# Networks of Exchange and Co-operation:

Reinforcing Traditional Values through Economic Activities in an Indonesian Kampung.

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#### Introduction

Traditional social values are believed to be undermined by the harsh imperatives of survival in the expanding urban areas of the developing world. The caring, collaborative nature of rural societies can be contrasted with the hard, individualistic and competitive character of life in developing cities. Unregulated, urban, economic processes in particular are assumed to be antagonistic towards *gemeinschaft* ideals because the logic of the market has little respect for non-monetary values.

However one of the key characteristics of many informal economies is the ability of participants to draw creatively and flexibly on all potential resources: human, material and spatial. This is particularly evident in households and settlements where a significant proportion of the economic activity is within micro scale, home-based enterprises (HBEs). By blurring and reconfiguring the spatial and conceptual boundaries between work and home, between production and reproduction, many households are able to generate income to sustain themselves. Intrinsic to these processes are the linkages and exchanges between neighbours and residents, many of which are based on cultural and religious value systems which can be supportive of the economic activities taking place.

This paper will explore aspects of the interrelationship between economic and social processes through the use of empirical data collected during extended periods of participant observation and detailed interviews in a consolidated informal settlement (*kampung*) in the city of Surabaya, Indonesia. This research forms part of an ongoing international comparative research project examining the impacts of home-based enterprises in four developing world cities. Extracts from

the interviews complemented by household case studies will be used to illustrate how income generation activities are embedded within social networks and how in many cases traditional collaborative cultural values directly reinforce economic production. This is echoed in the use of space, particularly the overlapping and shared use of streets and alley ways. The paper concludes that despite severe economic constraints many traditional values facilitate survival in times of crisis and can be conducive to longer term sustainability.

"If we have our own business then we must respect one another. For instance if there is someone around here who wants to also run in the same business as I am, then they must firstly tell me about it. So when [a neighbour] saw that my rice was nearly out of stock and it's been a long time since the last delivery, he asked me if I was going out of business because if I were, he was interested in running in this business. So I told him that I wasn't going out of business but the delivery of the rice is a little late. He said that if that were the case then he would try another business, such as vegetable oil and sugar.

That goes the same for me. There was once a rice seller around here named Bu As, [but] one day her business wasn't running well for a few weeks, so then I asked her if she had quit the business. She said that she was a little tired of selling rice anymore because of the price that keeps going up and down and she was to try another business that is to sell sugar. So I asked her if I could start my business in selling rice and she let me do it. This is important so we don't take another person's business. So after that we exchange information about cheap rice and sugar. She told me about the rice and I tell her what I know about cheap sugar." Mr Uman [Indo23/4]

Mr Uman buys rice wholesale which he then sells in small quantities from his front room in the *kampung* of Banyu Urip in the Javanese city of Surabaya. Although he and his family are reliant on this enterprise for their subsistence, it is clear from this extract that his approach to business is inflected by values which are not usually regarded as effective in commercial terms. He is concerned about taking someone else's business and actively shares information with potential competitors. Relations between neighbours are courteous and respectful and appear to put collective concerns higher than individual ones. Here he explains about his neighbours:

"When they are in a financial difficulty they can always ask to pay later when they have the money. Living in a kampung such as this we must care about these people. I have a special debt book. There are people who took 20 kg and there are some that took 30 kg, there are a few who cannot pay up until a month later but I don't charge interest on them because I feel pity on them. If they buy outside my shop maybe they wouldn't be treated that way, so they never complain but feel happy instead. [After sorting] the rice that cannot be used is called 'menir'. It's usually regarded as waste but it can still be cooked up and eaten. I myself don't have the heart to sell it to people even if sometimes there are people who want to buy it, so I usually give it to them for free."

