



# From Kampung to Condos? Contested accumulations through displacement in Jakarta

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## Abstract

Across cities of the global South, major initiatives are underway to assemble land from informal settlements in order to make it available for large-scale infrastructure and commercial real estate projects. Driven by global city aspirations, profit-seeking developers, demands from emergent middle classes for modern residential, consumption and recreational spaces, and, last but not least, the availability of finance, these land transformations seek to commodify and enclose residential urban commons and involve the displacement of thousands of urban residents. Through an examination of two field sites, a ‘legal’ kampung where land is being acquired through negotiations between kampung residents with land rights and developers’ land brokers, and two ‘illegal’ kampungs whose residents were evicted in the name of flood mitigation, we conclude that the default theory for explaining these processes—accumulation by dispossession—is inadequate for capturing the variegated and complex nature of such processes. By thinking through Jakarta, we seek to provincialize the dominant concept of accumulation by dispossession, proposing an extension that we suggest is better attuned to capture the distinct features of Southern cities: Contested accumulations through displacement.

## Keywords

Accumulation by dispossession, commoning, contestation, displacement, land transformation

A dramatic urban land transformation is underway across Asian cities and many other cities of the post-colony. In the context of the variegated neoliberalization of global urbanism, conjoined with political elites’ intents that their city achieve world class status, an emergent middle class aspiring to western urban lifestyles, and the attractiveness of real estate as an investment opportunity, developers have been converting informally settled spaces of an urban commons into privatized, commodifiable land assets. This is a struggle over space that plays out locally, while influenced by supra-, inter- and national scale developments. These processes are not only variegated but also contested: Those engaged in these struggles

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seek not only to resist this commodification of informal residential spaces, but also to continue livelihoods that exceed the capitalist space-economy.

It has become conventional to conceptualize this commodification of the commons in terms of accumulation by dispossession: The dispossession of those living in more-than-capitalist ways on land from which they pursue their livelihoods, enabling capital accumulation by developers and other capitalists who use that land for commodity production. There is much to this argument, but also much that it misses. Thinking through Jakarta has provoked us to complicate this conceptualization, bringing into view multiple forms of displacement and accumulation, and contestation (Leitner et al., 2007). We will argue here that the notion of contested accumulations through displacement, a provincialization of accumulation by dispossession, is better attuned to capturing the complexity of urban land transformations and displacements (Chakrabarty, 2000).

In Jakarta, one of the world's largest metropolitan areas albeit understudied by non-Indonesian scholars relative to other metropolises of this size, legal informal settlements are commodified via land brokers' negotiations with residents holding rights claims to urban land (Kusno, 2013; Santoso et al., 2009). Since 1998 forced evictions are largely reserved for state-led razing of 'illegal' kampungs, currently in the name of flood mitigation.<sup>1</sup> For these various vectors of displacement, differently positioned participants face unequal opportunities to accumulate both economic and political capital. Displacement is not reducible to dispossession, and there are multiple opportunities and pathways for accumulation. Finally, these processes are contested, doubly: Resisting evictions, but also working to re-constitute informal livelihoods and living spaces that exceed capitalist social and economic relations. In short, capitalist Development (Hart, 2002) is never complete.

The following section summarizes the pressures to commodify informal settlements, argues that urban commoning coevolves with capitalist economic practices in such spaces, and examines how accumulation by dispossession has been mobilized to explain their enclosure and commodification in 'southern' cities. The third section summarizes the forces driving massive investment in real estate, and associated pressures for displacement of kampung residents in contemporary Jakarta, placed within the 'context of context' (Brenner et al., 2010) of its encounters with globalizing capitalism. In the fourth section, we report on two case studies illustrating distinct vectors of displacement, multiple forms of accumulation and contestation: one examining negotiated sales of land and living space, the other forced evictions. In the conclusion, thinking through Jakarta, we conceptualize such processes as contested accumulations through displacement—a provincialization of accumulation by dispossession (Sheppard et al., 2013).

### **Commodifying informal settlements: Accumulation by dispossession**

A shared feature of urbanism across the post-colony is the high proportion of land occupied by informal settlements—informal in the sense that there exists a wide variety of land rights and that residents may not possess formal title to their spaces of habitation, that the buying and selling of land takes place primarily outside the capitalist land/housing market, formal planning and land registration systems, that the dwellings and associated infrastructure are frequently auto-constructed and vary greatly in terms of the quality of housing and amenities, and that often host informal economic activities. The United Nations estimates that one-third of urban populations in 'developing regions' reside in informal settlements (862 million people) (UN Habitat, 2013). For Jakarta, estimates vary between 30 and 60% (McCarthy, 2003; Rakodi and Firman, 2009; Silver, 2007). This feature is reflective of distinct processes of urbanization in those parts of the world whose long-standing

peripheral positionality—dating back to encounters with European colonialism—has undermined the possibility that they simply follow Rostow's (1960) stages of capitalist development. In much of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, urbanization has been significantly more rapid than in Europe, Japan and white settler colonies, and not matched by economic growth and job creation in the urban formal sector. It also has not resulted in the wholesale transfer of populations from rural to urban areas observed in wealthier capitalist economies—the rural–urban transition.

The urban space occupied by informal settlements presents an opportunity for capitalist property development, but also poses a challenge because it lies outside the capitalist land market. The pressure to commodify informal settlements, making them investable (Li, 2014), is particularly strong at present. This reflects the confluence of several processes: Fast policy initiatives seeking to privatize urban land; the rapid emergence of a wealthy urban middle class demanding urban spaces consonant with living a 'modern' lifestyle (condominiums, villas, shopping centers, office towers, etc.); developers chasing the profits to be made in supplying this upper end of the residential population; municipal officials determined to enhance the attractiveness of their city to mobile capital and wealthy residents; and, last but not least, global finance capital (Goldman, 2011).

