

Reclaiming Spaces from the Margins: The Making and Shaping of Participatory Spaces in the Development of Kampung Susun Bayam

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Abstract

This article explores the social production of participatory spaces, its effect on the participatory mechanisms, and how marginalised groups could reshape these spaces to claim their rights. The issue of housing the poor in Indonesia has rarely been a participatory process and is dominated by state-led evictions and government-controlled public housing. A recent initiative proposed by urban poor social movements, termed kampung susun attempted to shift decision-making and empower the marginalised. Despite early successful attempts, not all have managed to deliver changes smoothly. This article aims to investigate how these spaces of participation could fail to achieve transformative results and what kinds of opportunities exist for reclaiming decisive participation. The study argues that existing power relations and prevailing political culture of the local bureaucracy, state-owned company, and even within the urban poor hinders attempts at delivering the desired outcome for the movement. Nevertheless, avenues of reshaping spaces still exist through electoral institutions and the act of creating their own spaces of engagement.

Keywords: Participation; development; spaces; social movements

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Introduction

For the urban poor of Jakarta, struggles in affording decent housing have characterised their everyday politics of precariousness. Despite earlier visions of 'social housing' proposed by Muhammad Hatta, the government's treatment of the urban poor has never been far from neglect and exclusion (Kusno, 2024). After the fall of Suharto and the New Order regime, democratic institutions have provided the urban poor with new spaces of participation to take advantage of and maneuver around.

The *kampung susun* projects is perceived as a result of this opening, in which urban poor residents of evicted *kampung* had the

participatory space to design and operate the *kampung susun*, a new form of vertical housing in which the poor could dictate their own terms of engagement (Putri, 2020; Sari et al., 2023). However, the processes had not always been straightforward, which was the case for recipients of the *kampung susun* in Bayam, North Jakarta (Kampung Susun Bayam). The infrastructure was nearly taken over from them and failing to improve their well-being, which led to questions on how feasible participatory development really is for empowering the marginalised.

Literature surrounding participatory initiatives has been riddled with critiques regarding its potential to entrench already existing

inequalities rather than delivering transformative social changes (Cornwall, 2002; Hickey and Mohan, 2005). From early approaches to participation the 1970s, which aims to include recipients for purposes of cost efficiency by sharing burdens of the project (Bamberger, 1986) and achieving compliance (Cornwall, 2002), to a neoliberal perspective of 'user and chooser' (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001) that positioned recipients as consumers, these initiatives were seen as depoliticising the acts of participation and ignoring its social and political context. Projects were deemed too focused on personal reform rather than political struggle (Chambers, 1994), overtly romanticising

the 'local' (Mohan, 2001), and appropriating alternative visions of development (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001). This has led to the susceptibility of participatory avenues to elite capture, domesticating local organisations, obfuscating existing power relations within communities, and hence sustaining social, political, and economic inequalities.

Some scholars have prescribed methods on which participatory development could fulfill their transformative potential. Glynn (2004) underscored the democratic tendencies in participatory projects that could be taken advantage by social movements and/or NGOs to realise actual political changes, i.e. the

characteristics of transparency and self-criticism. He also highlights that the initiatives must be imaginative and attempt to pressurise the expansion of participatory chances into other arenas. Meanwhile, in a more citizenship-oriented analysis, Hickey and Mohan (2005) argued that successful attempts to achieving transformative changes in participatory approaches are most likely to follow four characteristics: pursued as a wider political project, aimed at citizenship rights and participation for marginal groups, engaging development as an underlying process for social change rather than mere technocratic innovation, and a structural separation between the

modes of accumulating political and economic power in the targeted community (Hickey and Mohan, 2005).

Both of these literatures gave considerable input on transformative methods; however, Glynn (2004) gives too much attention to the marginalised's agency (which is of course still crucial), but few on the power relations supplementing these institutions. While Hickey and Mohan's (2005) analysis on social movements falls short on how the agency of these movements manage competing interests of the government and/or donors when they are invited into participatory institutions. Questions evaluating end results are not enough, and more should be done to

dissect the political background of participatory arenas and how this affects the dynamic within them. To this end, the concept of participatory spaces is highly useful.