## **Work and Home**

Until recently the implications of productive activities within the home for broader issues of housing have been relatively neglected by most of those studying housing. This reflected a common conceptual separation between the spheres of home and work, based on dominant western/northern cultural contexts where production and reproduction are regarded as distinct,

often conflicting categories. However working in the home was the norm in pre-industrial societies, and this lack of distinction continues for many households in developing world cities (Kellett and Tipple, 2000). For such households the running of a home-based enterprise (HBE) is a essential poverty alleviation strategy. The effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes and other economic changes during the last quarter of the twentieth century have reduced the scale of the formal sector and driven many people to earn their living in the already active informal sector. Because setting up shops or workshops can be both complex bureaucratically (de Soto 1989) and prohibitively costly, new and long-standing micro-enterprises benefit from being in the only space households can use without further cost: their domestic space. Therefore HBEs are important, and are likely increase in scale and significance in developing countries. There is also increasing evidence and interest in the use of the home to generate income in industrialised countries, especially with the rapid development of information technologies which are not location specific (Baines, 2000; Ahrentzen, 1989).

The research on which this paper is based forms a part of an international research project comparing the effects of home-based enterprises on the residential environment in informal settlements in developing world cities. We are examining a number of aspects of the complex interrelationship between home and work, and earlier work includes an analysis of space usage at the dwelling level (Kellett and Bishop, 2000) and policy implications (Tipple, Coulson and Kellett, 2001). In this paper we will explore how collective linkages and shared cultural values directly impact on the processes of economic production.

# The Indonesian setting

One of the four research sites is the *kampung* of Banyu Urip in the city of Surabaya on the Indonesian island of Java. The settlement began in the 1950s when squatters settled in an old Chinese cemetery and now has a population of approximately 40,000. In the early 1980s it was successfully upgraded as part of the ambitious Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP) (Maskrey and Turner, 1987) and continues to have active community organisations as witnessed by numerous awards for 'best kept *kampung*'. It is not the poorest nor the most densely inhabited of the *kampungs*. Surabaya is a large industrial city with a busy port, which has been significantly effected by the Asian economic crisis. This has led to a reduction in formal sector employment opportunities and a consequent increase in informal and home-based income generating strategies throughout the city. A high proportion of households in Banyu

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The project is examining the environmental impacts of home-based enterprises. It is co-ordinated by a research team in CARDO at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne who are working closely with partners in the Department of Geography at Newcastle University; the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi (India); ITS, Surabaya (Indonesia); University of San Simon, Cochabamba (Bolivia); and CSIR (Boutek), Pretoria (South Africa). The project is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DfID) as KAR Research No. 7138 and their support is gratefully acknowledged.

Urip are engaged in home-based enterprises. There are many small shops selling daily household necessities for people who do not have a refrigerator or much storage space; fresh food, bottled drinks, snacks, soap, candles, rice, cigarettes etc., as well as a range of more specialised shops. Services are represented by repair shops, tailors, hairdressers, rental of videos and party equipment. There are several production HBEs manufacturing traditional Javanese furniture, decorated bird cages for export, masks of various kinds, and shoe uppers for export. There are many HBEs making rattan and wooden handicrafts or clothing to order.

## Collecting stories: methodology

A range of research methods were employed to collect complementary empirical data sets on the economic, spatial and social implications of HBEs (questionnaires, plans, qualitative interviews etc.). One of the key methods was to interview in detail a proportion of residents in order to record their own interpretations of their circumstances and the strategies they employ to cope with a range of frequently conflicting demands on domestic space, labour and time. A detailed list of themes and issues was prepared by the research team to help the interviewers structure the interviews in a flexible but focused way. The interviewers were trained to encourage the respondents to speak at length in order to explore in some depth the perspective of each individual and their response to their own particular circumstances. In addition the first two authors had the opportunity to live with a family<sup>2</sup> whose home in the study area provided an ideal base from which to experience life within the *kampung* and carry out a series of more detailed household case studies. Recording of oral narratives were a key component of the data collected.<sup>3</sup>

The paper is structured around four interrelated themes. It begins with an analysis of the cooperative relations between neighbours and how these help structure economic activity. We then examine how social networks relate to the use of collective open spaces, and how low levels of crime are linked to high levels of trust and support between residents. This is followed by a brief examination of religious values.

