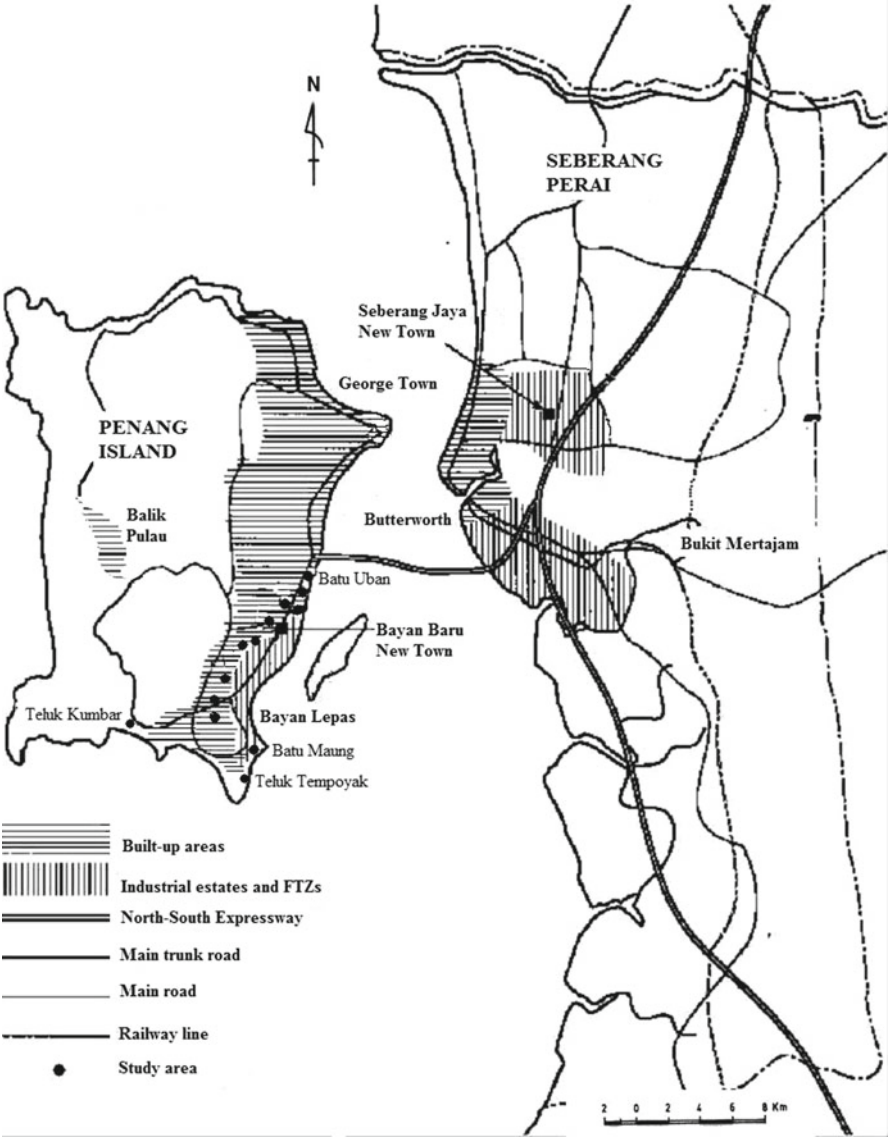

Fig. 8.3 Penang Island: extended urban region of George Town—Bayan Lepas, industrial areas, and study villages (Source: Adapted and modified from Ghazali 1999, 2000)

allows the state authority to acquire land for public purposes and the owners to be paid compensation. Since the 1970s, villages and agricultural land have been acquired from landowners in Penang, and elsewhere in Malaysia, for the purpose of industrial development. In 1991, the Land Acquisition Act was amended and

Plate 8.1 The capital-intensive housing park takes over village land (Photo: Suriati Ghazali, 1997)

more power was given to the state authority to practice forced land acquisition. The owner cannot contest the acquisition, but can only demand compensation (Ali 1996; Malaysia 1994, p. 4, p. 13). The acquisition of land often gives rise to tensions; it is often said that the development and compensation given do not really benefit rural people (Berita Harian (Nasional) 1998; Harian Metro (Tengah) 1997). Landowners find that the compensation paid to them is below the market price, whereas the state authority makes quick profit by selling or renting the land to private agencies for certain projects. It is often said that the "new development" benefits only a few local and many foreign large-scale investors, who make profits on the land through their factories and housing projects (Ghazali 1999, 2000) (Plate 8.1).

The landowners, and also the "ground tenants" who have built houses before the acquisition of land, are given compensation in terms of money, houses, or resettlement in new villages, town houses, or flats and apartments. Ground tenants are friends and relatives of landowners who are landless and build houses on the owner's land with their permission (Ghazali 1999, 2000; Goh 1985). The state has difficulty in distinguishing whether a person is a ground tenant or a squatter because in most cases, there is no formal agreement between those who occupy the land and the landowners. Even if there is an agreement between the two parties, it is usually verbal, and often, those who have originally made the agreement are now deceased

(see Berita Harian (Internet Edition) 1997). In some villages studied, the ground tenants have outnumbered landowners. There are tensions between them when the landowners plan to sell off the land to housing developers.[3]

8.6 Place, Identity, and Geographical Imagination of Village Communities in Urban Areas

Informal interviews were carried out in December 2009 and January 2010 in order to explore *kampung* people's imagination of place and the daily experiences which give rise to feelings of belonging and patriotism toward their village. In addition to that, information gathered in my past research (1996–1999) has been reinterpreted in order to contribute to the present discussion. These are subjective impressions, showing the uniqueness in experiences which influence the way *kampung* people perceive their village. In the following discussion the kampung are given names such as A, B, and C in order to protect the anonymity of the villages and the informants interviewed.

8.6.1 Rural and Urban Elements in the Village

Rurality derives from the social production of meaning and is a symbolic lens for certain moral and cultural values which vary across time and space (Gorman-Murray et al. 2008). The variable meanings of the rural for Malays include owning land, practicing rural work such as growing rice or vegetables, tapping rubber, and keeping chickens and other farm-related work (Ghazali 1999; Thompson 2004). Rural social values for Malays include kin related, close neighborhood, *gotong royong*

[3] Ground tenant, in this case, is different from the Malay *setinggan* or *peneroka bandar* discussed in Bunnell and Nah (2004). Ground tenants here are Penangites and relatives to the landowners. They are also descendents of the earlier settlers. The *simply setinggan* and *peneroka bandar* in Kuala Lumpur, meanwhile, are mainly rural-to-urban migrants who have moved to the city between the 1960s and 1980s. Some have claimed that they have the "license and consent" to occupy the land (Bunnell and Nah 2004: p. 2452; pp. 2456–2459). In the *kampung* studied, it has been said that after the earlier settlers have deceased, their lands have been subdivided and inherited by their children. The size of land per person is getting smaller due to subdivision, and as a result, many of the third and fourth generations are unable to inherit land. However, due to the scarcity of land in Penang, the inability to buy town houses, or simply to enjoy and love the life in the village, many of the children and grandchildren build houses in small vacant spaces around their parents'/grandparents' houses, usually after getting verbal consent from the landowners, who are their uncles, aunts, and cousins. When the land is to be sold to the state or a housing developer, most ground tenants manage to get compensation for the loss of their house.

Plate 8.2 A traditional Malay house in the village studied, built in 1935 (Photo: Suriati Ghazali, January 2010)

(working together), and *tolong menolong* (mutual help) (Ariffin 1993; Bunnell 2002; Emby 2003; Ghazali 1999; Thompson 2004). Rural images in the *kampung* built environment, meanwhile, include the presence of a mosque or *surau* and the architecture of Malay houses made of wood with an attap roof in the shape of an inverted "V," with stilts/tall posts or pillars, and with a staircase to reach the entrance of the house (Zabielskis 2002) (Plate 8.2). The *kampung* house is surrounded by coconut trees and a variety of fruit trees such as rambutan and mango. Low plants, such as ginger and lemongrass, are also important elements in a Malay village (Ghazali 1999, 2000).

Informants agree that their villages preserve the rural images of a Malay *kampung*. As a male informant from Kampung B, aged 28, says:

> [W]hen I arrive home from work I can feel the rurality of the village. The old Malay houses are still here, even though many have been renovated and enlarged. The coconut and fruit trees shadowing the houses make this place look rural. (Plate 8.3)

He shows an appreciation of rural landscapes and preferred to stay in the village rather than in a flat because:

> In the village we have a relatively large house garden, and we can plant ginger and lemongrass, bananas, even coconut and fruit trees. Many villagers keep chicken[s], and it is nice to hear them crowing in the morning.

Plate 8.3 An urban *kampung* in the study area (Photo: Suriati Ghazali, January 2010)

A woman aged 74, from Kampung A, shares the same thought:

> [I]f we live in the village, we can have our own kitchen garden where we can plant turmeric, lemongrass, and ginger for our cooking. We also can keep duck[s] and chicken[s]; thus, we can save some money.

Her son, a retired officer in his 50s, who owns a flat in a nearby modern housing area, expresses his attachment to the village:

> I live in a flat, but I prefer village life much more than the life in the flat. I always spend my good times at my mother's house, talking to neighbors and friends, attending village meetings, or just resting and listening to birds singing.

He strongly regards himself as part of the *kampung* community even though he has moved to another place.

More than half of the households in the villages studied keep gardens and livestock such as chickens and ducks. Some villagers do not have extra space to keep a garden because the space has already been taken up by residential units. They have extended their house to make more rooms, some of which are rented to migrants who come to Penang to work in the factories (Ghazali 1999, 2000). In this case, villagers make an effort to plant vegetables in flower pots, which, according to them, can reduce daily household spending.

While the landscape of the *kampung* shows the element of ruralness, the economic activities of the people portray a different story. The majority of the villagers are employed in nonagricultural sectors. Many of them work in the factories, offices, and shopping complexes that are located a short distance from the villages. Others operate small businesses by selling cooked food or by operating sundry shops in or outside the village. Although urban *kampung* are often said to be homes to the urban poor (Nooi 1996, cited in Bunnell 2002; Salleh 1993), one informant says that:

> …there are administrative officers, teachers, and doctors living in the village, and they inherited the house or land from their parents. (as told by the 28-year-old male informant from Kampung B)

A male informant aged 75, an ex-teacher from Kampung B, concluded that "it's only a *kampung* by name and by the appearance. Nobody in the village does *kerja kampung* (*kampung* work)." This is similar to what a community leader in the Village Development and Security Committee of Kampung C told me more than 10 years earlier, namely, that "this is a modern, urban *kampung*. Almost nobody does farming, except one. He grows vegetable around the house" (interview conducted in 1997).

Back then, in 1997, I followed the life of Pak Ahmad (pseudonym) for 6 months. I thought that his houseplot was "…considered unusual because 75% of the 70 × 90 ft land is devoted to fruit trees and vegetables, whereas on other houseplots residential units have taken up most space" (Ghazali 1999, p. 132; Ghazali 2002). He had a fenced space planted with chili peppers, mustard leaves, and lady's fingers for sale. He spent most of his time tending the garden, with the result that he was called "a farmer in the town" by his neighbors. Ahmad's case could be that of what some researchers refer to as a displaced farmer (see Guinness 1992) or "strangers in the town" (Gilbert and Gugler 1987, p. 117[4]). It shows that farmers like Ahmad have little power to suggest to the state, which favors industrial and town development over farming, in what manner land should be used to make it beneficial to him (see also King and Parnwell 1990, p. 2). Meanwhile, neighbors who sought nonfarm work, and who perceived urban income as more secure than farming, readily undervalued Ahmad's garden work.

Today, in Kampung B, I have found that farming still exists, showing that urban and rural activities continue to occur in the same geographic territory. A male informant, a livestock and poultry farmer aged 49, has used his 30' × 40' fenced land plot to keep 16 goats, 20 turkeys, and 20–30 chickens and geese, all in the same area (Plate 8.4). The livestock and poultry are to be sold during the festive season when

[4] Gilbert and Gugler's (1987) work offers a comprehensive account of Third World urbanization, especially in Latin America and Africa. On this matter, they have commented on the large and growing number of people in Third World cities engaged in non-enumerated activities such as peri-urban gardening. Such employment is, however, likely to go unenumerated and fail to show up in employment statistics. Such employment is commonly characterized as unproductive and all too often dismissed altogether as making little contribution to the urban economy (see also Gugler 1992a, p. 95).

Plate 8.4 Rural economic activity in one of the *kampung* studied (Photo: Suriati Ghazali, January 2010)

the demand is at its highest. The farmer, however, has another job; he sells vegetables at the morning market in Bayan Baru. This shows the vital spatial articulation of rural and urban and the degree to which rural activities are to be found in urban areas (Rigg 1997, p. 268).

Rural social networks of *gotong royong* are now less evident among the village community compared to some 20 years ago. *Gotong royong* is a collective form of burden sharing that is important in rural villages. *Gotong royong* is considered a joint activity organization that maintains neighborhood collective identity. It is often called on to prepare a feast, to clean the village area, or to build village roads or dig drains (Ariffin 1993; Ghazali 1999; Guinness 1992; Emby 2003; Thompson 2004).

More than 10 years ago, neighbors in the villages studied participated in *gotong royong* in the spirit of mutual assistance, and it was an important element in the preparation of wedding feasts (Ghazali 1999). However, since then, a new element of preparing feasts using food suppliers' services has become increasingly important. This phenomenon is often termed *kenduri kontrak* (contract feast), or simply *katering* (catering). The Malay food suppliers who usually live in the urban *kampung* use the idea of *kampung* in promoting their services such as offering "a real *kampung* taste," which would mean the inclusion, in their menus, of items like *ikan kering*

(dried salted fish), *sambal belacan* (chili with shrimp paste), and *ulam* (*kampung* salads), among other items. The villagers have been gradually acquiring the skills needed in the modern world and rethinking and making adjustments in order to adapt to their new circumstances as consumers and people who run businesses. What Sloane (1999) discusses in her book on urban Malay entrepreneurs doing businesses in Kuala Lumpur is especially true in that *kampung* values, that is, being *kampungan*, or what is seen as being down-to-earth, honest, and trustworthy is prevalent even in modern, business contexts.

In all villages studied, *katering* has long been more popular than *gotong royong*, and an increasing number of food suppliers for feasts have emerged due to an increase in demand. Most people interviewed prefer *katering* because it is convenient. As stated by one of the informants:

> [T]he hosts have nothing to fuss around. They just get the money ready, and the food comes. If we choose *gotong royong*, the preparation and cooking have to be done in our house. It is complicated to manage. (a female informant in her 40s, from Kampung C, interviewed in 1997)

Even *gotong royong* itself in this village has become formalized and commercialized. The village leader usually becomes the head of *gotong royong* and under him the villagers perform the *gotong royong*. Some villagers prefer this because as one villager says, "I can get additional income of RM 20 for one *gotong royong"* (a female informant in her 50s, Kampung C, interviewed in 1997). The *gotong royong* here is, thus, not an act of mutual assistance, informal help, or favor, but rather a form of "contract labor" in the neighborhood association. The difference between *gotong royong* and *katering* in this village is that *gotong royong* members and hosts work closely to prepare for the feast, and the preparation is done in the hosts' houses. A few still like *gotong royong* not only because it is cheaper, but also because they prefer to see their neighbors and friends in their houses during the preparation. This reminds them of the traditional *gotong royong* work of decades ago.

Even though it is less popular than before, the informal element of burden sharing is maintained in urban *kampung.* In some places, it has been modified to fit in with the lifestyles of busy-working village people.

Another ostensibly rural element that is appreciated by the villagers is the neighborhood aspect. Fences are rarely seen in villages studied, expressing a sense of rural neighborliness. As noted by one informant:

> We are all kin related, so we are close to each other. Women especially will gather in front of a neighbor's house when they are free, while children play freely outside the house, running from one house to another. (male informant aged 28, Kampung B)

However, the marginalized group in the *kampung* could be the tenants, which the established residents have called "*orang luar*" ("outsiders"). The majority of the tenants are rural-to-urban migrants that have come to Penang to work. The established residents who claim themselves to be "*orang tempatan*" ("local resident"), as mentioned before, are those who were born in the *kampung*, many of whom are descendants of the earlier settlers. There are also foreign migrants, especially

Indonesian Malays, who rent rooms in the *kampung* studied. An elder female informant reports that:

> [T]here are so many people around. Village people extend rooms and rent them to "outsiders," including foreign workers, who came to Penang to work in the factories. When they come back from work at night, they usually turn on the TV or radio really loud. Older people like me feel disturbed by this. (female informant, 74, Kampung A)

The feeling of discomfort among the local residents toward the "outsiders," especially foreign workers, due to conflicting lifestyles has been discussed by Morshidi and Ghazali (2011). This "*orang luar*," however, will be socially accepted as "*orang tempatan*" if they are married to a local resident, or have bought or built houses in the *kampung* and live there, and have established good relationships with the "*orang tempatan*." Therefore, in the "politics" of "insider-ness" and "outsider-ness" being Malay, rural, and a close conformist to traditional *kampung* ideas and practices are not necessarily the preconditions to be accepted as "*orang tempatan*" in Penang urban *kampung*.

8.6.2 Kampung as Heritage: As Sites for Social Life, Social Cohesion, and Continuity of the Past

The villagers interviewed affirm that the *kampung* has significant *warisan* (heritage) importance. The heritage element is expressed through the sense that *kampung* is "an inherited past from the ancestors." These elements have become loved and cherished memories of the past, and villagers feel it is important to retain them as nostalgic elements either for themselves or to be shared with future generations. The informants have expressed gratitude to their ancestors who founded the villages, especially those of Kampung Batu Uban, which was founded by Nakhoda Intan.[5] A few informants have mentioned the names of people they are proud of, namely, those who have popularized the village, for instance, the mosque priest or a shrine of a holy person who used to live in the village a long time ago. The village is seen as an important site for social cohesion and continuity with the past, and individual houses are considered significant as sites of family history and social action. These values, as Zabielskis (2002) has mentioned, may be unseen, but they are still very much remembered and loved by the villagers. They become reasons by which, according to the informants, their villages must be retained.

Concerning this matter, the female informant aged 74 from Kampung A recalls her personal attachment to the village and why she insists that the village land must not be sold to any party as follows:

> We have been living here for many generations. Some 20 years ago this was a fishing village. Many villagers were fishermen including my late husband. They worked together and at that time the neighborhood relations were very close. There are so many memories here. If I can choose where to die, I would prefer to die here and to be buried here.

[5] This refers to experiences across multiple villages studied, but Kampung Batu Uban is the most vocal one.

She has also expressed her fear of the loss of beloved landscapes and village land:

> Now the beach and sea have been reclaimed for the building of highways, the Penang Bridge, and housing parks. We cannot see the sea any more. The housing developer kept persuading us to sell the land. Some of our relatives agreed to this, but many, including me, declined to do so. This had caused tension among us. Why should we sell the land? This is the only piece of land we have.

A retired officer who has already bought a flat nearby recalls the importance of the *kampung* as a heritage site for the Malays of Penang. He says:

> [T]his is the first place opened in Penang Island. The mosque was founded in 1734. This *kampung* was founded and inhabited by the Malays. That is the reason why this village must be retained.

He also expresses his concern and fear that the village may be demolished in the near future:

> In the past, the village area was large. Almost half of it has been sold now to developers, and the landowners get their compensation. Sadly, the village area now becomes smaller. For us who have been living here for generations, this village is very meaningful and important. We love the village and its lifestyles; we don't like the idea of living in high-rise flats.

His concern and fear is shared by other informants from other villages.

In Kampung A and Kampung B, residents have informed me that many land plots have been sold to private developers. In the plots that have been sold, the land has been cleared for the building of high-rise condominiums. In Kampung A, for example, a huge modern condominium, nicknamed Twin Tower,[6] heightens the social differences within the village. It stands out magnificently in the middle of a humble Malay *kampung* (Plate 8.5).

A plot of land adjacent to this is now under threat as the landowner who is living somewhere else has just sold the plot to a housing developer. There are houses on the plot, built by relatives of the landowner. As the disappointed ground tenants complain:

> This is cruel; we have been living here for so long. We have made efforts to secure the village and asked amenities to be built in the village. The landowner is ignorant and does not love the village land as we do.

This is a case in which the ground tenants feel some rights to the land and are more emotionally attached to the land than the landowner. In other cases, both landowners and ground tenants alike protect the land from being demolished or sold to other parties. This is done in a spirit of love for the village as the village is seen as their home and nostalgia of personal experience and symbolism (Tuan 1974, 1979).

[6] Twin Tower means Menara Berkembar in Malay simply because the building replicates Menara Berkembar Petronas or Petronas Twin Tower in Kuala Lumpur. Local residents prefer to call this condominium Twin Tower even though it has another name given by the property developer.

Plate 8.5 A huge, high-rise condominium next to the *kampung* houses (Photo: Suriati Ghazali, January 2010)

Although the element of village social cohesion through *gotong royong* has slowly faded off, village solidarity is still expressed in other ways. The village leaders, through the village committee body, usually mobilize collective support from residents in their effort to sustain villages' continued existence, and residents usually support this effort. Political leaders at the state level are usually called to the village to have dialogue with residents on issues the latter are concerned about. Residents' support and trust can be interpreted as village social cohesion that enhances villagers' solidarity. For example, there have been efforts made by the village leaders of Kampung A to ensure the village's continued existence. A few years ago, the village

committee had submitted a proposal to the state government demanding the state to establish the village as a heritage site and to ensure that the village land not be changed to other land use. As reported by an informant:

> We have applied to the state that this village should be established as a heritage site. The proof is that the Masjid Jamek has been founded in 1734 by our ancestors.

The villagers had high hopes of getting their village declared as a heritage site, following the declaration of George Town as the World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2008 (The Star Online 2008). Unfortunately their efforts have failed, and land acquisition in this village continues.

As new urban development, housing, and industrial estates surround the *kampung*, land in this area has become precious. Individuals and private and government agencies are continuously asking for more village land to be acquired for urban land uses. Village land values have increased rapidly. Many village people who have owned land have already sold some or all of it to take advantage of the high prices, while others who remain in the village feel insecure and threatened.

Many *kampung* people, especially the older generation, prefer to keep land and to live in the village rather than in the new housing areas or high-rise flats. They value land as a symbol of status and security and feel that income can be generated from the land. Furthermore, their neighbors in the village are their own relatives and old friends, with whom they enjoy neighborhood activities, whereas in the new housing areas, they will be dispersed in blocks of houses or flats and their nearest neighbor may be someone they do not know.

Residents or landowners who have disposed of their land and moved away or bought town houses or flats using the money have left their village neighbors in a very difficult situation, especially when property developers begin to clear the land in order to build high-rise blocks next to their houses. A lady in her 50s in Kampung C says:

> [W]hen they started to clear the land and build the apartment, they persuaded us to sell ours too. We declined to do so. But I felt really threatened while the building construction was in process. It was noisy, the air was polluted, and I was worried that the bricks would fall on our house during the construction. (interviewed in 1997)

A similar situation has also been reported by the 74-year-old female informant in Kampung A. The remaining residents are inclined to sell their land to the same developer since they feel segregated and unhappy living in an old house that is too close to a huge, modern building. This process of indirect land segregation has led *kampung* people to leave the village or forced them to sell their land to the developer.

8.7 Conclusion

Village people surrounding the expanding urban region in Penang have an impact on the urban environment and ways of life. They assert *kampung* rural appearance, economy, networks, and built environment as an expression of love and appreciation

for their *kampung* and memories of the past. At the same time, there are significant rural-urban linkages and transitions in the city *kampung*. Some aspects of the rural elements are modified and commodified to adapt to the current modern economy and modern lifestyles. Meanwhile, pressures on village land provoke images of "insider-ness" and "outsider-ness" among village folks. However, there is no clear distinction between the two. Relatives who own land can be seen as "outsiders" if they agree to the capitalist notion of urbanization and development and discard their communities' livelihood matters and sense of belonging to the village. Other landless relatives who struggle for the survival of the village land and the people, on the other hand, are seen as "insiders." The *kampung* surrounding the cities are, thus, a site of conflict and contestation in the midst of rural-urban transformation.

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Chapter 9
Gender and the Interplay of Rural and Urban: A Malaysian Case

Maila Stivens

9.1 Introduction

This chapter argues for the significance of gender relations in thinking about the evolution of the relationships between the 'urban' and the 'rural', with the examination of a Malaysian case at the 'rural' end of the rural/urban divide. I will be looking at the decline over the last few decades of the local economy of the state district of Rembau, in Negeri Sembilan, where I first carried out research in the mid-1970s,[1] proposing a number of ways in which gender relations are important for understanding the articulations of 'rural' and 'urban' in the ongoing processes of this decline.

The terms that we might use to talk about such developments, however, are problematic. In previous work on Malaysia, I have argued for a reconceptualisation of the often essentialised categories of 'rural' and 'urban' there (Stivens 1996), following scholars like Breman (1980) who pointed to the problems with the ahistorical essentialising of the 'village' in many studies of the developing world. Subsequent arguments by writers like Rigg (1998, 2003) have pointed to the fluid

[1] The original fieldwork was carried out from 1975 to 1976 in three adjacent villages in Rembau district, which are located about 100 km south of Kuala Lumpur, for a research project in the Department of Anthropology, LSE, University of London. Further visits were made in 1982 (funded by the Hayter Fund, UK), 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987–1988, 2004 and 2008. Some of the material presented here has appeared in *Matriliny and Modernity: Sexual Politics and Social Change in Rural Malaysia* (Allen and Unwin, Asian Studies Association Series, 1996), and in Stivens (1994a, 1985, 1987). Subsequent research has been funded by the Australian Research Council: *Work and Family in the New Malay Middle Classes*; *Gender and Southeast Asian Modernities: Public and Private Revisited*; *'(Re)Inventing the Asian Family'; and 'New Asian Childhoods'*.

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and multiple character of these increasingly blurred and intertwined categories.[2] Similarly, one can also argue that the very word migration – often used with little self-consciousness in much of the literature – tends to essentialise the rural/urban divide. Arguably, one should conceive of the circulation of people as part of the processes constituting both the urban and the 'village' (*kampung* in Malay), not as a process of exodus from a fixed, essentialised entity located within an unproblematised 'rural'.

Rethinking the relationship between the rural 'heartland' on the one hand and towns and cities on the other clearly requires a long historical perspective, a perspective which can destabilise the terms of the debates. For example, nearly three-quarters of the purportedly 'rural' households of my original study in Rembau had histories of intermittent wage and salaried work, often in Singapore, stretching back in some cases to the 1920s and 1930s. The 1970s saw the mass exodus of most able-bodied young people between the ages of 20 and 40, male and female, to land settlement schemes and the newly industrialising cities of Malaysia. This left many older women carrying out farm work centred on rice, rubber and orchard lands without much input from husbands away on migrant labour. Grandparents of necessity were often extensively involved in looking after grandchildren in the villages. The late 1970s and 1980s saw a very large decline in rice cultivation in the state. Today, many of the older landholders who had stayed in the village or returned on retirement, often dependent on remittances, are now also decamping to live with their children in Singapore or Kuala Lumpur.

While there has been sizeable attention paid to the rising numbers of single women internal migrants in Malaysia from the late 1960s on, the gendered dimensions of the older complex patterns of movement between Rembau and colonial and post-colonial cities of the region need more attention. In particular, it was clear from the life histories of my informants that kinship and family were key social relationships linking city and countryside for many decades. I shall argue that this movement might best be conceptualised as a 'domestic' sphere spanning different geographical sites, which has evolved out of these key linkages over the decades, including the key role of remittances amongst kin.

To pronounce on the character of those experiences of movement is not straightforward, however, both because the position of the expatriate scholar is a tenuous one and because these changes lie at the heart of the cultural politics surrounding the Malaysian modernisation process itself. Within Malay identity politics, the Malay 'villager' – *orang kampung* – was the central figure in a version of Malay subalternity that lay at the core of the Malay nationalist imagination both before and after independence: the essential Malay was either pictured as a (usually) male villager living in an egalitarian rural idyll or as a suffering subaltern oppressed by the twin forces of colonialism and capitalism.