Spaces of participation is defined as opportunities and moments where citizen engagement is conceived and perceived and has the potential to affect policies and discourses (Cornwall, 2002; Gaventa, 2006). This notion was built upon conceptions by Lefebvre, Foucault, and Bourdieu, which underlined the interrelation between power and difference in the making of space and the interplays within them (Cornwall, 2002). Lefebvre's (1991) influence lies on his notion of the production of

space, in which each social space is the outcome of past actions, etching within it a 'generative past' that influences future action. His thought helps in dismantling assumptions of space as a political vacuum and to analyse spaces in regard to the past power relations that constitute them. From Bourdieu (1997), uncontested and entrenched patterns of interaction in social spaces could become embodied in particular places. Foucault (1975) suggest the replication of existing power relations in new arenas, domination through architecture, and the affect of discourse on shaping spaces. However, Cornwall (2002) also noted the influence of Foucault's thought on the permeability of

these spaces and the 'strategic reversibility' of power relations, which enables multiple points of resistance and the possibility of reshaping those spaces.

Based on how and by whom spaces are created, Gaventa (2006) divided spaces into three categories: closed spaces, invited spaces, and claimed/created spaces. Closed spaces are arenas in which decisions are negotiated solely within by actors of the state without inclusion whatsoever of the public. Invited spaces are created by various authorities (whether government, supranational agencies, or NGOs) that invites the public to participate in the process of development. Cornwall (2002) dichomotised these invited

spaces into those that are regularised, which are more institutionalised, and 'fleeting formations,' which are transient in nature and rarely devolves decision-making.

Claimed spaces, on the other hand, are arenas initiated purely by less powerful actors, or claimed by them from authorities. These spaces could also be institutionalised in the forms of groups or associations (Cornwall, 2002). Gaventa (2006) underlined the dynamic relationship within the three forms of spaces, as constantly leaving room for opening up and closing. Closed spaces could be opened up by a motive for legitimacy, while invited spaces could be restricted when little resistance is offered from other spaces to

counteract powerful elite interests.

Despite it being a creation of more powerful actors, invited spaces still harbor potential to deliver transformative changes that could reconfigure power relations. Cornwall (2017) argues that this potential is determined by the locus of its creation, whether it is a result of public demand (termed conquered spaces) or the initiative of authoritative actors (provided spaces). It is also contingent on the landscape of the existing governance, whether there is popular mobilisation, support from a ruling party, or a highly organised bureaucracy. Lastly are the 'particularities of context,' which are history of power relations in governance

and the existing political culture.

In the case of Jakarta, some scholars have examined how social movements of the urban poor creatively move between these spaces and deploy a number of strategies to defend their livelihood (Savirani and Aspinall, 2017; Putri, 2020; Sari et al., 2023; Irawaty et al., 2023). They showed how the urban poor movement of Jakarta was able to be invited into new spaces as a result of political contracts and the electoral process. Irawaty et al. (2023, p. 990) argued how the political contracts the urban poor arranged were a form of invented space, due to being a vehicle to envision a form of living distinct to the urban poor. However, at the same

time they were also an invited space by using the electoral process and giving the urban poor a voice in urban governance (Irawaty et al., 2023, p. 998).

By analysing the case of participatory development in the Kampung Susun Bayam (KSB) project, this article attempts to resolve two main questions: how did spaces initially intended to be inclusive could in the midst of development be closed off? And how a reshaping of spaces is possible despite attempts at pushing less powerful actors to the margins? In the process of the answering these two main questions, Cornwall (2002) and Gaventa's (2006) work on participatory spaces provided supplementary questions that

should be asked on an analysis of participation in development: how is the configuration of existing power relations? What is the political, social, or economic context of the production of said space? Who initiated, chose the methods, and facilitated the space? Who takes part? And finally, how do the people involved perceive these spaces?

This article would hope to provide the 'particularities' that Cornwall (2002, 2017) underscored in order to fully understand the transformative capabilities of participation. Cornwall (2002) argues that there is no panacea for influential development, therefore this case study could contribute to an understanding of

development struggles from a Global South perspective and of a post-authoritarian nation slipping back to its repressive past.

In order to answer these questions, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with six individuals. Two of the interviewees are active organisers in the Bayam urban poor movement. Due to the conflict that divided the Bayam movement into two groups, interviews were conducted with the leader of each group to avoid factional bias.

Two other interviewees are organisers from two different NGOs that have accompanied the Bayam urban poor. These activists came from different organisations, each of which sided with one of the opposing

Bayam groups, again to avoid factional bias.

The final two interviewees were involved in a similar development project in Kampung Susun Akurarium. Their experiences help situate the historical context of participatory spaces in housing development in Jakarta and provide a comparison for understanding how two similar participatory spaces can lead to different trajectories.

