You arrive at the mouth of a maze...

(Edited) excerpts from:
Perception, Design and Ecology of the Built Environment, A Focus on the Global South.
Chapter 21,
Living in Alleys:
A Story of Kampung Kota

by
Achmad Syaiful Lathif

Alleys in its' context answers as a spatial formation to answer people's needs. Alleys are entangled with a network of people and forms an entity as one kampung. Wholeness becomes important because alleys connect a person's identity to the kampung.

Alleys work in a way that does not only accommodate physical needs, but also supports mental needs. Alleys can be considered as a life reservoirs. As a reservoir, the alley has a homeostatic capability of keeping balance of the kampung.
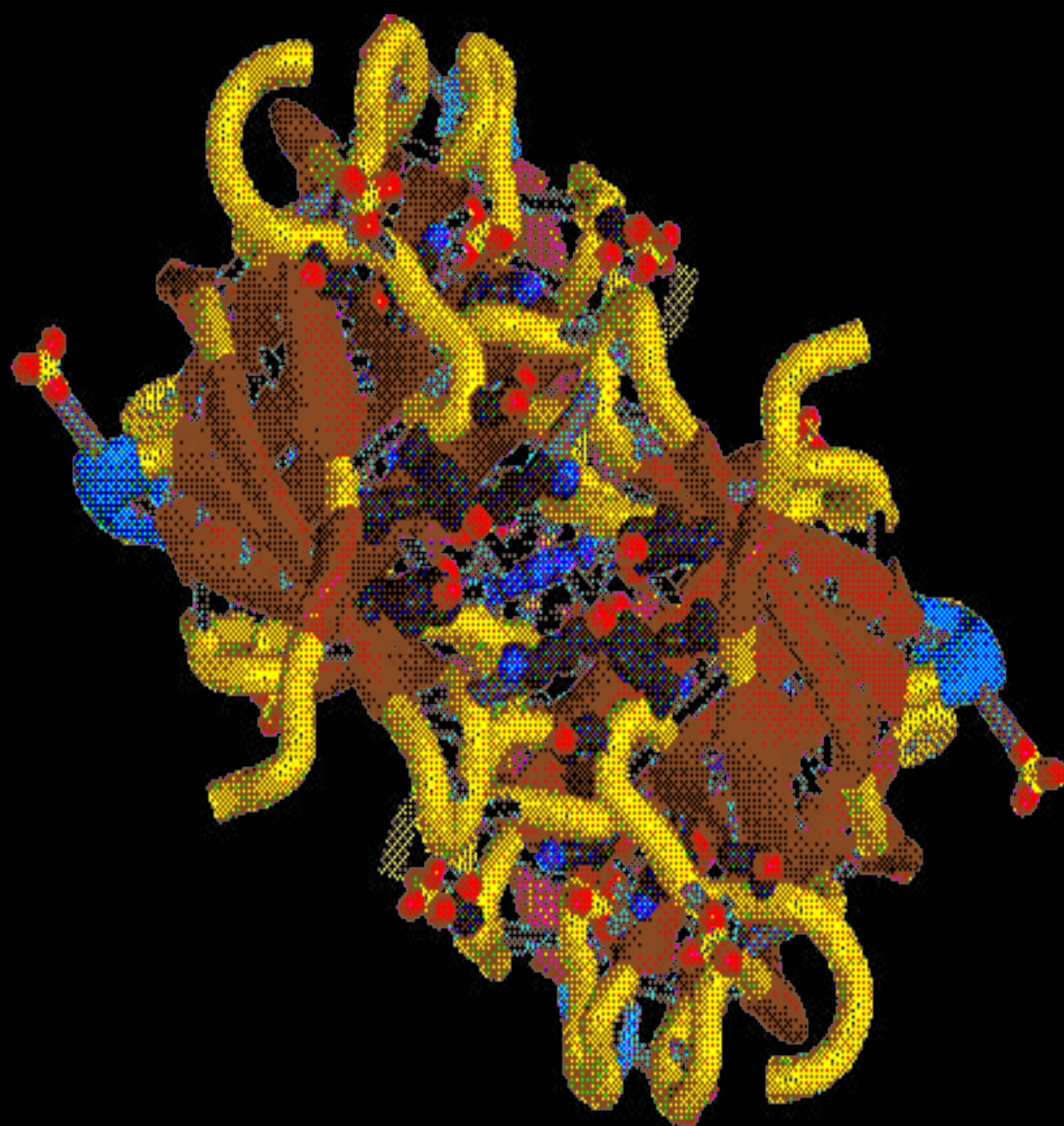
James Lovelock (1979) tells us about Earth's capability of maintaining such balance if there were an imbalance. This equilibrium can be seen in how fluidly alley inhabitants adopt a "making do with what we have" behavior, and how this adapts with the changing conditions of the environment or social context.

Alleys behave like the *cell wall*. The cell wall of an organic cell is, in most cases, is larger as, or larger, than the cell interior. It is not a surface which divides inside from outside, but a coherent entity in its own right, which preserves the functional integrity of the cell and also provide a multitude of transactions between the cell interior and the ambient fluids (Alexander et al. 1977, p. 87).