#### **Consideration towards neighbours**

According to Koentjaraningrat (1984:151-152) neighbourliness is one of the essentials of Javanese culture. Every family, without exception, is expected to play their part in the events of his neighbours' lives, by contributing in person, as well as materially, on the occasion of death, disaster and house construction. The traditional method of approaching and asking a neighbour

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We would like to thank Bu As, her husband Mas Didi for sharing their home with us and for making us so welcome, as well as the community of Banyu Urip for their collaboration throughout the data collection process.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The second author's fluency in *Bahasa Indonesia* greatly facilitated this work. Most of the interviews presented here were conducted by Dewi Septani (DS) who is the local researcher for this project. For a detailed discussion of the value of oral testimony in low-income housing research see Kellett (2000).

for this help is called *hyambat*, a type of request that cannot be refused, but also ties the supplicant to returning the favour when the time comes. This concept of *'gotong royong'* (mutual co-operation), goes hand in hand with maintaining harmonious relations, and respecting a neighbour's territory. Such behaviour fits well into the one of the two polar categories proposed by Duncan (19981): collectivistic social relations, where individuals subordinate themselves to the interests of the group as a whole.

There is some evidence from the literature to suggest that *kampung* dwellers are no longer tied to each other so closely as under the agricultural systems which generated these codes of neighbourly behaviour. This observed by Geertz in his study of urban *kampung* in the 1950s:

"...as the sense of economic unity within the kampung lessened due to the fact that each man made his own living in his own way more or less independently from how his neighbours made theirs, ideological factors, stimulated by the rise of nationalism, began to play a more important role in social organisation than territorial ones" (Geertz 1975:111).

Mulder (1996) charts the gradual breaking down of these communal relationships in an urban *kampung* in Yogyakarta. He reports that modern urban dwellers who were able to afford it would rather pay for help than become entwined in the web of obligations. But close ties did not automatically mean a correspondingly loose territoriality:

"In that area, everybody is related, or at least acquainted, and ties of community and religion are fairly compelling. Yet [...] that shared proximity also led to the tendency to clearly stake out the borders of one's privacy" (Mulder 1996:187).

However the empirical evidence from this study suggests that although social linkages and mutual co-operation are changing, they remain is strong. This is manifest in a range of situations, and is certainly very marked when respondents were questioned about possible problems related to the operation of HBEs in a dense urban setting. Mrs Anik Darmini [indo8/25] makes rattan baskets and was asked if any of her neighbours had ever complained about her activities:

AD: No, they've never, I'm so thankful that I have very nice neighbours and that they've never even complained about the activities of my enterprise because I feel that they truly are not disturbed by any of my activities. And I also try my hardest not to disturb my surroundings, like when I'm done with my activities, I wouldn't let it all pile up outside my house and make a terrible view for my surroundings, and I'd take it all upstairs for storage. DS: Or have you ever been disturbed by any of your neighbour's activities?

AD: I myself have never had any complaints and I don't mind even when there are some activities which does cause a little disturbance in this area but I never complained. Let someone else do the warning. I really try hard not to disturb others, but I never mind anybody else's business, they can do whatever they want, like maybe they leave their things in the wrong place, but I'll always see that my things stay at the right place. So whenever I get an order, I would then get the things from upstairs and I would deliver it straight away with the becak (motorised rickshaw). I'm aware that I live in a small neighbourhood with narrow alleys, and that we have to be considerate with our neighbours.

This attitude is echoed by virtually all the respondents. The following extract is from Mat Jadi [indo5 /44] who is a mask maker. This is a process which at times requires substantial outdoor space for drying the masks, but he has never had any complaints from neighbours:

MJ: No, never. It has never bothered them, even if one of them happened to dry their laundry out on the street side and I was also drying out my masks, then I would put them further aside so it wouldn't disturb the people passing by. I am always concerned about my neighbours and my surroundings.

DS: Have you ever complained yourself about any activities your neighbours might have done?

MJ: No, never. We treat each other with great care and tolerance.