To balance perspectives, interviews with Jakpro and the Jakarta Provincial Government were initially sought. However, Jakpro declined the request and the Provincial Government did not respond. As a result, this article draws on official statements made in press

conferences and media interviews to represent their perspectives. The rationale is that any potential interview would likely not diverge significantly from the public narrative they have already articulated.

Explanations regarding the historical context of power relations were taken from literature of government interventions on housing, particularly which targets the urban poor and of the Bayam urban poor's previous experience confronting state policies. Interviews with Bayam residents and NGO activists are expected to reveal their experiences in the original process of space production, interaction with more powerful actors during the process of participation,

and attempts of reshaping places that threatens to limit their room for participation. Besides their experiences, answers regarding their perception on those spaces are also sought for, specifically on how they 'perceive and enact' their sense of citizenship (Cornwall, 2002).

The article is divided into four sections. The first part introduced background context for the case study and explores various literature regarding participatory initiatives, their propensity for transformative change, and the concept of spaces of participation. The second section gives historical context on housing development policy targeting the poor in Jakarta,

government treatment of the Kampung Bayam settlement, and production of participatory space in housing development. The third part examines how the Bayam urban poor movement and NGO activists took part in the newly created space, the mechanisms which restricts their inclusion, and the attempts to reshape these spaces to their favour. The final part concludes the article by resolving the questions posed in the first section and offering insights for future endeavours in participatory development.

Histories of Housing Development on the Urban Poor

The Indonesian governments handling of

housing exhibits a continuity with the attitudes of the Dutch colonial government (Kusno, 2024). Prioritising land and housing projects to those of more affluent economic status, while delivering scarce attention to the livelihood of the poor. During the authoritarian New Order regime, expansive economic growth was followed with rapid urbanisation, and with neither state nor private actors providing a formal market for lower-income families, the spread of informal settlements intensified (Zhu & Simarmata, 2015).

Of the limited interventions the state conducted during the New Order, almost all were of top-down nature. Programmes such as a national low-cost housing

scheme (PERUMNAS) and a mixed housing ratio policy (The 1:3:6 Policy) were policies born purely from closed spaces without public involvement. These programmes also faced criticism for inadequately solving the housing backlog (Tunas and Peresthu, 2010). Two programmes contain some sort of participation, however all were backed by foreign donors. The Kampung Improvement Program (KIP) was fully funded by the World Bank and attempted to upgrade local infrastructure in informal settlements rather than supplying housing. Local residents were invited to collaborate under guidance of a local committee in determining the needs of their settlement, such as repairing

roads, drainage, or water sanitation (Tunas and Peresthu, 2010). It was regarded as highly successful in its objective. However, some critique it lacked sustainability after the flight of donors (Werlin, 1999; Taylor, 2016). The other programme was the P2BPK, a community-based housing development programme. It was a Ministry of Public Housing project with support from UNHCS and UNDP. The programme intended to lower housing costs by including communities and directing them to mobilise resources such as labor and finance (Rukmana, 2018).

The Kampung Bayam settlement did not become recipients of any of the aforementioned programmes.

It was a settlement formed surrounding Bersih Manusiawi dan Berwibawa (BMW) Park in the Papanggo subdistrict, Northern Jakarta. Muhammad Furqon, a farmer in Kampung Bayam and head of the Bayam farmers community (Tani Bayam Madani), claimed he was the second generation to have settled and farmed in the area. Dwellings have been built since as early as the 1980s, when a few migrants from rural areas took advantage of unused land and began farming them (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025).

The fall of the authoritarian regime after 1998 unleashed a wave of democratic reforms in the country. One consequential political reform

was the decentralisation of powers from the central government to local apparatus, mainly city and regency governments. This reform offered city governments more flexibility in utilising fiscal income, which enabled projects tailored to local-specific needs. Coupled with the introduction of direct electoral elections, this would provide the breeding ground for new political spaces. However, these seemingly inclusive reforms did not halt the state's repressive acts against the urban poor. Evictions are still a routine occurrence in the capital in which security forces clear off poor households, supported by thugs and ethnic gangs paid for by the state, local

government, or corporations (Wilson, 2019). Wilson (2019) also describes how large segments of the urban poor still relies on relations of patronage for their material needs. Class-based solidarity is deemed as risky and limiting opportunities for the urban poor, and due to long-standing anti-leftist stigma in Indonesia, risks inviting unwanted hostility.

