

# Transformation of Urban Policies on Informal Settlements in Indonesia: The Case Study of Code River, Yogyakarta City

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Place of fieldwork: Indonesia

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- Research background

The world population reached 7.3 billion, with 2.2 billion people living in developing countries in 2015. In developing countries, the lack of housing and deterioration of housing are serious problems. The United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. As one of its 17 goals, the 11<sup>th</sup> aims to provide housing for the poor and regenerate slums in urban areas.

Indonesia, which I chose as my research site, has the fourth largest population in the world. The lack of housing and the informal settlements, where people do not have clear land rights, remains a serious issue. Some of them take up residence at the riverside because of their lack of access to the housing market. Therefore, the Indonesian government faces the difficulties in implementing river management.

- Research purpose and aim

In Indonesia, there are a number of methods to utilize rivers in urban areas today. Preventing floods is one of the basic steps of river management. The restoration of the river environment and creating natural spaces along the riverside represents the recent attempts of urban planning. However, the government could not accomplish basic management due to the occupation of riverside settlements. Subsequently the government has undertaken the task of clearing riverside settlements. On the other hand, there is new movement in some Indonesian cities that the riverside settlements prevent the clearance and negotiate with local governments. One such precedent is the case of Yogyakarta, where the settlements form a community-based organization and try to improve the river quality and its spaces while living at the riverside. This research focuses on the struggle between riverside settlements and local governments, and the accompanying challenges of the settlements.

- Results and achievements by fieldwork

For this research, I focused on the role of the private companies that intervene in urban development in Yogyakarta. This is because private companies, especially developers, have been a chief motivators for urban development since the late 1990s. Therefore, it was important to identify the effects of private land purchase in Yogyakarta city. I tried to research whether these effects extend to the riverside or not. I conducted interviews with riverside settlers during the stay. The results revealed three findings about private development at Code Riverside.

Firstly, the private developers have already purchased riverside land and there is a hotel that has begun its operations. Secondly, there are activists who criticize the commercialization of land in the city and support the riverside settlements. Finally, the activists criticize not only the land commercialization in the city, but also the government's policies pertaining to market-oriented urban development and the illegal issuance of building permits for private developers.



Picture1. Interviews conducted with Code riverside settlers

During the stay, I participated and presented at the international seminar, “Celebrating 20<sup>th</sup> South East Asian Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP). I have developed new findings and ideas through the other related presentations.



Picture2. The opening ceremony celebrating 20<sup>th</sup> SEASREP

Another opportunity to share my research findings was at the National Islamic University in Yogyakarta, where my counterpart works. I gave a presentation as a speaker. The topic was an overview of urban policies related to Code riverside settlements and the brief history of housing policy in post-war Japan. Many students who study housing and welfare policies in Indonesia are interested in the Japanese strategies that dealt with housing shortages after the war. Although my study area is Indonesia, this academic exchange gave me the valuable opportunity to examine my own country's

housing history and politics.



Picture3. The class at the National Islamic University, Yogyakarta

- Implications and impacts on future research

I focused on the interviews conducted in areas where private constructions intrude along the Code River. For future research, it will be necessary to collect the materials related to the local government's policies. I will also utilize the local newspapers and documentation issued by local authorities in the city.