Arguably, Negeri Sembilan's famous *adat perpatih* – its matrilineal ideology and social organisation, often translated as 'matrilineal custom' – occupies a special

[2] See Stivens (1996) and Rigg (1998, 2003). Thompson (2002, 2007) has explored urban sociality in the rural in an area of contemporary North Malaysia.

place in such imaginings, as an archetypal Malay homeland that has a documented long history. Indeed, one might suggest that it is in fact only one of the few locations in the Malay Peninsula with such clear claims to 'true' long-standing Malay identity. Past accounts of the Negeri Sembilan village economy stressed foremost its 'peasant' character (see Swift 1965). This is clearly part of a larger pattern that Rigg (1998: 498) notes: the 'strange desire [of scholars] to paint rural areas as representing the unchanging heart of Southeast Asia'. As Joel Kahn argues, the essentialising of Malay identity by most scholars saw a neglect of the diverse cosmopolitan origins of many so-called *bumiputera*: the ready equation of Malays and peasants in histories of Malay(si)a overlooks the fact that many were in fact merchants, artisans and entrepreneurs (see Kahn 2006). More generally, it also ignores the long interpenetration of the 'rural' and the 'urban' in Malay(s)ian history. Overlying all these factors has been the racialised spatial localisations of the country: groups designated as 'Chinese' were more strongly represented in urban areas (see Kahn 2006) until the late 1960s saw the rise of the new Malay middle classes.

While notions of the Malay rural idyll have been displaced in recent years by governmental images in the public of a new, go-ahead 'can-do' Malaysia ('Malaysia *boleh*', the slogan of the post-1997 economic crisis), one can see new and complex configurations of *adat* in the post-industrial order. *Adat* is commonly translated as 'custom', 'customary law' or 'tradition' and refers to a body of 'customary' ideology and practices found throughout the Malay world. One can see the *adat perpatih* of the twentieth century as a complex reconstituted set of ideologies and practices produced by colonial modernity (Stivens 1996). Today, however, its social eclipse is seeing its reconstruction shifting to urban bureaucratic and scholarly centres. For example, scholars are working with state governments and tourist bodies to market 'tradition' as part of an *adat (perpatih)* 'revival' project.[3] The highlighted place of gender within Negeri Sembilan *adat* – notably women's alleged enhanced status within *adat* ideology and practices – has been uneasy within much of this *adat* revivalism: woman-centred social systems continue to pose ongoing problems for much male-centred scholarship (see Stivens 1996), and there are also tensions between versions of both *adat perpatih* and contemporary Islamic religious revivalism in particular.

9.2 New Malaysia

Malaysia has seen massive social change since independence in 1957, developing rapidly from relative poverty to move into the World Bank's 'upper-middle-income economy' level. A highly interventionist state propelled the country to unprecedented growth rates, rapidly improving health and life expectancy and expanding

[3] Anthropologist Shamsul Amri Baharuddin of Universiti Kebangsaan, among others, has been active in promoting an *adat* revival. See *New Straits Times* (2006).

education. Malaysia's development can be seen as a highly specific form of becoming modern; it has followed a path common to many countries in the Asian region, in which the state acts as a 'midwife' to capitalism (Robison and Goodman 1996). The modernising process has been guided by a number of core policy initiatives: an export-oriented industrialisation policy in the late 1960s; the New Economic Policy (NEP) launched after 'race' riots in 1969 with the dual aims of eradicating poverty 'irrespective of race' and 'of [restructuring] Malaysian society to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function' (see Jomo 1986, for discussion);[4] an expansion of a highly developed public sector, with a large growth in public enterprises concentrated in the financial and industrial sectors (Kahn 1996: 10–11); and, more recently, a move from heavy involvement in public enterprises towards partnership between the state and the private economic sector (Jomo 1995). The National Development Policy of the 1990s saw the government aiming for a Singapore-style Second Industrial Revolution, with a shift from the model of the low-wage factory to the high-tech, highly skilled economy (Salih and Young 1989; Kahn 1996).

Malaysian modernisation has thus seen a large shift from agricultural employment to nonagricultural urban employment and associated mass migrations, including substantial numbers of women (see Ariffin 1992, 1994). One outcome has been the rapid growth of new middle classes (see Robison and Goodman 1996; Stivens 1998). Overall, agricultural participation rates have declined dramatically, although a significant proportion of female employment is still engaged in this sector. World Bank figures show that the proportion of the population living in rural areas has fallen from 58% in 1980 to 29% in 2009 (World Bank 2011). According to the Malaysian census and the Asian Development Bank, 67.9% of females and 49.6% of male workers were working in agriculture and forestry in 1970 (Malaysia 1993: 417, 1995). By 1980, however, only 44% of economically active women and 34% of economically active men were working in agriculture. These figures fell to 25 and 26%, respectively, in 1990 and to 13 and 21%, respectively, in 2000 (Asian Development Bank 2003).

The distribution of the benefits of development and modernity is more debatable. Critics have seen the NEP as producing new middle classes, with a shift of power to technocrats and bureaucrats, and growing gaps between rich and poor, rather than poverty alleviation per se. Accusations of 'crony capitalism' have been persistent (Khoo 1992: 50; Gomez 1990; Searle 1999). While figures for poverty reduction vary, UNDP figures estimate that by the end of the twentieth century, Malaysia's poverty rate had fallen below 10% and in 2007 to less than 5% (United Nations Development Programme 2007).

[4] Malays, who are by definition Muslim and are classified with various indigenous groups as *bumiputera* (literally sons of the soil), constituted 53% of the total population according to the 2000 census report (Malaysia, 2001) and 63.1 per cent of the population of Peninsular Malaysia in 2010 (Malaysia 2010:9). In 2010, *bumiputera* overall constituted 67.4% of the total population, 'Chinese' constituted 24.6% of the population and 'Indians' 7.3% (Malaysia, 2010). See Saw's discussion of 2000 Malaysian census (2007). Also see Mandal (2004) for discussion of ethnicising discourses in Malaysia.

I see the study area, Rembau, as enmeshed in a complex development process that has encompassed the wider nation/colony and the global. Elsewhere, I have stressed the role of capitalist class interests and the disparate elements forming the colonial state in structuring a Malay 'yeoman peasantry' in Malaya generally and reconstituting a matrilineal 'peasantry' in Negeri Sembilan in particular (Stivens 1996). The relevant economic and political developments relating to the making of colonial and post-colonial society in Rembau include the incorporation of the precolonial economy into the capitalist order well before formal colonial rule was imposed in the 1880s and the use of colonial land legislation to implement a form of indirect rule.

The historical specificities of development in Malaya need to be underlined, however. The penetration of capitalism into the Malayan economy subsumed the Negeri Sembilan economy within its workings in uneven and often contradictory ways (see Stivens 1996). The Negeri Sembilan 'peasant' sector when it was operational neither functioned directly to 'serve the interests of capitalism' (e.g. by subsidising the costs of the reproduction of labour) nor did capitalism account directly for its social and economic forms. The latter were the outcomes of complex historical processes transforming a past not easily subsumed under the rubric of 'tradition' (Stivens 1996). We need to be careful about assuming a historical baseline of supposed 'traditional' society rudely disrupted either by modernity in its imperial/colonial guise or in its contemporary forms in the wake of Asia's new industrialisation and massively expanding urbanisation. Rembau social forms should be understood as thoroughly 'modern' – the product of a continuous recasting of 'old' and 'new' elements in a complex process of reception, accommodation and transformation. The district is best seen as an increasingly tenuous 'local' within ever-more-encompassing late modern national and 'global' orders.[5] As I have suggested, in these circumstances, treating the rural/urban divide as a straightforwardly 'real' social division is highly problematic.

Elsewhere, I have discussed the problems with the invisibility of women and gender in many scholarly and state-level discourses about the small farmers and 'peasants' of the literature on the 'rural': women have too often been defined by their reproductive roles as wives and mothers (Stivens 1994a, 1996). These representations have ignored the often key place of gender relations within rural production systems historically and the gendered dimensions of geographical mobility, including the important role of masculinities. The problems of women's invisibility, for example, are not resolved by simply adding 'women' to the classical debates about 'Third World' economic forms, showing the 'effects on women' of agrarian and urban transformation (Stivens 1994a, b, 1996). I suggested that we need instead to show the complex roles that gender relations as a whole may play in such change and to detail the linkages between local level and larger political and economic forces. For example, it was clear in working in Rembau that the dominant scholarly discourses

[5] See Stivens (1996) for a discussion about how the precolonial and colonial Malaysian social formations were formed within an integral relationship to the rise of modernity.

that arose dealing with Malay and other 'peasantries' and their relationships to the national order were often able to marginalise or exclude issues of gender. Thus, I saw the experiences of my female informants working in the rural economy as pointing up some important areas where a rethinking of the concepts employed in debates about rural society and its relationship with the wider economy and the urban was necessary. Such concepts included the 'farmer', 'household', 'autonomy', the 'peasantry', arguments about an alleged increasing concentration of landholdings (the 'differentiation of peasant classes' debates) and even the 'state'. In particular, state and scholarly models of rural economy tended to assume that men as 'heads' of households do most of the work, that households are places of equitable redistributions of resources and that men are the main property holders (Stivens 1994a, 1996). The category 'peasant' grew increasingly inappropriate as farms came to rely on commoditised inputs for their reproduction. In any case, the multiple links between the 'rural' and the 'urban' historically render the distinction between the two terms problematic, with much economic reproduction of the rural household increasingly coming from urban remittances over a long period. Rembau informants had especially important links with Singapore over the same periods, with sizeable numbers working there before Kuala Lumpur assumed greater importance in Malay employment patterns after Malaysia's successful industrialisation.

9.3 *Adat*, Gender and the Rural/Urban Divide

As noted, Negeri Sembilan has long been famous in the anthropological literature for its matrilineal customary law, *adat perpatih*, and its system of matrilineal clans and lineages, which I have seen as reconstituted within colonial modernity. Various colonial enactments served to codify rules for the transmission of ancestral rice and orchard lands and to limit the commoditisation of land (through the Malay Reservations Enactment, 1913, Hooker 1972; Wong 1975). Malay land could then only be sold to other Malays, which limited the market in land and hence its commoditisation. This meant the persistence of several non capitalist sectors of production in Rembau: rice growing, where the means of production – (mainly ancestral) rice land – was only a commodity in so far as it could be sold under certain circumstances to a fellow clan member; fruit cultivation, which similarly involved mainly ancestral orchard lands; and rubber cultivation, in which land was not fully commoditised. The continuing protection of ancestral land (*tanah pusaka*) was one of the cornerstones of the ongoing recreation of *adat*.

So-called matrilineal societies, of course, have occupied a particular niche in the feminist imaginary, seen as a possible source of clues about the world defeat of women and about social arrangements that might offer greater scope for equality between the sexes.[6] Although such judgments are not straightforward, it can be

[6] There are dangers in reifying 'matriliny', as many anthropological writings have done. The 'differences' between Negeri Sembilan 'matriliny' and the social systems of Malays elsewhere in Malaysia have often been overdrawn (Stivens 1991).

argued that women in precolonial Negeri Sembilan did obtain considerable advantages from their place within the social system. This accorded them extensive female property rights through the matrilineal clan system. They also derived advantages from the system of uxorilocal residence, under which a man resided in his wife's household compound, which was usually within a localised clan subsegment. This system clearly conferred some degree of 'economic independence' on women in the past, although the extent to which such independence can be interpreted as 'autonomy' is open to debate (see Stivens 1996).

The colonial state enactments formalising certain aspects of village property relations and reconstituting a form of matrilineal inheritance can be seen as actively strengthening women's rights to land as *individuals*. These enactments gave women individual land grants for ancestral land, which replaced their previous clan usufruct rights. Thus, not only have women continued to hold titles to ancestral land (rice land, orchards and household compound land) passed down from mother to daughters but they also hold a sizeable amount of other 'non-ancestral' land like the rubber land that both popular and scholarly discourses have represented as 'male'. While colonial officials may have initially favoured men in registering new (non-ancestral) land from 1910 or so, much of this land has subsequently reverted to women through various mechanisms outside formal 'matriliny'; through these, acquired land inherited by sons is passed on to their wives and female kin as gifts, and daughters' land comes to be treated as 'ancestral' (see Stivens 1996). The end result of the colonial process was a continuing 'feminisation' of landed property relations in the noncapitalist sectors of the village economy up to the present. This process was intensified by the political controls in the 1920s and 1930s on smallholder rubber production (Bauer 1948; Lim 1977) that relegated village production into backward and declining spheres.

The complex dialectic between formal legal precepts and actual practices, as well as the tension between Islam and *adat,* has been critical here. Much writing on *adat perpatih* has claimed a core contradiction between Islamic ideology and practices and *adat*. Past accounts have maintained that Islamic inheritance practices were gaining hold, but with little actual evidence (a point made by Hooker 1972). But the relationship is better seen as being complex, fluid and mutually constitutive. Both *adat perpatih* and Islam confer formal property rights on women, although the latter favours men. The ways that women have inherited and been given land, however, have tended to follow neither *adat* nor Islamic practices strictly. Rembau practices, in fact, bear some resemblance to other Malay local societies' mechanisms transferring land to women, including gift transfers to daughters, sisters and wives during parents', brothers' and husbands' lifetimes (Stivens 1991; Stivens et al. 1994). While my 1988 research in the Rembau Land Office found little evidence of Islamic gains in the past, it now appears that some land listed as acquired land under *adat* has been transmitted under Islamic law from the early 1980s. Local ideology suggests that such land may well be given subsequently to female kin through the family *pakat* (agreements) that appear to have been an important part of the feminisation of land over the decades.

Today, the matrilineal kinship system in Negeri Sembilan and customary law (*adat perpatih*) are seen as being on the way out by many Malaysian commentators, not

least the keepers of *adat* itself in Negeri Sembilan. The most common representation is that as the *adat*-based system is agrarian-based, the decline of the rural economy means that this base will rapidly disappear, taking with it notions of female rights to land, social esteem, relative gender equality and indeed that problematic idea, female 'autonomy', relative or otherwise. As one tourism website notes,[7]

> …as the matrilineal system is strongly rooted in an agrarian society, there is a great possibility that soon the customs and traditions of the Minangkabau will disappear as more and more men and women opt for employment in the cities and towns nearby. Many of the padi [rice] fields have been left abandoned and their importance in the matrilineal system of inheritance has become only of mere symbolic reasons [sic]. As men find work elsewhere, they are no longer dependent on their wives; and in their own homes, they can assert more authority than before. (Dolphin Diary Travels 2011)

Massive industrialisation and the associated rural-urban migration have indeed eroded much local agriculture in Negeri Sembilan and thereby undermined women's place as owners of ancestral land. Negeri villagers may no longer be 'peasants', but many aspects of matrilineal ideology and practices associated with the local *adat* continue to make their presence felt some 20 plus years after rice cultivation effectively ceased in many districts. The formal structure of the 12 clans mirrors that formalised at the time of the colonial conquest, and ceremonial positions are still sought after, albeit as re-formed ways of making politics in the new Malaysia. Much rice land is still under formal 'ancestral' title, held by individual women who were given grants by the colonial state. Even though it is now largely uncultivated, women have continued to stake their formal claims to its ownership, and a body of parallel processes disposing land to women through inheritance has worked to move land to women, although not following formal *adat* rules. But, the desertion of the villages has left large areas fallow and neglected, and it is not at all clear what will in the end happen to this land. Whether the modern, downsized versions of these local practices continue to confer social and cultural rights and indeed 'autonomy' on women is a highly moot point.[8] As suggested, *adat* becomes a sphere for the making of a new 'tradition'/ceremonial-based politics by *adat* officials, scholars and bureaucrats. Significantly, much of this activity is urban-based, delivering social capital and other rewards in the state capital and beyond.

9.4 The Demise of a Local Economy: Rural/Urban Interplay

As noted, Rembau had seen long histories of movement back and forth between the study area and urban areas, especially the cities of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Rembau had long been known for providing extensive numbers of male soldiers and

[7] This passage can be found both on the tourism site.

(http://www.journeymalaysia.com/M2state_negerisembilan.htm) and on two other blog sites http://travel-to-negeri-sembilan-malaysia.blogspot.com/ and http://eusoffbro.blogspot.com/.

[8] 'Autonomy' is not a concept that my informants used, although they had other words such as the famous Negeri Sembilan phrase *kwin-kontrol* ['queen control'], which implied a form of female dominance.

police in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It was often alleged that this was a consequence of the lesser opportunities for men provided by *adat perpatih*. As the new Malay middle classes developed in the 1970s and 1980s, younger Negeri Sembilan women also joined the global sisterhood of women juggling work and home in the cities (Stivens 1998). I suggested that the study area did not form a pristine, primordial entity, but had been re-formed within precolonial, colonial and post-colonial modernities. Importantly, in both the colonial and post-colonial period, a considerable amount of livelihood came from activities off-farm and outside the village. By the 1970s, a much downgraded village production was becoming the province of those over the standard retirement age of 55. Still vigorous middle-aged people supplemented a pension with a mixture of rice growing, rubber production, fruit collection and other occasional sources of income, such as livestock rearing. But there was also a high proportion of female-headed households – over 40% – headed by widows, divorcees and other women whose husbands were working away. Other village residents engaged in short-term rural wage labour, as well as regular wage and salary earnings from teaching, clerical work and pensions. The marginality of agricultural activities meant that many people, especially the elderly, needed help from migrant kin. The labour demands, however, were considerable for older villagers in particular. Woman as well as men carried out a large range of agricultural tasks in the production of all the local crops. These tasks included supervisory labour dealing with sharecroppers and share tappers, the harvesting, processing and storage of foodstuffs, processing of rubber and the maintenance of fruit and rubber holdings. In addition, women also had a considerable burden of domestic labour, which is not always easy to differentiate from other forms of unremunerated labour in the village.

These changes have seen successive transformations of the rural landscape, with large areas of paddy and rubber land now lying fallow. In 1976, 24% of rice land in the study villages was dormant. By 1982, in a rapid decline, most of this land was unused, and by the 1990s, much rice production had ceased completely, not just in Rembau, but throughout large areas of Negeri Sembilan (Courtenay 1987; Kato 1994). The trajectories in small farm production are apparent in Kato's figures:

> As recently as 1970, 87 per cent of the total gazette *sawah* (paddy fields) in Negeri Sembilan were actually planted with rice in the main season; but the figure dropped to 51 per cent in 1975 and to 16 per cent in 1980…[T]he rate of sawah cultivation plunged to a mere 7 per cent in 1990. (Kato 1994: 146)

Kato's paper (1994: 161) provides figures from 1903, showing that there was normally very little variation in rates of wet-rice cultivation in Negeri Sembilan from 1903 to 1956 (1994: 152). The figures, however, show a steady and extensive decline after that, from 85.7% in 1963 to 6.8% in 1990. The figures in Table 9.1 underline these trends. (It will be seen that the figures for Jelebu in this table are not fully consistent with the trends elsewhere in the state and within Kato's overall probably very reliable figures; this is most probably the result of inconsistent data collection for that district.)

While the development studies literature often makes arguments about rural enclaves acting as a reserve of labour for the city in many comparable contexts, I would argue instead that the Rembau village economy was clearly reproduced over a very long period during the colonial and post-colonial periods by complex

Table 9.1 Total of paddy land planted

District	1984/1985[a]	1996[b]	1997[c]
Jelebu	158	197	334
Kuala Pilah	1,367	416	464
Port Dickson	225	0	0
Rembau	508	0	0
Seremban	327	0	210
Tampin	190	0	39
Jempol	365	0	15
Total	3,140	651	1,062

[a]Malaysia, Ministry of Agriculture (1985)
[b]Agrolink (1996)
[c]Agrolink (1997)

ongoing circuits of labour and investment centred on urban areas. In particular, remittances from urban family members and exchanges of domestic labour became increasingly crucial in sustaining households outside the city over several decades (Stivens 1996, 1987).

9.5 The Decline of Village Production

A key and classic argument made in discussions about 'outmigration' has been the role of land concentration and differentiation in dispossessing rural landholders. Yet it is clear that such processes were not occurring to any great extent in Rembau and played little role in the ultimate demise of the village economy. Negeri Sembilan rice growing fell into the category of inland valley production, producing rice on small-scale, mainly subsistence plots, characterised by small plot size (the smallest in the Malay Peninsula), relatively low productivity, the lowest levels of tenancy in the peninsula and less land concentration than other states.[9] In the mid-1970s, under half of the study households grew enough rice (on ancestral land) to feed their households. Levels of tenancy had changed very little, showing little tendency towards increased differentiation. A significant proportion of households also supplemented their production with sharecropping. Such factors suggest a degree of relative equality amongst cultivators compared to many other Malay areas. About half of all village households in 1976 'owned' at least some share of an orchard holding. But such holdings were often very small and highly fragmented, with some parcels of land in the Land Office recorded as 1/32 of a five-acre holding. Again, there was a high level of female ownership, with a large proportion of land being 'ancestral', although a few male villagers had invested outside earnings in orchards during the 1970s. Orchards provided only an erratic source of income. Male wage

[9] See Selvadurai (1972) for figures on the size of padi farms and Fujimoto (1983) for a bibliography. See Stivens (1996) for a fuller account of the issues around differentiation and land concentration in Rembau.

labour was important here both in collecting fruit and in acting as guards for the crop. Migrant kin also returned to help at harvest, either for payment or, more usually, to share in the feast of fruit.

In the mid-1970s, village rubber production was no less problematic: 30% of the acreage was untapped.[10] Over half of the households owned rubber land but only 40% of households in two of the villages and 30% in the other gained some income from rubber. A minority overall gave their land to share tappers, with the common pattern being *bagi-dua*, a share tapping arrangement in which the tapper and owner share the proceeds. Again, however, this was not simply a straightforward relationship of inequality: an owner might tap part of their holding and give the rest to a share tapper because they were too old to tap it all, or it was located at a distance. From the mid-1970s on, villagers saw rubber growing as unviable. The very half-hearted level of activity was a result of long periods of low prices, competition from technical advances in the plantation sector, ageing trees and, most importantly, labour shortages deriving from the exodus of the young to urban areas; these factors had all intensified trends originally set in motion by the colonial political economy. Government agency schemes had had little impact (see Stivens 1996, for details). In the late 1980s and on into the 1990s, the situation showed little sign of improvement. Other minor economic activities included livestock rearing which was undertaken by a minority of households and a few minor experiments with tobacco and vegetables, which had failed.

Ownership of rubber land since the first decade of the twentieth century has been both more individualised and commoditised than rice and orchard lands, with complex transfers through family arrangements and inheritance. There have been competing ideologies of *adat* and Islamic inheritance and complications of successive legislation governing these practices. It is possible again to argue against a significant degree of differentiation: as before, it would be problematic to categorise the 'landlords' owning rubber land (who included many women) as a homogeneous class extracting surplus (Bray 1986). Thus, only 15% of households in the 1970s owned more than 4 acres, with only one holding (of 28 acres) being more than 20 acres. While a small group of 'rich' villagers resembled the classic landlords of the differentiation debates, and considerable inequalities have existed within the village economy, there are several objections to such a scheme: first, 'landlords' did not form a uniform group; second, those with large landholdings mostly obtained these with male earnings from outside the village, rather than from the generation of surplus within the village economy – retired male bureaucrats especially had accumulated larger holdings which they passed to wives or daughters; and third, women have been amongst the largest landholders. As I have argued elsewhere, this points to the need for a rethinking of the classic debates about peasant classes which often assume that only men (as unproblematic representatives of households) are the social agents within class relations while women are hidden away in domesticity and 'family labour' (Stivens 1994a, 1996).

[10] See Drabble (1991) for account of the history of rubber growing in Malaya.

The processes of feminisation of land declare themselves in a key statistic: the 57% of the owners of censused village rubber landholdings in 1976 who were women. This figure is especially interesting, given that male ownership had been favoured by post-independence government schemes offering marginal land for cultivation. Much of the scholarly and popular discourse surrounding rubber growing has only spoken about *men*, but women in fact have often been involved in this production process. Women 'helped' when the price was high and with ongoing maintenance work on holdings and were active managers of land that they owned, especially if they were widows or divorcees. They did, however, often feel at a disadvantage in dealing with male share tappers and rubber merchants. The future of such female landholding in a situation where small farming has faded in significance, however, may be in considerable doubt. Such landholding in the 1970s and 1980s took on the status of 'insurance' for women owners living away in an urban area.

One clue to the future of these property relations was accorded me on return visits. In 1988, *Mak Cik*, a widow in her 60s, was living with one divorced daughter, who was in ill health, and a second, who had moved back to the village with her retired husband. The second daughter's husband had been persuaded by government agricultural office initiatives (and incentives) that the mother's fallow rice land should be given over to a new – and it was hoped – lucrative crop, cocoa. But the women were utterly opposed to the idea: 'It's rice land and nothing else should be grown on it!' Without their permission, nothing could be done. This woman's resistance to change patently illustrated the continuing moral force of women's land ownership, even in a period of extensive agricultural decline and with many landholders now permanently absent in the cities and towns. But by 2004, the woman and one of her daughters had died, and her beautiful *adat* house was falling down, a potent symbol of the demise of the village and its economy. Most significantly, the paddy fields leading to the village were now planted with oil palm, following government initiatives to reuse 'idle' land. How far such initiatives lead to any effective revitalisation of the area, of course, remains to be seen.

Other factors account better for such inequality as existed within village productive sectors. Kahn has argued that a growing commoditisation of inputs into rice production, imposed by both market and state, and placing extra costs on holders of small plots, is key in understanding the pressures against village production in a number of parts of Malaysia (Kahn 1981). Arguments about the characterisation of Third World agrarian economic forms have pointed to the way commoditisation of production leads to increased competition between, and individualisation of, households, intensifying inequality. Those with smaller plots are thus forced to spend more on inputs to try to raise productivity. The determinants of productivity in the study villages had altered beyond recognition, changing the technological environment within which paddy farmers were constrained to operate from nonmarket to market reproduction of the enterprise. Kahn suggests that when farmers began to base their decisions on money costs of production, even within subsistence production, we might expect to find a decrease in rice output per household. Such

commoditisation made it possible for farmers to compare the costs of different forms of economic activity, such as rubber tapping, fruit production or, most likely, for young people, work in the capitalist economy. Commoditisation also imposed particular burdens on women, who had less access to cash in an economy where such access increasingly relied on capitalist labour markets and where the gender order limited women's access to such markets on an equitable basis. With rubber production providing income even of a very minimal level for less than half of all village households, women rubber land owners might have had some cash for inputs, but most other women were dependent on cash earned by husbands or on adult children's remittances. Increasing state subsidies for inputs, while alleviating some of these pressures, could not in the end resolve the problems produced by the exodus of labour, however. Labour shortages posed acute problems in periods of high labour demand like harvest time, when younger kin would often have to return from the city to help.

The volume of work that women had to perform, then, in the rural economy when it was functional, was extensive. They carried out a large range of agricultural tasks in the production of all the local crops: these included supervisory labour dealing with sharecroppers and share tappers, the harvesting, processing and storage of foodstuffs, 'help' with processing of rubber and in the maintenance of fruit and rubber holdings. In addition, they also had a considerable burden of domestic labour, which is not always easy to differentiate from other forms of unremunerated labour in the village.

These outcomes highlight problems in agricultural planning. Green revolution inputs were supposed to produce increased productivity and prosperity and they may well do so under particular circumstances. But as a number of writers have noted, even where such benefits are tangible, they may not be evenly distributed within households and between men and women (Agarwal 1985; International Rice Research Institute 1985). In this case, however, they were resisted for the extra labour burdens they were felt to impose: women in particular found them untenable. One could, of course, argue that, given the shortage of young, strong labour, any such attempts to raise productivity were bound to fail; the best solution was to find other kinds of employment for older rural people to sustain themselves with. The decline in rubber prices was a further nail in the rural coffin, undoing the plans of pensioners to supplement their pension 'with a bit of tapping'. The extensive and growing dependence on the remittance family economy linking city and countryside in reworked kin networks was not surprising, given these circumstances (see Stivens 1987, 1996).

The government is developing initiatives in some areas outside the urban conurbations to develop new paths to livelihoods, including the development of tourism, especially homestays, and so-called rural industrialisation. But there has been no development of this kind in the study villages. The state capital Seremban, however, is inexorably spreading down the highway towards Rembau town, with new dormitory housing estates constantly appearing. As Thompson (2007) and Azima and Ismail (2009) argue, there is an increasing development of what some authors characterise as urban sociality also arising in the formerly 'rural areas'.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored a case that might be thought to represent the epitome of the Malay rural idyll – the *adat perpatih* area of Rembau. Noting that much of the writing on Malay 'rural' dwellers has tended to assume the existence of a real, substantive divide between the rural and the urban, I suggested that to persist in posing rural and urban as separate economic spheres is increasingly problematic. It is clear that the history of the area can only be understood within a model that conceives of a long-standing interplay between the rural and the urban, especially given the long histories of intermittent wage and salaried work outside the village. To explore these themes, I examined the workings of gender within the ongoing processes of the local economy's decline, focusing on a number of ways in which gender relations have been central to the making of 'rural' and 'urban' and their complex articulations.