The pervasiveness of informal settlements also challenges dominant urban theory, and the interventions that it informs. This theory presumes that all urban land is available to the capitalist land market, turning to land rent theory to account for urban land use patterns (Alonso, 1964; Harvey, 1972). Some urban theorists seek to resolve the disjuncture between urban theory and the persistent pervasiveness of informal settlements in favor of theory. Thus Scott and Storper (2015: 12) seek to 'guard against over-hasty impulses to take certain dramatic or peculiar instances of urban development (e.g...the extensive slums of Mumbai...) as a clear-cut signal that a reformulation of theory is required'. Dominant urban theory has also informed major initiatives undertaken to privatize ('normalize') land ownership in cities of the post-colony, seeking to bring informal settlements into the capitalist land market. Inspired by de Soto's (2000) claim that urban poverty can be reduced, as well as by social justice arguments that the poor's occupancy of urban land should be legally recognized, the UN and the World Bank have pushed post-colonial urban administrations to undertake cadastral surveys and 'regularize' property rights in informal settlements through formal land titles (Durand-Lasserve and Royston, 2012). The resulting extensive initiatives to provide residents of informal settlements with private property rights have been far from successful, however (Sundaram, 2013). Residents in informal settlements still experience a variety of land and tenurial use and occupancy rights, ranging between the extremes of freehold property ownership and squatting.

### *Urban commons and informal settlements*

Until recently, much of the literature on the commons has focused on natural resource commons. Ostrom's common property regime theory (1990) has been particularly influential, dominating late 20th-century scholarship. Here the commons is defined as: 'Property owned by no-one...owned and defended by a community of resource users...used by multiple individuals regardless of the type of property rights involved' (Schlager and Ostrom, 1992: 249). Ostrom's common property regime theory effectively undermines Hardin's (1968) tragedy of the commons, the presumption that land must be privately owned in order to be used productively and avoid free-ridership, but has limited applicability to the urban context. While informal urban settlements are 'used by multiple individuals regardless of the type of property rights involved', urban land generally is not a

primary common resource (such as pastures, waters, forests) in the sense conceptualized here: a resource that is collectively owned or shared among populations whose livelihoods it directly supports.

Building on this elision between rural and urban contexts, other scholars have advanced various notions of the urban commons. At the most basic level, in parallel to natural resource commons, certain scholars conceptualize the urban commons as shared access to local resources. These include civic commons—public spaces such as streets, parks, spaces of mass transit, sanitary systems, public housing and schools, community gardens, open-source cyberspace, as well as an ecological commons—the air we breathe and the water we drink (Bradley, 2015; Gidwani and Baviskar, 2011). Such important shared urban resources are defined less by forms of ownership than by how they are used. In megacities of the global South, as Gidwani and Baviskar (2011: 43) remind us, some of these resources also underwrite crucial sustenance for the urban poor: ‘municipal garbage that provides livelihoods to waste-pickers; wetlands, water bodies, and riverbeds that sustain fishing communities, washerwomen, and urban cultivators; streets as places where people work, live, love, dream, and voice dissent; and local bazaars that are sites of commerce and cultural invention’.

Critically reflecting on this extension of the common property approach, Gudeman (2001) and Bruun (2015) note a tendency therein to separate real and virtual spaces of the commons from the human communities associated with them. ‘Commons refer not only to material resources and physical space, but also to social and cultural values and anything that contributes to the material, social and cultural sustenance of communities’ (Bruun, 2015: 155, quoting Gudeman, 2001: 27). Similarly, Chatterton (2010: 626) argues that ‘[t]he common consists of shared interests or values that form the potential basis of communities’. In this view, urban commons emerge through actors engaging in practices of ‘commoning’ (Blomley, 2008; Harvey, 2012; Jeffrey et al., 2012; Linebaugh, 2008), implying that the commons ‘is perpetually made and remade, created, eroded and defended’ (Chatterton, 2010: 626). This also implies supplementing the civic and ecological commons (Gidwani and Baviskar, 2011) with a social commons, as well as interrogating the complex relations between them.

As for informal settlements more generally, Jakarta’s *kampung*s are spaces that support and are shaped through practices of commoning that exceed capitalist social relations. The dense, frequently institutionalized social networks characterizing *kampung* life provide sustenance and livelihood support to *kampung* residents: non-bank savings groups (*arisans*), food sharing, collective fundraising for medical costs, social groups providing mutual aid, social care, and simply togetherness. *Kampung* residents also construct shared green spaces and spaces of food production, offering respite from the congested and polluted thoroughfares bounding them. While one could argue that such practices are deployed as survival strategies by individuals and households, this still implies some form of collaboration and collective endeavor.

Yet, as Simone (2014a) has shown, the *kampung* cannot simply be reduced to practices of commoning, since residents’ practices are shot through with self-interest and power hierarchies, and articulate with capitalist market exchange and attempts to monetize the commons. Put otherwise the commons is never the pure space of non-collective interest and non-market exchange described by Harvey (2012: 73):

at the heart of the practice of commoning lies the principle that the relation between the social group and that aspect of the environment being treated as a common shall be both elective and non-commodified—off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuation.

Rather than off-limits to the logics of market exchange, competition and hierarchies, kampungs embody both commoning and competition, collective and self-interest, with the balance between these continually in motion.

Worldwide tendencies towards the enclosure of commons, particularly in this current era of neoliberalizing globalization, including the privatization of public goods and encroachments on public space (Mitchell, 2003; Staeheli and Mitchell, 2008), have generated contestation. Even as wealthy urban residents take advantage of enclosure to create gated communities, displacing the poor, eroding urban commons and undermining the urban majority's rights to the city, marginalized communities and their supporters work to block, push back against and evade enclosure. Grassroots initiatives, such as the Right to the City movement, are fighting displacement and promoting social and spatial justice in cities across the globe. In the realms of academia, these grassroots movements have inspired some critical scholars to elevate cities themselves to an urban commons, whose residents should be accorded the right to use and collectively control their neighborhoods, housing, transportation, social services and economic activities (Blomley, 2008),<sup>2</sup> where public space and the public sphere are accessible to all, and where collective urban visions become possible, securing a universal right to the city.