Bayam was not exempted from repressive acts by authorities. The settlement experienced several evictions prior to 2017, with one massive eviction by the provincial government under Governor Fauzi Bowo in 2008. The evictions were part of plans to build a new stadium for Jakarta's football club. The provincial government utilised

not only Satpol PP, the local government's security apparatus, in displacing *kampung* residents, but also squads of thugs or *preman*. These *preman* came from various 'civil' organisations or *ormas*, surrounding the Bayam residents with their *ormas* flags encircling the settlement (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). Shirley Aplonia, Head of the Bayam peoples' cooperative (PWKB), reiterated that the 2008 evictions eventually drove the Bayam residents from the centre of the park to its outskirts, eventually bordering a railway (Interview with Shirley Aplonia, Head of PWKB, 12 May 2025). However, they were still technically in the park area,

and thus any further projects in the park would inadvertently result in their complete eviction.

As a response to frequent repression by the state and its private partners, some organisations were formed with the aim of protecting the interests of the urban poor. The Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) was founded to organise the *kampungs* of the urban poor and defend their social, political, and economic rights. Situating the urban poor rather than elites as instigators of political change, UPC was bringing forward an ideology that could be perceived as radical under a regime paranoid of remotely anything mimicking lower class resistance (Savirani & Guntoro, 2020). UPC worked in

tandem with JRMK (Jaringan Rakyat Miskin Kota) which is an alliance of the Jakarta urban poor, consisting of *becak* drivers, street sellers, and *kampung* dwellers. While the diversity of its consortium could lead to a broader understanding of being poor, this heterogeneity also creates difficulty in perceiving commonality (Wilson, 2019).

In 2012, facing incoming gubernatorial elections, UPC/JRMK engineered a political contract with eventual winners Jokowi-Ahok. This linkage resulted in the first housing programme born from the urban poor's participation. Taking advantage of a new regulation that gave local governments more fiscal power in housing, the Jokowi government refurbished 123

homes in the Petogogan area, being the first local government to initiate a housing programme (Savirani & Aspinall, 2017; Rukmana, 2018). The programme was received positively by *kampung* residents owing to an increase in living standards and reducing disruptions caused by evictions (Rukmana, 2018).

Jokowi's deputy and successor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or commonly known as Ahok, initially continued to utilise participatory methods in dealing with the housing of urban poor. However, in order to solve Jakarta's flood problem and appease the middle-class, Ahok began using an 'iron fist' approach by mass evicting *kampungs* along riverbanks without prior

negotiation and mostly inadequate compensation (LBH Jakarta, 2017). Bayam was also affected by Ahok's regime, with the government disturbing residents' water supply and pressuring them to flee the land (Interview with M. Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). Under Ahok, evicted residents were forced to locate to state-built low-income vertical housing termed *rusunawa*. However, it also has several disadvantages, including relative seclusion, insecure tenure, the loss of community, and a deprivation of agency (Siagian, 2024).

Ahok's repressive approach led to UPC/JRMK endorsing Anies Baswedan in the 2017 elections. The political contract assembled with

Anies was more detailed and rigorous than the Jokowi-Ahok agreement in order to prevent another reversal of approach (Savirani & Aspinall, 2017). Anies eventually won the elections and for a second time UPC/JRMK achieved political influence by virtue of political contract. The demands surrounding settlement and housing were executed through two new programmes: Community Action Plan (CAP) and Collaborative Implementation Program (CIP). These programmes were a collaborative framework that aimed to include the urban poor and NGOs in the planning process (through CAP) and the construction (through CIP) of *kampung* developments (Sari et al., 2023). From the

CAP programme, evicted *kampung* residents were aided by NGO activists and architects to design a new mode of housing for the urban poor called the *kampung susun* with support from the Provincial Housing Agency.

The *kampung susun* is a form of mid-rise low-cost housing that differs from *rusunawa* in the decision-making process of its day-to-day operations. Rather than the local or national housing department, residents themselves manage the building through a cooperative, taking over matters ranging from maintenance to finances (Irawaty & Muhammad, 2023). The first projects were constructed in the former settlements of Kampung

Akuarium, Kampung Kunir, and the Cakung area. Topaz Juanda, Head of a Neighborhood Unit (RT) in Kampung Akuarium, claimed that the idea of *kampung susun* had actually been formulated by the *kampung* members, NGO activists, and urban architects before Anies had entered office. Thus when the CAP was kickstarted, the *kampung susun* concept had already been relatively mature (Interview with Topaz Juanda, Head of RT, 22 May 2025).

The Housing Agency played a relatively minor role in planning of future day-to-day operations (Interview with Topaz Juanda, Head of RT, 22 May 2025). Debates did occur between the agency and the cooperative; however, most concerned technical aspects

of the building (Interview Topaz Juanda, Head of RT, 22 May 2025). Sari et al. (2023) described how arguments emerged between architects appointed by the agency and architects accompanying the urban poor movement. The urban poor and activists criticised how the government-appointed planners projected a sense of superior expertise during the planning process (Irawaty et al., 2023, p. 1000).