The forces of industrial capitalist modernity seem well set to erode what is left of the village economy, turning it into a 'dormitory' for the spreading urbanism of Kuala Lumpur and Seremban. Like many parts of rural Malaysia, the study villages have become a retirement base for some of their inhabitants, with most of the young decamping. Young men were no longer willing to engage in farm work; while some young women were revelling in new independence as they joined the occupations opening up for women, some were also clear-sighted about the nature of some of the labour that they would be called on to perform. I saw the increasing commoditisation of the village economy as presenting particular difficulties for an ageing village population, many of whom were women, who faced increasing demands on their waning energies and income. For the large numbers of female-headed households, the problems were acute. I suggested that the declining rural economy was largely maintained by income flows from employment outside the villages in urban areas and on FELDA (land schemes) employment. Those with close kin working in the capitalist sector on whom they could depend were better off than those who for demographic reasons had no such support. In these circumstances, landholding became little more than an insurance policy. The twist here is that much writing on 'women in development' has seen women's exclusion from commoditised sectors as disadvantaging. Yet it is precisely the increasing commoditisation of village production combined with the exodus of the young that appears to have helped produce a crisis in agriculture for my informants.

As I suggested, one should conceive of the circulation of people as part of the processes constituting both the urban and the 'village', not as a process of exodus from a fixed, essentialised entity located within an unproblematised 'rural'. Kinship relations and the extended family were key social relationships effecting this circulation in Rembau, linking city and countryside for many decades. They not only provided the main courses for flows of remittance income but also constituted a 'domestic' sphere spanning a number of geographical sites (Stivens 1996, 2007; Parreñas 2005). Modernity has seen complex reconfigurations of the 'domestic' and 'household', which arguably became stretched from the main urban centres to the study villages. Such processes saw women who had 'followed' a husband to urban areas becoming 'housewives' and providers of care for children and grandchildren.

Older women staying in the villages and caring for children also saw themselves becoming more dependent on husbands and children's remittances. There are still households whose main links are to Singapore-resident kin, reflecting these long-term links, rather than to Kuala Lumpur. Thus, the family of one of my neighbours in the study villages had an ancestral house in the village, as well as an HDB flat in Singapore dating back to the 1960s. The now older grandparents were caring for a number of their grandchildren in the village, while the parents lived and worked in Singapore, caring for each younger child as their many children were successively born in Singapore. They explained that the HDB flat was too small for all the children, who were moved back to the village as they grew older. This moveable extended household can thus be seen as transcending not only the rural/urban divide but ultimately international boundaries. But with the reported increasing departure of older women landholders to their children's homes in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur in the contemporary period, the geographical spread of this domestic sphere may well now be shrinking.

The wider kinship system is also, of course, a key point of articulation between rural and urban. As I suggested, the future of the matrilineal kinship system – *adat perpatih*, the *adat* ideology and practices that were underpinned by the rural economy – is open to considerable doubt. In the twenty-first century, this imagined community as one source of the expressive core of Malay identity of the nationalist era has faded before the bolder and multiplying images of 'modern', 'can-do' Malaysia. In the process, women still living in the study area might be seen to have lost a great deal of the economic, political and cultural independence accorded them by *adat* under the precolonial and colonial systems. But matrilineal ideology is by no means bowing before modernity. On the contrary, we find a continuing strong attachment on the part of many Negeri Sembilan people to being matrilineal and an ongoing reconstitution of the discursive formation that is the 'traditional' matrilineal customary law. My informants' resistance to having their land turned over to cocoa was one instance of a series of defences of 'tradition' resisting further capitalist encroachment (see Josselin de Jong 1951, 1960; Stivens 1996). Women on occasion have engaged in energetic defences of *adat* and 'tradition' in all its shifting meanings, defences which have derived their strength from the matrilineal imagined community. Pressures to dismantle *adat perpatih* are likely to come both from the modernist young and from the Malaysian state's intensifying 'development' drives. The continuing misogyny of the agents of the state apparatus may also be important in directing the course of Rembau's relations with the wider society and economy, in spite of growing feminist and womanist action at a national level, and a romantic attachment to 'matriliny' and its revival. It is also possible that moves to defend *adat* in either romanticised neo-traditionalist or overtly subalternist versions, both well removed from their agrarian roots, might well arise amongst those very migrants who have been central players in the transformations discussed here. Such 'diasporic' identity politics is a common response to the kinds of dislocations that Rembau shares with many other parts of the once agrarian world. Such *adat* revivalism, however, seems to be being led by initiatives of bureaucrats, tourism authorities and academics based outside the village. But, it, too, represents yet further dimensions of the articulations of 'rural' and 'urban'.

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Chapter 10
Urban Cosmopolitan Chauvinism and the Politics of Rural Identity

Eric C. Thompson

10.1 Introduction

Across the globe, urbanism structures feelings of place and subjectivities associated with place. Urbanism, as I am using the term, is a structure of feeling of place in which cities are central, privileged sites in contrast to non-city spaces, usually figured as "rural." The term, urbanism, can be and is used in myriad other ways. I am using it to signify an ideological field, in contrast to "urbanization" as an associated but analytically distinct set of social processes. My use parallels Ulrich Beck's (2002) distinction between "cosmopolitanism" and "cosmopolitanization." A common correlate to urbanism is cosmopolitan chauvinism, that is, the identification and reification of values deemed to be "cosmopolitan," asserting those values and the people who hold them as cosmopolitans, to be superior to a non-cosmopolitan other. These cosmopolitan values are commonly (though not always) discursively associated with the space of cities and the subjectivity of city dwellers. In this process, subaltern subjectivities of rurality are born—the "stupid, ignorant hillbilly" in America, "*orang kampung*" (village people) in Malaysia, "*ba za*" (country bumpkins; Lei 2003, p. 614) and "*lao ta'er*" (smelly hicks; Yan 2003b, p. 493) in China, or "*kon ban nok*" (outer village people) in Thailand.

The discursive structuring of subaltern rural identities provides a basis for political mobilization. In this chapter, I compare four cases of the politics of rural identity. The first case is based on fieldwork conducted in Malaysia during the 1990s. During political campaigns in the 1990s, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) rhetorically mobilized the figure of "*orang kampung*" (village people) in rural Malaysia.

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Comparing the discursive positioning of PAS and its main rival, the ruling United Malay National Organization (UMNO), a main point of difference is their divergent approaches to Malay rural identity. Under Mahathir Mohamad, rural *kampung* Malay identity was positioned as a figure of backwardness and ignorance. As part of a program to create "*Melayu Baru*" (New Malays), a program of urbanization was called for, and rural Malays were treated with rhetorical contempt. In response, PAS used rural-urban difference as a point of political leverage, positioning themselves as defenders of rural Malays against urban forces. In many respects, this point of difference was more prominent in PAS rhetoric than that of the more charged rhetoric of "*kafir-mengkafir*" (charges of religious infidelity). I demonstrate these arguments through an analysis of cassette recordings of PAS political speeches from the 1995 general elections at the height of the Mahathir era.

Reflecting on this rhetorical mobilization of rural identity, I compare three other cases—those of America, China, and Thailand—to the field of political discourse I found in Malaysia. In each case, the hierarchy of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism has political consequences, though the specific consequences play out differently, relative to the different political landscape of each country. Early twenty-first century urbanisms of Malaysia, America, China, and Thailand each possess unique characteristics, configured as they are within radically different cultural and social fields. Yet, in each case—and many others to be sure—the specter of rurality haunts the urban, cosmopolitan imaginary. In each case, urban cosmopolitanism constitutes a subaltern rural subjectivity as its other. And in each case, this rural subjectivity has identifiable (though often discursively sublimated) political consequences—from the struggle between "red" and "blue" states at the ballot box in America to rural unrest accompanying the growing dissonance between communist ideology and capitalist practice in China to populist politics and battles between "red shirts" and "yellow shirts" on the streets of Thailand.

In the first case of Malaysia, urban cosmopolitan chauvinism engenders a racialized rural subjectivity in the form of "*orang kampung*" (village people). Here, I will outline the political conditions in Malaysia that make "*orang kampung*" relevant to national politics, the constitution of "*orang kampung*" in popular and political discourse, and the mobilization of "*orang kampung*" in political rhetoric. I argue that "*orang kampung*" forms one important, but largely overlooked, aspect of political subjectivity in Malaysia that is mobilized by opposition politicians.

10.2 Malaysia: The Received Wisdom

The dominant discursive frames used to think about Malaysia, both in everyday life and politics, as well as by scholars, do much to conceal the salience of rural identities. In subsequent sections, I discuss how such identities are mobilized by PAS in its political rhetoric. In this section, I address the frames of reference more commonly used to conceive of the Malaysian population as a whole (racial framing) and Malay-Muslim politics specifically (nationalist-religious framings).

Malaysians see themselves and are seen by outside observers, particularly academics, overwhelmingly through the rubric of "race."[1] Race in Malaysia is codified in a scheme of "Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Others." Race shapes nearly every aspect of public and private life, from the micro-bureaucratic requirement that all Malaysians carry an identity card (IC) baring their official race to racial quotas and targets in education, housing assistance, and initial public offerings of publicly listed companies. The federal government, which has, in essence, not changed hands in the 11 nationwide general elections held since independence in 1957, is controlled by a coalition of race-based political parties, dominated by UMNO. All social interaction, from the quotidian to the macrostructural, is construed as flowing from a logic and discourse of race.

Census data reports that the nation consists of 58% Malays (and other indigenous groups), 24% Chinese, 7% Indians, and 11% others (Pejabat Perdana Menteri 2000). The "Malay" category is alternatively construed as "bumiputera" (literally, "princes of the soil"), which expands its constituency to include a variety of Orang Asli (aboriginal) communities on Peninsular Malaysia and a complex array of indigenous groups in the states of Sarawak and Sabah on the island of Borneo. However, UMNO and the UMNO-led government are, in practice, anchored in a Malay-Muslim identity of (mainly peninsular) Malays.

The received history and structure of politics in Malaysia is that it is first a struggle of Malay-Muslims to maintain political hegemony in the face of an immigrant influx of Chinese and Indians during the late nineteenth-century British colonial administration of the territories that now comprise the nation-state. Singapore's entry into Malaysia, for example, was untenable (and short lived, from 1963 to 1965), as it denied Malays an outright popular majority at a national level. Second, because Malays have secured and maintained racial political hegemony since 1957, Malaysian politics is about Malay politics and the politics of the Malay community. It is a struggle for the rural "Malay heartland" of northern Peninsular Malaysia (made even more powerful in the electoral system due to substantial rural-biased gerrymandering). There is much to be said (and criticized) about this received wisdom of the political landscape of Malaysia, but my objective here is to focus on the issue of *intra-Malay* politics, which, if not the only grounds for political control of the Malaysian state, is certainly an important site of political struggle.

The dominant discursive framework for understanding the battle for Malay "hearts and minds" is between the nationalist and relatively secular UMNO, which protects Malay interests while working together with the representative parties of "other races," and PAS, which champions an Islamic state and institution of Islamic law. Dominant themes in Malaysian politics and political analysis include Malay rights and privileges (guaranteed by the constitution), the role of Islam in politics and society, and questions surrounding political patronage, money, politics, and corruption. Rural-urban tensions, or any substantial analysis of rural conditions

[1] I use "race" here (rather than ethnicity) because this is the term commonly used in Malaysia (*ras* in Bahasa Malaysia).

whatsoever, are remarkably absent from most political analysis in or about Malaysia. During the 1990s, PAS and UMNO were the main contenders for Malay votes. With the expulsion of Anwar Ibrahim from UMNO and the rise of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party) around Anwar as well as the retirement of Mahathir in 2003, the political terrain of Malaysian and Malay politics became more complex and contested in the first decade of the twentieth century. Yet, the role of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism remains largely unexamined and sublimated within other issues.

This absence is apparent in the most significant academic assessment of the Mahathir years spanning 1981–2003 (Welsh 2004). As the editor of the volume claims, it is a remarkably diverse reading of this period with over 40 authors from more than half a dozen academic disciplines as well as a number of journalists and public intellectuals. Its topics range from party politics to economics to foreign policy to high-tech super-corridors to the experience of transsexuals. As valuable as these contributions are (and my critique here is not meant to disparage the work), the volume, as a whole, reflects the very urban-oriented concerns of Malaysian elites and professional middle classes. Only one chapter, analyzing the political struggle between UMNO and PAS for "the rural Malay heartland," mentions rural issues in anything more than passing. The author's approach to the issue focuses on ideological positioning between the two parties over a range of issues and policies, especially the sacking and treatment of Anwar Ibrahim, the *reformasi* movement, and Islamization. The author concludes that UMNO's lack of support in rural Malaysia appears "paradoxical, given substantial benefits rural Malays have gained during the period of Mahathir's rule" (Funston 2004, p. 175). The lack of rural Malay enthusiasm for UMNO is credited primarily to relative deprivation, compared to urban counterparts.

This conclusion seems unconvincing on at least two counts. First, it seems to imply and reiterate the discursive assertion so common in Malaysia of a sharp urban-rural divide between city and village folks. In fact, there is substantial movement between rural and urban. In particular, those born in rural areas over the past 20 or even 40 years almost inevitably migrate to live in cities for substantial periods of their lives. Second, and related to the first, relative deprivation per se is not a powerful political lever. In my own fieldwork during the 1990s, while there was a wide range of opinions about development, the dominant attitude toward observable changes in infrastructure and the like was that life was better and easier in *kampung* than it had been in the past; in other words, people expressed a sense of satisfaction, even gratitude, with regard to expansion of education, health facilities, water and power supplies, and telecommunications and the like, not a sense of relative deprivation, compared to cities (Thompson 2002, pp. 57–59).

I would suggest, instead, that a persistent and pervasive urban cosmopolitan chauvinism is one of the main sociocultural forces lending strength to PAS's bid for rural Malay votes and undermining UMNO's legitimacy with the same constituency. It is a powerful hidden force missing from Malaysian political analysis, which focuses on Islamization, interracial politics, globalization, political economy, and a number of other important issues. Urban cosmopolitan chauvinism is missing from

this analysis of the Malaysian political struggles and landscape, or, more accurately, it is dealt with as "landscape," but not part of the "struggle." Urban-rural difference is naturalized, and rural dwellers—*orang kampung*—ascribed all the familiar characteristics of anti-cosmopolitanism: backward, stupid, close-minded, racist, and religiously conservative. I argue in the following that rurality is a sociocultural phenomenon that should not just be taken as a given but understood in terms of the social and cultural conditions structuring rural identity, which, in turn, lends itself to mobilization in the realm of Malaysian party politics.

10.3 Constituting *"Orang Kampung"*

The Malay world is a world of frontiers, long-distance trade, and radical mobility. Yet, in the wake of European colonialism, Malays came to be seen and, importantly, to see themselves as a backward and largely rural community (see Alatas 1977; Kahn 2006). The "*orang kampung*" (village person), in particular, became a figure of pity if not contempt. The pervasiveness of this image and discourse in contemporary Malaysia can be found everywhere from television programs to primary school textbooks; I will forego a detailed discussion of these media here, which I deal with at great length elsewhere (Thompson 2007).

In the political realm, Malay rurality has formed a central pillar of the analysis of the "Malay dilemma" by the long-serving Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. As he wrote in his classic work, *The Malay Dilemma*,

> The *kampung* dwellers'…will to progress, never great because of lack of contact with the outside world, became negligible. Soon they were left behind in all fields. The rest of the world went by, and the tremendous changes of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries took place without the rural Malays being even spectators. (Mahathir 1970)

Mahathir drew a distinction, rooted in part in social Darwinist eugenics, between progressive "town Malays," with a "vibrant" admixture of Malay, Indian, and Arab blood, and "village Malays," who were inbred and slow-witted. This critique dated to the 1950s and 1960s, when Mahathir was branded a "Malay ultra" and marginalized for sometime within UMNO for his radical "Malay chauvinist" views (as he argued that government policy needed to favor Malays). By the 1990s, this position had evolved, under his premiership, into championing a "New Malay" industrial, capitalist class. In 1993, a book authored by a leading UMNO politician appeared, outlining the political program for engendering "New Malays" (Muhammad 1993). Its first substantive, programmatic chapter calls for "Malay urbanization" (*membandarkan Melayu*), repeating, in somewhat updated language, the same ideology that rural-dwelling Malays will inevitably be backward and lazy and that Malays need to be "urbanized" both physically and mentally.

This urban-based discourse is consumed in rural places (through television, schooling, and other media) and engenders a negatively valued rural subjectivity of the "*orang kampung*." For rural dwellers, this sense of being the rural subject of

urban cosmopolitan chauvinism produces a subjectivity ripe for political mobilization in opposition to UMNO's urban-centered politics.

10.4 Mobilizing *"Orang Kampung"*

The political mobilization of *orang kampung* in rural Malaysia is apparent in the rhetoric of the PAS. To illustrate the deployment of "*orang kampung*," I draw, here, on a number of cassette tape recordings I collected in the run-up to the 1995 general election. I am citing, here, instances from three taped speeches of one of PAS's most popular orators, Mohamad Sabu, popularly known as "Mat Sabu"; similar instances are found in a dozen other taped speeches that I have reviewed. These cassette tapes are sold at PAS rallies and circulate through PAS networks. They are an important part of PAS's "alternative media," given that mainstream newspapers and television are largely controlled by the UMNO-led government.

In his speeches, Mat Sabu addresses his audience as "*Muslimin dan Muslimat*" (Muslim men and Muslim women). He stresses his struggle (*perjuangan*) for Islam. Rural-urban divides are not his only avenue of critique of the ruling UMNO party; in fact, that dimension of division in Malaysian society is rarely if ever elaborated in great detail in Mat Sabu's statements. However, based on an analysis of his speeches, placed in a wider discursive field in which rural-urban divides are ubiquitous, there is abundant evidence that his rhetoric plays to the oppressed subjectivity of "*orang kampung*."

Mat Sabu frequently aligns UMNO with the realm of "*korporat*" (corporations). UMNO, he tells his audience, is overrun (*dilanda*) by "*korporat*" interests (Sabu 1995c). The wealth of UMNO leaders, the millionaires among them and how they use their political positions to become millionaires (*jutawan*), is a constant theme of his speeches, (for example, Sabu 1995b). UMNO is no longer the representative of the people, but the representative of the *tokay*—a term derived from Chinese to mean business owners or people with capital (Sabu 1995a, c).

In contrast to the *tokay* and *korporat*, whose interests are served by UMNO, in Mat Sabu's analysis, "*orang kampung*" are the victims of development. UMNO, he argues, for the sake of development "sacrifices the local people, the original inhabitants of the land" (*mengorban penduduk tempatan ataupun penduduk-penduduk asli bumiputera*) (Sabu 1995a). PAS must fight for justice so that "*orang kampung*" are not the victims of development (Sabu 1995b).

UMNO and PAS engage in a discursive and political struggle over a vast terrain of unresolved issues—the place of Islam in Malaysia, the way in which to develop the nation, and standards for interracial relations. Observers of Malaysian politics have highlighted many aspects of this struggle. The increasing emphasis and assertiveness of Islam in Malaysian society is attributed, in part, to the battle between UMNO and PAS to outdo each other in a field of competitive piety (Who is more Islamic? Who does more to promote Islam within Malaysia? Who is the true Muslim and who is the infidel?—each party accuses the other of being non-Islamic and

"*kafir*"). PAS urges implementation of Islamic ("*Hudud*") law and accuses UMNO of promoting sin (*maksiat*). UMNO accuses PAS of being fanatic and chauvinist, thereby undermining Islam by causing non-Muslims (and perhaps some Muslims) to fear it.

PAS emphasizes Muslim identity and portrays itself as the champion of the Malays and *bumiputera*, "indigenous people." The latter is, in theory, a more inclusive category than the first; in practice, especially though not exclusively in PAS's rhetoric, the two are almost completely conflated. However, UMNO, of course, also stakes a claim to being the champion of the Malay community and, therefore, of Muslims. Again, in Malaysian discourse, the two are almost completely conflated; in multiple contexts, speakers and writers switch back and forth between the two, Malay and Muslim, as if they are essentially the same thing, and all evidence suggests that most people in Malaysia, most of the time, think of Malay and Muslim as one and the same.[2]

Mat Sabu and other PAS leaders try to distance UMNO from the constituency that both parties are battling over. The *kafir-mengkafir* (labeling each other infidels) rhetoric calls UMNO's Islamic credentials into question; UMNO is claimed to be weak in its support of Islam and to sponsor parties where alcohol is consumed, where young people (especially girls) are naked or half naked and follow their "boyfriend" home (Sabu 1995a), and of aligning itself with "immigrant capitalists" (*pendatang-pendatang tokay-tokay*) (Sabu 1995b). UMNO is also accused of forgoing Malay interests in favor of the interests of other races, foreigners, and businesses (again, *korporat* interest).

However, it is in their rhetoric and deployment of figures of rurality where one of the most obvious substantive divides between PAS and UMNO is to be found. In discourse on Islam and Malay identity, for example, both parties fully claim the ground staked out by those positions, that is, both claim to be the ultimate champion of Islam and Malay interests. UMNO, however, during the Mahathir era, followed a rhetoric of urban-based, future-oriented development. The "*kampung*" mentality was claimed to be a key problem standing in the way of the birth of a "New Malay"—a figure explicitly described as a corporate leader.

Mat Sabu's rhetoric plays precisely to the subaltern "*orang kampung*" subjectivity engendered as a negative, backward identity in the rhetoric of UMNO. He warns his audience that the enticements UMNO offered at election time are only for their own benefit so that they can enrich themselves by winning political office. "*Orang kampung*" are only a tool that they use to win elections while their true interests are in their own wealth and the interests of corporate elites (Sabu 1995b).

As Mat Sabu's speeches illustrate, PAS positions itself as the defender and champion of the "*orang kampung*." UMNO, in following the Mahatir's long-standing analysis of the "Malay dilemma," tells "*orang kampung*" that they are a problem, that they

[2] Malay, Muslim, *bumiputera*, *pribumi*, and *orang kampung* are all associated (used as synonyms) discursively in Mat Sabu's speeches, for example, "*[k]ita kena membantu orang kampung, orang Melayu*" (we have to help *orang kampung*, Malay people) (Sabu 1995b).

need to change who they are and need to "urbanize" (*membandarkan*), and that their "*kampung*" mentality is holding them and Malays in general back in a competitive, rapidly developing world.

In his 1995 speeches, Mat Sabu returns to a trope that Mahathir himself has long utilized, that is, that the fate of the Malays will be like that of the "Red Indians" in America, that they will be driven off their land into the jungle and disappear from the face of the earth, leaving only traces such as "Chicago" and "Alabama" in America (Sabu 1995a). However, while Mahathir, as a "Malay ultra" within UMNO in the 1960s and 1970s, was urging aggressive pro-Malay policies, in the 1990s, Mat Sabu's rhetoric aligned UMNO with corporate (and foreign/immigrant) interests that would "in the name of development, sacrifice indigenous Malays, forcing them to leave their *kampung* homes (*kampung halaman mereka*)" (Sabu 1995a). UMNO, he argues, is "Robinhood" in the reverse, that is, "UMNOhood" robs from the poor to give to the rich.

10.5 Comparative Cases: America, China, and Thailand

Before reflecting on the significance and politics of discursive urban-rural differences in Malaysia, particularly in the more recent post-Mahathir era, I will lay out three comparative examples. My purpose is twofold. First, I seek to demonstrate that far from Malaysia being an isolated or peculiar case, the sort of discursive production of subaltern rural identities is a very widespread phenomenon. Second, and closely related to the first, while similarities are apparent in these three examples, especially the ways in which urban "cosmopolitan" identities tend to dominate rural "backward" ones, the ways in which these play out in electoral or other sorts of politics are not simple, straightforward, or easily predictable. In America, these identities are mobilized in support of a Republican Party deeply committed to a neoliberal economic agenda, which would not seem to favor the rural, lower-middle-class voters to whom they are appealing. In China, the ruling Communist party maintains an ambivalent relationship to a rural, peasant base. In Thailand, appeals to a rural underclass have been effectively mobilized by Thaksin Shinawatra to create a powerful political base. The response by Thaksin's Bangkok-based elite opponents is to abandon democratic rule and principles, resorting to a military coup in the face of Thaksin's popularity.

10.6 America: What Is the Matter with Kansas?

The choice of television news networks in the United States to color states red to signify Republican Party victories and blue for victories of the Democratic Party in national presidential elections has captured the geographic imaginary of the nation and come to represent a great cultural divide in the country. On the worldwide web,

alternative mappings of the country appear, such as one that depicts the entire nation in clines of blotchy purple, through a finer-grained analysis of voting patterns, rather than the stark, bordered contrast of red and blue (Gastner et al. 2004). However, reiteration and extension of the red-blue contrast is much more common, as in a ranking and red-blue labeling of states by supposed average IQ scores, and in keeping with a distinctly leftist cosmopolitan chauvinism, displaying the red states disproportionately occupying the lower rankings (Evans 2004).

The cultural anthropology of Boas, Malinowski, and others, which have struggled mightily to assert the cogency of *cultural* difference and relativism in opposition to social Darwinist theories of *racial* difference and hierarchy, now sees the collateral damage of these battles in such theories as this of the great "cultural divide" of the red states and blue states. While academic anthropology has largely moved on, to champion theories of discourse over and against its own theories of culture, this central organizing idea of twentieth-century anthropology—*culture*—has become widely accepted as explanatory of difference. Culture, in this popular incarnation, is conceptualized as a form of groupthink. Every group of people has its own way of thinking, and any member of that group will, more or less, think in that way. Thus, the red states and the blue states are different (and vote differently) because the people in those states just think differently. Inhabitants of red states are stereotyped as conservative, Christian, and ignorant. Residents of blue states are stereotyped as arrogant, atheist, "latte liberals."

However, it is as much the myth of the cultural divide, *not* cultural difference itself, which produces the effects of the color contrast on television screens and, more significantly, the now solidly entrenched Republican Party dominance in rural America. The force at work is not cultural difference, but rather a *shared*, that is, cultural, knowledge of urbanism and cosmopolitan chauvinism. Insofar as rural-urban differences account for a conservative lock on rural American politics, it is not because urban and rural subjects are operating from within different cultural systems, but rather because they are operating in the *same* structures of feeling, but positioned very differently in relationship to the ideas circulating within that structure.

Thomas Frank's popular analysis of this supposed cultural divide, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (2004), is remarkable in that it succeeds in simultaneously identifying and exemplifying the crux of cosmopolitan chauvinism. Frank (2004) correctly identifies a subjectivity of victimization and marginalization motivating a "backlash" mentality of conservatives against liberals.[3] He provides abundant examples of Kansans "performing

[3] I use the terms, conservative and liberal, here in keeping with their American political usage, even though this usage is radically out of synch with the explicit meaning of the words themselves; conservatives have been working to radically *re-form*, not conserve, government structures since at least the ascendance of Reaganism in the 1980s, and liberals are much more inclined to champion both social and economic policies at odds with traditional liberal models of individual rights, for example, affirmative action, and economically rational markets, for example, social welfare and curbs on corporate activities.

indignation" in varied discursive moments, from political rallies to a rural sculpture garden of radically right-wing artwork crafted from discarded farm equipment. Yet, for Frank (2004), all of this sound and fury is nothing but the ranting of ignorant hillbillies. His argument is that Kansans and others from the "red states" have been deceived by corporate capitalist interest. The latter has, for Frank (2004), successfully foisted onto Kansan consciousness an idea of "the *latte liberal*… identifiable by their tastes and consumer preferences…[which] reveal the essential arrogance and foreignness of liberalism" (pp. 16–17). The shortcoming of Frank's (2004) analysis is that he fails, as one reviewer of the book succinctly notes, "to consider the idea that there might be such a thing as legitimate cultural grievances" (Chafetz 2004).

Frank highlights precisely the source of the "cultural grievance" of red state subjectivity:

> Its averageness has…made Kansas a symbol of squareness in the vast world of commodified dissent, the place that actors announce they're 'not in anymore'…Recall the late-eighties T-shirts that sneered, 'New York—It Ain't Kansas'. Or think back to those teen-rebellion movies in which the stern Kansas elders forbid dancing and all the bored farm kids long to escape to Los Angeles, where they can be themselves and adopt the lifestyles of their choice. (Frank 2004, p. 30)

Yet, Frank (2004) fails to take the consequences of this sneering urbanism seriously. For him, a politics not grounded in "something hard and ugly like economics" is deeply suspect (Frank 2004, p. 27). His analysis reiterates the sneering urbanism that it highlights by ultimately identifying the "problem with Kansas" as located in the "dysfunctional" attitudes and voting patterns of people who apparently vote against their own self-interests because they have been misled into believing that "*latte liberals*" of the Democratic Party treat them with contempt whereas the Republican Party treats them with respect. In other words, the problem, for Frank (2004), is that Kansans are "stupid."