### *Accumulation by dispossession*

In metropolitan areas across post-colonial Asia, Africa and Latin America, scholars researching displacement in informal settlements have focused on forced evictions by the state and private capital. The tools deployed range from formal declarations of eminent domain—whereby state power is used to abrogate property rights in the name of what is declared a higher societal priority (with compensation for displaced residents)—to various informal and illegal measures (e.g. intimidation) and outright physical violence. The critical urban studies literature has attempted to explain these developments through concepts of dispossession and enclosure. Dispossession and enclosure resonate with Marx' (1967 [1867] Part 8) analysis of primitive accumulation: The enclosure of rural commons in 18th-century England, dispossessing peasants of the means of food production and displacing them to cities to become an industrial working class. In Marx' account, primitive accumulation clarifies the transition from a feudal land-based political economy to industrial capitalism. Others have argued, however, that such processes are a permanent feature of capitalism's enrollment of non-capitalist practices and practices into its logic (De Angelis, 2001; Glassman, 2006; Perelman, 2000). In this spirit, Harvey developed accumulation by dispossession to conceptualize the many ways in which contemporary capitalism colonizes its constitutive outsides in order to redress emergent internal contradictions and repeated crises:

What accumulation by dispossession does is to release a set of assets (including labour power) at very low (and in some instances zero) cost. Overaccumulated capital can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use. In the case of primitive accumulation as Marx described it, this entailed taking land, say, enclosing it, and expelling a resident population to create a landless proletariat, and then releasing the land into the privatized mainstream of capital accumulation. . . . [I]f capitalism has been experiencing a chronic difficulty of overaccumulation since 1973, then the neo-liberal project of privatization of everything makes a lot of sense as one way to solve the problem. (Harvey, 2003: 149–150)

Harvey's conceptualization has inspired contemporary urban scholarship. Dispossession and enclosure have been elevated to mid-range concepts that account for struggles over land as



varied as global 'land grabs', the privatization and sales of council housing in the UK, and the clearing and 'upgrading' of urban informal settlements across the post-colony (Anwar, 2012; Ghertner, 2014; Gillespie, 2016; Hodkinson, 2012; Ince, 2014; Jou et al., 2012; Li, 2010; Shin, 2016). Enclosure in particular has become a broad-ranging term, capable of capturing multivalent processes of dispossession in different contexts (Jeffrey et al., 2012; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015; Vasudevan et al., 2008; White et al., 2012). With respect to dispossession, Rossi (2012: 348) goes as far as to argue that it constitutes one element of capitalism's ontological 'dispositif'.

Such scholarship also has sought to place accumulation by dispossession into conversation with post-colonial theory, offering cautionary comments and proposing modifications. With respect to primitive accumulation, Ince (2014) argues that applying a genealogical approach to the role of globalizing capitalism in the post-colony raises questions about whether enclosure of the commons necessarily entails the spatial displacement of peasants theorized by Marx. For example, land grabs can commodify subsistence land for globalized commodity production without displacing peasants (who become an agricultural labor force, albeit with increasingly precarious livelihoods). With respect to enclosure, Jeffrey et al. seek to extend its conceptual capacity beyond the material fencing off of land, to incorporate 'spatialities, and subjectivities' (Jeffrey et al., 2012: 1249), thereby acknowledging the constitutive role of spatial, cultural and biophysical processes. Further, challenging pessimism about capitalism's capacity seemingly to dispossess, enclose and commodify everything, they argue that processes of commoning continue to contest those of enclosure: 'If enclosure is a seizure of the commons, the commons is a generative spacing that is not simply reducible to but that variously precedes, responds to, and exceeds processes of enclosure' (Jeffrey et al., 2012: 1249).

Gillespie makes a similar point in seeking to provincialize accumulation by dispossession. Thinking through Accra, he argues that theorists neglect the ongoing capacity of residents and social movements to push back against dispossession through acts of 'quiet encroachment' (Bayat, 2000; Gillespie, 2016). This resonates with others' arguments about the persistence of contestations and alternatives to globalizing capitalism (Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2008; Leitner et al., 2007). Relatedly, Ghertner (2014) questions whether gentrification, as conceptualized in the North American and European literature, is applicable to the displacement of residents in cities of the post-colony, where the social upgrading of housing occurs through wholesale replacement of the housing stock by large real estate developments (see also Lees, 2011). Finding that gentrification has limited relevance in Mumbai, he concludes that "'urban revolution", "enclosures", and "accumulation by dispossession", while equally abstract terms, . . . are better suited than gentrification for a north-south comparative analysis of displacement (Ghertner, 2014: 1554). Examining 'gentrification' in Guangzhou, Shin (2016) questions whether forcible dispossession is adequate for describing the putative vectors of displacement: 'dispossession occurs in a nuanced way, involving a mix of co-optation and coercion, or "negotiated consent to displacement and forced eviction"' (Doshi, 2013: 848; quoted in Shin, 2016: 485).

Studying land transformations and displacement in Jakarta, our research underlines Shin's reservations about the adequacy of dispossession for explaining land transformations and struggles over land in Asian cities. We will show that they are not simply about dispossession and capitalist accumulation, but are more complex. First, displacement takes multiple forms and cannot be reduced to dispossession. Second, not only capitalists have the opportunity to accumulate, but a variety of actors accumulate wealth and power through the land transformation process, albeit unequally. Last, but

not least, commoning and other contestations over land transformation may block or exceed the logic of the capitalist market (For similar arguments, see Levien, 2012; Sarkar, 2016).