After two of the planned five blocks in KSA were completed in 2021, residents were not yet allowed to move into the site by the housing agency due to administrative reasons. Fearing exclusion from the compound, residents occupied the building before the housing agency

completed the administrative process. The Akuarium urban poor also demanded intervention from Governor Anies, who proceeded to instruct bureaucrats below to speed up the process. Musdalifah, Secretary of the KSA Cooperative, claimed that residents were successful in inhabiting KSA in part due to being sheltered in close proximity to the building during construction.

At first, the Provincial Government rejected the proposed location of the shelter, citing security concerns. However, the movement insisted and eventually constructed the shelter themselves without major support from the government. The shelter's location was intended to ease

supervision of the building's construction by the urban poor and was incited by fears of the building being reappropriated by the authorities after completion (Interview with Musdalifah, Secretary of the KSA Cooperative, 22 May 2025). Conflict initially arose within the Akuarium urban poor regarding the allocation of spaces within the shelter; however, this was short-lived, attributed to a strong leadership by Yuni, head of the Akuarium cooperative (Interview with Musdalifah, Secretary of the KSA Cooperative, 22 May 2025).

After Caretaker Governor Heru took over office from Anies in 2022, the three remaining blocks experienced a sluggish construction

process. Topaz complained that after Anies, the bureaucrats in charge were 'back to their default settings.' They had no pressure from above to quickly accommodate the urban poor. The urban poor were also never given a chance to even meet face to face with Heru during his term (Interview with Topaz Juanda, Head of RT, 22 May 2025).

This section has attempted to provide a chronological narrative of the power relations and political culture that pervades low-income housing policy interventions and the urban poor of Jakarta. Development policies on low-income housing during the New Order era were mostly arenas closed to public participation. Of those that do,

all were financially backed up by supranational donors and reflected aforementioned critiques on participatory development. The P2BPK programme approached inclusion as a method of cost-efficiency, and while the KIP programme did receive community aspirations, they were still quite passive agents and no attempt at reconfiguring power relations were present, unsurprisingly.

Democratisation did open up spaces, and these were taken advantaged of by organised urban poor groups engaging in direct local elections. This has resulted in a participatory space which has been used to challenge existing assumptions regarding housing development as a top-down

approach and implement visions of an empowered community. Construction of the *kampung susun* displayed a culture of resistance. Collectivity is also apparent within the urban poor and has given birth to a successful experiment in transformative development.

However, post-authoritarian Indonesia exhibits a culture of violent evictions and paradigms of patronage that still prevails and fragments the poor. Policy influences are still dependent on a linkage with elite candidates rather than candidates from within these movements. Hence, they are prone to reversibility due to not having any institutional leverage, such as through legislative bodies. Also

noteworthy are contestations of knowledge within the CAP spaces, which shows that the prejudice towards knowledge from less powerful actors or non-professionals still persists within bureaucratic institutions.

Making and Shaping Spaces in Bayam

In 2019, Kampung Bayam underwent its largest eviction process to make way for the Jakarta International Stadium (JIS). The process was led by Jakpro, a real estate company majority-owned by Jakarta's Provincial Government. Rather than immediately using force, Jakpro persuaded residents with compensation under the guise of a "Resettlement Action Plan" (Mujtahid & Machdum, 2024). In the midst

of this resettlement programme, a group of fifty households under the leadership of Furqon were still hesitant on whether to accept the compensations. These households engaged in farming and thus far more dependent on the land. Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, claimed that Furqon was inspired by *kampung susun* that has undergone planning in several *kampungs* and eventually demanded a *kampung susun* for themselves (Interview with Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025). Anies, who two years prior won the election and had built an image of a pro-poor leader, eventually accepted their demands. Aid money was given in order to build a

temporary shelter until both the JIS and the KSB finished construction (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025).