In fact, the "problem" is that urbanism's structure of feeling and implicit cosmopolitan chauvinism is a much more significant force than Frank (2004) will admit. In Frank's (2004) account, Kansas becomes a singular entity populated by largely undifferentiated masses, "described as 'deranged' and 'lunatic', people who live in a 'dysfunctional' state" (Chafetz 2004). This fits easily into the structure of feeling that configures America's imagined geography of bicoastal cosmopolitanism divided by the rural, mid-Western "flyover." By contrast, William Least Heat-Moon's (1991) thickly descriptive, "deep map" of Chase County, Kansas, reveals a place and people not so easily counted among the Evangelical lunatics of Frank's (2004) account. However, of course, sound-bite politics is much more favorable to Frank's (2004) stereotyped view of the world than a nuanced one such as Least Heat-Moon's (1991). In trading on such stereotypes, the Republican Party has largely captured the field of rural identity in America, throwing up political "heroes," such as George W. Bush (the guy you would most like to have a beer with) and Sarah Palin (who extols the virtues of rural and small town "real America"), in advancing an agenda of neoliberal economics and neoconservative foreign policy.

10.7 China: Smelly Hicks and the Peasant Class

Cosmopolitan chauvinism is, if anything, more starkly expressed in China than in either America or Malaysia. In newspaper accounts and everyday conversations, rural subjects, especially when they appear in the space of cities, are discursively constituted as "*ba za*" (country bumpkins; Lei 2003, p. 614) and "*lao ta'er*" (smelly hicks; Yan 2003b, p. 493). Writing from the perspective of both personal autobiography and extensive ethnographic research, Mobo Gao testifies that rural villagers are considered to be "by nature stupid" and "treated with contempt and callousness" by urbanites (Gao 1999, p. 108, pp. 252–253; see Lu 2002; Potter and Potter 1990, p. 303).

Villages in China are represented as "cellular," self-sufficient social spaces, (for example, DuBois 2005 and Gao 1999, pp. 9–10). Mobo Gao's sensitive, rich portrayal of *Gao Village* is remarkable in this respect. While Gao (1999) portrays the village as a "cellular," self-sufficient social space (pp. 9–10), the text belies a simple reading of the village as a closed corporate community. The village is the site of intensive national education (pp. 92–121) and health systems (pp. 72–91), as well as circulation of consumer goods (pp. 67–70). Urban-bound migration, more than any other force, is changing and reshaping village life. Notably, Gao's (1999) account begins and ends by citing urbanization and rural-urban interactions (particularly, though not exclusively, with regard to migration) as the foremost issue in the near-future transformation of rural China (Gao 1999, pp. 1–2, pp. 261–264). The cultural expectation that the course of life for young people will inevitably take them out of the village and into urban spaces echoes the expectations of Malay *kampung* dwellers:

> The 'push and pull' factors are such that a young Gao villager is considered odd if he or she stays in the village. In fact, virtually all the young people in Gao village have gone. The very few who remain are considered to be incompetent. (Gao 1999, p. 216)

Yet, this severe Chinese cosmopolitan chauvinism is of relatively recent derivation. According to Faure and Liu (2002), it was not until the end of the nineteenth century, and more substantially in the twentieth century, that the sharp, hierarchical contrast between a superior city and inferior village or countryside took shape. Moreover, through the twentieth century, complex interactions between political-economic forces (at inter-articulated local, national, and international levels) and shifting ideological winds (Imperial, Republican, Maoist, and post-Maoist) have seen the moral hierarchy of city and countryside within representational practices flip more than once.

Prior to the twentieth century, a rural-urban continuum prevailed in the social geography of China. Villages, towns, and cities were not sharply demarcated social and cultural spaces. While walled fortifications marked boundaries and urban spaces operated as nodes of commerce and government administration, these features of the socio-spatial landscape were not generally emphasized and elaborated in Chinese cultural geographies as markers of contrastive difference between urban and rural.

Rather, the articulation and interpenetration of villages, towns, and cities appears to have been the hallmark of, for example, ritual practice and literary imaginations (Faure 2002; Harrison 2002; Zhao 2002). This is not to say that cities and villages have never been marked by contrast and hierarchy in pre-twentieth-century China, (for example, Berg 2002), but this was not generally a principal trope of Chinese cultural geography in the Qing period (1644–1911).[4]

Chinese urbanism in the early twentieth century centered especially on Shanghai, which figured not only as urban (in contrast to rural) but also as foreign (in contrast to Chinese) and as the epitome of modernity (in contrast to tradition). Shanghai and "Shanghainese" developed a distinctive port city identity. In the view of Faure and Liu (2002),

> [I]n the 1920s and 1930s, Shanghai taught the rest of China to see China through the eyes of the Shanghainese. While in imperial China, the emperor held centre stage, the Shanghainese viewed the metropolis as the centre of society. (pp. 1–2; see also Liu 2002; Lu 2002)

In the late-Qing and Republican era, "the urban-rural continuum was gradually replaced by an urban-rural gulf."

The political and military triumph of Maoist communism did not see a submersion of this urban-rural gulf, so much as its ideological inversion: the heroic peasant emerged as the central figure of moral superiority in juxtaposition to the decadent, urban, Westernized bourgeoisie, in other words, the Shanghainese. Of course, Maoist cultural geography was more complex than only this and importantly ambivalent with regard to the rural peasantry and village. While the peasant was an important revolutionary class, the decidedly modernist doctrine of Maoism was, at the same time, suspect of the village as a site of tradition and backwardness. Moreover, given the Maoist ideological commitment to development of an urban proletarian class, the Communist Party instituted a strict, classificatory, residential system that divided China's population into a higher status "urban personnel" and lower status "rural personnel" (Potter and Potter 1990, pp. 296–312). The relationship between the Communist Party, based in Beijing, and the bulk of the population, still located in areas thought of as rural, would seem to remain ambivalent up to the present.

The political consequences and mobilization of rural identities are somewhat harder to discern in China than in Malaysia or America or, perhaps, should be viewed as a particularly rich field for further research. China does not have the same sort of electoral politics in which mobilization of rural voters might play a role. The most significant challenges facing China as a whole are those around the transition from the Maoist era to the Deng (and post-Deng) era, in which a capitalist, market

[4] The rural-urban continuum is not a timeless Chinese cultural geography upset only with the coming of twentieth-century modernity. Rather, it is better understood as specific to the context of the predominantly agrarian orientation of the later Ming and Qing dynasties after the sudden end of the early-Ming age of exploration in 1433. The history of urbanism and structures of feeling around cities, towns, and villages is undoubtedly as complex in Chinese history as elsewhere (see Williams 1977).

economic ideology is ascendant. It is in this context that Yan Hairong and others have pointed to the emergence of theories of human value in which rural "smelly hicks" (Yan 2003a, b) are given a very low status. At the same time, media reports seem to indicate widespread, yet hard to interpret, unrest in rural areas around China. Given that Mao's communist, revolutionary mobilization has centered on a rural, Chinese peasantry, the politics of rural places and of rural identities, in contemporary China, make them a site from which we may well expect future changes or social movements to emerge.

10.8 Thailand: Rural Politics from Red to Red

Over the first decade of the twenty-first century, nowhere among the cases reviewed here has the politics of rural identity and urban cosmopolitan chauvinism been more explosive than in Thailand. Politics of Thailand over the past decade has been dominated by a power struggle between Thaksin Shinawatra and his political opponents both in the Democrat Party in parliament and among what Duncan McCargo has described as the "network monarchy" surrounding the Chakri Dynasty (McCargo 2005). Whereas in Malaysia, the discursive role of subaltern rural identity is largely sublimate within idioms of Islam and development, in Thailand, expressions of both urban cosmopolitan chauvinism and subaltern rurality, in similar ways to both America and China, have become increasingly explicit throughout the course of the evolving and still unresolved struggle between those aligned with Thaksin and his opponents.

Thaksin came to power in the elections of 2001 as the head of the newly formed Thai Rak Thai Party and, in 2005, was reelected with a dominant showing in the polls (Kasian 2006 p. 5). Although it was clear, from the outset of Thaksin's rise to power, that his political strongholds were in his hometown of Chiang Mai and the rural north and northeast of the country, the urban-rural dimension of politics came more sharply into view from 2006 onward, in the wake of Thaksin's ouster by judicial and military coup.[5]

In describing the development of democracy, or rather, electocracy, in Thailand 1973, Kasian (2006) summarizes the "tale of two democracies" (see also Anek 1996, quoted in Kasian (2006); Walker 2008; Giles 2009, pp. 88–89). As Kasian (2006) puts it,

> Rural Thais' numerical superiority, coupled with their unofficial 'right' to sell their votes, was experienced by urban middle-class voters, especially in Bangkok, as 'the tyranny of the rural majority'…Meanwhile, the liberal principle of property rights and the city's greater purchasing power and undemocratic freedom to trade, invest, consume, overspend, exploit, and pollute were in turn regarded by rural folk as constituting an 'urban uncivil society', which dispatched hordes of avaricious government officials to plunder the countryside. (p. 15)

[5] Kasian (2006) and Walker (2008) detail these events up to 2006 as well as their aftermath.

On the strength of this felt exclusion and oppression by urban elites, the history of rural Thai politics, at least in the north and northeast of the country, has seen a transition from support for leftist communism to rightist populism.[6]

In his essay, "From Red to Red," anthropologist Pattana Kitiarsa (2011) recounts the political history of his natal village in the far northeast province of Nong Khai near the Thai-Lao border. When he was a child in the 1970s, the village and the province had a reputation for being "red," that is, a stronghold of the communist insurgency. In that period, the American War in Vietnam was still in its final stages (during which Thailand was a staunch American ally). In 1975, the communist Pratet Lao, took control in Laos, with tensions high on the closed and militarized Thai-Lao border. In the wake of the violent crackdown on leftist student demonstrations in 1976 at the Thammasat University in Bangkok, many students and intellectuals fled the capital to join peasant-based communist insurgents in the northeast. From around 1980, however, students and others who had fled the capital were granted amnesty and reabsorbed into the political center, where, according to Giles (2009), they largely shifted away from support for socialist politics and toward apolitical nongovernmental organization (NGO) work.

In the 2001 election, Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party effectively mobilized the subaltern, excluded sensibilities of rural voters, particularly in the north and northeast Isan region, in order to establish a dominant electoral majority. While he was by no means a socialist, Thaksin supported populist, pro-poor programs, especially universal healthcare under the "30-baht" medical scheme, so named because under this program, Thaksin guaranteed that anyone seeking medical assistance could see a doctor for a minimal charge of 30 baht (less than one US dollar). Poor and rural voters came to see him as their charismatic champion in the domain of national politics. This image was only bolstered in the second half of the decade, when Thaksin was deposed and the battle lines of Thai politics became ever more clearly defined between "yellow-shirt" opponents of Thaksin and his "red-shirt" supporters.

Giles (2009) argues that the clash between the "yellow shirts" and "red shirts" is, fundamentally, a class warfare between the traditional elites and privileged middle classes, who support the royalist yellow shirts, and the urban and rural poor, who fill the ranks of the red shirts with Thaksin as their charismatic leader. While casting the conflict in class terms is not unreasonable, the rural-urban dimension of the conflict is also important. The "urban poor" are not easily distinguished from the "rural poor." Overwhelmingly, Bangkok's poor underclass has rural roots and is first-generation rural-to-urban migrants. Moreover, many migrants are involved in frequent seasonal migration between rural and urban areas. In my own recent research among such migrants from the Isan region in Bangkok, for example, among 130 interviewees, all but a very small handful have expressed strong emotional and social ties to the

[6] In the rural south, another important region of political opposition to Bangkok, such opposition has centered around a subaltern Malay-Muslim identity within a Thai-Buddhist majority country.

countryside. They speak of their "homes" (*ban*) not in Bangkok, but as located in their natal village or, for some men, their wife's village. The "urban and rural poor" are, in many respects, not two groups, but one group. Among those from the Isan region at least, they are an underclass whose ties to the rural northeast remain strong even when they have lived for decades in Bangkok.

Despite the tremendous class difference between Thaksin—a billionaire businessman (at least before his political fall from power and seizure of his assets)—and his impoverished followers, the fact that he claims Chiang Mai as his hometown allows people from the north and northeast to feel a certain kinship with him as Bangkok outsiders. The common epithet for the rural in Thailand is "*ban nok*" [house/home (*ban*) outside/remote (*nok*)]. Outside and remote are always relative terms; a small town can be referred to as "*ban nok*" relative to a larger town and a village is "*ban nok*" relative to a small town. However, in Thailand, generally, the "*ban nok*" can refer to all areas outside of Bangkok. Even Chiang Mai is "*ban nok*" relative to Bangkok, and "*ban nok*" is overwhelmingly a derogatory term in Thai. The phrase encompasses the most common expression of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism and its rural other.

Thaksin's populist, electoral success has ridden as much if not more on this geography of identity politics as it has on explicit class politics. Thaksin has championed populist policies for the poor, but not a broader socialist or anticapitalist agenda. To the contrary, Thaksin has supported free-market neoliberalism globally and Keynesian economics for the poor and in rural areas (Giles 2009, p. 78). His ability to position himself as a champion of the rural poor stems, in part at least, from the disappearance of any substantial socialist or left political forces from the late 1970s in Thailand. Giles (2009) traces the complex history through which he argues how many urban-based, formerly leftist, NGO activists and leaders have come to have a patronizing attitude toward the rural poor, leading them to align themselves with the royalist "yellow-shirt" movement and against the rural-based "red shirts." In part, this history involves the collapse of "left," or socialist, political movements in Thailand from the 1970s onward and Thaksin's ability to draw the loyalty of rural Thais to his political movement and away from the NGO networks that developed in the 1980s and 1990s (Giles 2009, p. 93–98).

Parallel urban-biased political discourses in both America and Thailand portray poor, rural voters as essentially ignorant, leading them to vote for the "wrong" candidates in elections. This discourse of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism expresses itself in favor of very different politics in the two countries. In America, it is voiced by those on the political "left" of the Democratic Party, who believe that the rural voters are undermining their own self-interest by supporting the "conservative," that is, neoliberal, antisocialist, Republican Party (Frank 2004). In Thailand, a nearly identical denigration of rural voters is mobilized to explain why rural voters back populism rather than the conservative, urban-based, elite political interests (Walker 2008, p. 85). In both cases, the patronizing, derogatory attitude of urban-based political actors would appear to do nothing but widen the gap between themselves and rural electoral constituents.

10.9 Malaysia After Mahathir: A Return to the Rural?

As the cases of America, China, and Thailand all demonstrate, structuring of urban-rural divides in which rural identities contrast unfavorably to urban ones is by no means unique to Malaysia. In all three of these cases, rural identities play into the rhetoric of political mobilization, though most obscurely in China, which does not have the same degree of electocracy. However, the diversity of these cases also demonstrates that the specific *ways* in which a subaltern rural identity plays into politics and gets mobilized, that is, to what end, in support of what sort of politics, are flexible. Rural identities, perhaps more so than others such as class or race, are very flexible in the realm of politics. Rural peasants in China and farmers in America have been called out to support both Maoist communism and Republican capitalist neoliberalism, respectively. Due to the common tendency of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism to utilize the rural as a despised "other," the mobilizing force of rural identities would appear to lie in a search and desire for respect more so than economics, power, or other fields. I draw on these thoughts in considering how rural identities may play out in post-Mahathir Malaysian politics.

In the 1995 election, UMNO and the Barisan Nasional arguably had their greatest victory since the founding of the Malaysian state. It was an election held in the latter years of a decade of rapid economic growth, prior to the financial crisis of 1997–1998 and prior to the political shock induced by the sacking, trial, and imprisonment of then Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. In this case, the opposition's attempted mobilization of the "*orang kampung*" of the Malay heartland could not be seen as strikingly successful; at the very least, it did not overwhelm the positive wave of the extraordinarily good economic tide on which UMNO and its coalition partners rode to victory. Four years later, in 1999, post-crisis and post-Anwar, UMNO experienced one of its worst election results in its history. The cause of *reformasi* and emergence of an alternative political front, the Barisan Alternatif (BA), to challenge the Barisan Nasional was the main theme of Malaysian politics in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Once again, how rural *kampung* identities might have been playing out in these elections received very little, if any, attention.

"*Orang kampung*," by itself, does not explain PAS's relative success and UMNO's relative failure in national-level politics over different election cycles. However, it is an important element in securing PAS a perpetual base in the northern Peninsular "Malay heartland." PAS appeals to a specific sense of Malay rurality that is associated with parallel fields of racial, religious, and class identities, but constitutes an important field of identity itself, based in a contemporary Malay cultural geography and associated sentiments. This remains important to PAS and to PAS's role within the BA (Alternative Front), which has contested power with the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional (National Front) over several election cycles. PAS's partner parties in the BA, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR or People's Justice Party) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP), both appear to appeal more to an urban, cosmopolitan sentiment than a rural one. While PAS is seen mainly as a religious (Islamic) party, its base in

rural identity is just as important. Between PAS and PKR, the two parties challenge UMNO for Malay votes on both urban and rural fronts.

Notably, addressing the long overlooked interests of rural Malaysia (sidelined by Mahathir's UMNO administration) was a cornerstone of Mahathir's successor Abdullah Badawi. However, his premiership was short lived and it would not appear that his successor, Najib Razak, has similar sentiments (though here again, more consideration could be given by scholars to UMNO's attention or lack thereof to the rural population). It remains to be seen if UMNO will be successful in "recapturing" the Malay heartland that Mahathir's urban-oriented, progressive vision alienated.

10.10 The Politics of Subaltern Rurality

The worldwide shift from rural to urban populations is occurring in Asia, perhaps more rapidly than anywhere else. Urbanism, in this case, does not involve simply processes occurring in cities, but broader social transformation. Cities have always been leading central sites in the production and distribution of cultural ideals, including the biases of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism. While the effects of urbanism play out in many other ways (see Thompson 2003, 2004, 2007), here, I have highlighted the political implications of urban-rural divides. Increasingly, in societies connected by high-speed travel over rail and highways, mass media, and sophisticated telecommunications networks, the urban-rural divide is more a matter of ideology than of substance. Rural dwellers, as well as rural-to-urban migrants, do not live in cultures separated from those of cities, but rather participate in urban-dominated cultures in which they learn that they are subjects of scorn, ridicule, and debasement by urban cultural elites. These conditions are fertile ground for the production of subaltern rural identities, which, in turn, are ripe raw materials, ready-at-hand for political mobilization.

The clearest examples of such mobilization can be found in relatively open democracies, where politicians curry favor with a voting public. In countries governed by means other than electocratic principles, that is, where elections do not exist or are less meaningful, rural identities and the cultural discrimination felt by people of rural origins may, nevertheless, be a site of political concern and source of social unrest. The ways in which the politics of urban cosmopolitan chauvinism and rural subaltern identities play out may vary substantially from place to place, as the four cases discussed here have demonstrated. At the same time, it is a dimension of politics of significance across many diverse nations and deserves greater explicit attention in the realm of political and social analysis.

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Part IV
Thailand

Chapter 11
Gendered Nation and Classed Modernity: The Perceptions of *Mia Farang* (Foreigners' Wives) in Thai Society

Sunanta Sirijit

11.1 Introduction

In popular and academic discourses in Thailand, globalization is often associated with cultural and economic imperialism that brings about both poverty and environmental disaster. Globalization is even more demonized in Thailand after the 1997 economic crisis while localism has gained popularity as a remedy for the damage done to the nation and its people by globalization and pro-growth development. Supporters of localism in Thailand include academics, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), policy-makers, and the monarch himself—the Thai king. While localism takes a wide range of forms and degrees, it generally seeks alternative development that is rooted in the community, which, in Thailand, is often conflated with the rural village (Hewison 2000; Connors 2005; Parnwell 2007). Some schools of localism, such as sufficiency economy and Buddhist economy, highlight moral values in local Buddhist-Thai communitarian traditions that are seen as a cure to social and economic pathologies caused by consumerism and global capitalism (Hewison 2000; National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) 2008; Parnwell 2007). In this chapter, I challenge the popular understanding of globalization and localism. I contend that global/local and tradition/modernity cannot be readily dichotomized while collectivism and consumerism are not naturally conflicting. Far from a stone pillar for humanity, morality constitutes a shifting and contested ground on which the cultural war of meaning-making unfolds.

The aforementioned analysis of globalization and localism is based on an examination of the widespread transnational marriage phenomenon (*phua farang* phenomenon in Thai, literally, "Western husband" phenomenon) in northeast

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Thailand and its implications in the wider Thai society. The twenty-first century has witnessed the rise of transnational marital and romantic relationships between northeastern Thai women and Western men. A 2004 regional survey stated that as many as 15,000 women from Thailand northeastern provinces were dating or married to foreign male partners, mainly from Western European countries and the United States (US). The women collectively send remittances of approximately 1,464 million baht (US $44,360,000) per year to their families in Thailand and spend a further 77,200 baht (US $2,340) per month with their husbands during annual visits to Thailand (NESDB 2004). This massive amount of money is fed into the northeast or Isan region, the poorest region of Thailand where the majority of the population lives in rural areas and engages in agricultural production.

For four decades, women and men from farming villages in Isan have engaged in subnational and transnational migration to supplement their increasingly marginalized agricultural income with wage labor. Isan women have been overrepresented in the labor force in Thailand's manufacturing and service industry including the loosely defined "sex tourism." A significant number of Isan women have met foreign romantic partners while working in tourist-oriented establishments in Thailand's resort destinations. The transnationalism literature often focuses on social and economic ties forged across national boundaries and fails to capture intense urbanization and continuous flows of rural-to-urban migration that underlie transnational activities such as the *phua farang* phenomenon in Isan.

Imagination of available alternatives beyond the immediate locale plays an important role in the proliferation of the *phua farang* phenomenon in Isan. Isan transnational wives (known in Thai as *mia farang*, literally, wives of Western men) have gained visibly higher economic status and inspired other women to follow suit. A growing number of Isan women now view transnational marriages as a desirable option, while parents encourage their daughters to find Western boyfriends. More than 50% of *mia farang* in Ban Karawek and Ban Sri Udon villages (not their real names) in Udon Thani province have met Western boyfriends while working in night entertainment businesses in Thailand's tourist destinations such as Phuket and Koh Samui. Others have met Western (*farang*) husbands through introduction by friends and relatives, while others have married the men they have met on Internet dating websites. The accounts of Isan women who are dating or married to Western men reveal the intricate interrelations among the rural, urban, and transnational spaces and the contestation of the women's multiple identities as they travel across these interconnected spaces (Fig. 11.1).

As the *phua farang* phenomenon in Thailand's northeastern provinces continues to grow and its economic gain becomes evident, Thai society has been trying to make sense of it. The state, in particular, has been struggling to find a suitable position to deal with this emerging trend of global intimacy. This chapter explores Thai social dynamics through the ways in which social actors in different social spheres make sense of the *phua farang* phenomenon. I have argued, elsewhere, that the *phua farang* phenomenon epitomizes classed and gendered agency and is, therefore, a form of transnationalism from below through which Isan women seek to transcend their social and economic disadvantages within Thai society (Sirijit 2009). Rural

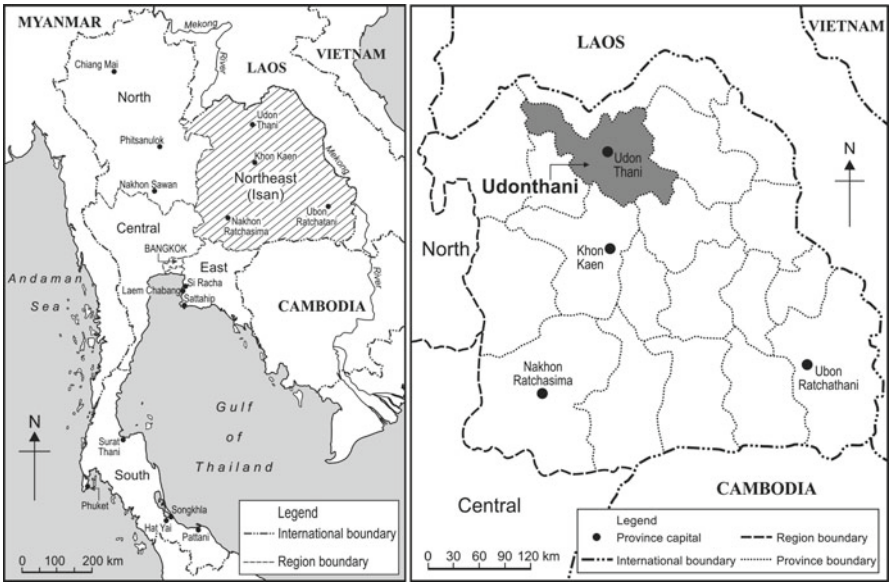

Fig. 11.1 Maps of Thailand and Udon Thani province

aspiration for social and economic mobility through the *phua farang* phenomenon, although generally sympathized with and accepted by the women's own rural communities, is often met with overt and, sometimes, hostile moral resistance from wider Thai society. While subtle and sporadic in the rural community, negative comments about the *phua farang* phenomenon are prevalent in urban settings, as well as in the national media with headquarters in metropolitan Bangkok. For a significant part of the general public, certain academics, and some central and provincial government representatives, the *phua farang* phenomenon in rural Isan signifies a moral problem caused by rampaging materialism and consumerism which threatens to degrade the "Thai traditional culture." The notion of saving "national tradition" from "foreign immoral values" has gained more strength with the current revival of localism and nationalism.

Thai nationalist discourses are gendered as well as classed. Women and rural populations are endowed with the ascribed role and responsibility for national social reproduction and cultural preservation. I argue that the nationalist construction of rural *mia farang* as "immoral materialists" is a product of discursive power of the urban elite Thais who monopolize the definitions of "modernity" and "morality," while rural *mia farang* definition of the same terms is invalidated. Critically examining Thai nationalist discourses, I point out the manipulation of the concepts, "tradition" and "modernity," in support of the urban elite's continued domination over the rural countryside.

While all discourses are partial, the more powerful ones (or those supported by the more powerful groups in society) have better chances to shape the material world. I demonstrate that the construction of *mia farang* in the Bangkok-based media and

urban-centric mainstream society as "immoral, materialist, yet, ignorant victims" has shaped recent national initiatives, policies, and approaches to the *phua farang* phenomenon. I am, however, critical of such current top-down initiatives and policies grounded on moral and victimization discourses as they often do more harm than good to women and the Thai nation by widening the ideological distance between the village and the nation, thus, further stigmatizing rural *mia farang*. In a highly class-conscious society, rural people in Thailand are well aware of pejorative images people in urban centers have of them and therefore, harbor shame and insecurity if not grievances (see Thompson in this volume for parallel cases from Malaysia, China, and the US).

In the following, I discuss the context in which the current classed and gendered imagination of Thai national identity has been shaped. I then identify urban-centric and masculinist bias in the construction of "immoral materialism" as a negative consequence of modernity and a threat to the simple agrarian "Thai life."

11.2 Class and Gender in the Thai Nationalist Discourse of "Immoral Materialism"

In the past three to four decades, Thailand's social and economic conditions have changed rapidly and fundamentally. From an agricultural-based economy and a largely rural society in the 1960s, Thailand bears little resemblance to its old economy after the renowned Economic Miracle of the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Remarkable changes can be seen both in Bangkok and in the villages, and most Thais welcome the changes that modernity has brought—a convenient life, more advanced communication and transportation technologies, more sophisticated stores and entertainment for cities, electricity, running water, TV, and more capital for the countryside. Yet, Thais appear to have "love/hate" feelings toward modernity, especially when it comes to the requisite preservation of Thai culture. After all, modernity that brings comfort and progress also threatens "traditional Thai ways of life" and corrupts the morality of Thais with lavish material consumerism.

Discourses around the "precious and unique" Thai culture have been produced, in large part, by 40 years of the state-promoted Thai tourism industry, which has been packaged for foreign visitors as well as domestic consumption. The success of the Thai tourism industry in the global arena has created a form of cultural nationalism among Thais, who are now proud of the self-exoticized images that they have invented for others (Reynolds 2002; Sirijit 2005). Thai cultural nationalism discourses have been and still are constantly reproduced by the popular media, as well as institutionalized by the state such as in the founding of the Thai National Identity Board and the Ministry of Culture. Along with cultural nationalism, "anxiety" discourses around the loss of Thai tradition amidst the encroachment of globalization and heavy consumerism have been circulating. The following section illustrates that Thai nationalist discourses are classed as well as gendered as they expect two (partially overlapping) groups—women and rural people—to be responsible for the

preservation of Thai tradition on behalf of the whole nation (for parallel arguments, see Jeffrey 2002).