## Land transformations, land rights and displacements in Jakarta

In Jakarta, the new construction of housing, commercial space and offices has exploded over the past decade, fueled by a number of developments. As elsewhere in Asia, a rapidly expanding middle class aspires to a western urban lifestyle: Jakarta's peri-urban gated communities, built by large Indonesian conglomerates, are rife with Californian architectural styles, marketed under such place names as Orange County, Malibu and Fresno (cf. Dick and Rimmer, 1998). Having experienced the 1997 Asian financial crisis (*krismon*), demand for land and real estate seems almost insatiable, with well-to-do Indonesians purchasing multiple properties as a more secure investment than the stock market.

Identifying urban real estate as a profitable investment opportunity, large Indonesian conglomerates have become very active in urban real estate development. Able to sell every unit they build, with anticipated rates of return of 30%,<sup>3</sup> they have developed urban super-blocks, peri-urban new towns and 'integrated' industrial estates, most recently turning to Dubai-style island reclamations (17 currently permitted) between Jakarta's north shore and a planned Great Sea Wall (Colven, 2016; Kusno, 2013; Suryono et al., 2016). It is estimated that Jakarta offered the highest return (37%) on luxury real estate investment in the world in 2012 and 2013 (Chow, 2014). Spectacular, gated and defensive architecture, combined with provision of a full range of services (retail, office, primary to university Anglophone education, religious facilities), has created communities where the better off can segregate themselves from the poverty and congestion that they associate with Jakarta's streets and kampungs (Firman, 2004; Suryono et al., 2013). From the perspective of national and municipal officials, such real estate projects enhance Jakarta's global competitiveness as a destination for mobile investment capital, and for economic and political elites.

Given these developments, Jakarta's central city and peri-urban kampungs are highly sought-after spaces from which land can be assembled for real estate projects and thereby commodified. Kampung residents pursue urban lifestyles that exceed the western, neoliberal capitalist norm (Simone, 2014a). Kampung life has a strong urban commons orientation. This includes collectively governed non-bank microloan savings and credit associations (*arisans*), helping out neighbors, socializing in and maintaining kampung public spaces, and collective decision-making (as well as conflicts). Many residents participate in both informal and formal economic activities. Kampung governance is a complex hybrid of formal state administrative structures (e.g. Kelurahan), locally elected neighborhood representatives (RTs and RWs), village committees (*dekel*) serving as a 'a conduit between the district and larger administration venues and programs' (Simone, 2014b: 133), and local political fixers (*preman*) embodying contradictory roles (for further details see Simone, 2014b).

Jakarta's Kampungs are highly variable in terms of the quality of the built environment and temporal origin. They range from those dating back to the Dutch era, where families have lived for several generations and benefitted from kampung improvement programs, to desperately poor and unhealthy spaces on marginal land, occupied by first-generation rural-urban migrants. Kampung residents may hold land rights, but these need not be freehold. In Indonesia, as elsewhere across the post-colony, newly independent nation-states sought to craft land rights that recognize both indigenous principles (*adat* in Indonesia) as well as

western-style formal legal principles (Fitzpatrick, 2008; Seidman and Seidman, 1994). Michael Leaf (1993) describes the persistence of two parallel systems of recognized land rights in Jakarta: unregistered 'indigenous' *adat* land rights (*girik* and *garapan*) that Indonesians had been granted on foreign-owned land, managed by the Lurah (the appointed official in charge of a *Kelurahan* (the lowest level of district government), and rights registered with the National Land Agency (Badan Pertanahan Nasional—BPN)).

Notwithstanding the 1981 PRONA (Proyek Operasi Nasional Agraria), a national title registration program,<sup>4</sup> and the creation of BPN in 1988 tasked with formalizing land ownership, only limited progress has been made with national land registration. As of 2001, 22.3 million of Indonesia's 60.7 million parcels of non-forest land had been registered, mostly on urban and peri-urban land (Wallace, 2008). Leaf estimates that land rights in Jakarta's *kampungs* were 'almost exclusively' unregistered in 1993, with such rights 'grudgingly and unofficially' recognized by the state for capitalist market transactions (Leaf, 1993: 489). In the spirit of Hernando de Soto and neoliberal global urbanism, World Bank-initiated attempts at land reform in 1991 (the Land Administration Project part C) and 2004 (the Land Management and Policy Development Project) sought to 'improve land tenure security and enhance the efficiency, transparency, and improve service delivery of land titling and registration' ([www.worldbank.org/projects/P064728/land-management-policy-development-project?lang=en](http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P064728/land-management-policy-development-project?lang=en), accessed 20 December 2015). In part as a result of these programs, registered land rights now have penetrated Jakarta's *kampungs*, but these take a variety of forms, including use rights (*hak pakai*) and the right to build (*hak guna bangunan*), in addition to freehold ownership (*hak milik*).

*Kampung* residents wishing to convert unregistered land titles into BPN-registered *hak milik* find this frequently difficult (Irawaty, personal communication). The registration process is time-consuming and costly—costs that are elevated by under-the-table payments to officials, and by the cost of conforming to the numerous planning requirements that apply to registered landowners. Political connections to local officials (RT, RW and the Lurah) also are important to this process. It follows that lower income residents cannot afford to register their land (Monkkonen, 2013). For developers, by contrast, a system of development and building permits created under Suharto (*Izin Lokasi* and *Izin Mendirikan Bangunan*) enable them to acquire development rights to tracts of land, also in Jakarta's long-standing *kampungs*. Legally, the residents of these tracts can only sell to this developer, undermining their negotiating power. This arrangement also imposes constraints on developers, who cannot begin construction until the land governed by these permits is acquired and registered as *hak milik* (Monkkonen, 2013; Soemarno, 2011).<sup>5</sup>

Under *reformasi*, Suharto's authoritarian pro-market developmentalist regime underwent democratization, including the re-scaling downward of state authority and responsibility (Bunnell and Miller, 2011). With the devolution of spatial planning decisions to local authorities (e.g. municipalities), Indonesia's traditionally top-down spatial planning process has become increasingly ambiguous and manipulable as national-scale laws and implementation rules are countermanded at the local scale. The development arms of large Indonesian conglomerates are expert at working with local officials to game this changing system to their advantage. This exemplifies how *reformasi* has yet to significantly reshape Suhartan hierarchies of power and influence, notwithstanding international expectations of and pressure for 'good' governance (Hadiz, 2010; Hadiz and Robison, 2013).