A collaborative institution for planning was then constructed, similar to the Community Action Plan already underway in other *kampung susun* projects. The Bayam residents were aided by architects from the University of Indonesia to help translate their aspirations (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). However, in Bayam the role of the housing agency was replaced by the Jakpro company, who is also responsible for the JIS project adjacent to the proposed KSB. For KSB, Jakpro had planned to build 135 units. First 50

units were to be occupied by Bayam farmers organised under Furqon. The next 35 units were allocated to Bayam residents who had assisted Jakpro in persuading other residents to accept compensations during the earlier eviction process. These residents were referred to as *warga binaan* by other residents. *Binaan* literally means 'fostered' or 'guided,' implying that they were perceived as being subordinate to Jakpro. Gugun Muhammad claimed that Jakpro allocated these units in return for their role in the eviction process (Interview with Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025). Jakpro had given no explanation for allocation of the remaining 50 units. UPC/

JRMK proposed these units be occupied by other former Bayam residents. Gugun explained this was to avoid the units being misused by Jakpro, especially for commercial purposes (Interview with Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025). To fill the remaining units, UPC/JRMK searched for former Bayam residents who had been living in rental housing in and around Papanggo.

After finding the 50 potential households, UPC/JRMK gave the list to Jakpro and demanded a verification process. Jakpro accepted and a letter was soon issued by the Administrative Mayor of North Jakarta in June 2022 which would be the legal basis that verified and determined

the 135 inhabitants of KSB. A lottery was then held to distribute the units to the 135 households already verified. The verification letter explicitly divided upcoming inhabitants into three groups: The Huntara or Tani Bayam Madani group, residents living in the temporary shelter and led by Furqon; *binaan* Jakpro residents; and members of Persaudaraan Warga Kampung Bayam (PWKB). PWKB is a cooperative consisting of the 50 households that UPC/JRMK had found to occupy the remaining units. The group is headed by Shirley Aponia. Since the construction of the temporary shelter in Tongkol, UPC/JRMK had parted ways with the Huntara group, citing disagreement with the

leadership style which they perceived as less participative (Interview with Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025). Understanding the fragmentation of Bayam residents into these three groups is crucial to grasping how the dynamic that eventually emerged was possible.

As part of its Resettlement Action Plan, Jakpro established a cooperative for Bayam residents. This cooperative was created mainly to operate a workers canteen in JIS. In order to empower residents, as described by Mujtahid and Machdum (2024), income from the canteen would be distributed to residents and managed by the cooperative.

R, a resident from the Jakpro *binaan* group, won the election for head of cooperative in a process that other groups claimed had been heavily intervened in by Jakpro (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025; Interview Shirley Aponia, Head of PWKB, 12 May 2025). Unlike *kampung* cooperatives formed in Aquarium, discussion and planning on the future management of KSB was never initiated due to the cooperative becoming overly focused on managing the canteen and the distribution of its profits (Interview Shirley Aponia, Head of PWKB, 12 May 2025). Besides R, the board of the cooperative consisted of heads of the three groups. Shirley Aponia,

head of PWKB, eventually left the cooperative, claiming it was acting more like a puppet of Jakpro rather than for the interests of Bayam residents themselves. Conflict also arose due to suspicions of embezzlement of the canteen's profits and other income of the cooperative (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). Jakpro persuaded cooperative leaders to distribute any external aid only to their respective groups and to restrict information to other cooperative members, a move which Shirley interpreted as an effort to divide Bayam residents (Interview Shirley Aponia, Head of PWKB, 12 May 2025). After leaving, Shirley established a new cooperative with other

members of PWKB which earned its legal status in July 2022. PWKB started to initiate internal discussions regarding the future management of KSB, which they demanded to be maintained by occupants themselves. Jakpro ignored PWKB cooperative and insisted on KSB being managed by Jakpro.

The KSB was unveiled in October 2022, only four days before Anies left office. At the time, Anies promised that the housing could be inhabited in November, pending the completion of administrative processes. However, when November finally came, Jakpro, without prior notice, established a rental cost of 1.5 million rupiah. Both the Huntara group and PWKB rejected the nonsensical rent

which was far above what future occupants could afford. Meanwhile, other *kampung susun* such as in *Akuarium* only had to pay the government a symbolic 1 million rupiah a year for five years (Irawaty & Muhammad, 2023). Defending their decision, Jakpro stressed how they have given compensation funds in the early eviction process (BBC News Indonesia, 2024). The narrative slowly morphed into KSB being built primarily to support JIS activities, not as a living space for formerly evicted Bayam residents (Kompas, 2024). Statements were even made by Jakpro that claimed the building was too 'fancy' to be inhabited by the Bayam people's and were of a 'commercial quality'

(Interview with Hari Apriawan, NGO activist, 23 April 2025). The Provincial Government, now under Caretaker Heru, responded by affirming this was a strictly Jakpro affair and declined to intervene (Republika, 2022). From then on, both of these groups would be engaged in a struggle against Jakpro and the Provincial Government to reclaim the KSB, proclaiming the jargon "*Kampung Bayam pulang ke rumah!*" (Bayam residents are coming home).

