

The influence of the national “Green City” project on the local community

The case study of squatter settlements in Chode River, Yogyakarta city

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Place of fieldwork: Indonesia

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Research background

This research focuses on the influence of Indonesian urban spatial policy on informal settlements such as squatter settlements. Indonesia’s urban population has grown rapidly through the introduction of modern development in the 20th century, which caused an influx of urban poor from rural areas. Usually, the urban poor were eliminated or forced to move to low-rent apartments because urban policy emphasized beautification and greening of the city. However, with the spread of democracy and grass-roots activism, the urban poor are empowered to appeal the rights to occupation the land.



Picture 1: Green corridor outside the campus of Yogyakarta State University (18/08/2014)

Research purpose and aim

Indonesian city governments have been improving public spaces for citizens and aim to achieve cities of abundant green plants. This policy was highlighted by the Ministry of Public Works in the 2007 national “new spatial landscape act. I emphasize that Yogyakarta city encourages the greening and beautifying of the river-side. However, the existence of informal settlements, especially along the Chode-River, has made it more difficult for the city government to develop the river-side. Therefore, the purpose of my research is to analyze the effect of city greening policy on the informal settlements along the Chode-River.

Results and achievements of fieldwork

Through my research, I have obtained some acknowledgement of local activities initiated by the city greening policy. First, the city government aims to organize a community-based group, called Green Community, to strengthen the policy through a bottom-up development. I participated in conferences held by stakeholders and found agendas for

achieving the policy, solid waste management of the river, and low awareness of settlement for river-cleaning. Second, there is a construction boom of low-rent apartment near Chode – River because the existing small houses do not have enough capacity to accommodate residents and the quality of living for the river settlements has been deteriorated. However, there is conflict about a new construction in ward T. Contrary to the many applicants for the low-rent apartments, some riverside residents oppose the movement of existing houses. Third, I conducted participant observation in area G, made up of small-scale settlements of around 160 people. Many work in the informal sector of the economy and seldom get steady salaries. I often observed mutual aid activities like river-cleaning and daily activities in area G. but it seemed that the settlements do not face many restrictions or limitations on developing their houses. Therefore, such self-help acts as extending rooms and setting up outside private washing places deteriorate the quality of living.

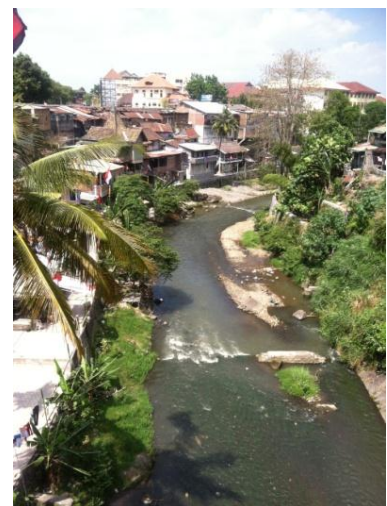
To sum up, even one river faces many problems depending on people’s economic situations and residential styles. Also, community participation in the green policy varies in the Chode-River area. Nevertheless, I point out that conflict occurs because migration drastically changes the lifestyle in some settlements and they do not get appropriate information about urban greening policy.



Picture2: Green community forum (25/08/2014)

Implications and impacts on future research

My research this time was directed at surveying the current progress of greening policy in Yogyakarta city. As for future plans, I need to survey other related spatial policies so as to understand the influence of policy comprehensively. Also, I would like to refer to other case studies in Indonesia and analyze the effect of spatial policy in the local situations



Picture 3: view from above area G (14/08/2014)