Although many *kampungs* began life as squatter settlements—settlement without land titles—most long-standing *kampungs* have been accorded legal recognition by the state.



In 1988 under a public order regulation (Perda 11/1988), the DKI Jakarta government declared settlement to be illegal in certain locations and began to label kampungs as 'legal' or 'illegal'. Reaffirmed and modified in the 2007 public order regulation (Perda 8/2007), it became illegal to settle and build on streets, within 10 meters of rivers and other water bodies, in parks and green spaces, along railroad tracks, and under flyovers and bridges. The designation of certain kampungs as 'illegal' has legitimized their erasure through evictions, aggressively pursued by Governor Ahok (Basuki Tjahaja Purnama; 2014–2017) to raze such settlements and evict thousands. By contrast, the dominant vector of displacement in 'legal' kampungs has been negotiated sales to land brokers. In short, changes in the political regime and the regulatory framework have legitimated two distinct vectors of displacement.

### **Jakarta's Kampungs: Displacement, accumulations and contestations**

In order to examine the variegated nature of land transformation in the kampungs of contemporary Jakarta, we analyze two case studies based on fieldwork between 2013 and 2016.<sup>6</sup> One exemplifies displacement via negotiation, the other is a case of forced eviction. The long-standing 'legal' kampung of *Menteng Atas* in south central Jakarta has been shrinking since 1992, when Bakrieland began its signature Epicentrum development of its corporate headquarters surrounded by condominium and apartment towers and facilities for their residents (a shopping center, school and sports facility). As several developers explained to us, eviction was easy under former President Suharto, facilitating land assembly and the commodification of kampung land.<sup>7</sup> After 1998, however, developers found themselves compelled to conform to capitalist market mechanisms of negotiating sales with residents holding land rights. By contrast, the city administration under Ahok (Basuki Tjahaja Purnama), the current governor of the DKI Jakarta, has implemented rapid, forced evictions of kampungs overlooking the banks of the Ciliwung River and the Pluit retention pond, using the Public Order Law of 2007 (Perda 8/2007) to declare these as illegal.

#### ***Menteng Atas: Land assembly and negotiated displacement***

*Menteng Atas* in south central Jakarta exemplifies the quiet and piecemeal encroachment of Asian urban modernity and real estate developers into Jakarta's 'legal' kampungs. Developers and land brokers pursue, sometimes haunting, residents to sell their land, triggering a sometimes lengthy negotiation process over the price of land. It begins with a few people in a kampung agreeing to sell the home in which they have lived all their lives, raised their children and carved out a living. The process speeds up as more and more people sell their property, until only a few holdouts remain. We have been observing this first-hand in a sub-area (RW02) of Kampung *Menteng Atas* that we entered by chance in December 2013. At that point in time just a handful of properties had been sold. These were typically razed to the ground, and the land enclosed with a fence or concrete wall, but the area was otherwise inhabited and intact (see Figure 1). Residents' spirits were high, with heated negotiations between residents and various land brokers, as well as local public officials (RT, RW, Lurah) about whether and when to sell the land and at what price. As we walked around the kampung residents roped us into this discussion, seeking our opinion as to whether they should sell or hold the land, and how they could negotiate a good price.

Interviews with residents revealed that neighborhood representatives (the Lurah, RTs and RWs) frequently serve as intermediaries between residents, brokers and developers, in various ways.<sup>8</sup> They may help residents obtain land certificates, giving them the rights



**Figure 1.** Land assembly and enclosure, Menteng Atas, September 2013.

Source: Authors.

necessary to be able to negotiate with brokers and developers, but may also smooth the sale of the property. Notwithstanding the excitement around land transformation in the kampung, the residents we spoke to had not formulated a collective response. Negotiations with brokers were highly individualized; brokers told residents not to share with their neighbors the price they had obtained for their land.<sup>9</sup> The going price in December 2013 was between 10 and 12 million Rupiah (US\$800–1000) per square meter. Many families' land plots were 100 m<sup>2</sup>, and the prospect of a windfall of US\$100,000 was extraordinarily tempting. According to interview responses, household incomes in this sub-district average between 2 and 6 million rupiah (US\$150–450) per month.<sup>10</sup> For those earning approximately US\$200 with a plot of 100 m<sup>2</sup>, selling the rights they hold to their home thus compensated them with a sum equivalent to wages for almost 40 person years of work.

Under these pressures, RW02 has experienced dramatic transformations. Within a 5 month period 1/3 of the housing in the subdistrict was sold and enclosed, and 2 ½ years later most of the subdistrict had been cleared (Figure 2). Residents repeatedly commented that their willingness to sell was not only due to pressure from the brokers; the destruction and enclosure of other residents' homes undermined kampung sociability, making the neighborhood increasingly an undesirable and unsafe place to live.<sup>11</sup> If negotiation, demolition and enclosure were one trajectory of land transformation, an alternative could be observed in other RWs within Menteng Atas. Speculating on these changes, developers, brokers, wealthy individuals and better-off kampung residents acquire and/or renovate and expand property in the kampung, which they rent out to workers in adjacent commercial and residential developments or to retailers serving these workers. The new high-rise apartment complexes are not affordable for office and retail workers, enhancing the demand for rental space in remaining nearby kampungs.