Henceforth, Jakpro would never accept meetings with the Bayam residents, and protests in front of their office was ignored. This led the Huntara group deciding that protests and mere requests for negotiation would not be enough. On March 2023, they

decided to physically occupy the KSB by force. They claimed that the KSB rightfully belonged to them and that they had the right to inhabit it, whether officials approved or not (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). The act was also done to incite officials from either Jakpro or the Provincial Government to meet residents and directly address their demands (Interview with Hari Apriawana, NGO activists, 23 April 2025). The guards were outnumbered and the occupiers quickly settled in the main courtyard. A few Jakpro officials eventually came to KSB, but residents demanded that high-ranking executives meet them. The Provincial Government, under

Caretaker Heru Budi, did not even meet with residents during the span of the occupation (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). Heru often deflected responsibility solely to Jakpro, asserting KSB is an asset owned by Jakpro and thus the Provincial Government had no say in the affair.

While the Huntara households occupied the KSB, PWKB members erected tents behind the gates. From July 2023, Jakpro made efforts to relocate the tent dwellers due to the upcoming FIFA U-20 World Cup, with JIS set to serve as one of the host stadiums. The tent dwellers were then successfully persuaded to relocate to Rusunawa Nagrak, located 10

kilometres from KSB. They had written an agreement with the Chief of Papanggo, which stated that their stay in Rusunawa Nagrak was temporary and they would be returned back to KSB (Interview with Shirley Aplonia, Head of PWKB, 12 May 2025). Despite moving to Nagrak, PWKB remained active, and with legal assistance from LBH Jakarta, continued efforts to communicate their demands to the Provincial Government and Jakpro. With PWKB households moving to Nagrak, the Huntara group became the only group of the Bayam urban poor remaining in the KSB area.

After a year, Jakpro decided to take extreme measures to force the occupiers out. Furqon was

detained by police while visiting the shelter in April 2024. Following his detention, hundreds of police officers and JIS security personnel were deployed to reclaim the KSB by force. The occupiers held their ground and demanded that Furqon be released before any negotiations could take place. The clash ended with an agreement signed between the squatters and Jakpro which stated that further negotiations surrounding the future of Bayam residents housing would be mediated by Komnas HAM (National Committee for Human Rights), Furqon would be released from the police station; and occupiers would return to the shelter while awaiting the mediation process. The

eventual negotiations mediated by Komnas HAM resulted in Huntara residents accepting the offer to relocate to a yet-to-be built *rusunawa* in Yos Sudarso street.

Bayam residents seemed to be in retreat and apparent defeat. However, the incoming 2024 gubernatorial elections offered a new opportunity. The Tani Bayam Madani group took advantage by inviting the three running candidates to the shelter. They eventually chose to establish an integrity pact with candidate Pramono-Rano. They had chosen Pramono instead of the other two candidates, Ridwan Kamil and Dharmono, because they had thought them as a continuation of the previous Heru Budi regime (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani

Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025). Differing from the political contract in 2016 between JRMK and Anies, this agreement is far more particularistic and only addressed the Bayam problem. At the same time, the wording was also quite broad, with no specific mechanism in how the KSB will be managed, the ownership status, and the question of rent. Pramono only promised to 'solve' the Bayam question and restore the resident's rights. Pramono himself was hesitant to describe the deal as a political contract, stating that the integrity pact was open to interpretation (Wienanto, 2024).

In contrast to Tani Bayam Madani, PWKB did not engage in talks with any of the

candidates. Instead, they followed UPC/JRMK's decision to campaign for *Gerakan Coblos Semua* (Gercos), which encouraged voters to mark all candidates on the ballot as a show of no confidence. UPC/JRMK viewed all candidates in the Jakarta elections as being staged by, and purely reflecting the interests of, the oligarchic elite (Interview with Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025). Despite abstaining from the gubernatorial election, UPC/JRMK nominated their own members in the legislative election through the Labour Party.

To the surprise of many, Pramono won the gubernatorial election in a

single round. Less than a month after inauguration, the new Provincial Government held a symbolic ceremony handing over the KSB keys to Tani Bayam Madani. At the same time, masses of the PWKB and UPC/JRMK held protests outside KSB demanding that the keys be given to all originally registered inhabitants. The protests led to further talks between the Provincial Government, both groups of the Bayam urban poor, and Jakpro to discuss the future of KSB inhabitants. However, these talks tended to be one-sided, with the government dominating and effectively dictating the discussions (Interview with Furqon, Head of Tani Bayam Madani, 20 April 2025; Interview with Hari

Apriawan, NGO activist, 23 April 2025; Interview with Shirley Aplonia, Head of PWKB, 12 May 2025; Interview with Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025).