Feminists have long been aware of gendered nationalist discourses in which women bear the burden of reproducing the nation and embodying national identity so that women's dress code, sexual behaviors, and "values" around marriage and family become matters of moral and national interests (Bannerji 2000; McClintock 1995; Sinha 2006). As the urban elite's notion of tradition represents the national tradition (Nidhi 1995; Sirijit 2005), the construction of ideal Thai femininity portrays the traits of upper-class women—delicate, fair-skinned bodies, and gentle, subtle, and sexually reserved gestures (van Esterik 2000). This idealized "Thai femininity" pertains largely to well-educated, middle- and upper-class, urban women. Poor, working-class women and rural, Isan women, who constitute the majority of *mia farang*, are distant from the classed, stereotyped conception of the traditional Thai woman because of their peasant background, low education, dark complexion, bold manner, and, in some cases, past employment in tourist red-light businesses.

While gender is classed in Thai nationalist discourses, the countryside is gendered when invoked in Thai national imagery. "The rural" bears feminine symbols of pristine landscape that yields and feeds the nation, akin to the nurturing, lactating mother. The countryside represents the idealized past, the authentic Thai, the peasant roots, and simple agrarian livelihoods present before the rampaging foreign influence in the name of global capitalism and modernization (see also Jeffrey 2002; Walker 2008). The modest, contented farmer in Thai elementary school textbooks is what most Thais have in mind as symbolizing an authentic Thai countryside, or an authentic Thailand, for that matter. The ruralized nationalist imagery appeals to the growing number of urban, middle-class Thais, whom themselves enjoy the privilege of modern comfort, yet can rest assured that the comfortable and familiar Thai tradition is being preserved in the countryside. The aspiration of the rural people to embrace modernity and a more comfortable life is, therefore, an alarming thought for many urban, middle-class citizens.

Several literary and social science writers, such as Raymond Williams (1973), Michael Painter (1991), and Arun Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan (2000), have already explored the poetics and problems of this romanticization of the "traditional" or the "past" way of life (Craib 2004). Williams's classic work, *The Country and the City* (1973), has discussed that it is often the urban bourgeoisie, eager to critique the consequences of the urban social order, who put forward such nostalgic visions. The social construction of the "traditional rural life" is often made by referring to so-called "traditional," agrarian social organizations and practices that are in fact quite modern outcomes of rather than precursors to capitalist transformations in the rural countryside (Painter 1991). As further demonstrated below, it is often the well-educated, urban-based Thai professionals who are nostalgic about the disappearing "traditional Isan life."

In contrast to the idealized imaginary, small-scale farming in Thailand's countryside is tremendously hard work that pays a modest income and often puts farmers in debt. The romanticized depiction of Isan agrarian life in popular media conjures up images of the contented peasant family, but not of the harsh reality of marginal

livelihoods in rural areas. With the increased commercialization of the village economy, new opportunities to participate in the local cash economy have emerged for peasant families, who may be in debt, but who no longer have to go hungry. Marriage migration in Isan, similar to those in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea where brides from the Philippines and Vietnam have been imported to marry local bachelors, is a response to the wider phenomenon of an agrarian care crisis and the need to sustain rural farming households in light of an aversion to heavy agricultural labor and available urban alternatives (Sirijit and Angeles 2012).

11.3 *Mia Farang*, Materialist Women, and the Degradation of Culture

The following excerpts from an online news article offer a perspective on transnational marriage trends among Thai women, particularly those from the Isan region. The article has been reproduced in online discussions and blogs since July 2007 and has generated much discussion. The article focuses on the notion of declining morality as a result of materialist values in young girls:

> The Nongkhai[1] Education District Director reported that he was petrified hearing a kindergarten school girl saying 'I want to be a *mia farang* when I grow up' following the belief that a foreign husband translates into a big house and wealth. The Director commented that the girl's outlook demonstrates that people in the present prioritize the material before the mind. The Secretary of the Ministry of Culture remarked, upon the same incident, that young children have learned that *mia farang* have a comfortable life. This (aspiration of young children to become *mia farang* following the example of grown ups) is a problem that all involved parties need to help solve. (Talkystory 2007)

Regarding the same news item, a researcher who has conducted a study on transnational marriages in Thailand's northeastern provinces notes that this "problem" is not only limited to uneducated rural women but has now expanded to young college students, who have fallen for materialism, consumerism, and the desire for quick economic gain:

> Assoc[iate] Prof[essor] Dr Suppawanakorn Wongtanawasu, a lecturer for the College of Local Administration, Khon Kaen University, commented that in the present, teenagers cannot find opportunities to advance in their careers. Even those who have university degrees are unemployed or are earning incomes that do not cover their expenses. When asked about their views on transnational marriages, some of the (female) college/university students who already have Thai boyfriends said, 'If I could turn back time, I would like to have a foreign boyfriend'. This is because the material changes are visible—the acquisition of houses, cars, and money. This signals that the attitudes of the people are now more attached to material gain and are driven by an urgent desire. They are less patient, not waiting and saving money but rather opting for the *mia farang* strategy (Talkystory 2007).

[1] Nong Khai is a province in Thailand's northeast region.

Analyzing this chapter in the context of Thai cultural nationalist discourses, the purported influence of the *mia farang* trend, which drives materialism in young girls and women in the Isan region, is of grave concern based on four assumptions. Firstly, Isan is viewed as a rural society where the authentic Thai peasant identity exists. Secondly, women are seen as being responsible for representing and preserving the identity of the nation. Thirdly, women are expected to uphold the right values of preserving marriage and family for traditions to endure and for the nation to reproduce. Fourthly, young women, in particular, should not digress from tradition so that the Thai nation, as we understand it, continues into the future. Morality is always in place for women to sacrifice for the collective group, and young college students in the news article are deemed lacking the "good woman" quality because they show signs of abandoning the concept of selfless wives (to Thai men) for personal material gain.

Mia farang, especially those from poor rural backgrounds, tend to receive a disproportionate share of moral criticism and scorn from urban Thais. This moral criticism, which stems from the pervasive class bias and urban-rural divide in Thai society, easily leads to stigmatization. Kamonchanok Pawinpon—the owner of Kamonchanok Matchmaking Company—discusses her business in a news article on the transnational marriage trend among Thai women: "[m]ost of the women who use our services are educated professional women so you don't have to worry about poor uneducated women from the provinces who hope to fish for a foreign man (using our services)" (Daily News 2006). In this remark, Kamonchanok clearly dissociates herself and her business from lower-class, rural women, whom she describes as eager to use foreign men for upward economic mobility. The perception that uneducated rural women are shamelessly pursuing foreign men for a quick and easy path to wealth is widely shared among Thai people outside the women's rural community. This perception has gained more momentum with the current national popularization of localism and the branding of rural materialism.

11.4 Demystifying the "Traditional Marriage and Family"

Insofar as the institutions of marriage and family carry the stakes of collective group reproduction, the *phua farang* phenomenon in rural Isan is concerned with two overlapping collective groups—the village and the nation. *Mia farang* sustain their rural households and villages by remitting income to their birth families and financially supporting village public and religious functions. These practices are in accordance with "traditional Isan agrarian values" of daughters nurturing their birth families and the better-off sharing their wealth with the community. The *phua farang* phenomenon connects rural families and the local village community to the global, through remittances from transitionally married women, bypassing the nation-state's institutions and agencies that have been inadequate in addressing Isan's disadvantageous position within the growing Thai regional and national economies. Financial contributions from *mia farang* release their birth families

from the agrarian life and offer the latter new opportunities and roles to take up in an increasingly more complex and socially differentiated, peri-urban, rural economy. Over time and after continuous negotiation of meanings around "family," "female sexuality," and "morality" in the context of transforming agrarian life, community perception of transnational marriages has gradually changed from that of disapproval to acceptance of this phenomenon. Regardless of some women's background as "bar girls," Isan transnational wives have gained moral acceptance as grateful daughters and generous members of the village community (see Angeles and Sirijit (2009) for full discussion of *mia farang*'s contribution to rural economies and their moral acceptance in rural communities).

The moral acceptance of *mia farang*, however, does not extend beyond the close-knit rural community of Isan. While sustaining rural households and the village community, the *phua farang* phenomenon disrupts urban imaginations of ideal Thai traditions rooted in pristine agrarian life. The following excerpt from a Thai newspaper online article, entitled "*Phua Farang* Is Changing Isan Society—Wives Eating Husbands' Western Food and Forgetting *Som Tam*,"[2] represents a view that prioritizes the preservation of the national culture through rural values around marriage and family. In a morally alarmist tone, Dr Suppawanakorn Wongtanawasu reports her research findings that the *phua farang* phenomenon brings negative changes to the Isan family, connoting that these changes negatively affect the Thai national tradition. She is quoted as saying

> This research also finds that the Isan family institution has completely changed in regards to ideologies and practices around marriage and the choice of marital partners, especially in families with *khei farang* (foreign in-laws). In the traditional Isan society, parents usually chose marital partners for their children. Marriages were arranged by parents, often without children's input. But in the present, Isan social values around marriage have changed, giving less importance to love but focusing more on economic security. This is why some Thai (Isan) women decide to marry foreign husbands even if they have not met the men prior to their weddings. The Isan women think that if their foreign husbands have money, people in the community will consequentially accept them for that. (Kom Chad Luek 2006)

What has come ahead of this paragraph are Dr Suppawanakorn's research findings that the *khei farang* phenomenon is changing Isan society from emphasis on collectivism to increasing individualism. The women married to *farang* are not interested in or excited about important Thai religious holidays as much as Christmas or Valentine's Day, which are from their husband's culture. Regarding food and dining, Isan women prefer pizza or Kentucky Fried Chicken, a fast-food restaurant chain, which signifies their assimilation into Western culture. This excerpt reveals a double standard and a false distinction between the meanings and purposes of traditional and modern marriages. Arranged marriages in the past have been as much about economic considerations as the *phua farang* marriages are in the present.

[2] *Som Tam* is a typical Isan dish, which is similar to the green papaya salad served at most Thai restaurants. The article was downloaded from the website of *Kom Chad Luek* national newspaper on 26 July 2008.

When livelihoods were mostly dependent on the land and daughters inherited it, who the daughters married and what the grooms had to contribute mattered to the parents, hence, the rationale for higher bride-price for daughters of land-rich families or the preference for industrious sons-in-law to work on the farm. Taking economic security into consideration when marrying is not new, but it takes different forms in different times, and is practiced by rural farmers as well as the urban upper class.[3] The changes in courtship and marital practices in Isan villages can be attributed to the weakening of parental authority over children's marriages and courtship when young men and women leave for work away from the village (Lyttleton 1999; Mills 1999; Sirijit 2009). Rural villagers have gradually accepted this change as a part of a larger transformation of village life, in which remittances constitute a significant part of rural families' livelihoods. Most of the time, young people use freedom from parental monitoring to marry or cohabitate with another Thai out of "love." Parental sanction and encouragement for daughters' *phua farang* marriages in the present, if anything, is closer to the "traditional" Isan marriage. The criticism that Isan women marry foreign men "without love" is in fact to criticize Isan women for not being modern enough. A love marriage, as opposed to a traditional arranged marriage, is associated with modernity, but this modernity is somehow moral because it is approved and has been taken up by the urban middle class to mark their progress. When associated with urban, upper-class practices, modernity signifies progress, but when used against rural people, modernity translates into greed and immorality. The perceived lack of modernity and progress in rural people, in turn, validates the power of the urban elite in leading and controlling the rural. A similar manipulation of discourses around "modernity" applies to current Thai politics in which Isan rural people are portrayed in the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD)'s nationalist-royalist discourses as being lured by Thaksin's vote-buying strategy out of "ignorance"—lacking modernity and the understanding of democracy—and "greed," i.e., corrupted by too much modernity (see also Callahan 2005 and Chap. 12 by Chairat in this volume).

The above analysis is at the discursive level only. I realize that not all Isan marriages in the past have been arranged and that not all *mia farang* marry without love. In fact, the notion that "love" and "practicality" are unable to coexist in a marriage is a highly debatable one (Constable 2003). From what I have seen during my village-based study, no village woman has married a foreign man whom she has met only for the first time on the wedding day. The disapproving tone with which the above article describes Isan social transformation caused by the *phua farang* phenomenon is contrasted to the perception and representation of one particular *khei farang*. British-born Martin Wheeler, who married an Isan village woman he

[3] The use of marriage and extramarital sexual relationship for social upward mobility is a partially acceptable option for Thai women in all social strata. In fact, keeping *mia noi* (mistresses) and kept women is a more common practice among urban upper-class men as a sign of the men's social and economic prestige. *Mia noi* and kept women face gossip and criticisms although not as harsh as those directed at *mia farang*.

met in Phuket before relocating to her village in Khon Kaen, has been celebrated in the Thai press as a farang who teaches Thais to appreciate their own country especially the Thai rural agrarian life. Wheeler is known in Thailand as *farang tham na* (rice farming foreigner) who left his middle-class lifestyle in the United Kingdom to live modestly in Isan in a *po yu po kin* (having just enough to eat and to live) way following the Thai King's sufficiency economy teaching (Matichon 2008). An atypical *phua farang* who has assimilated into the Isan rural society, Wheeler is widely recognized in Thailand. He has been interviewed by journalists as well as television hosts. Wheeler was appointed one of the *prat chao ban* (local wisdom holders) and has been invited to speak about his experience in Isan. Unlike the common perception of *mia farang* as materialist and overambitious rural subjects, Wheeler's story invokes Thai nationalism rooted in agrarian and Buddhist values on modesty, close relationship to nature, and gratefulness to the land and the king's wisdom.

11.5 Women and Rural Families as Victims of Violence and Deception

Another discourse around the *phua farang* phenomenon that has been widely circulated in Thai society is that of women as victims of violence. The murders of Thai women by foreign male dates or boyfriends have made the news. News about the tragedies of Thai women at the hands of foreign men is addressed as a warning message to the increasing number of Thai women who are "dreaming of having foreign boyfriends" for economic mobility (Daily News 2006). A headline of the news article about the brutal murder of a Thai woman by a foreign man she met on the Internet reads: "Like Foreign Men? Beware! A Warning for Thai Women; Victim of Deadly Love!" (Daily News 2006). The article warns women about danger and unfortunate incidents concerning Thai women in *phua farang* marriages or relationships. In the same news article, Thanawadi Tajeen—the director of Friends of Women Foundation—warns: "[s]ome women are forced to work as housemaids, physically abused, forced into unnatural sex, or sold into prostitution." Aiming to raise the awareness of Thai women during the intensifying *phua farang* trend, the "victim of violence" message, when read along with the "immoral materialist" discourse, gets easily translated into "greedy yet ignorant women get into trouble because of their greed."

The discourse around "ignorant victims" does not only apply to the women but also to rural families who desire *khei farang* (foreign in-laws). The headline of a news report about mothers of women from Udon Thani province accusing a dating company of deception reads: "Seeking *Khei Farang*, Mothers End Up Badly Deceived" (Khao Sod 2006). According to the news article, a group of about 10 mothers from a village in Udon Thani province reported that they hired an agent from Khon Kaen province who promised to help them find *khei farang* through the Internet. The mothers paid 5,000 baht each to register their daughters with the company and a separate lump sum of 50,000 baht as a group processing fee. The

company got back to the mothers regularly during the first 3 months, sending photos and messages of foreign men who were interested in their daughters, for which the company charged 2,000 baht each time for translation. However, after a year, none of the daughters had secured a marriage with a foreign man and the mothers felt deceived by the company, bringing the case to the police. While this story is a warning example to rural families and women who pay high fees for transnational marriage services, it also sends a moral message to a wider audience that greedy materialist rural people who hope for a shortcut to wealth are destined to suffer from their ignorance and greed.

11.6 Discourses and Policy

While discourses are not true or false and all discourses are partial, they generate "truth" effects and shape material reality. Against the discourses of *mia farang* as both materialist rural women and ignorant victims, recent policy and actions initiated at the national level have taken shape. In July 2008, the head of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSO)—Mr Pallop Ploytabtim—expressed his concern about the link between the *phua farang* phenomenon in the Isan region and trafficking in women (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSO) 2008). Noting that a higher number of women in Isan provinces who are in *phua farang* relationships are not in legal marriages, Mr Pallop has asserted that these women are prone to becoming victims of human trafficking. He has also pointed out that some women are drawn into human trafficking by foreign men who use marriage as a front to bring women into prostitution in European countries. In other words, Isan women in *phua farang* relationships are vulnerable to human trafficking regardless of their marital status, according to Mr Pallop's statement. Mr Nakorn Imboriboon, Udon Thani MSO officer, raised the example of 20 women in a village in Udon Thani province who were lured by an agency into paying for unsuccessful *phua farang* arrangements as a case of failed human trafficking (the same case cited above). As a measure to crack down on human trafficking and in addition to the Human Trafficking Act 2008, the MSO has proceeded to raise public awareness of the issue. One of the efforts was a day event, "*Khei Farang*, the Path to Paradise or Misery," held at Udon Thani Rajabhat University on 25 July 2008. The event emphasized raising awareness and teaching morality. The day's schedule consisted of discussions led by an Udon Thani MSO officer, two university professors, and the wife of the former Udon Thani governor, who also served as the Chair of the Women's Society for Community Development. The discussions were accompanied by a screening of the film, "Sawanbiang" (Twisted Paradise), and a Buddhist teaching entitled "Is This Really Love" by a Buddhist monk.

In the context of my study, there are two problems with MSO's initiative. First, MSO's rationale for linking the *phua farang* phenomenon to human trafficking is weak. The high number of women not in legal marriages with foreign men does not determine their status as victims of human trafficking. In fact, the actual

number of legal marriages is higher than the number cited by MSO, which only reflects couples who have entered their marriage registrations with the Thai authority and those who have voluntarily reported their marriages overseas to the Thai officials. Some Thai women do not enter a legal marriage with foreign men by choice or do not report their marriages with foreign nationals overseas because of the understanding that Thai women will lose their rights in buying property in Thailand if married to foreigners. Some women are indeed in the position of girlfriends/former prostitutes or mistresses of foreign men, who travel back and forth between Thailand and their countries, but this does not mean the women are victims of human trafficking, especially if they remain in Thailand while their foreign partners travel. Many women still have not come to terms with the long-term prospect of their transnational relationships, and this does not have a direct correlation with human trafficking. After all, being overcharged by a match-making company without getting the desired results does not indicate that the women have almost fallen into the hands of human traffickers. While it is true that women are not equally successful in their relationships with foreign men and some women do find themselves in difficult situations, extremely traumatic cases are rarely reported.

The fact that some *mia farang* are unhappy with their foreign relationship partners suggests the limits to "spatial hypergamy" (Constable 2005). The causes of unhappiness among some women may include *farang* husbands who are "too old," "too poor," or "stingy with their money." However, even in the face of constraints and limited choices, the unhappy *mia farang* still have room to exercise their agency by ending their relationship with *farang* who do not fulfill their expectations. The unhappy ones do not easily give up searching for a more suitable foreign partner for a marriage, even if this means moving from one *phua farang* relationship to another. Women deciding to engage in transnational dating usually know the risks, and the money they put into it is seen as an investment.

The second problem with MSO's approach to the *phua farang* phenomenon is that of discursive power. The "victim of human trafficking" discourse adopted by MSO represents the discursive power of the elite in portraying rural women as unaware victims who need to be saved by the savvy and more moral people, i.e., highly educated, upper-class women and local and national officials. The ethical question around the condescending objectification of the "oppressed women" in feminist discourse has been raised since Chandra Mohanty's (1991) highly influential essay, "Under Western Eyes." In this essay, Mohanty criticized "discursive colonization" in First World feminist scholarship in constructing Third World women as a homogeneous group of victims of oppression, who need to be rescued by "liberated" First World feminists. MSO's top-down effort in awareness raising through didactic methods directed at rural women appears patronizing. It is based on the social class hierarchy and rural/urban divide in which the urban upper class set moral standards for rural people and tell them what is good for them. This approach perpetuates the stigmatization of rural women (and their families) as ignorant and morally inferior. MSO's approach to the *phua farang* phenomenon has raised a central question in feminist debate, i.e., that of "gender as the primary category of analysis" given

differences and power relations among women and the constitution of gender along other axes of power such as class, race, and ethnicity. Without genuinely incorporating women's views, the awareness-raising effort of the MSO is likely to be ineffective in addressing women's needs.

On transnational marriages in other contexts, Constable (2003), Suzuki (2003), and Schein (2005) argue that victimization discourses miss the point by ignoring women's agency and volition. Along this line, I argue that the victimization discourse adopted in the Thai context by the locally privileged is a mechanism that curbs "too much aspiration" and "misguided agency" on the part of rural women in the increasing *phua farang* trend. The didactic awareness-raising and anti-trafficking effort, such as the MSO's event in Udon Thani, is missing an important point. By focusing on danger and oppression from the outside (foreign men, transnational human traffickers), this event has erased the issue of internal social hierarchy and the local structural limitations that working-class, rural women try to transcend through the *phua farang* strategy.

11.7 Discourses and Women's Experience

The conflicting rural and national discourses around the *phua farang* phenomenon signify divergent interests between the village and the nation, which, in turn, shape the experience of Isan *mia farang*. The stigmatization of *mia farang* outside the village community is disempowering for the women themselves. It shows that the "good daughter" identity that gains women community acceptance does little to raise their moral status outside their own rural community. Noon (not her real name), a 33-year-old single mother who met her French partner while working in a bar in Phuket, commented on perceptions of *mia farang* and how she felt about them:

> Some people think it's a good thing. With a *farang* boyfriend you can help the family and help your parents out. But people in the Thai society are different. Some people see us with *farang* and (only) think that we sell our bodies and that we are prostitutes (*phuying khai dua*). In a way I am ashamed of it but in another way I'm not. I'm not ashamed of working (in the bar) because I have a family to take care of. If I don't work, nobody will take care of my family. But I'm ashamed when people look at me walking with a *farang* and I am ashamed of being seen (as a *mia farang*).

Noon feels ashamed of her identity as "the shrewd woman who uses her sexuality to fish for a *farang* for financial gain"—the only dimension strangers often see in her in an urban setting. While face-to-face relations in the close-knit and kin-based rural community create the space where *mia farang* are able to contest their "negative" portrayals (sexualized women who marry the racial and religious "others") with more "positive" ones (good daughters, generous community members, and achievers), this is not possible outside the community. Beyond the community, class bias is dominant, and rural *mia farang* have little power in presenting their version of the story and their multiple identities (see also Askew 1998).

11.8 Conclusion

The *phua farang* phenomenon in Thailand's Isan region shapes and is shaped by inter-scalar dynamics between the village, the nation, and the global. Hence, studying this phenomenon requires thinking outside the naturalization of the nation-state and paying attention to activities at other scales. As Mahon (2006), Marston (2000), Marston and Smith (2001), and Nagar et al. (2002) have written, the rethinking of scales allows for the visibility of gender, family, and reproduction that are embedded in localized global relations today. The rural village in Isan—the most economically repressed Thai region—has reached out to the global through cross-border marriages and relationships of rural Isan daughters, who, following local gender and familial practices, remain an important part of their birth families even after marriage. Extending into the global through their mobile and transnationally married daughters and newly incorporated foreign sons-in-law, the rural Isan village community scale-jumps in order to circumvent their marginalization at the nation-state level. The politics of scale also plays out discursively as the same actions are perceived differently at different geographical scales. While the *phua farang* phenomenon is generally accepted within the Isan rural village communities, it is tainted with moral criticisms based on gender and class prejudices operating outside the village community, in the urban context, and at the provincial and national levels.

The *phua farang* phenomenon in Thailand problematizes the simple polarization between localism and globalization and between tradition and modernity. In this light, the currently prevalent localism narrative is limited because it only sanctions urban-approved local practices and not the initiatives that disadvantaged rural people take in negotiating their position within multiple systems of power. Projecting globalization and modernization as a threat to rural populations, antiglobalization narratives tend to overlook the agency of marginalized people, who are constrained as well as inspired by new social and economic orders. The global imagination of Isan *mia farang* and their families, along with their classed and gendered cosmopolitan awareness and their trans-local village networks, is depreciated in the Thai localism ethos. The stigmatization of *mia farang* in Thai society highlights that global capitalism is not the only system of power that structures the present social world; class, gender, and rural-urban relations also constitute multiple systems of power in which individuals are located.

By identifying conflicts between the urban and rural discourses around the *phua farang* phenomenon, I do not intend to portray either the urban or rural community as homogeneous. There are urbanites, both males and females, who look at rural women's *phua farang* choice as an individual's right to serve her own best interest, and there are academic works by Thai scholars who study the *phua farang* phenomenon in terms other than those of human trafficking and moralist discourses. For example, Ninwadee Promphakping (2006) compares Western-Thai and Asian-Thai transnational marriages, and Ratana Boonmathya (2006) sees transnational marriages as a space for rural Isan women to renegotiate conventional Thai norms and practices of gender roles and relations, marriage, and sexuality. At the rural end, the acceptance

of *mia farang* is, by no means, complete. Although the *phua farang* phenomenon has been generally accepted in the village, comments such as "[s]he dresses like a *mia farang*" are used to describe a woman who is dressed in formfitting, more revealing clothes. To some degree, *mia farang* are still conflated with bar girls and a stereotypical bold, loud, and over-sexualized style. While hypergamy is not a major moral concern for the villagers, polygamy is. There are circulating gossip and rumors about *mia farang* who take up lovers or juggle between more than one *farang* at the same time.

Using the master's tool to destroy the master's house, *mia farang*'s economic mobility perpetuates rather than hinders the system in which global capitalism dominates. While addressing rural-urban inequality, the practice has also created new inequality by bringing inflation to the village economy where land prices, in particular, are much higher. At present, the going price for land in the villages I have studied is almost twice as much as its official assessed value. For business corporations, from real estate, private hospitals, home hardware stores, and transnational supermarket chains to car dealers, *mia farang* and their families are important commercial players. Some businesses are aggressively tracking down *mia farang* and their families, seeking their information from provincial and district registrars.

At the same time, the stigmatization of *mia farang*, grounded in class and rural-urban divides within Thai society, widens rather than bridges the existing distance between the nation and the village. This trend further encourages Isan regionalism (Keyes 1966; Suthep 2005), which has now jumped scale to the transnational space through *mia farang* and *khei farang* as well as other Isan transnational migrants. As a nation within a nation, the village collectivity benefits from its women, not so much as wives, but as daughters, who nurture and further reproduce the village under the market economy. The family obligations expected of Isan *mia farang* thus have mixed effects on women's experiences, creating a paradox of both empowerment and restraint.

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Chapter 12
Redrawing Thai Political Space: The Red Shirt Movement

Chairat Charoensin-o-larn

12.1 Introduction: Intensified Rural-Urban Cleavage

This chapter attempts to provide a better understanding of a new, rural-based political group in Thailand, which has emerged after the military coup in September 2006. This chapter argues that the rise of the Red Shirt protesters in recent years is, by and large, a consequence of a significant shift in the continued pattern of rural-urban divide in Thai society. Unlike most studies whose main task is to put the blame on Thaksin Shinawatra—the ousted Prime Minister who is immensely popular with rural people—as a source of deep political polarization between the rural and the urban people, this chapter contends, to the contrary, that recent rural-urban divide is basically a structural phenomenon that has evolved from a half century of modernization and development, a process which has concretized in the form of uneven development between the rural and the urban areas/people. Such a pattern of uneven development primarily constitutes a built-in structure of inequality in Thai society since the Second World War (Chairat 1988; Glassman 2010).

The recent emergence of Red Shirt demonstrators clearly indicates the third hallmark of fundamental socioeconomic structural change of Thai society (Thongchai 2009). Historically, the first wave of fundamental transformation in Thailand took place between 1910 and 1930, a period which saw the crystallization of the modern nation-state in that country. This was accompanied by the establishment of a public bureaucracy and modern armed forces. The end result of this first wave of socioeconomic transformation was the rise of a civil-military stratum, which successfully overthrew the absolute monarchy in 1932. The second wave of fundamental socioeconomic change in Thailand came during the Cold War period, between the 1950s and 1980s. During this period, Thailand had overwhelmingly adopted the

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Western model of modernization as an effective means to develop the country as well as to counter communist insurgency. The final outcome of this development era was the rise of a new and educated urban middle class in the city of Bangkok. Subsequently, this new, urban middle class became the driving force for economic development and the surge of the democratization process, resulting in the collapse of the military regime in 1973, the call for liberal democracy in 1992, and the installation in 1997 of the most democratic constitution Thailand ever had.