Words such as respect, tolerance and concern are continually repeated. This consideration is reflected in working times, particularly for those activities which might create noise disturbance. For example Mr Suusmahaji [Indo19 /91] is a furniture maker but he has never received any complaints from his neighbours:

"Never. I still consider the time when working so it's impossible for me to do noisy jobs, like hammering at night, which could disturb other people. That's why I organise myself to do the noisy jobs in the afternoon like wood drilling, sawing, hammering. And when night comes, it's time for the finishing part, so nobody will be disturbed."

His neighbour Mr Yudi [indo17 /59] who is a tailor is also highly conscious of working in a way which will avoid conflict. He was asked if he worked continuously through the day:

No. Although I begin to work in the morning, but during the day, I work with doing activities such as delivering and collecting orders for customers. So far the relation to the neighbour is good and I always try to make good relation with all neighbours, besides I also realise to stop working by using sewing machine at hours that someone else is sleeping or taking a rest so that it will not disturb them.

When it comes to relations between HBEs, this sense of neighbourliness was cited as the reason for peaceful negotiations rather than competition. We have already seen the case of Mr Uman who explained the importance of receiving 'permission' before setting up a potentially competitive business. The following are a number of further examples where social relationships override monetary values. Mrs Sutiyah [Indo14/121] runs a business selling second hand clothes and also has a small 'corner' shop. Here she explains how prices are set to avoid damaging the business of other shop keepers:

- S: Yes, just in this little alley there are five shops alike. Before they were open my earnings are much better than this. But even though now there is a lot of competition, I never feel bothered by the neighbours by what they do. [...]
- DS: Is there a possibility that the price in this shop is made lower than the other shops in order to attract more buyers?
- S: No, I only take a small profit out of this. For instance I bought it at the wholesale store at a price and I would sell with just a little profit, and the price is almost the same as the other shops. Inside this area we must have the average price because if not then we might make other shops go down, so that's why I always ask the other shops about the prices of certain goods such as cigarettes, then I would sell it at the same price. I'm one of those people.

In other cases it appears that potential competitors are encouraged. Mat Jaelani is a successful mask makers, but with the economic crisis there are many who are attempting to copy his work to set up their own business:

DS: Is there any other mask maker who copied your creation?

MJ: Yes, they asked me and I give them.

DS: Give?! You aren't supposed to do that, sir.

MJ: I'm fair, if they ask I'll give them. But they'll never make masks similar to mine. Mine are original, because I'm working on the original ones. If they ask for two, I'll give them two. They ask for four I'll give them four. Whenever they ask then I'll give them, but if they steal then I'll be angry. There were others who refuses, but I still give them.

Mr Uman [Indo23/4] the rice seller explains how his business has been directly affected by a government poverty alleviation programme. However he still supports the programme:

U: If we look back to the time I first started the business, it has been going on really well because now I already have a lot of customers that know about my business. The problem now is the programme from the social organisations that sells cheap rice that is subsidised by the government so the price can be pressed down to Rp 1000 a kg so it is automatically affecting my customers. Of course they will choose something that is cheaper. But fortunately my business can keep continuing because the rice that are sold by the organisations does not taste too good, so many people are still buying their rice from me even though the number has decrease from what they used to be. They sometimes buy my rice then mixed it up with the cheap rice so they can still eat better tasting rice.

DS: How long has this decline been going on?

U: Since there was the cheap rice programme, which is about two months ago. Actually I really hope that the programme will still continue to help the needlest and I don't mind if my business is effected by it.

## **Social Networks and Kinship Clustering**

In all these cases we can see how social harmony is being maintained and excesses limited through mechanisms which redistribute material surplus and opportunity. Personal interests are subordinated to the interest of the group (Duncan, 1981). This demonstrates the continuing strength of social relations and the close interdependence with economic exchanges, all of which have a strong spatial component. Hertzberger (1991:14-15) notes that in Bali, "many streets [...] constitute the territory of one extended family", so that although nominally as public as a main road, "you still tend to feel like an intruder or at best a visitor." In Banyu Urip too there is a high incidence of family members within one street. Although this suggests there is a tendency to remain close to the extended family, the basic unit is the nuclear family household (Mulder 1996:86). Koentjaraningrat (1984:137) reports that there are no rules governing where newly-weds should live, but that the ideal situation is to live neolocally, in one's own house close to related family members.