The costs and benefits associated with such negotiated displacements are uneven, reflecting participants' socio-spatial positionality. Residents with *Hak Milik* rights stand to gain what, for them, is an unprecedented accumulation of wealth; those with more limited rights are offered a lower price as developers assume the cost and effort of converting these to *Hak Milik* after the sale. Residents who have been unable to obtain any kind of recognizable land or use right cannot take advantage of this opportunity; renters



**Figure 2.** Land use Menteng Atas RW2, May 2015.

Source: Map drawn by Rully Mardona.

are simply displaced without compensation (as in any capitalist market). Brokers make undocumented monetary gains, local officials trade on their political influence, and landlords gain returns on their speculative investments. But developers stand to gain the largest profits: While developers of the project described RW02 residents' negotiated land prices as exorbitant, we later learnt from other developers that the land prices paid to residents are less than 50% of the market value in that location.<sup>12</sup> Eventually, once land has been developed, the developers' potential for long-term capital accumulation is enormous.

It is easily imaginable that the prospect of potentially life-changing windfall-profits is hard for kampung residents to resist. This makes them complicit in this commodification of kampungs, undermining these as spaces for urban commoning. This became the center of conversation in interviews and focus groups with residents who had already sold their property and moved further out towards the urban fringe. Women and youth, in particular, expressed very deeply a loss of community, neighborliness, and sociability and the informal social safety net that RW02 had provided ('when I was sick neighbors collected money so that I could pay for my medication').<sup>13</sup> Some still were regularly returning to visit friends left behind in their former kampung. Remarkably, an arisan (collective savings group) created by the residents of RW02 has survived their displacement: its 35 families still meet monthly, now at homes scattered across south Jakarta.<sup>14</sup> In a girls' focus group, participants weighed gains in housing quality and status against loss of sociability, seeking both. As one girl put it: 'My dream is to combine the quality of a *rumahan* [home in a planned development] with the life-style and neighborliness of the kampung.'<sup>15</sup> This experience of and desire to reproduce commoning leads families to seek out and construct

similar living and built environments on the urban fringe. One developer told us that he offered kampung residents a condominium in lieu of monetary compensation, but none took up this offer.<sup>16</sup> This exemplifies contestation: Using money made in the capitalist land market to relocate into another informal urban commons.

As this example of land transformation demonstrates, there is more to commodifying the urban commons than dispossession and capitalist accumulation. Displacement demonstrates elements of choice, albeit in a situation where the ‘context of context’, of global urbanism, neoliberalism and informality, structures the opportunities available. Beyond developers seeking to produce housing as a capitalist commodity, a variety of different actors accumulate capital, but also wealth and political influence, albeit unequally. While residents participate in the commodification of urban land, they seek out and continue to live in informal urban commons and work in the informal sector.

### *Kampung Pulo and Bukit Duri: Contested evictions*

Those kampungs that have been designated as illegal often house the poorest of Jakarta’s urban poor, who have built their makeshift shelter on marginal public land, particularly along the city’s riverbanks, canals and retentions ponds. These areas bear the brunt of flood events that have intensified in recent years. Our focus here, two well-established kampungs along the Ciliwung River—Kampung Pulo and Bukit Duri—would flood every year during the rainy season, damaging the homes and belongings of poor residents and often forcing them to temporarily evacuate. Residents of these kampungs are particularly vulnerable and exposed to these environmental threats, but also find themselves at the center of the local politics of flood mitigation. Since 2013, these residents have faced ever-increasing threats of eviction as part of internationally funded flood mitigation measures, which also include river dredging, embankment reinforcement, and regulations requiring buildings to be set back by at least 10 meters from open water. They have been blamed by political leaders, the media and the middle and upper classes for contributing to clogged-up rivers, making them responsible for flooding. Thus Governor Ahok publicly stated that Jakarta floods because the rivers ‘are surrounded by illegal residences. Therefore the rivers’ surroundings cannot properly absorb the overflowing water’ (Wardhani, 2014). Discourses advancing the need for river revitalization measures lay blame on ‘illegal’ kampung residents for the flooding, citing public order regulations to justify forced evictions from the shelters that residents built with sweat equity and the spaces where they could support their livelihoods through urban commoning.

Governor Ahok has been uncompromising in implementing forceful evictions since July 2015. In the early morning of August 20, police, bulldozers, heavy machinery, and construction crews moved in to raze riverside housing in Kampung Pulo, leveling the area and destroying hundreds of homes within a few days. We observed the aftermath of this eviction (Figure 3). Bukit Duri on the other side of the Ciliwung River likewise was cleared in two stages, in December 2015 and September 2016. Although the river dredging and reinforcement programs include a plan for resettlement and full compensation for those displaced, residents need to hold land rights certificates and/or a Jakarta identity card to qualify for compensation. Many of those residing along the Ciliwung River do not possess such documents, and even those who do and are able to obtain replacement housing and/or compensation remark on its inadequacy. This includes inadequate and inappropriate provision of resettlement housing, whether nearby or on the outskirts of Jakarta.

We could document concerns with respect to a previous eviction of kampungs along the shore of the Pluit retention pond in North Jakarta, where thousands of residents were



**Figure 3.** Evictions, Kampung Pulo, August 2015.

Source: Authors.

evicted. These evictions were to enable extensive dredging of the retention pond, enhancing its capacity to absorb floodwaters from Jakarta's rivers, and to construct a recreational park for an adjacent upper income residential neighborhood. The largest nearby replacement public housing complex, the Rusunawa Waduk Pluit project, was constructed under the previous governor (now President of Indonesia) Joki 'Jokowi' Widodo. It provides 1200 apartments in twelve four-story apartment blocks for residents evicted from the banks of the Pluit reservoir. The apartments average approximately 30 m<sup>2</sup>, accommodating households of 4 to 8 people. Evicted residents' biggest grievance has been that the newly built housing units are too few to accommodate all those evicted and too small for extended family units, that they are often poorly built, that the design is ill-suited to residents engaged in informal sector activities, and that piped water is inadequate.<sup>17</sup> Dian, who we visited in September 2015, commented on the advantages and disadvantages of her new home, where she lives with her husband, two children and a cousin in a 36 m<sup>2</sup> unit on the top floor.<sup>18</sup> She emphasized how much she had looked forward to a cleaner environment, and to having finally piped water in her home. Yet the housing project only receives piped water intermittently and of poor quality, forcing residents to continue to purchase potable water from water vendors, at a higher price than they paid in the nearby kampung from which they were displaced. Asked about the biggest difference between her everyday life in the rusunawa compared to the kampung, she lamented the loss of commoning possibilities with her former neighbors: They no longer live near one another, nor do they share food when individual families have too little to eat.<sup>19</sup>