The third wave of the fundamental socioeconomic transformation began in the period of the economic boom of the 1980s. As the globalization process of the 1990s intensified, a rise of a new social group based mainly in the rural areas began to arise. Viewed as the "lower middle class," this new social group now forms the basis of group known as the Red Shirts (Aphichart 2010; Kamol 2010; Naruemon and McCargo 2011). They are the by-product of the long period of modernization and development in Thailand. This third wave of structural transformation in Thailand has witnessed the shrinking of the agrarian sector and the growing of the manufacturing and service sectors in the rural areas. The flexibility of moving back and forth between the rural and urban areas, due mainly to the availability of the cheap but advanced modern information and communication technologies that globalization has made possible, has caused the line between the rural and urban to become more fluid, if not caused it to evaporate. In other words, the third wave of structural transformation has seen rural Thailand increasingly "becoming urban," to use the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987). That is, location matters less than a cumulative accentuation of the mode and way of life typical of the city among the rural. One no longer needs to move to the city in order to become urbanized. In this regard, the urban is not a location or space, but the configuration of social value and meaning.

Moreover, as the process of democratization has advanced, elections have come to be held with relative regularity since the 1990s. Not only have regular elections served as a new avenue for rural voters to gain a more substantial share of power and basic public goods, such as health care and education; they have also aroused a new sense of equality. Established electoral processes since the 1990s have made rural voters aware of their power and truly allowed them to enjoy, for the first time, the benefits of democracy. In the eyes of these rural voters, democracy is no longer an abstract principle that is irrelevant to their daily lives. Rather, democracy has now become real and relevant—as evidenced, for example, by the universal health-care scheme initiated by Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) government. Unfortunately, the coup of 19 September 2006 has taken away all these benefits, including the new sense of equality, from the rural voters who constitute the majority of the Red Shirts.

If the modernization process in Thailand since the Second World War, which has taken the form of unbalanced growth mentioned above, has led to the primacy of the city of Bangkok and the emergence of an urban middle class in that city, which has come to dominate, first, the economy and, subsequently, the politics of Thailand, then the populist policies and programs of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, which have begun in 2001, have led to the emergence of a new social group in

contemporary Thai society. This new social group, broadly defined as the "lower middle class" or "urbanized villagers," consists mainly of people residing in the urbanized areas of the countryside, whose income and quality of life have gradually improved over a half century of modernization and development—a process that in recent years accelerated under Thaksin's populist policies.

While the rural masses and the urban poor, who constitute an integral part of the Red Shirts, are relatively better-off as a result of the implementation of Thaksin's populist policies, the urban middle class, on the contrary, feels that their security and standard of living have been gradually declining (Nidhi 2010). Since the economic crisis of 1997, the Thai urban middle class have found themselves increasingly dissatisfied with their lives. They have experienced what Gurr (1970) has called "relative deprivation." The urban middle class have found that in the decade since the economic recovery, their income has failed to keep pace with the changing economy, making it difficult for them to maintain the level of consumption that differentiates them markedly from the rising rural masses, who have recently come to constitute the lower middle class.

Moreover, the urban middle class have been left feeling politically insignificant—overlooked—compared to the rural masses and the urban poor, who have benefited from the attention given to them by the Thaksin government. Socially, the urban middle class have felt that their standard of living has been compromised by the rise of the lower middle class, notably in the areas of education and health care. The urban middle class perceive, as a threat, the rise of the rural masses to the level of a lower middle class. For the Thai urban middle class, equality has, until now, simply meant having the opportunity available to them to rise to the level of the upper middle class and upper class. Equality is never intended to mean that the lower middle class should have the privilege of rising to the level of the middle class. The urban middle class are now yearning for a lost past prior to the rise of the lower middle class. This nostalgia has been manifested in the call for a harsh enforcement of law and order at the time of the Red Shirt rallies in Bangkok, both in April 2009 and May 2010. This deeply felt dissatisfaction with a declining standard of living as "middle class," coupled with dissatisfaction with the populist policies and the rampant corruption of the Thaksin government, has compelled the urban middle class to join the urban-based, ultraconservative, and royalist Yellow Shirt People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) as well as to support the 2006 military coup that has ousted Thaksin from power.

Meanwhile, the rural masses, now rising to the level of lower middle class, have felt cheated as they watch their elected government being swept away by the 2006 coup and, later, attacked by protest from the PAD and by an increasingly activist judiciary. Their participation in the Red Shirt movement is, thus, seen as a means to protest the bias against them by the urban elites. Participation in the Red Shirt demonstrations and protests has helped forge a new sense of self and identity among the rural people, encouraging them to desire more equal treatment from the urban elites (Chairat 2012). Therefore, the volatility of the rural-urban divide since 2006 has shown no signs of ending anytime soon despite repeated calls for reconciliation from all sides.

At this moment, the people once referred to condescendingly as "villagers" are no longer uneducated and ignorant, as the stereotype of them would have it. Compulsory education, mass media (such as newspapers, broadcast and cable televisions, and community radio stations), mobile telephone, job mobility, and the campaigning of the Red Shirt political activists in the countryside have all worked together to transform the subservient peasant mentality of the "villagers." Anek's (1996) once famous "two democracies thesis" cannot help us to grasp the significance of the rise of the new class and its increased politicization. According to Anek, the disparity between the rural and the urban areas in Thailand has led to a different kind of political subjectivity and demands among these two groups of people. The rural electorate, with its large numbers, elects the government, while the urban middle class, although comparatively small in number, then overthrows the government using its economic and political power. The recent divide may prove the thesis wrong: this time the rural electorate, in particular the newly risen lower middle class, insists not only on forming their government but on keeping it intact as well.

As for the "Thai village," it is no longer isolated, as the philosophy of sufficiency economy would have it. Rather, the "village" is now integrated into the entire network of Thai society through the market, both local and global, and through modern communication and information technologies. As a result, in contemporary Thailand, the rural and the agricultural are no longer identical. The rural has increasingly become urban-like in all spheres of life. The rural now constitutes the mainstay of the newly risen lower middle class in Thai society, whose rise to prominence can clearly be seen in their participation in the recent Red Shirt rallies. The conceptualization of the rural-urban nexus in Thailand needs to be adjusted (Robinson 2006). Recent violence has demonstrated that Bangkok as a city has increasingly become what the "new urbanism" literature describes as "a space of encounter and connectivity" (Amin and Thrift 2002; Shapiro 2010). Recent violence in the city has turned Bangkok into a theater of the endless play of different kinds of power. The urbanization in the political and social life of the rural in Thailand blurs the traditional boundary between the rural and the urban, creating the situation of "becoming urban." Understanding recent political divide in Thai society therefore requires, in a major part, an understanding of the new complexities and intricacies of the rural-urban relationship.

12.2 Red Shirts in Action

On 10 December 2009, the antigovernmental National United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (NUDD) Red in the Land (Naewruam prachatipatai tortan phadetkarn haengchart daengthang phandin or, in short, Nor por chor), better known as the Red Shirts, launched a massive rally and demonstration at the Democracy Monument in the heart of Bangkok. 10 December was Constitution Day. The demonstrators called for a reinstatement of the 1997 Constitution, which had been abolished by the coup of 19 September 2006 (Chairat 2009). This demonstration is politically significant in at least two ways.

First, the timing is quite sensitive because it coincided with the occasion on which the Thai people celebrate His Majesty the King's birthday, which is on 5 December. Does this mean that, for the members of the Red Shirts, an antigovernment political campaign has taken precedence over showing loyalty to the King? Or does it mean that Thailand's rural masses and urban working class, who constitute the main component of the Red Shirts, are now capable of distinguishing between reality and illusion? In reality, they are the uncounted (Rancière 1999) of Thai society and politics, while the illusion is that this group is one among equals as Thai citizens. Is their determination to participate in the Red Shirt rally an attempt to make them count politically?

Second, at the 10 December rally, the Red Shirts had made explicit their determination to overthrow the Abhisit government by staging a series of massive rallies starting in January 2010. They claimed to bring more than one million protesters nationwide to dislodge the government in Bangkok. The first rally of the new round of demonstrations to unseat the Abhisit government, after their first attempt failed miserably in April 2009, began on 11 January as a protest against what was perceived to be concrete evidence of the practice of a "double standard" of justice in Thai society. The site of the protest demonstration was Khao Yai Thiang Mountain in Nakhon Ratchasima's Si Khiew district, where Privy Councilor and ex-Premier General Surayud Chulanont owned a plot of land and a house on the top of the mountain, which was alleged to encroach on a forest reserve. The Red Shirts accused the Abhisit government of discrimination for, while many villagers were being sued and forced off the land, the public prosecutors had decided to drop the forest-reserve encroachment charge against General Surayud on the grounds that the ex-Premier had had "no intention to break the law" (Bangkok Post 2010b).

As a result of Red Shirt pressure, General Surayud was ordered by the Royal Forest Department to return the controversial plot of land to the state. As a Privy Councilor and ex-Premier, the Khao Yai Thiang incident was an embarrassment not only to General Surayud but to the entire Thai establishment, who were always preaching their moral superiority over the rural folks. Similarly, the Red Shirts held a rally at Khao Soi Dao in Chanthaburi on 23 January. The idea, on that occasion, was to expose another instance of encroaching on a wildlife sanctuary and forest reserve by a business group closely associated with General Prem Tinsulanonda, a Privy Council President and former Prime Minister. According to the Red Shirt protesters, the Khao Soi Dao case served as another specific example of a "double standard" in law enforcement against the wealthy parties who were encroaching on forest-reserve land. The protestors demanded that both Prem and Surayud resign from their Privy Council posts (The Nation Online 2010a).

In addition to the charge of keeping a "double standard," the Red Shirts saw General Surayud as a nominee of its archrival, Privy Council President General Prem Tinsulanonda. General Prem himself was considered by the Red Shirts as the de facto leader of the *ammart* (aristocrats). He had meddled in Thai politics and had his hands in military reshuffling and even in several coups, which were not the business of the Privy Council President. The two men were seen by the Red Shirts as the real masterminds of the 2006 coup that toppled their beloved leader, Thaksin Shinawatra,

from power (Bangkok Post 2010a). Before the 19 September 2006 coup, this kind of criticism against the King's men was not only unthinkable but also forbidden. Prem himself had long been the untouchable in Thai society and politics. Any criticism leveled against him had been met with a fierce response from the Thai army. However, during the 2009 Songkran rally, the Red Shirts publicly established their front line, and hence, a new political space, by issuing relentless attacks on Prem. Even Prem's alleged homosexuality, had been derided openly at Red Shirt rallies without retaliation from the armed forces. By criticizing Prem, who is the King's chief advisor, the Red Shirts ran the risk of being seen as disloyal to the King.

Between 26 March and 14 April 2009, the Red Shirts staged massive rallies in front of Government House in order to bring down the Abhisit government. The climax occurred on 8 April, when Red Shirt leaders claimed that the number of protesters amounted to over one hundred thousand. The Red Shirts then announced their ultimatum that both Prem and the government resign. When these demands were not met, the demonstration turned violent. On 9 April, Red Shirt taxi drivers used their cars to block main roads and the Victory Monument, bringing the city of Bangkok to a standstill. A number of protesters then went to Pattaya to disrupt the ASEAN summit on 11 April. There was rioting in Bangkok on 12–13 April, when protesters attacked the Prime Minister's car at the Ministry of the Interior, torched public buses, and threatened to set a gas truck on fire. The government responded by invoking an emergency decree, and the military marched out to suppress the protesters, leaving two people dead and 123 injured. The event was dubbed the Songkran riot because it took place during the Songkran holidays. Military suppression of the Red Shirts only served to intensify the standoff in an already divided nation.

Prior to the Songkran riot, the Red Shirts had held gatherings in several provinces to mobilize protesters. After the riot, the Red Shirt leaders learned the hard lesson that a reliance on agents to bring protesters to a rally site in the same way that politicians rely on canvassers to acquire votes could have disastrous results. Thus, they had to be well-prepared for the new round of battle against the Abhisit government by systematically organizing the rural masses nationwide by themselves. While the Red Shirt leaders in Bangkok busily set up their political operation school (*rongrean patibutkarn karnmuaeng nor por chor*), Red Shirts throughout the country started building their networks. The political operation school is a kind of workshop in which Red Shirts are brought together to receive political training from the leaders. Once they graduate, they return to their local areas and start training other Red Shirts. Thus, Red Shirts nationwide form their own groups, then invite the leaders or their representatives in Bangkok to give them training. Their objective is to turn Thailand into a "sea of red" (*daengthang phandin*).

Moreover, a series of protests and demonstrations had been held extensively in Bangkok and the countryside as rehearsals for the real battle to come. On 26 July, a gathering of the Red Shirts in different locations nationwide was organized in celebration of Thaksin's sixtieth birthday. On 31 July, a massive rally was held at Sanam Luang to deliver the signed petitions of people nationwide in support of the petition seeking a royal pardon for Thaksin. On 17 August, a massive rally was held in Bangkok to coincide with the submission of 3.5 million signatures of Red Shirts

throughout the country, contained in 380 boxes, to His Majesty the King, asking his pardon for Thaksin. On 19 September, a large rally was organized in memory of the third anniversary of the September 2006 coup. Then came the 10 December rally on the Constitution Day mentioned above.

Before the "final battle" against the Abhisit government, which was originally scheduled to take place in late February 2010, at the same time that the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Political Office Holders was to read its verdict in the case involving Thaksin's 76 billion baht asset seizure, but which, instead, took place between 12 March to 19 May, a series of mass rallies and demonstrations throughout the country were organized. In other words, since the Constitution Day rally, the Red Shirts intensified their mobilization activities in almost every corner of the country to the point where their claim to be able to bring in one million Red Shirt protesters to Bangkok to oust the Abhisit government could not be underestimated. The whole idea behind all these multifaceted gatherings was to raise the political consciousness of the protesters by acquainting them with the issues of injustice and "double standards" by means of "speaking truth" to the *ammart* (aristocrat). In January alone, the Red Shirts mounted at least eight rallies in Bangkok and the provinces (The Nation Online 2010a; Bangkok Post Online 2010). The most notable but controversial one was on 18 January in Bangkok, where a rally took place outside the office of the Privy Council, and an open letter was submitted calling for the Council to show their colors over the Khao Yai Thiang and Khao Soi Dao cases. This was an unprecedented rally at the doorstep of the office of His Majesty the King's top advisers (The Nation Online 2010b).

More significantly, the coming together of Red Shirts at the provincial and district levels intensified after the Constitution Day rally. Almost daily since January, there were all kinds of activities conducted by provincial Red Shirts in order to bring people together and provide NUDD leaders and speakers with an opportunity to bring them up to date on the current political situation. These activities ranged from the countdown on New Year's Eve in many provinces to the selling of tickets for Chinese dinners and concerts, the setting up of the NUDD political operation school, and ordinary gatherings. All of these events were done for the sole purpose of getting people to hear Red Shirt leaders, or their representatives, talk in public meetings about their struggle against the aristocracy (*rabob ammartaya dhipatai*). People had to pay and were willing to pay to listen to these leaders talk about politics and their struggle against the *ammart*, in the same way that businessmen or academics paid for attending a seminar or workshop. Also, the people listened attentively. Those who could not attend, watched People channel, MV5 channel, or listened to the community radio, and read a variety of Red Shirt-published media such as "Voice of Thaksin," "Truth Today Magazine," "Thai Red News," and "Red Flags." The Red Shirts had to pay, at their own expense, to attend the rallies either in Bangkok or in the nearby provinces. Once at the rally sites, they had to buy everything, starting with food, water, T-shirts, jackets, and souvenirs. This was totally different from attendance at the Yellow Shirt PAD rallies, where food and water were not only free, but in plentiful supply. The Red Shirt phenomenon was both astonishing and unprecedented in Thai politics.

Before the 19 May 2010 crackdown, Thailand's Red Shirts have come close to becoming what Hardt and Negri (2004) call "multitude." They have built their own strong networks and have come to possess both "tendency/commitment" and "quality" in the Benjaminian sense (Benjamin 1992). The uncounted of Thailand have begun to recoup their lost political space. Thailand's rural masses and urban working class are no longer the politically passive people described by Hindley (1968) four decades ago. To paraphrase Rancière (1999), the part that have no part in Thailand have begun to take part, attempting to turn their noise into speech. Unfortunately, their desire for equality and justice has repeatedly been met with violent suppression. The brutal dispersal of the Red Shirt demonstrators by the Thai military in the heart of Bangkok's business district on 19 May 2010, resulting in 90 dead, nearly 2000 injured, scores of missing persons, and general unrest in the city as a consequence of such a shameful action, is just a recent manifestation of the old-style politics-of-desire suppression. Violent crackdowns on the Red Shirt demonstrators in April 2009 and May 2010 have inevitably made them feel that they are lesser citizens of the Thai nation. The two crackdowns cannot stop the simmering desire of the Red Shirts to be counted.

12.3 Who Are the Red Shirts and How Did They Rise to Prominence?

Who are these Red Shirt people? How can they come together in such large numbers and so many locations in a way that is unprecedented in the history of modern Thai politics? Perhaps, they are the first real "mass" movement that Thailand has ever produced. The prolonged protests and demonstrations of the Red Shirts have exceeded all expectations of and defied all expressions of contempt against them by the Thai urban elites, who have always looked down upon them as ignorant, uneducated, and provincial, similar to the water buffalos. This attitude of the urbanites toward the rural folks is not a view, but the value system embedded in a hierarchical structure of Thai society that favors the urban at the expense of the rural. The flood prevention to save Bangkok by means of allowing the nearby provinces to be inundated is one of the classical cases of urban bias against the rural. The mismanagement by the Yingluck government of the 2011 devastating flood is another.

Generally speaking, the Red Shirt movement originates from an assemblage of two overlapping political groups (see Pravit 2009). One is the urban group, which comprises the urban working class and the urban poor, such as taxi drivers and vendors of all sorts in Bangkok, who have moved from the rural areas, mostly from the northeast, to seek a better life in the city. These urban elements within the Red Shirts also include a small portion of the urban middle class such as office workers, university students, policemen, and military personnel, notably, General Khattiya Sawasdipol, alias Seh Daeng, who has been allegedly shot to death by the army sniper in front of the Red Shirts' rally site during the May protest. Not all of these

urban groups support Thaksin.[1] Some of them are democracy lovers who cannot tolerate the injustice that they are seeing in the form of legal and political execution against the enemies of the urban elites since the 2006 coup. Another component of the Red Shirts is the rural masses, in particular, in the north and the northeast regions. These rural elements within the Red Shirts constitute the majority of the Red Shirt people. They are mainly rural electorate whose lives are made better-off by Thaksin's populist politics but who feel cheated by the 2006 coup, which has forced their elected government from power. They are, in short, staunch supporters of Thaksin.

Together, they have formed an anti-coup and anti-dictatorship front, in 2007, under the banner of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) (Naewruam prachatipatai khabrai phadetkarn or nor por kor). Their goal has been to oust the coup-installed Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont—a former Army Chief and Privy Councilor. After their campaign against the draft charter in the national referendum in August 2007, the UDD has changed its name to the National United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (NUDD) Red in the Land (*nor por chor*). The idea has been to broaden their support base among the rural masses in the fight against, what they term, *rabob ammartaya dhipatai* (aristocracy). As for the color red, it is derived from their deployment during the campaign against the 2007 draft charter. During the campaign, red has been used to signify their opposition against the draft charter. Despite a failure to block the charter, the Red Shirts have managed to galvanize the population into casting more than 10 million votes nationwide against the draft charter. The votes have also reflected regional polarization.

After the successful installation of the military-backed Abhisit government from the Democrat Party in December 2008, the Red Shirts have continuously rallied against the government under the slogan "Red in the Land." They have vowed to

[1] The Saturday Group against Dictatorship (Khum khonwonsao maioou padetkarn) is a staunch pro-Thaksin and middle class group, while the 24th June Group (Khum yisibsi mithuna) comprises mainly former communists and university students. Members of the 19 September Network against the coup (Kleurkhrai sipklaokanya tortarn rattapraharn) are radical university students and non-governmental organization (NGO) activists. One of its members, Chotisak Onsung, a former Thammasat University student, is well-known for his campaign against standing up for the royal anthem in the cinema. The White Dove (nog pirap khao) Group takes a more radical stance against the military coup. Other urban middle class groups include Friends of the Constitution Group (Khum puen ratthammanoon), Globalized Citizen Group (Phonlamueng piwat), and People's United Front against the Coup (Naewruam prachachon tortarn rattapraharn). These groups rally regularly but separately at Sanam Luang. According to Somyot Pruksakasemsuk, one of the key leaders of the 24th June Group I has been interviewed in early January 2010; these urban groups help create "a political community" at Sanam Luang. They work very hard to raise the political consciousness of the urban working class, who attend their rallies almost every night. In addition to their political speeches, these urban groups distribute newspapers, pamphlets and leaflets and hold exhibitions against the coup. Their messages are full with contents attacking Privy Council President General Prem and the palace. They began to use the term *ammart* to attack the urban establishment. Part of the information in this note is derived from my interview with Dr. Phichit Likitgitsomboon of the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, in mid-October 2009. For more details, see Nostitz (2009).

make Thailand a "sea of red." The Red Shirts have regarded the Abhisit government as undemocratic and, thus, illegitimate because the Democrat Party does not have a majority vote in the parliament. With the help of the armed forces, the Democrats have simply stolen political power from the now-defunct People's Power Party (PPP) of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, which has obtained a majority vote in the general election in December 2007. The Red Shirts have demanded that the Abhisit government return power to the people through the dissolution of the House of Representatives. Abhisit has declined.

Along with the notion of *ammart*, the Red Shirts deploy the old notion of *phrai* or corvée labor in the traditional Thai *sakdina* society (Chairat 1988). The new use of the notion, *phrai*, which, in this context, simply means ordinary people or commoners, serves two purposes.

First, it is used as a weapon to attack Privy Council President General Prem Tinsulanonda, who always presents an image of himself as an aristocrat despite his *phrai* origin. Bringing Prem down to his social roots makes it easier for the Red Shirts to attack him. Prem, previously an invincible figure in Thai politics, has now been made to appear as just an ordinary person who can be easily criticized, verbally and symbolically, in Red Shirt rallies. Elevating the King while attacking his chief advisor has been the Red Shirts' main strategy for fighting against what they perceive to be the "aristocracy" disguised as democracy.

Second, the notion of *phrai* signifies the status of commoner among members of the Red Shirts. In other words, they want to project themselves as members of ordinary people, not the privileged *nai* or elites, in Thai society. The deployment of the notion of *phrai* in their fight against the urban elite serves as a viable strategy of the Red Shirts. In the traditional *sakdina* system, the *nai* (master, nobility, aristocrat, and royalty) exploits the *phrai* through a required periodic corvée service. The system has been abolished by King Chulalongkorn. However, its superior-inferior relations have since been institutionalized as one of the contending ideologies in Thai society. By identifying themselves as *phrai*, the Red Shirts have touched upon the prevailing structure of inequality in Thai society. Although it is not an explicit spatial notion, because *phrai* must stay with their *nai* in the city to perform the corvée service, most of the *phrai*, however, have been poor peasants. Thus, by invoking the notion of *phrai* among the Red Shirts, who are mainly rural people, the sense of spatial disparity between the rural and the urban is rendered more obvious. Moreover, by identifying themselves as *phrai*, the Red Shirts have opened a class war by shifting their fight from the level of individual (supporting Thaksin) to that of structural, namely, to dislodge the structure of inequality between the rural and the urban, and the elite and the commoners. The notions of *ammart* and *phrai* together make it easier for the lower strata to identify themselves with the Red Shirts. By placing themselves in the category of *phrai*, the Red Shirts have successfully reinvigorated the sense of inequality among the rural masses and the urban poor, who, although no longer *phrai* in the traditional sense, have long felt that they were treated by the urban elite in a manner similar to *phrai*. If the PAD has invented the term, "Thaksin regime" (*rabob Thaksin*), as its main weapon for fighting Thaksin, then the Red Shirts have recently revived the old *sakdina* social regime, under the new label of *rabob*

ammartaya dhipatai, to serve as their common foe in the fight for a return to democracy. Language, in the form of a proper name, has played a significant role in political struggles in contemporary Thailand.

Historically speaking, the two components in the Red Shirts mentioned above—the rural masses and the urban poor—are all newly emerging political subjects in Thai politics. They are the uncounted of Thailand's political space, who have begun to call for a recount. Besides, they have begun to feel the impact of being political outcastes whose votes are not counted. Both their chosen parties, the TRT and the PPP, and their chosen leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, have been rendered powerless by the urban establishment. Indeed, what Thaksin has accomplished in the realm of Thai politics has been to forge alliances with the rural masses and the urban poor, who have long been ignored by Thailand's traditional and urban elites. Since most of the urban poor are rural migrants, they do not only understand but share the experience of hardships as *phrai* with the rural masses. Together, they form a strong alliance in support of the Red Shirts.

In effect, Thaksin's populist politics, no matter how problematic it may be, has opened up the limited political space long dominated by the urban, educated elites. Thaksin has transformed the way in which Thai politics has been operating. He has given priority and privilege to people's power at the ballot box. Thaksin has instituted a totally different political game, and this has both bewildered and astonished the Thai urban elites. To use a Deleuzian term (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), Thaksin has "deterritorialized" Thai politics, disrupting the balance of power among the established institutions. The politicians, the urban working class, and the rural masses have gained more space in the new balance of power at the expense of the established urban elites, in particular the military and public bureaucracy. The coup of September 2006 has been a direct response to Thaksin's new political game.

Other urban elements in the Red Shirts such as the anti-coup groups and the democracy-loving groups add to the new breed of political activists who have no direct relation to the October generation. Neither do they have any linkage to the mobile-phone mob of the May 1992 uprising. On the contrary, they are a new generation of young "netizens" who learn by chatting on the Internet, in particular, the *rachadamnoen* chat room at the website, panthip.com—groups like the student Red Shirts and the FARED (first aid Red Shirts). After the closure of many of the websites used by them, these young Red Shirt cyber warriors move to their own website at www.thaifreenews.com. These young Red Shirts are not Thaksin supporters. However, they cannot stand to see Thai democracy being stolen either by the military or the PAD. Many young Red Shirts want to see a new era in Thai politics where there is no longer anyone orchestrating events behind the scenes, be they military strongmen or some charismatic extra-constitutional figure. Some of them want to see the monarchical institution truly outside politics.

In short, the young Red Shirts have begun to imagine a new political space for Thailand. These urban components of the Red Shirts challenge the commonly accepted belief that the Red Shirts are all Thaksin's lackeys. On the contrary, they demonstrate that there exist, within the movement, those who do not support Thaksin. Also, they need each other. In their eyes, Thaksin is a permanent scar on

the movement that must be accepted. Those who do not support Thaksin admit to the fact that he is a popular leader and, therefore, that being allied with him means being allied with the masses. As a movement, the Red Shirts are, as one newspaper columnist puts it, "an unholy alliance of many groups wanting to tear down the old political order" (Pravit 2009).

It is quite obvious, from the discussion above, that the origin of the Red Shirt movement is not in Thaksin Shinawatra per se, as is widely perceived. Rather, it stems from the alliance of multiple and different groups of rural and urban people who are opposed to the coup d'état. The pro-Thaksin groups have begun to take over the movement only after the "company of three" (*sam kloe*)—interestingly all from the south, namely, Veera Musikapong, Jatuporn Promphan, and Nattawut Saikua from the "Truth Today" (*Khamjing wannee*) television program—have established their hegemonic leadership. This was accomplished after a split within the Red Shirt leadership was reported in August 2009, when the leaders, at that time, publicly severed ties with the Jakrapob Penkair-led fraction, which had made known their preference for a communist-like violent struggle. Meanwhile, Jakrapob and his associates formed another group called "Red Siam," detaching themselves from the mainstream Red Shirt movement. The two groups parted ways over the strategy to file a petition seeking a royal pardon for Thaksin. The Jakrapob group argued that given the fact that the Red Shirts had severely attacked Prem, the chances that the Privy Council President would endorse the petition would come to naught. Moreover, the petition move was in contradiction to the Red Shirts' overall campaign against the aristocracy.

Since the majority of the Red Shirts are Thaksin supporters,[2] it is worth going into detail as to how they are awakening politically. As noted above, there are at least two interrelated groups of Thaksin supporters. One group constitutes the rural voters and the other, the urban working class and the urban poor, whose common rural origin make them tie together. Both groups are held in contempt by the urban elites because they are felt to be uninformed and ignorant and need to be guided by the urbanites. In the early stages of joining the Red Shirts, these people are often referred to as a "hired mob" and the demonstrations in which they participate as a "prepaid rally"—a reference to the use of a mobile phone with a prepaid card. Fully aware of such expressions of contempt, they have emblazoned their T-shirts with such messages as "[n]o need to hire me, I came here myself." The contempt shown by the urban elites has ignited these groups of Thaksin supporters, fueling their rapid and exponential growth. If Karl Marx has compared the peasants to "a sack of potatoes" who are unable to organize themselves to fight against the bourgeois, then in the eyes of the Thai urban elites, the Red Shirts are just a bunch of misguided

[2] According to Jaran Ditta-apichai, a Red Shirt leader I have interviewed in early January 2010, those who are pro-Thaksin constitute about 70% of the Red Shirt movement, and they are not all as "grassroots," as is commonly perceived. On the contrary, Jaran thinks that the majority of the Red Shirts are the "lower middle class" living in the cities throughout the country. Most of them are retirees who want to see a better Thailand for the next generation (see also Jaran 2009).

people who are easily seduced by Thaksin's populism. At the height of the Songkran rally, one newspaper columnist has said of them, "[t]he barbarians are at the gate" (The Nation Online 2009).