He illustrates this with an analysis of language: the phrase 'omah-omah' is commonly used to mean 'to marry', but, correctly speaking, means 'to have a house.' In relation to the HBE, most

workers tend to be from the immediate family. Abel (1997:196) notes that the principal economic unit in Asian cities is the family, "...community, family life and work are all intimately interconnected", which provides the ideal climate for HBEs. For Bu As, the availability of relatives close by allows her to call on them occasionally to help with the brief but intense workload of her intermittent cake making enterprise. All of her team, except her husband and daughter, are paid for their help. Similarly an existing shoe-sewing enterprise run by a woman at the end of their alley, has at its core a group of related family members augmented by a broader network of friends. As they sit chatting in small groups outside their houses in the alley, their sewing can be seen to symbolise the social act of knitting together and consolidating the social relationships between them.

These pedestrian scale alleyways form the key spatial component of the *kampung* from which the narrow back-to-back plots are laid out in a regular way. Most dwellings are single or double storey and occupy the whole plot, leaving the alleyways as the only open spaces. They are intensively used, in many cases as an extension of the dwelling area but also for productive activities and for a range of collective activities. For example the women in the *kampung* take turns to host a prayer meeting each month. The fifty or so people who attend are unable to fit inside the houses, so the alleyway is used rather like a large linear outdoor room. Apart from the religious function, there is a strong community aspect to these meetings which usually end with a meal being served, carried out from the house and passed around the group. Such meals can also be interpreted as redistribution rituals, in which the food symbolises the sharing of wealth and reinforces group identity (Faqih, 2000)

## **Crime and security**

These strong social relationships are fundamental in building a community with sufficient cohesion to avoid the corrosive impact of crime and insecurity. In numerous ways this community has managed to create a place in which people feel safe. Mr Yusuf [indo11/42] who sews caps is a good example of this:

DS: Have you modified this place to anticipate security? For example by making a strong door.

Y: I do nothing.

DS: Why?

Y: Because I feel safe, nothing happened to me.

DS: Are you not afraid with this wide door? Don't you think there is criminals who comes to you?

Y: No. It's never occurred to me.

This is reinforced by Mrs Anik Darmini [indo8 /25] who offers an explanation:

"The safety is guaranteed around here, because each family in this neighbourhood considers others as their family also and so our relationship between each other is really close and full of understanding. I've never had any burglaries but one of my son's belongings has just been stolen recently. But I'm sure that it couldn't have been done by

anyone from around here, because we're like one big family around here. It must have been done by someone outside our neighbourhood."

It is perfectly safe for people to leave their goods on display outside the house facing the street. This is demonstrated by Mrs Sutiyah [Indo14 /121] who sells second hand clothes and Mr Yudi [indo17/59] who is a tailor:

"This place is quite safe, such trouble never occurred around here. [...] It's been quite safe here. When I begun and there were lots of customers I even placed my clothes in the front porch from morning till night. When it was still a lot of customers I can make in a day an average of Rp. 200000 up to Rp.500000, especially early in the month when most people have just received their wage, the customer will increase. Even though there were a lot of people that visit, look around and just pass through here, there has never been any burglary towards my goods."

DS: Have you ever had things stolen, because I see many garments which are finished laid out on this veranda, aren't you afraid of someone might steal [them]?

Y: I never experienced stealing. Right here neighbours care of each other and pay attention. It's different from [formal housing areas] which usually, do not have sense of high social concern so that don't care about each other. Therefore, so over here we take care of each other and try hard to anticipate stealing.

DS: Don't you want to close this veranda so be safer and not to be risky to stealing?

Y: No, I think this kampung safe, we don't have to act like that.

This high level of security is obviously an advantage in social terms, but it is also significant from an economic perspective. In some of the other research sites of this comparative project, particularly in South Africa, the costs associated with high levels of neighbourhood crime impact detrimentally on the economic viability of the enterprise. Not only do HBE operators (and other householders) have to invest in expensive security measures (burglar bars, locks, security fences, security guards, electronic alarms etc.) to protect their property, they are also suspicious of outsiders entering their area. Cross et al (2001) argue that many HBEs do not want supra-local custom bases, as they like to recognise who it is that is entering their home. This discourages trade and involvement with suppliers and potential customers. Low levels of neighbourhood cohesiveness are expensive in economic terms.