It would be wrong to portray inhabitants of illegal kampungs as passive victims, however. In collaboration with non-profit organizations, such as Ciliwung Merdeka (a non-profit organization seeking to empower residents on the banks of the Ciliwung river), the Urban Poor Consortium (an advocacy and service organization for housing rights, social and environmental justice), RUJAK (a non-profit think-act tank promoting grassroots democracy and sustainable urban development), and Jakarta Legal Aid, kampung residents resist evictions through a variety of strategies, including legal appeals (Winayanti and Lang, 2004) and street demonstrations. Non-profits also have helped these kampung residents to advance demands for replacement housing and compensation, and for a voice in the design of replacement housing. For example, Ciliwung Merdeka helped residents of



Bukit Duri document and map the homes they have constructed, maintained, and improved over time, drawing attention to the historical significance of this kampung and its residents' contributions to Jakarta's economy, seeking to legitimate their demands for compensation after eviction (Padawangi, 2016). A violent protest during the Kampung Pulo eviction caused significant ripples within a government nervous about unscheduled protests of any form. Yet, notwithstanding local resistance, appeals against eviction orders and alternative proposals, residents and their advocates continue to be marginalized from the planning and decision-making process and evictions persist—undermining the capacity of urban commoning to enable the poorest of the poor to find foothold in Jakarta.

Forced eviction is the overarching vector of displacement for kampungs designated as illegal. These evictions are framed as mitigating flooding and removing 'illegal' settlements, but they also facilitate longer-term accumulation strategies for political and economic elites and middle class residents. These groups aspire to remaking Jakarta as a world-class metropolis (Firman, 1998). The poor, and the kampungs they inhabit along water bodies and railway lines and under overpasses, are seen as eyesores standing in the way of such aspirations, and of the money to be accumulated in realizing them. Some evicted residents unevenly qualify for compensation, whether money or replacement housing, often finding themselves relocated far from their current places of work. These cannot be counted as accumulation, but on occasion facilitate micro-accumulation strategies. For example, public housing officials complain that some residents sub-let the replacement housing they were allocated, generating a regular income previously unavailable to them. However, by and large evictions reinforce impoverishment of the very poor, stripping them of their homes, frequently separating them from informal livelihood opportunities and undermining possibilities for the urban commoning that sustains them. Thus they are hotly contested. Resistance to such evictions is widespread, ranging from public demonstrations to quiet encroachment, legal claims and political lobbying. More-than-capitalist livelihood practices also remain rife: Residents of replacement housing seek to continue their informal livelihood practices notwithstanding building regulations proscribing this. Those sub-letting housing use these funds to afford space in other kampungs. Those who do not qualify for compensation resort to eking out space and livelihoods in remaining 'illegal' kampungs.

### **Thinking through Jakarta: Contested accumulations through displacement**

It is important to reiterate that the complex local dynamics experienced in Menteng Atas and along the Ciliwung River, while specific to this geographical context, bear a family relationship to urban land transformations more broadly underway—both across cities of the post-colony and elsewhere. Under the overarching umbrella of the norms of neoliberal global urbanism, and the policy mobilities propagating these in variegated forms worldwide, urban elites actively seek to modernize/westernize their cities and cleanse them of visible poverty: privatizing urban land ownership, formalizing economic and settlement activities, promoting infrastructure development and urban sustainability, and enjoining citizens to self-identify as entrepreneurial and responsible individuals. Emergent middle classes, benefitting from these processes, invest in urban spaces designed for their lifestyles but also make speculative real estate purchases. Profit-seeking developers seek to commodify urban commons to construct spectacular real estate projects, and global finance firms underwrite the funding. All of these come together in particular ways to create a perfect storm of urban land transformation—a storm that too often washes away the urban poor/majority and increases inequalities.

Taking Jakarta seriously as a field site, a place from where urban processes can be rethought, we argue that the current default concept for understanding such land transformations—accumulation by dispossession—is insufficiently capacious for cities of the post-colony with extensive informality, complex forms of land transformation and displacement, multiple ways for actors to accumulate money and power, and ongoing contestations of attempts to commodify land and living space. We thus propose extending this concept as *contested accumulations through displacement*, with the following co-implicated properties.

First, variegated vectors of displacement range from forced eviction to residents' sales of land rights. While the former entails dispossession, the latter exceeds this. With respect to Jakarta, large tracts of state-owned land were handed over to well-connected Indonesian conglomerates during the New Order regime under president Suharto (1965–1998), who could rely on the state to enable or countenance eviction from 'legal' kampung settlements. After Suharto was deposed, ushering in democratization and *reformasi*, developers seeking to assemble legal kampung land had to resort to the market, initiating a complex and time-consuming process of negotiating sales with kampung residents holding land rights. While residents are 'free' to negotiate with developers, their options are constrained by the monopoly power of developers' possession of development and building permits and superior knowledge of the going price of land, and by developers' complicity with state officials who see the presence of kampungs as obstructing Jakarta's world-class aspirations. Facing such asymmetries, residents see displacement as inevitable and take the money and run. Evictions continue, but are largely restricted to 'illegal' kampungs, in the name of public order, flood mitigation and creating green space rather than real estate development per se (Leitner et al., 2017). While ordered by governors of DKI Jakarta, some evictions are financed by the private sector as a result of complex linkage agreements between developers and the city (Anya, 2016).