The Red Shirts' main complaint is the undemocratic nature of Thai society and politics. In short, the Red Shirts are offering concrete evidence of what they feel constitutes a "double standard" in Thai society and politics. Angered at what they perceive as systematic injustices since the September coup, the Red Shirts have, painstakingly, built a case that allows them to take the moral high ground and promote the righteousness of their cause. No wonder that the number of converts to the movement grows daily. Unfortunately, the Thai urban establishment has not only ignored them but also consistently antagonized them, either by refusing to acknowledge the merits of their complaints or to suppress them violently. The movement has grown, steadily, from the supporters of Thaksin and the opponents of the coup to become a crusade for democracy. The Red Shirts are demanding justice for all, not the unequal treatment inherent in the aristocratic social system expressed in the form of the *ammart* and *phrai* relations.

12.4 The Politics of Aesthetics[3]

I am struck by the fact that the same script is being read by the Red Shirt protesters and their leaders over the same theme of the *ammart* holding to "double standards." However, this does not mean that the Red Shirts are being programmed by their leaders. If the real world they encounter is not in accordance with what their leaders talk about on the rally stage, in the workshops of the operation school, on People channel, MV5 channel, community radio, or in the Red Shirt-published media, then it would be extremely difficult to mobilize the Red Shirts to such a level that they are now. Furthermore, to say that the Red Shirts are being hired or misled by Thaksin is an oversimplification. In other words, the Red Shirts have experienced, for themselves, the injustices that they have protested against since the September coup. Put another way, what has happened in the real world of Thai politics since the September coup has been an eye-opener for the Red Shirts.[4] Their leaders have simply articulated and simplified the whole situation for them in the form of a binary opposition between aristocracy and democracy. The theme on the rally stage always goes something like this: "[S]top the double standards, overthrow the aristocracy," "[n]o justice, no peace," and "[r]ed in the land, democracy in the country." The three pillars of Thailand's dominant ideology (nation, religion, king) are not sufficient to

[3] The heading of this section is borrowed from the title of a book by Rancière (2004).

[4] One of the noted incidents that serves as an eye-opener or awakening (*ta sawang)* for the Red Shirts is when Queen Sirikit attended the funeral of a member of their archrival PAD in October 2008. This event was interpreted as an endorsement to the PAD and, at the same time, an abandonment of the Red Shirts.

satisfy the sensibility of the Red Shirts. There is a need to open up a space for a new pillar called democracy.

To put it in a Rancièrian perspective, the Red Shirts have adopted a particular "partition of the sensible" in their fight against the Thai urban elites. Rancière's (1999) aesthetics focuses on the way in which spheres of experience or sensibilities are partitioned. This partition determines, among other things, who are counted and who are uncounted as legitimate members of a society. Rancière (1999) differentiates between political subjectivation and identification (pp. 35–36). The former is aimed at disrupting the social hierarchies, while the latter complies with them. Therefore, politics, for Rancière (1999), is characterized by a process of subjectivation in which a given identity is relinquished through a process of dis-identification in order to open up a new space where equality can be realized. In other words, politics, for Rancière (1999), refers to an interruption of the dominant social code to pave the way for a new subject to emerge. In this regard, Rancière (1999, pp. 29–30) reserves the term "politics" for specific and relatively rare forms of action, those that disrupt social hierarchies in order to create equality.

Since every society creates its own uncounted subject culminating in "the wrong," politics then begins when the part that has no part decide to take part, turning their noise into speech. For Rancière (1999), politics is essentially an eruption of the rule to demand the recount of the uncounted. Rancière (1999), thus, assigns a significant role to the uncounted in his democratic politics. For him, the uncounted is not a failure or an obstacle, but rather, a necessary condition for democratic equality. Thus, the objective of Rancière's (1999) politics is to "bring the nonrelationship into relationship and give place to the nonplace" (p. 89). Similar to politics, democracy, for Rancière (1999), is reserved for a moment when there is an interruption in the order of things that society establishes. Before the emergence of politics in the Rancièrian sense, everybody follows the rule set forth by a society or by "police logic." However, Rancière's (1999) politics begins when this rule is questioned. Rancière's (1999, 2004) politics of aesthetics is, thus, an attempt to create a new political subjectivation derived from a new partition of the sensible, whereby there is a new space for the uncounted. In his recent interview, Rancière (2012: 289) has this to say: "The aesthetic regime means a rupture with what came before, the mimetic regime."

Consequently, it is argued, here, that the Red Shirts in Thai society could be regarded as the uncounted in the Rancièrian sense of the term, and their politics is exactly the kind of politics of aesthetics described above. The Thai rural electorate or grassroots (*rakyar*), who constitute the major portion of the Red Shirts, are the most notable example of the uncounted in Thai politics. Before an election, their votes are counted as one among equals. After an election, if the result is not satisfactory to the urban elites, the rural voters are suddenly discounted as having been no more than prey to the vote-buying practices of politicians or victims of Thaksin's populism. As elections are embedded in Thai politics as a result of the democratization process under the 1997 Constitution (Kuhonta 2008), they enable elected politicians and political parties with the support of the rural electorate to take over a greater share of the power from the army, the bureaucracy, and the urban elites. The loss of power

to elected politicians not only astonishes the Thai urban elites but also forces them to uncount the election, the elected politicians, and the rural electorates.

Through a populist platform, Thaksin has been able to garner the support and loyalty of the urban working class and the rural electorate, who have had little influence over national politics in the past. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to state that the rural masses and the urban working class have recently learned, from Thaksin's populist politics, how to use electoral democracy to overcome the deep-seated state negligence. The Thai rural electorate, the uncounted, and the people who, traditionally, have been without voice and who have, until now, been politically invisible have become increasingly visible as a result of Thaksin's populist politics. Thaksin's populist politics has repartitioned the political sensibility of the rural masses and the urban working class, making them realize that their votes really have been counted.

In short, Thaksin's populist politics has increased the political consciousness of rural voters nationwide. These voters have begun to realize the importance of their votes and vote "rationally," that is, for a party that responds effectively to their needs and demands. Unfortunately, this pattern of voting has been interpreted by the urban elites as the "selling of votes" for short-term tangible gain under the banner of Thaksin's populism. Thus, elections partition, at the same time, both time and power. During election time, power is located in the rural masses, who are the majority of the country. During this time, the rural electorate elects their leaders and their government through the ballot box. However, after the election, the urban elites, dissatisfied with the outcome, enact their power to overrule the mandate of the rural electorate, as has been demonstrated by the September coup, the activism of PAD, and the maneuvering of the *ammart*. Elections, under such circumstances, will definitely serve as both a means of partitioning the sensible of the Thai voters and, at the same time, a means to reflect the Thai voters' partition of the sensible.

Red Shirt campaigns and rallies of all sorts act as a viable means of partitioning the sensibilities of their members. During their participation in rallies, Red Shirt members can see, hear, feel, sense, and think to the point that a particular partition of the sensible among them emerges—namely, the partition between the aristocracy and democracy. In this partition, the *ammart* usurps democracy from the Thai people. The identity and consciousness of the Red Shirts have been formed, by and large, through the work of the Mobile Truth Today program led by the movement's "company of three"—Veera, Jatuporn, and Nattawut. Since the Songkran riot, People channel and MV5 channel have played a pivotal role in strengthening the identity and consciousness of the Red Shirts nationwide via their various television programs.

With their new political subjectivation, the Red Shirts are able to embark on a new mission of deterritorializing Thai politics by opening new political space for ordinary people. They have successfully entered into forbidden territories in Thailand unknown and inaccessible to them before. The relentless attack on Privy Council President General Prem is a prime example of an act of entering into these forbidden territories. The exposure of Privy Councilor General Surayud's encroaching on the forest reserve on Khao Yai Thiang Mountain is another. Here, it is the nature

of the Red Shirt struggle to create a new space for "the political" to exist in Thai society in the sense that they want to go beyond the established norms in Thai society. In other words, Red Shirt protest and demonstration create the situation in which disagreement over a certain issue is made possible, leading to the restaging of the new space for dialogue which has not existed before.

Red Shirt consciousness is the consciousness of commoners or *phrai* who understand that their plight is derived from the structure of inequality reformulated by them through the traditional *ammart-phrai* relation. It is, thus, a kind of class struggle in a different form. They do not talk about the proletarian revolution against the capitalist class in the Marxian sense. However, they talk about the equality and justice for all *phrai*. This is simply because the composition of the Red Shirts has come from different groups of people who share the same *phrai* consciousness. Their struggle is not a class struggle *per se* because their driving force is not purely economic. It is also a political struggle whose driving force is the logic of the political in a Rancièrian sense, namely, to create the space that does not exist before. In short, it is a new politics of desire for equality and democracy conducted by the uncounted, long neglected, and suppressed by the Thai urban elites.

It is true that there exists a long list of struggles for democracy in Thailand. However, these previous attempts have been led by the privileged classes: the civil-military bureaucrats that overthrew the absolute monarchy in 1932, the university students that toppled the military regime in 1973, and the urban middle class that dislodged the attempted military rule in 1992. It is also very true that Thailand has not been lacking of people's movement from below such as peasant and labor movements. Nonetheless, the Red Shirts are different in two critical ways. First, theirs is a movement of the unprivileged class—the rural masses and the urban poor. Second, they are more political than economic in their quest for equality. They do not ask for specific tangible interests. Rather, they attack, directly, at the structure of inequality in Thai society, which manifests itself in the form of "double-standard" practices between the rural and the urban, the rich and the poor, and the privileged and the unprivileged classes. The Red Shirt movement has, at least, demonstrated to the Thai urban elites that the latter's ideological grip on the masses has begun to crumble (Connors 2011; Glassman 2011). The unprivileged in Thailand have begun to see through the illusion that portrays Thai society as open, benevolent, and inclusive.

By calling for social justice, the Red Shirt struggle moves from the level of individual to that of structural. The Red Shirts have shown, through their protests and rallies, that inequality in Thai society is structural, manifesting itself as an aristocratic system disguised as democracy. The Red Shirts do not fight against the urban elites, dubbed the *ammart* per se, but rather against their close allies such as the army, the judiciary, and the PAD. The Red Shirts have been successful in changing the political subjectivation of the rural masses and the urban working class from the former hierarchical orientation to equality and justice for all. The Red Shirts argue, convincingly, that the aristocracy is a system of "double standards" while democracy is a "single-standard" system. If PAD activism has led to the resurgence of the aristocracy, then the Red Shirt movement would probably lead to democracy. The overall impact of the Red Shirt movement has been to lay down a completely

new partition of the political sensible among the Thai villagers and rural electorate. By participating in the Red Shirt movement, the Thai rural masses and the urban working class have been elevated to the status of a new political subject with a new political subjectivation ready to penetrate into the restricted zone of Thai politics.

The Red Shirt struggles have added a new reason, new meaning, and new logic to their voices, rendering them to become a new speaker with an ability to disagree with the hierarchical "police logic." This, then, would make them equal to other members of a society. In this regard, the Red Shirt movement is an aesthetic movement because it is an attempt to reconfigure the existing partition of the sensible in Thai politics by replacing the hierarchical (police) logic with equality. Their politics makes visible the invisible in Thai politics, in particular the rural electorate. The invisibility of the uncounted, or the wrong, cannot be easily resolved by issuing a new law, calling for reconciliation, or staging a military coup. Rather, it needs to be resolved through the principle of equality, which is another name of democracy (Hewlett 2010).

12.5 Conclusion

Despite the shadow that Thaksin casts over the movement, the Red Shirts have been able to enter new political turf. They have begun to form a clear-cut vision of Thai society and politics. Democracy, for them, is not confined to elections or a constitution. Rather, it is a matter of getting rid of the antidemocratic *ammart*, who are the major obstacle to Thai democracy. Understanding this vision is critical for an understanding of the relationship between the Red Shirts and the Rancièrian politics of aesthetics. In the past, the rural masses and the urban working class, or the uncounted, have been blamed for being an obstacle to Thai democracy. Now, the urban elites—dubbed the *ammart*—are to be regarded as the real obstacle of Thai democracy (Tamada 2008). This new partition of the sensible in Thai politics has emerged from the struggle of the Red Shirts. It is a new partition in the sense that the locus of the problem of Thai democracy has been shifted from the ignorant, rural masses to the educated, urban elites.

Furthermore, the Red Shirts have entered a kind of process that Esteva (1999) has called the "politics of no," experiencing Rancière's process of political subjectivation. They have stood up firmly to say "no" to the *ammart*, becoming a free subject and not *phrai*. They have said loudly and clearly, through their numerous rallies, that "enough is enough." They will no longer endure suppression and exploitation at the hands of the *ammart.* "No justice, no peace," as they always announce during their rallies. Since the Songkran riots, they have come to fear no threat from the *ammart* in their fight for democracy, be it lèse majesté charges, a show of force by the army, or intimidation of all sorts by the government, in particular, the invocation of the emergency decree whenever they demonstrate, a threat to stage another coup by the armed forces, or the charges of terrorism and the involvement in the antimonarchy movement created after the May crackdown. At this moment, they are waiting

anxiously for the right moment to strike back and to recoup their losses from the two violent crackdowns. They are, in short, in the process of redrawing Thai political space to make themselves fully counted and, thus, heard.

However, their shortcomings are plenty too. The Red Shirts lack support and understanding from the international community and the Thai mainstream media. In addition, they need to build alliance with the youth groups. Most of the Red Shirt members are women and aged. The most serious weakness of the Red Shirts is the lack of unity among the leaders, leaving it with no clear-cut vision to carry the movement forward. Moreover, the Red Shirt leaders have no concrete plan to control the mob. The May unrest has been a recent living proof of this inability. Furthermore, the Red Shirts lack a concrete plan concerning an alternative form of government after being able to topple the Abhisit government from power. For example, they lack a concrete plan on what kind of democracy they would like to project for the future of Thailand. In other words, the Red Shirts call for a regime change but offer no policy format to address the existing structural disparity. Without a long-term and viable project, their struggles run the risk of being seen as a short-term struggle to bring Thaksin back to power. The removal of the *ammart* and the Abhisit government from the political scene does not mean much if the entire structure of inequality is still intact.

After the violent crackdown in May, the Red Shirts were temporarily left without leaders and, thus, became marginalized and fragmented. Nineteen of their leaders have been arrested. Their idol, Seh Daeng, has been killed at the protest site. The emergency law in Bangkok and other provinces has been imposed. It remains to be seen whether the Red Shirt movement would be eliminated. However, several incidents have pointed in the opposite direction. Red Shirts in the provinces are still active. Their networks throughout the country have not been touched by the May crackdown, although the killing of some provincial Red Shirt leaders have been reported (Piyaporn 2010). The desire for equality and justice remains strong among the Red Shirts. This could be seen clearly in the growth in numbers of the "Red Villages for Democracy" in many parts of the country after the May suppression. There is, thus, no clear signal that the Red Shirts will be subdued anytime soon. Once this sleeping giant is awoken, it is extremely difficult to put it back to sleep again. The most important question is this: when and how will the giant strike back and at what cost? With the second defeat in 2 years, the Red Shirts need to do a serious self-evaluation concerning their future move. However, one thing is clear, that is, that it is ineffective and useless to deploy violence to inflict dramatic political change while the army acts as a supporter of the sitting government. Under such circumstances, symbolic struggle seems to be one of the most viable options.[5] Unarguably, the Red Shirts deserve a space to live with dignity and integrity, like their urban counterparts.

[5] The Red Shirts have staged a number of symbolic protests after the May crackdown. These include a rally at the Ratchaprasong intersection and several provinces to mark the fourth anniversary of the September 2006 coup and the 6-month remembrance of their fellow protesters killed, injured, and imprisoned from the May crackdown. Starting in early 2011 when the emergency decree in Bangkok and nearby provinces was revoked, the Red Shirts seem to be able to reunite

12.5.1 Postscript

Once the outcome of the 3 July 2011 general election was made known, the Red Shirts were cheerfully relieved. Their long-awaited victory has finally come to fruition. The Pheu Thai Party they support won 265 of the 500 parliamentary seats and has formed a coalition government with 4 small parties under Thaksin's younger sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, as Prime Minister, replacing the rival Abhisit government of the Democrat Party. To a certain extent, the result of this election signals the changing pattern of rural voters in general and the Red Shirts in particular. Thai rural electorates are no longer ignorant but politically and democratically awakened to know full well what they really want (Pichai 2011; Fuller 2011a, b). They are no longer willing to accept a Bangkok-based patriarchal system and a military coup d'état. The result of the election is, thus, a part of the Red Shirts' attempt to rebalance Thailand's hierarchical structure (Fuller 2011a; Mydans and Fuller 2011).

Apparently, this victory was earned, in a major part, through two sacrifices—the "bloody" Songkran of 2009 and the "cruel" May of 2010 discussed above. With these collective memories, it is certain that the Red Shirts will definitely guard their new found territory vividly. The huge gatherings of the Red Shirts on 25 February 2012 over the theme—"[a]gainst the coup, amend the constitution"—at the Bonanza resort in Nakhon Ratchasima province, one of their strongholds in the northeastern region, are nothing but a show of strength to protect this boundary as well as to support the Pheu Thai's attempt to amend the constitution. Besides, each Red Shirt victim of the 2010 political unrest will receive the government's controversial compensation payment up to 7.5 million baht for the family who lost their loved ones during the unrest. Beginning in March 2012, the court will start its hearings on the cases of the Red Shirts killed in the unrest. As a movement, the Red Shirts have successfully redrawn Thai political space to make themselves heard.

However, the relationship between the Red Shirts and the Pheu Thai government may take a different turn. For example, the critical element in the movement may want to push for the whole truth regarding the May crackdown rather than stopping at the superficial reconciliation process. Furthermore, some of them are uneasy to see General Prem come to terms with Yingluck. Prem presided over the government function to thank those who supported the government during the recent flood

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themselves completely. In late February, 2011 the Red Shirt leaders have been released on bail after being imprisoned for 9 months. It is thus believed that the Red Shirts will definitely intensify their pressure on the urban elites to realize their goals.

Indeed the Red Shirts had successfully performed one of the finest symbolic demonstrations on 12 March 2010 when numerous members of the Red Shirts throughout the country spectacularly moved their processions to Bangkok to pressure the Abhisit government to dissolve the parliament. During that very day, all roads, rails, and rivers leading to Bangkok were filled with members of the Red Shirts, making the whole nation become "a sea of red." For more details on this spectacular event, see Chada (2011). For details of the Red Shirt rally to mark the first anniversary of this very day, see Bangkok Post (2011).

control, particularly the military. A number of the Red Shirts find it hard to believe that suddenly Prem's statute has been shifted from chief villain to being a good guy (Avudh 2012). As the Yingluck government has adopted a hard-line stand on royal insults (The Guardian Online 2011) and Thaksin and the Pheu Thai Party are distancing themselves from those seen as being anti-royal, notably the Thammasat University's Nitirat (Enlightened Jurists) group who campaign vigorously for the revision of the lèse majesté law, the rough path ahead between them seems more likely. This is because throughout their campaigns the Red Shirts have projected themselves as a movement that has begun to reposition its stance toward the established institutions and values in Thai society. However, the acts of the Yingluck government and Thaksin himself seem to undermine this image. Therefore, it is interesting to see how this paradoxical relationship between them will turn out in the future. As an emerging political force to be reckoned with, the Red Shirts's support is undoubtedly vital to the survival of the Yingluck government and the possibility for Thaksin to return home.

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Chapter 13
The City as Promise and Ruin: The Supernatural and Urban Change in Chiang Mai

Andrew Alan Johnson

13.1 Introduction

Aong worked as a night watchman at a high-rise building in one of Chiang Mai's quickly growing suburbs. A Shan,[1] he had fled from Burma as a child and was raised in Mae Ay—a town on the Thai-Burmese border. As an adult (Aong was in his early 20s), he moved to Chiang Mai—the largest city in Northern Thailand and, outside of Bangkok's metropolitan region, the second largest city in the country. Without formal refugee status and without a listing as a registered "hill-tribe" member, Aong faced a host of difficulties involved in life in the city: he was subject to forced bribe or deportation to a hostile Burma should the police discover him, he lived in a squatter's community on the outskirts of the city without running water, and he was working outside of any sort of labor law. Each of these contributed to the instability of his life in the city and each must have weighed on his mind. One of these was likely the cause of his eventual disappearance as, after 3 months of working every night, 7 days a week, he suddenly vanished without a word to me, his friends, or his employer. However, as I sat with Aong as he worked, eating noodle soup and drinking instant coffee together, his chief concern about the city was its ghosts.

The relationship between the city and spirits might strike readers unfamiliar with Thai urbanscapes as strange. Ghosts in my United States hometown of Suffolk, Virginia, a region with a 400-year history of English settlement, are badges of historical legitimacy. Creaky steps and unexplained drafts tie buildings in the city to

[1] The term "Shan," *tai yai* in Siamese (Central) Thai, or *tai* in their own language, refers to a group of people in Northeastern Burma and parts of Northern Thailand practicing wet-rice agriculture and Theravada Buddhism. Shan are linguistically, religiously, and historically very close to other Tai groups such as Lao, Northern Thai, or Siamese Thai.

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historical events, especially those national narratives of the American Revolution or Civil War. Chiang Mai has twice the sufficient historical *bona fides*; Chiang Mai has, over the course of 700 years, been the capital of the Lanna principalities as well as an important node in Burmese, Shan, Thai, Lao, and Yunnanese trading networks. However, despite Chiang Mai's reliance upon its history as a continual reference point for tourism as well as civil society, its ghosts speak more to the newly changing urban landscape rather than nostalgia for an imagined past.

Mary Beth Mills (1995) notes how fears about malevolent ghosts come to stand in for fears about modernity for rural, Northeastern Thais. Mills shows how being "modern" (*thansamay*) becomes more and more an object of desire but, at the same time, more and more economically out of reach for workers relying on often duplicitous middlemen and an increasingly variable overseas labor market. As a result, when news about the deaths of overseas workers due to sudden nocturnal death syndrome (SUNDS) arrived in rural Isaan, villagers' fears about the uncertainty of modernity manifested as a panic over "widow ghosts" preying on young men of precisely the age to be engaging in overseas labor. These ghosts took the form of young, beautiful women, who would seduce sleeping men and kill them through sexual excess. In Mills's (1995) formulation, the unexpressed doubt over whether or not modernity would in fact be a source of prosperity for rural farmers gave uncanny animation to images that they had seen on television and in advertisements: the fashionable, sexualized, modern woman made suddenly and inexplicably murderous paralleled how the modern lifestyle became suddenly and inexplicably both desirable and dangerous.

I recalled Mills's (1995) study as I listened to Aong talk about ghosts haunting the Chiang Mai cityscape. After telling me how a girl who lived in his squatter compound was possessed by a wandering spirit—a possession that manifested in shouting fits and violent spasms until an exorcist could be located, Aong pointed across a parking lot to a nearby nightclub that catered to wealthy, local youths. "You heard about the shooting, right?" Aong asked me, referring to a fight that had broken out the week before. A police officer—the son of a sergeant—had flown into a drunken rage at a neighboring table of youths who had continually bumped into him while dancing. The officer pulled out his gun and pointed it at the group, and when the officer's friend—a fellow police officer—intervened, the friend was shot and killed. The officer fled, escaping prosecution through his family links within the police force (or so it was assumed). "His blood sat in the corner of the club," Aong continued, "and they [the club owners] were too cheap to hire a monk [to exorcise the place]. When the club re-opened, a girl was dancing [in the club]. Her foot kept stepping on the place where the blood was on the floor. Then, when she left, she was struck by a car and killed."[2] I pressed him to make explicit the connection between the blood and the traffic accident, and he grew frustrated, "It was the ghost of the officer! They were too cheap to hire a monk!"

[2] I have no way of verifying Aong's story. While the shooting made it into the newspapers, traffic accidents are often so commonplace that they go unreported.

Aong contrasts his own compound's commonsense approach to ghosts to the nightclub's. While his community pooled money together to hire an exorcist[3] in order to solve its supernatural crisis, the nightclub owners sought to simply clean the tangible, visible stain of violence and ignore its intangible trace. This lack of attention or care is something which, to Aong, made the city so dangerous; to him, it is quite possible and even likely that similar oversights exist throughout the city, leading to the proliferation of hidden dangers lurking beneath the city's modern veneer. Like the Northeastern farmers about whom Mills writes, for Aong, promises of urban prosperity imperfectly conceal a hidden violence.

Aong's fears are not unique to him. As I detail below, many of my informants expressed concern over the supernatural manifestations of past injustice or inattention in the city. Such reports came from men and women, across all of Chiang Mai's social classes.[4] However, such a conception of the city as a corrupted source of violence and ruin runs counter to other narratives, where the city contains within it the seeds of promise and prosperity, potential also articulated via the supernatural. In the early 1980s, Walter Irvine (1984) noted the sharp increase in cults of tutelary spirits (*phii jao naay*[5]) in the city of Chiang Mai, spirits which channeled the power of charismatic people or places in order to increase wealth, peace, and prosperity—actions that directly counteracted the malevolent influences of ghosts like those described by Aong. In each of these discourses, it is the intangible aspect of the city which is of the most concern.

The ghost that Aong describes does not appear like something out of a Thai horror film, stalking and menacing its victims. Rather, it remains invisible and intangible. It kills by acting upon chance and accident: the victim in Aong's story never directly sees the ghost; rather, she is struck by a car. The connection is coincidental to an outside listener: fatal car accidents are commonplace in Chiang Mai, especially given the combination of youth, alcohol, and fast traffic. But for Aong, the proximity of this person to death in the nightclub and her subsequent death are unmistakably linked. In Aong's conceptualization, some insubstantial force—a force he associates with the dangers of inconsiderate and cheap neighbors—had acted. In this chapter,

[3] *Moh phii*, literally "ghost doctor," denotes someone who specializes in dealing with malevolent spirits. These are often monks, although the practice is frowned upon by the national Buddhist administration (*sangha*) as being overly superstitious. Non-monk *moh phii* are also often villains in films, where they capture evil spirits to use for nefarious purposes.

[4] Elsewhere (Johnson 2010), I detail some of the differences that do exist in Chiang Mai's ghost stories. While most of my informants' related ghost stories, wealthier Thais, especially those that followed the regular assortment of Thai horror films, often articulated ghosts as appearing in a corporeal fashion, while those who did not regularly follow these described ghosts as causing sickness and misfortune in a more invisible fashion. Most feature a young woman, which perhaps reflects both the wide presence of young female ghosts in Thai media, e.g., movies such as *Shutter* or *Alone*, as well as the role of Thai women as the symbols of modernity, as Mills (1995) relates.

[5] This term is one of many, e.g., *phii meng, phii mot,* and *mae mot*, in the elaborate bestiary of Northern Thai possessing spirits, but I use *phii jao naay* here as this group seems to be most associated with the rapid increase in possession in the city.

I trace these two discourses: the city as a source of promise and prosperity and the city as a source of destruction and ruin, and I show how each casts lights upon the hopes and anxieties of urban dwellers.

13.2 The City

For Aong, and for those other urban dwellers who fear a plague of the "ghosts of bad deaths," the ghosts reflect fears about a lack of order. The city, in this imagination, is a place where social rules and conventions are skirted and, as a result, calamity is visited upon the residents. This idea of urban disorder is the inverse of premodern ways of conceiving the city as a bright spot of order in a chaotic rural hinterland.

The Thai term for "city," *meuang*, means far more than the sum total of a city's infrastructure, population, and political life. *Meuang's* distinction from other terms for settlements lies in the idea of the *meuang* being a central point in a system famously termed the "mandala," following Wolter's (1982) description of an "often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security" (pp. 16–17). The contrast between *meuang* and other terms for settlements in Thailand's north, such as *baan* or *mae*, can best be brought out with the addition of the word "outer" (*nohk*). *Baan nohk* is a pejorative term akin to the English "the boondocks": farmland without refinement, settlement without sophistication. *Meuang nohk*, in contrast, means a foreign land, not necessarily an unsophisticated or uncultured place, but one under the subject of a different reign. The implication is that a *meuang*, unlike a *baan*, has a center; *meuang* have culture and civilization and radiate this culture and civilization out to the countryside, while a *baan* lacks urbanity without the influence of the *meuang*.