Jakpro remained adamant about retaining control over the management of KSB and implementing high rental costs, citing 'economic' and 'rational' considerations. The Provincial Government and Jakpro proposed a new arrangement in which residents would be employed by Jakpro and receive a minimum wage of 5.4 million rupiah, from which 1.7 million would be deducted for rent. Jakpro also demanded that PWKB households return the compensation money before being allowed to inhabit KSB.

While Tani Bayam Madani accepted these terms, the PWKB rejected them and instead demanded that KSB be managed by a residents' cooperative, similar to the management model used in other *kampung susun*. According to PWKB and UPC/JRMK, being offered work in JIS was not inherently problematic. However, linking the right to inhabit KSB to residents' ability to maintain employment would make the urban poor's occupancy of KSB highly insecure (Interview Gugun Muhammad, Coordinator of UPC, 5 May 2025).

After a long run of negotiations and protests, both Tani Bayam Madani and PWKB households finally received the keys to KSB in

August 2025. PWKB accepted the terms after Jakpro conceded that the 1.7 million rent would be waived for the first six months and that no repayment of compensation would be required. Management of KSB would be transferred from Jakpro to the Provincial Housing Agency, while questions regarding self-management and future rent would be discussed after residents had moved into the building.

It is true that the participatory space surrounding KSB was initially created by the urban poor residents themselves rather than offered by authoritative actors. However, this alone did not determine the transformative outcomes of the project. The eventual

mechanisms of these spaces were soon dominated by more powerful figures, particularly Jakpro. Under the guise of empowering residents through a cooperative, Jakpro instead sought to domesticate more radical aspirations, such as self-management, and to fragment the Bayam urban poor.

This fragmentation however, did not result merely from Jakpro's methods. Each of the groups had differing contexts regarding its formation that influenced their actions and perceptions of the space. The *binaan* groups paternalistic origins made it lack any radical visions; the Tani Bayam group was heavily focused on gaining their lost chances of farming and fully trusted the benevolency of

authorities in the early parts of the project; and PWKB is closely linked with interests of UPC. These differences were taken advantage of by Jakpro, which transplanted its profit-oriented approach to a space originally devoid of profit-making. Meanwhile, the local authorities seemed unwilling to intervene, particularly after Caretaker Heru took the reins. This was not out of legal restrictions, as Anies easily instructed Jakpro to facilitate KSB in the first place. Bureaucratic culture of ignoring the lower classes had seemingly returned due to a change in executive leadership.

Conclusion

In its introduction, the article puts forward two main

questions regarding participatory initiatives: how did spaces initially intended to be inclusive could be closed in the midst of participation? And how is a reshaping of spaces possible despite attempts at pushing less powerful actors to the margins? Utilising Cornwall's (2002) and Gaventa's (2006) conceptualisations on spaces of participation, this article dissects these spaces to investigate their transformative capabilities.

The case of Bayam reflected Cornwall's (2002) argument on how simply creating new spaces for participation is not sufficient. Within these spaces, attempts at achieving an equitable outcome are hampered by existing power relations which

are transplanted onto the novel institutions. The diverse perceptions of the fragmented urban poor, profit-oriented culture of Jakpro, and prevailing bureaucratic ignorance has hindered efforts of realising transformative change. Similar projects in other contexts may result in different outcomes due to differing social, political, and economic conditions.

Nevertheless, the efforts of the Bayam urban poor had proven Cornwall's (2002) view of the permeability of these spaces to strategic reversals. Using elections, which in participatory literature is frequently seen as restrictive (Cornwall, 2002), the poor managed to reshape and be reinvented to these spaces.

However, when it risked slipping back and reducing the transformative demands, popular spaces of protests pressured authorities to give in to the more rights-based and inclusive demand of the Bayam residents. Demonstrating the importance of combining resistance in invited and claimed spaces, when invited spaces are slowly domesticated.

In Jakarta, social movements attempting to democratise development spaces still rely on linkages

with local elites. This reliance has proved risky when transitions occur, a risk that could potentially be mitigated through the presence of a wider political project. However, such a solution is also restricted by the prevailing paradigm of patronage in Indonesia. It would be interesting for future research to observe how newly founded parties claiming to be progressive, such as the Labour Party, navigate these treacherous terrain of Indonesian politics.

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