Second, displacements engender multiple forms and conditions of possibility for accumulation, including but exceeding Marx' definition of capitalists' accumulation of profits for expanded commodity production. With respect to money capital, developers, land brokers and a variety of residents in Jakarta are unequally positioned to profit from the land transformation process, acquiring investment capital and/or wealth (Simone, 2014a). Depending on documentable land rights, political connections, willingness to sell and negotiating skills, kampung residents may make a great deal of money or none at all during the land acquisition process. Even households facing eviction may be (differentially) compensated, opening up opportunities to invest in small-scale commodity production and engage in land or other speculation (Doshi, 2013; Levien, 2012). There also are multiple, unequal opportunities to accumulate power and influence, parsed by Bourdieu (1986) as social and cultural capital, that track but also exceed monetary wealth. Asymmetries in the conditions of possibility for such forms of accumulation coevolve with participants' distinct socio-spatial positionalities.

Third, these processes entail ongoing contestations that precede, respond to, but also exceed commodification of the urban commons (Jeffrey et al., 2012). Enright and Rossi, reiterating the arguments of many theorists of accumulation by dispossession, argues that 'social relations of collaboration...are incessantly captured within profit-driven logics of economic valorization' (Enright and Rossi, 2017: 18). Against this, we claim that practices of commoning have the effect of evading and undermining commodification. Yet these are not separate spheres: processes of commodification dialectically shape but also are shaped by those of contestation—outright resistance and more than capitalist practices—with neither reducible to the other. In Jakarta, resistance may include residents and their allies protesting evictions, refusing to sell, or resorting to the courts to prevent land transformation. In terms

of more-than-capitalist practices, those displaced may seek out, purchase or simply occupy cheaper, but similar kampung environments in peri-urban areas. For those making windfall profits, rather than converting these into entrepreneurial activities for capital accumulation (cf. de Soto, 2000) they may use (or lose) the money in a variety of activities that have little to do with capitalist commodity production and exchange.

Thinking through Jakarta, in order to adequately capture the complexity of urban land transformations, vectors of displacement, forms of accumulation, and contestations, we find it necessary to extend accumulation by dispossession into the notion of contested accumulations through displacement. This reformulation is not simply about the particularities of certain cities (*pace* Peck, 2015; Scott and Storper, 2015), however. Jakarta exemplifies a variegated trajectory of urbanization characteristic of much of the post-colony, one that reflects the peripheral positionality of such territorial economies within globalizing capitalism. Nor is it about a southern theory for southern cities: Certain processes become revealed because of their empirical prevalence in a place like Jakarta, such as the visibility of informality, which is also relevant to understanding land transformation in cities of the ‘global North’ (Leitner and Sheppard, 2016). Rather, contested accumulations through displacement emerge from spatio-temporal conjunctural thinking that emphasizes ‘how the specificity of cities...emerges from spatio-temporal dynamics, connectivities and horizontal and vertical relations’ (Sheppard et al., 2015: 1948).

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### Notes

1. Informal settlements in Indonesian cities are called kampungs (‘village’ in Bahasa Indonesia).
2. Blomley (2008: 320) advances a case for giving the poor legal rights to urban commons: “[T]he claim to commons of the poor... is based upon and enacted through sustained patterns of local use and collective habitation, through ingrained practices of appropriation and ‘investment’. By virtue of being in place for a long time and using and relying upon the commons, residents both acquire and sustain a legitimate property interest.”

3. Interviews with developers, Jakarta, December 2013.
4. This program sought to provide legal security of land ownership especially for poor people and to prevent land disputes (Soemarno, 2011).
5. According to the World Bank's 'doing business' calculations, Indonesia has the fourth highest cost in Southeast Asia for registering property and the fourth highest cost for obtaining construction permits ([www.doingbusiness.org/rankings](http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings), accessed 16 January 2016).
6. The findings reported here draw on multiple sources of information. In collaboration with Miya Irawati, Rully Mardona Nadia Ayu and Emma Colven we conducted four rounds of fieldwork in December 2013, August and September 2014, September and October 2015, and August 2016. The fieldwork included individual intensive interviews with developers of large-scale development projects and residents in central and peri-urban kampungs, and focus groups and interviews with residents and former residents of kampung Menteng Atas. The intensive interviews and focus groups were supplemented by intake questionnaires soliciting information on the socio-demographic characteristics and settlement history of residents, and by informal individual conversations. These were complemented by observations in kampungs and development projects, and archival records (including newspaper articles, documents on spatial planning, land laws, relevant government policies). Resident participants were recruited through elected neighborhood representatives (RT and RW), and developers and public employees through e-mails. Focus groups were separated by gender, held in a private kampung home, lasted approximately two hours, and were audiotaped. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in English and Bahasa Indonesia. Interview and focus group transcripts, intake questionnaires, debriefing notes, and observations were transcribed and analyzed through iterative coding, based on repeated close readings of the transcripts.
7. Interviews with developers, Jakarta, December 2013.
8. Interviews with Menteng Atas residents, December 2013.
9. Subsequent interviews revealed that collective negotiation also was pursued. Interviews with former Menteng Atas residents, August 2016.
10. Interview with Menteng Atas residents, December 2013.
11. Interview with Menteng Atas residents, September 2015.
12. Interview with developer, September 2015.
13. Interview with Menteng Atas residents, September 2015.
14. Interviews with kampung residents, September 2014, August 2016.
15. Focus group discussion, September 2015.
16. Interview with developer, December 2013.
17. Interviews with Rusunawa residents, and the Urban Poor Consortium staff, September 2015.
18. Interview with Dian, a Rusunawa resident, September 2015.
19. Dian, September 2015.

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