This distinction becomes important for understanding Northern Thai conceptions of urban charisma. *Meuang* are animated sites: centers of civilization, refinement (to varying degrees), and spiritual antennae that radiate prosperity and wealth to the countryside. They are the home of politics, of religion, and of rulers. They have within them a spiritual and civilizational force that the countryside and wilderness lack. The power and political control of the *meuang*, personified in the form of the ruler and the guardian spirits of the city, brought protection and prosperity out to the countryside and neighboring towns (Thongchai 1994, p. 81) much as it drew in labor power from neighboring rural areas. This charismatic power, though, is one which is not simply aesthetic. Rather, like the inverse of Aong's idea of an inchoate supernatural misfortune, the city's guardian spirits and charismatic power are conceived of as having the ability to cause prosperity and stave off calamity.

This quality of the city originally found its source in kingship. As the putative center of the galactic polity, kings were the ultimate source of charisma.[6] The power

[6] In Thai, this concept is best understood as *baaramii*.

of the urban center and, by extension, the center's ruler was always in competition with that of other centers and needed careful symbolic and spiritual maintenance in order to remain potent. The system of guardian spirits and sacred sites worked in tandem with the figure of the ruler and sites associated with the ruler, and each was a place of both hope and anxiety for its residents; a city without charismatic power would lose the ability to attract inhabitants, lose fame, and diminish.

But how was such power made tangible? How was the idea of an attractive, powerful city articulated to its residents and visitors? Lanna-era[7] Chiang Mai shared a model of urban space with other cities in the Theravada Buddhist world including Kandy in Sri Lanka and Angkor in Cambodia (Duncan 1990). These cities were built to be models of the heavens in miniature, as James Duncan (1990) wrote in his study of Kandy:

> Territorial space was structured in the image of celestial space. Many royal cities were explicitly built to represent the cosmos in miniaturized forms, with the central part of the city representing the celestial city of the gods, high upon the cosmic mountain. These cities were built as a square or rectangle and fixed at the cardinal directions. The square form of the city was actually conceptualized as lying within a *mandala*, a circular cosmic diagram fixed at the four cardinal directions and anchored by a fifth point in its center.
>
> By paralleling the sacred shape of the *mandala*, these cities were transformed into microcosms of the cosmos. The king, by situating his palace at the center of this *mandala*, occupied the center of the universe, and the summit of Mount Meru [the mountain of the gods], and hence maintained the liminal status of a god on earth.[8] By occupying this position at the center of the cosmos, he became a *cakravarti* who could control the world through the magical power of parallelism. (p. 49)

Duncan's description fits Chiang Mai perfectly: Chiang Mai possesses the same square walls, central palace, and sites of religious significance at the city's gates at each of the cardinal directions as well as the bastions at its four corners. In fact, as I describe below, spirit mediums in Chiang Mai still perform rites of propitiation for the city's guardian spirits at each of these nine sites (four gates, four corners, and a central point). In Chiang Mai, the city also contained a bodily metaphor: the northernmost gate was the monarch's head and the southwesternmost gate, his foot, or, in some readings, his anus. But Duncan's reading is meant to be a "kingly reading" of the city, one full of metaphor and meaning through religiously inspired symbolism. How else might urban residents, especially those nonroyals or those little versed in cosmological allegories, have experienced the urban space?

For a more typical resident of the city, Chiang Mai was marked by the segregation of the populace into discrete sections of the city. The city's center, bounded by the walls and sacralized by the *sima* stones buried underneath them in the same way that

[7] Chiang Mai—the capital of Lanna—was founded in the late thirteenth century AD and became an integral part of Siam in the late nineteenth century. In between these times, it was occasionally independent and occasionally a tributary state of Burmese or Siamese powers.

[8] It is worth noting that the common Northern term for king—*jao*—is identical to that used for higher spirits and gods.

marks a Buddhist temple, was a place reserved for those directly under the king's power. To the east and south of the city stretched an area in between the central walls and an outer earthen rampart where Chiang Mai's war captives (*kha*) were settled. These were largely artisans from present-day Yunnan, Burma, or Laos, who, carried back to Chiang Mai after a successful wartime excursion, were bonded to a particular temple and ordered to manufacture luxury goods used as tribute to Siam or Burma. Kawila—the warlord who restored Chiang Mai after the end of its Burmese occupation—was describing the action of collecting these "temple servants" (*kha wat*) when he proclaimed that his duty was to "gather vegetables to put in baskets [and] gather servants [*kha*] to put in the *meuang*." For each of these groups, those who would, at least after the mid-nineteenth century, become known as "city people," or *khon meuang*, including both freeborn citizens of the city as well as *kha*, their residence was mapped onto the monarch's body: the monarch himself lived in the central-north part of the city (the head), regular subjects lived in the central part of the city, and the lowliest lived in the southwestern corner—the "foot" of the city.

Those who were not *khon meuang* lived outside of the walls. To the west of the city, toward the mountain of Doi Suthep, was a monastery (Wat Suan Dok) where foreign monks were housed, and to the east of the city, on the Ping River, was an area for foreign merchants (and where the city's Chinese, Hindu, and Muslim populations currently live). The segregation of different wards for different populations was such that those not subject to the kings' power were excluded from entering the confines of the central urban square. For instance, Robert Schomburgk, the British consul general in 1857, reported being prohibited from the inner wall of the city and, instead, had to conduct all of his business near the river, well outside the sacred walls (Vatikiotis 1984, p. 45; Wijeyewardene 1986, p. 136).

With movement so restricted within the urban environment, one was continually subject to the order defined by and for the monarch. This was an order which placed one at the bottom of a hierarchy of power, but which "saw," recognized, and categorized one as an integral part of the whole. As Thanet Aphornsuvan (1998) writes, referring to changing ideas of "freedom" in Thai, such an order was one which lent definition to the individual:

> Freedom from other people, especially potential supporters and patrons, was not desirable or even imaginable. It was tantamount to suicide; one [who was entirely 'free' of connections with other] was looked upon as a *thuan* (raw, wild, untamed) person. (p. 170)

To be urban, then, and not to be wild, was to be dependent, to be enmeshed within the folds of obligation and duty.

The picture that I have painted thus far is one which is relatively stagnant and reflects an idealized order rather than adequately representing the continual shocks and deformations which this order must have taken over Lanna's long history. But none of these shocks was as great as the dissolution of the Lanna monarchy as Lanna changed from being a tributary (but still locally administrated) state to becoming an integral part of Siam during the turn of the twentieth century. As Bangkok exerted central authority over the city plan, the royal palace was converted to a

women's prison,[9] and the remaining royals were moved outside of the city walls, to the riverbank next to Chiang Mai's foreign consulates. As such, metaphors of urban order, such as body and the ritual segregation of space, no longer made sense. What remnants of the living royal family that remained lost their political and ritual functions, and so, the role of the source of Chiang Mai's magico-religious power moved entirely to the guardian spirits of the city.

Yet these too faced a regime eager to site the locus of charismatic power in Bangkok. With reforms to the Buddhist *sangha* aimed at purging "superstitious" influences such as spirit mediumship from the archive of Thai religious practice (see White 2005), spirit mediums of Chiang Mai's guardian deities found themselves barred from practicing in the city's most central temples—indeed, today, most temples explicitly bar mediums. The central rites of propitiation have moved to the plaza in the center of the city, where the Three Kings Monument now stands (Johnson 2011).

The deformations of the time are reflected in chronicles written during this time period. As the sources of foreign power—those settlements ringing the city—grew and the city's center stagnated, one anonymous author of a palm-leaf text wrote: "[t]hey built a new city swallowing the old. As if Rahu swallowed the old city" (Wijeyewardene 1986, p. 88). The image is evocative: Rahu is a demon who is just a disembodied head. Something swallowed by him, then, remains within his throat, still visible but ringed by his demonic visage. This is, in popular Thai folklore, what happens during an eclipse: Rahu swallows the sun or moon, and it emerges from his severed neck. Another author, purportedly referring to the Burmese takeover of 1558 but making frequent references to the teak trade and tax burdens—chief concerns among the late nineteenth-century Lanna citizenry—writes about the result of destroying the northeastern bastion of the city wall: "[the city became] a defiled place, as if the glory of the city had been sullied with urine and defecation. Harmful things befell the country, the ruling family, and all the high officials" (Wyatt and Aroonrut 1998, p. 99).

In these characterizations, the removal of urban order—in Wyatt and Aroonrut's example, the literal walls separating the space reserved for the inner city from the outer—creates chaos. What is clean is mixed with what is dirty, and the result is in the decline of the city's ability to prosper. While the monk's simile about how polluting the change was is concrete, the actual examples he gives of "harmful things"—the effects of such pollution—are not. Such a construction recalls Aong's fear about the possibility of random "harmful things" arising from ghost attacks: "things" disconnected from rational causality but connected through a terrible

[9] In Thai magico-religious belief, menstruation was the ultimate symbol of pollution and that thing which supposedly sapped kingly power. Examples of the danger posed by female anatomy toward kings, and especially their heads, can be found both in Northern Thai folklore, where Queen Chamadevi defeats a rival by tricking him into wearing her dirty undergarments and also in modern Thai politics, where a video of a woman's feet atop the current monarch's head caused the Thai government to ban the popular website YouTube.

malevolent force. Again, the concern is that the hidden properties of chance and accident have been skewed in a harmful direction.

It is this idea of chance and anxiety which I explore in the following examples. In the first, I explore the city's prosperous potential and in the second, its capacity for ruin. But each is linked to the other, as the explosion in spirit mediumship as well as in fears about ghostly contagion shares a sense of the decline of urban order and the wonderful and terrible possibilities of a decentered city.

13.3 The City as Promise

Along one side of Saen Pung[10] Gate stretched a blue and yellow tent with a stencil advertising the tent rental company in white. Inside of it and spilling out nearly into the dangerously fast traffic of Bumrung Buri[11] Road was what looked like a party. Electrically amplified brass music poured out of the darkness inside the tent, and people dressed in bright polyester tunics and turbans, often sporting sunglasses or large, garish heaps of tropical flowers on their heads, shouted and laughed in and outside of the tent. In the center of the throng, in the darkness of the tent, they danced frenetically. Against the pile of bricks that marked the ruins of Saen Pung Gate leaned an altar complete with flowers, pigs' heads, and a tree of money (intended as a gift to a nearby temple). From those offerings, a white cord stretched around the side of the reconstructed city gates and tied around the tip of a white, concrete, obelisk-shaped block embedded within the gate. This is the yearly ritual to recharge the power of the gate, held at nearly the same time as and in raucous contrast to the official, early morning, solemn affair involving city officials and monks.

The dancers are spirit mediums, possessed by their inhabiting spirits. These figures—what are called in Northern Thai "ridden horse" (*maa khii*) or in Central Thai, "the body which takes the form" (*raang song*)[12]—have been present in the Chiang Mai region since before historical records, and some form of it exists from the Vietnamese highlands to Burma. Mediums—largely older women, although increasingly transgendered men—channel the spirits of a particular place or neighborhood, which then pledge to offer assistance in the form of advice or blessing to the assembled devotees.

But the tie between place and spirit is on the wane in Chiang Mai, and as neighborhoods and populations increasingly change, spirits find themselves attached to personalities more than places. Indeed, the previous example of Saen Pung Gate is

[10] Occasionally written as "Suan Pung" or "Saen Prung."

[11] My Romanization here follows official patterns. I would otherwise Romanize this street as "Bamrung Buri"—the "street of upholding the city."

[12] This latter term also includes Taoist-style *tang ki* practices, which differ in many ways from Southeast Asian (Thai/Lao/Khmer/Burmese) styles of mediumship.

Fig. 13.1 Lord Father of the yellow-gold throne possessing Kham, his medium

a perfect case in point: the gate itself, like the city's other gates, lacks a medium. According to older devotees at the rite, this has occurred slowly, over the past 20 or 30 years, although, as an older woman reassured me, the spirits still look after the place even without a medium. Instead, as Irvine (1984) notes, mediums increasingly channel the spirits of national heroes or abstract prosperity rather than specific sites within the city.

The Lord Father (Fig. 13.1) of the yellow-gold throne sat on the floor with the rest of us, laughing at me as I tried to not make a horrible grimace as I chewed the *miang*—pickled tea leaves—that he had given me. He had made a habit of having me chew *miang* and smoke giant homemade cigars; the combination of bitter and sour and the sharp load of caffeine and nicotine all at once often threatened to send me hurtling out of his small concrete shrine and into the bushes nearby. Lord Yellow, as I referred to him, had a habit of challenging me ever since our first meeting, when he insisted on speaking some language other than Thai with me—some harsh and high-pitched tongue that his daughter, Noi, called "angel language" (*phaasaa thewadda*) or, as she mused, "maybe Burmese" and which no one could understand but him.

This time, I kept my seat. By now, I had learned the practice of not chewing too forcefully and not inhaling the cigar smoke. If Lord Yellow was disappointed, he did not let on; rather, he turned to the business at hand. A young man sat in front of him, accompanied by his mother. He was concerned about his application to a nearby university. He had neither any connections (*sen*—literally, "strings") nor any money that he could use to tilt the admissions panel in his favor. Could Lord Yellow do anything in the supernatural realm about this?

Other devotees approached Lord Yellow with similar requests. Was a husband straying from his wife? If so, could anything be done about it? A chronic pain in the stomach which the doctors could not diagnose—was it anything serious? Was it the

action of malevolent spirits? Also, that thing which mediums were perhaps the most famous for: what would be this month's winning lottery numbers?

In each of these cases, the devotee asks the medium to intervene in matters of randomness. College admission panels, middle-aged husbands' libidos, health, and the workings of the lottery are all unknown quantities, existing beyond the reach or power of the devotee. For devotees, they are powerless to affect the outcomes in any temporal manner; as the prospective student says, he has no connections. Rather, their only recourse is to the hidden workings of the universe—to chance. The act of supplicating spirits is an attempt to skew this chance in the devotee's favor.

Such a way of thinking is common to many systems of magic and belief. E. Evans-Pritchard (1937), in his study of Azande witchcraft, notes that the belief in magic removes the element of chance from such unknown quantities (Evans-Pritchard 1937, p. 65). In other words, the belief in magic tells the devotee that there *is* an underlying order to the universe, that the admissions committee or the lottery machine is not entirely a thing about which the devotee can do nothing. Rather, magic provides an assurance that there is coherence underlying the seeming randomness.

The idea of fundamental order underlying the universe and tied to those places in the city out of which the city's charismatic power flows and to which the medium has access is what is promised in Lord Yellow's benediction. As the student lowered his head and raised his hands folded in a respectful *wai*,[13] Lord Yellow, in turn, called upon greater powers than himself: "[M]ay you get into the university. May you get whatever you wish. May you be cool and happy.[14] May you become rich. May you have a hundred [*baht*]. May you have a thousand. May you have ten thousand. May you have a hundred thousand."

After his devotees had departed, Lord Yellow also left. The medium bent her head and let loose a series of retching noises as the spirit exited her body and her own spirit reentered. Lord Yellow's androgynous face relaxed and became that of a middle-aged woman. Lord Yellow was now Mother Kham, a 50-something woman who worked in the nearby tobacco field, divorced, and supported by her daughter who worked at the cosmetics counter at a Tesco supermarket. She leaned back, tired from her day, although she claimed neither knowledge of what had been said during the ritual nor intoxication from the whiskey and cigars (and strong *miang*) that Lord Yellow consumed. She took off Lord Yellow's polyester regalia and placed it into a battered brown suitcase. Noi locked the door to the shrine and Kham climbed onto the back of Noi's motorcycle, ready for the long trip home.

Kham now commuted roughly an hour to the shrine of Lord Yellow. While Lord Yellow was the tutelary spirit of a particular neighborhood—near where Kham had lived with her former husband and daughter—this neighborhood was no more. As farmland in Chiang Mai's suburbs gave way to housing developments and gated

[13] A gesture of thanks, greeting, and respect.

[14] "*Mii yen mii suk*." Coolness (in terms of temperature) is often associated with happiness, as heat is to suffering.

communities, many older neighborhoods in districts such as San Sai and Hang Dong disappeared. Kham's neighborhood was one such place; her former home was now under a row of American-style, two-story houses, built in anticipation of a boom in real estate values in the North—a boom which has yet to materialize. Her daughter had built her a new shrine several blocks away, at the home of some sympathetic neighbors whose land had not become part of the development. Kham herself now lived an hour north of Chiang Mai, in Mae Taeng, while Noi rented a room in a three-story dormitory near the Ping River in Chiang Mai.

Kham's dislocation from her tutelary spirit's shrine might answer the question of why mediumship attaches more to personality than place in Chiang Mai; as populations become increasingly mobile, place-based mediumship becomes increasingly untenable. However, it does not answer the question of why mediumship should then see an increase in urban areas, as Irvine (1984) and Pattana (2003) both note and my research also suggests. Indeed, dislocation, coupled with a decline in urban sacred sites and a hostile Buddhism, would seem to cause the decline of mediumship. What factors link mediumship and urban life, if not a connection between neighborhoods and their residents? Below, I argue that it is precisely the dislocation involved in the new city, where increasingly mobile and increasingly wage-dependent residents rely upon an increasingly uncertain source of income. To return to Aong, this increasing sense of dislocation also points to the link between ideas about inhabiting misfortune and ideas about possible fortune. Is there a connection between the newly uncanny, chaotic city and the city which provides for limitless possibility?

13.4 The City as Ruin

Bonn was the owner of a Hainanese-style coffee shop. I had been told about his café via a professor at nearby Chiang Mai University, who had taken time off to run his own café, one oriented toward university students in the city's most fashionable part of town. The professor spoke about the place as one specializing in "old-style Thai coffee," *kaafee boraan.* This sort of coffee—one which could just as easily be described as "Vietnamese coffee" or Malay *kopi*—was filtered through a long tube, about the size and shape of a very large sock, and served with condensed milk along with a glass of watery tea. The professor, standing behind his espresso machine and seemingly unaware of the irony of his statement, warned me that such places were disappearing in Chiang Mai and that it would be worth a look.

Bonn's shop was marked by a handwritten sign—*kaafee boraan*—on the side of the road heading out of Chang Pheuak Gate, to the north of the old city. A Chinese-style shophouse of the kind that is common to the center of most Thai cities, Bonn's shop contained a long wooden bench, his sink, and his motorcycle, parked at the back of the shop. I sat with Bonn many times on the bench, trying to shout over the traffic noise that poured in from Chang Pheuak Road outside or the noise of the television; Bonn was fond of watching BBC nature documentaries while he worked

but had to turn up the volume to ear-splitting levels to compete with the traffic noise. The place had been running for over 50 years but, over time, had continually seen its business shrinking, especially as younger people developed a taste for the increasingly available "good-smelling coffee" (*kaafee hohm*) produced by espresso machines. Bonn showed me pictures of the business when it was in its prime: two shops, side by side, with long benches and stools were packed with customers, generally older men. "Chinese men," Bonn clarified, "early in the morning. Too early for you! They talk about politics, their lives, these kinds of things." Now, according to Bonn, he gets by serving iced coffee in plastic bags to people commuting to work in the morning and by renting out the neighboring shop. Bonn doubted that his son would continue with the shop; the latter was too interested in computers. "Perhaps he will become an engineer," Bonn mused.

Bonn's favorite topics of conversation were the terrible traffic problems in Chiang Mai, which he connected to increasingly hot temperatures, the well-endowed figures of "Lanna maidens" in tourist artwork in the market, and the ghosts. It was this last topic that piqued my interest. Bonn had a stack of magazines that he lent to me; they were mostly, to my disappointment, translations of tabloid articles from the United States concerning ghosts or aliens. But once, as I showed up on my bicycle to his shop, Bonn immediately grabbed his car keys. "Today we're going to Lamphun [a city about 20 min to Chiang Mai's south]," he said.

However, instead of going straight to Lamphun, Bonn pulled his pickup truck off of the busy Canal Road at the western edge of Chiang Mai. He pointed at a tall apartment building on the edge of the road. It was made of concrete, and, like many of the other buildings along the road, car exhaust and rain had caused the concrete to develop sooty black streaks down its formerly whitewashed sides. What drew Bonn's attention, though, was a jagged crack running from the building's base to its top. "Do you see that?" Bonn asked me. "The concrete there is no good. One day, it's going to snap in two," he continued. He paused, keeping his eyes on the building. "Also, it's haunted," he said.[15]

"A girl was crossing the Canal Road," Bonn said, continuing, "late one night. Then, she was struck by a car and killed. If you go to sleep in one room in that building, at the same hour that she died, the bed will shake. It's the ghost of that girl [that is causing this]." Bonn continued to tell me other stories of haunted hotel rooms in Chiang Mai including some that he personally experienced and others that he had only heard of. Each one took place in the same kind of place: tall, one-room hotels and apartment buildings.

Bonn's story shares some parallels with Aong's. Each involves a young woman, traffic, and a late hour of the night. Each is also somehow dislocated from a particular place. While in Aong's story, it is the "stain" of the nightclub that has caused the

[15] The image which I provide here is another example of a "failed" condominium project. I have not provided the actual photograph of this building in order to preserve anonymity.

woman to die, the actual accident has happened some hours and distance away from the site. Bonn does not say that the woman lived in the room that she now haunts; rather, the connection is that she died outside of the room. What is common to each story is the idea of some inchoate connection between various misfortunes. In Bonn's story, the crack in the concrete, the death, and the haunting are all somehow connected—the ruin of a young life, the ruin of a broken building, and the ruinously bad traffic all share common themes of misfortune, poor neighborhood cohesion, and ruin.

As I have mentioned above, these ghosts are all examples of *phii taay hoong*—the "ghosts of bad death." Owing to their connection with random misfortune, *phii taay hoong* are also referred to as ghosts that must "eat rice outside of temples," meaning that they are placated via gifts of food and karmic merit is at the roadside spot where they died (Mala 2008, p. 49). These ghosts, if not placated and fed by their relatives, travel around the neighborhood harming people and causing misfortune (Mala 2008, p. 50). Hence, residents of a neighborhood rely upon their neighbors to observe all of the proper regulations regarding placating their relatives who may have fallen victim to misfortune. But the rhetoric of unreliable neighbors runs throughout Aong's and Bonn's stories. For Aong, the nightclub owners have sought to simply ignore the death, and for Bonn, the building's owners have ignored the structure's obvious problems. Having such unknown and unknowable neighbors, one fears *phii taay hoong*, and such ghosts become stand-ins for one's fear of the unknown inhabiting the houses next door. Such an idea of unknown strangers as neighbors recall Setha Low's (2001) "urban fear discourse," i.e., a way of talking about dangerous others which amplifies the perception of danger, even if the reality is that such risk is small (Low 2001, pp. 45–46).

The affluent American suburbs which Low studies and Chiang Mai do share parallels. In each, there is an increase in the movement and dislocation of populations as well as the segregation of populations within discrete units. As one billboard for a gated community in San Sai district proclaims, "[c]ome to where there are people of your level" (*radap khun*). Indeed, these gated communities as well as high-rise residences, such as Bonn's cracked building, often advertise themselves as being homogenous, in opposition to the messy heterogeneous city; a new resident of one such place described her idea of the gated communities as "having only doctors" (*mii tae moh*). Of course, such communities grow at the same time as do settlements for service-industry workers and laborers such as the squatter camp where Aong lived.

As new labor,[16] such as Aong, comes from the countryside at the same time as many Northern Thais leave the city for the suburbs or for Bangkok, the absolute

[16] Mills (1999) discusses the gendered dimensions of labor migration. Thailand has increasingly seen an increase in the movement of women for labor. As she suggests, labor migration has previously been a male realm and associated with sexuality and adventure, associations which became sources of anxiety when they became associated with young women (Mills 1995).

number of people in Chiang Mai remains relatively stable, if slightly in decline, but sees a massive amount of mobility and dislocation (Duangchan 2007, pp. 388–389). As such, there is an increase in the segregation of individuals to their social milieu and a corresponding decline in civil society (Duangchan 2007). As Aong and Bonn suggest, this decline is matched by a rise in fears of the chaos, manifested in the ghosts of bad death. Below, I trace the connections between these fears and the hopes represented by mediumship.

13.5 Order and Disorder

In each of these narratives, i.e., the story of the decline of feudal urban order, the rise of charismatic spirit mediumship, and the fears of the ghosts of bad death, there is an underlying theme of immanent possibility in the city, and it is my argument here that such an idea rises as older forms of urban order decline. In the case of spirit mediumship, supernatural aspects of urbanity are propitiated and channeled to bring their influence to bear upon sources of uncertainty and anxiety. But such sources of anxiety are on the rise. For instance, Aong's life as a security guard was extremely tenuous. He could (and did) vanish at any moment, a possible victim of police roundups of illegal immigrants, Chiang Mai's drug-associated gun violence, or simply the bad traffic (like that which claimed the life of the young woman in his story). He could also, however unlikely, have had a fortunate outcome: he could have won the biweekly lottery, he could have found a lucrative job in Bangkok, or he could simply have found, as his employer suspected, lasting happiness with his partner.

Such a feeling of extreme potential was only exacerbated by the worsening political situation in Thailand. For many residents, the election of local scion Thaksin Shinawatra to the post of Prime Minister marked the era for the North, one which would finally bring some of the prosperity held too long in Bangkok's hands. For others, Thaksin's neoliberal order represented a challenge to established sources of power, where the interests of capital (specifically, Thaksin's own capital) would trump that of moral authority. Thaksin's ouster in 2006 only heightened this division, as did the growing "Red/Yellow" divide in Thai politics in the latter half of the decade. As the divide deepened, the idea of a wildly prosperous future alternated with the fears of a calamitous one.

Jean and John Comaroff (1999) describe the supernatural fears birthed by the neoliberal market in their work on "occult economies." For the Comaroffs, as the market's possibilities for dramatic ruin and fortune increase, so do the anxieties and hopes surrounding the supernatural. The dual nature of these hopes and fears, the promise of wealth as well as ruin, helps to explain why the current era manifests a rise in both fears over the action of the supernatural as well as hope in its messianic possibilities.

The current moment, with its overtones of crisis and possibility, shares parallels with that dramatic moment of restructuring that Chiang Mai experienced during the turn of the twentieth century. As older systems of residence and authority give way to new ones, especially those focused exclusively on the accumulation of economic (as opposed to social) capital, there is a corresponding increase in the idea that the wealthy have a secret means of accessing this new hidden world of wealth—it is that feeling of somehow being left out of this new world that fuels Mills's widow ghost panic (1995) or the Comaroffs' examples of witch hunts (1999). Responding to this feeling of new possibility as well as to the dissolution of long-standing neighborhoods, mediumship has become more divorced from managing place and more involved with managing capital. This change in the idea of the city does not simply have to do with rural dwellers (such as Aong) becoming urban dwellers or vice versa (as in Kham's case). Rather, as the shift in mediumship suggests, urban life is itself changing, becoming increasingly associated with the accumulation of economic capital and mobile population. At the same time, as long-term residents such as Kham and Bonn find their ways of life increasingly circumscribed by the growth of "new" residents—both those wealthy residents of gated communities such as those growing in San Sai as well as those living tenuously on this boom such as Aong—they imagine both that they might benefit from that possibility and fear that they will not. This fear—that the prosperity promised by the rise of new buildings and increasingly "modern" lifestyle lauded by popular media and national education alike might not in fact mean prosperity—renders new urban construction something uncanny, much like the image of the modern woman in Mills's (1995) study.

Since 2006, this potential for calamity and prosperity has indeed manifested. Aong, as I mentioned above, disappeared without a trace. A year after his disappearance in 2007, only his employer remembered him; the guards' faces along the street were all also new, although they were all, at least on this street, still Shan. Even the building that he had guarded had moved on; it was now a Korean restaurant and youth hostel. In San Sai, Lord Yellow's spirit shrine had been undercut by road construction and cracked in half. Overcome by sympathy and, perhaps, no small amount of fear of Lord Yellow's anger, the family on whose property it was based built a larger one, twice the size, and done in bright colors instead of whitewashed concrete. Bonn suffered a heart attack—unusual for a man in his mid-40s—and I visited him in his hospital room the last time that I saw him. He said that, sure, he feared ghosts in the hospital, but the appearance of his attractive young nurse had convinced him that the stay was not all that bad.

The state of the city is still uncertain. Thailand's political crisis, as of late 2010, shows no sign of being resolved, and the newly constructed shells of high-rise hotels and residences face a dim future in the light of the worst tourist figures for the North in years (Fig. 13.2). The buildings remain, like the city, sites of potential, and the things that inhabit them, still invisible to the eye.

Fig. 13.2 Failed construction project, Chiang Mai

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