## **Security and Faith**

The strong community relations in Banyu Urip are underpinned by firm religious convictions which inform daily behaviour and decision making. Numerous mosques serve the Muslim majority and there is also a church for the substantial group of Christians. Life in the *kampung* is punctuated by regular calls to prayer in the mosque. These final three quotations give us an insight into how religious belief in a controlling god impacts on the earlier discussions of enterprise and security. Mr Choirul [Indo20/130] breeds a particular type of song bird which is very valuable. He has dozens of cages containing prize-winning birds but believes the situation is very safe:

C: Thank God it is, and I believe that everything depends on each individual. Thank God there hasn't been any thefts or anything of that kind.[...]

DS: Have you taken any security precautions?

C: Yes, I've surely done that, but my main effort is to pray to God and leave everything for God to handle, because everything I have was given by God for me temporarily, so to speak, and it shall all return to God. But in reality, I anticipate things by locking the fences, and then I have the place guarded by my employee who lives here. At night it's a great time to hear the sound of the Perkutut birds, because it's silent and there's no other sound to disturb so we can hear them clearly. [...] I only lock the glass doors, which is quite risky, you are correct, but back to the fact there is both good and evil in this world, I leave everything in God's hands.

The element of fatalism is underlined by Mr Bambang [Indo14 /121] who sews leather.

B: I've never experienced [burglary or fire hazards] and I hope that I never will. But if God wants it to happen, then there's nothing in my power that I can do. [...] If I want to live peacefully, then I need to adapt the best way that I can towards my surrounding Kampung. If we treat each other with respect, I think that we will all look after for each other and we shall prevent any harm that might be done to our neighbours. Giving donations for our kampung activities is one example.[...]

DS: Have you ever modified your house to protect it for security reasons [...] so that no thieves could enter?

B: No, I haven't. My principle is to trust everything in God's hand. Everything in this world belongs to him and so it shall all return to him, it's very temporary. I feel that I don't need to make a big deal out of it all, so if anything should happen, then I'll just call it fate.

This is reinforced by attitude to business as explained by Mr Karmin [indo10 /..] who is a mask and toy maker

DS: What about yourself, do you have complaints about your neighbour's business around here? Do you have any grudges?

MK: No, we think that fortune is in the hands of God. Even if the business is the same but if God doesn't approve of it then if it doesn't sell, it doesn't sell. So we never envy our neighbour around here, because [nothing good] comes from envy, right? We believe that every person has his or her own fortune. So we can find our own.

#### **Conclusion: towards sustainability**

This case study has revealed rich layers of structuring relationships governing how people interact with one another and how they generate their incomes. Analysis of this data provides a door to understanding underlying value systems and offers insights into how both cultural capital and economic capital are created and accumulated. Economic and domestic activities co-exist and integrate remarkably effectively. Although there is a strong and increasing economic imperative, it is instructive to see how social constraints limit the type of economic enterprises introduced to the neighbourhood, thereby avoiding the most potentially problematic and conflictive circumstances. This is all done without reference to external, official agencies or norms dictating or regulating the type of activity deemed appropriate.

The lines and boundaries between reproductive and productive activities are managed through complex, culturally-embedded mechanisms in which individuals, households and groups are continuously negotiating and re-negotiating the relations and boundaries between themselves.

We have seen how economic linkages can be used to consolidate social networks, as well as vice versa, and how the dwelling and settlement even in constrained urban circumstances play numerous simultaneous roles. Income generation activities are embedded within social networks and in many cases traditional collaborative cultural values directly reinforce economic production. Business is not regarded as a separate activity to be valued only in economic terms. Traditional values of co-operation, sharing and redistribution are not merely a reflection of the past but directly facilitate survival in times of crisis and appear to be conducive to longer term sustainability.

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