GLOSSARY

KAMPUNG
Village

KAMPUNG KOTA
Village embedded within the city
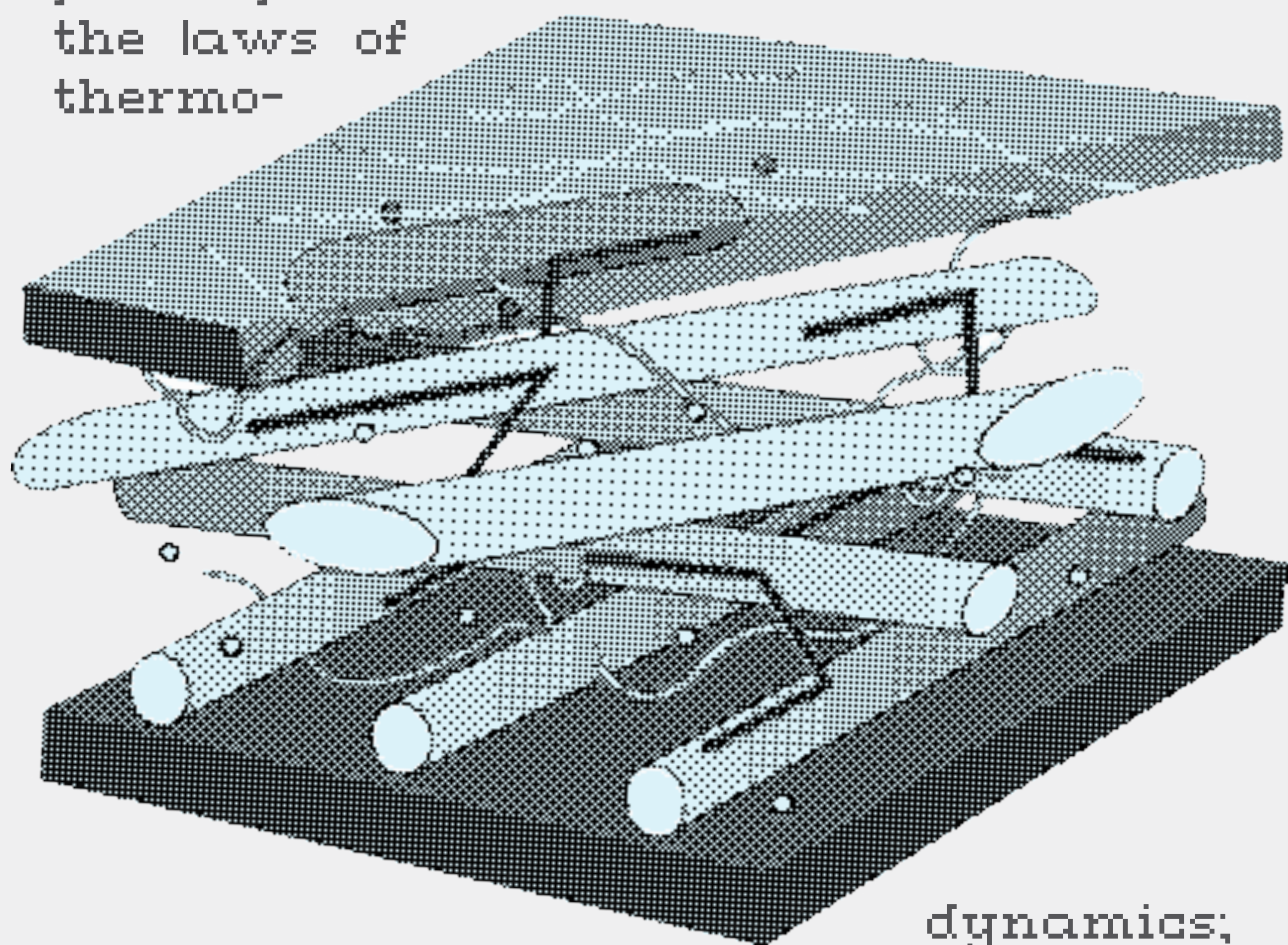
NONGKRONG
Chill out with
the neighbors

PIKULAN
Carrying pole

The presence of alleys in the kampung is important because it is able to maintain the wholeness or integrity of a kampung - a life reservoir that creates a kind of self-sufficiency. This new kind of urban collective should be present in the city, alongside the fast-paced progress of urban development. Likewise, we must realize that even though we are avoiding environmental decay through such development, these alleyway systems always manifest organically and by itself. To paraphrase Garrett Hardins of the laws of thermo-

dynamics; "We can't get out of the game." With that being said, between developed areas there should be room for escape, to let the after-effects of forced development, to find its balance. This is why the presence of the kampung is so important, because it gives room between buildings in the city, a space to feel the natural bustle of life, to give it a little breathing space and then it can bring our sense humanity back. It will be the space where people can live in a relaxed and undemanding way.

As a system, the kampung kota is concised of a network of alleys that create the space. Alleys are not only the physical elements of the kampung kota, but also as a social and economic investment to ensure community survival through social networks. It helps the kampung attached to the city as a larger settlement system.

The kampung kota alleys work as a unifying tool of its surrounding entity (Jelinek, 1991 as cited in Hans Dieter Evers and Rudiger Korf, 2000) which is a consequence of its inhabitants adaptating to survive. They survive by the bond of togetherness along the alleyways. It can be seen from the nexus of neighborhood in the form of houses, with its' windows facing each other within the same alley, so they can meet regularly and help each other lend or loan household goods to each other (Bremm (1988), as cited in Hans Dieter Evers and Rudiger Korf, 2000).

People keep the alley space public. In some cases, there are people who take a part of the alley as their own property. This unconscious action is tolerated by inhabitants as it"s assumed that a house is more than a living unit. It is a structure or an area in which humans express an individual or a group (Porteous 1977). This condition made social control dependable.

Unconsciously, people in the kampung always "make do," by strategy and tactic. [...] People create similarity to avoid miscommunication. One of the examples is how people build kampung gates in the city. [...] The form of the gate is made very clear and distinct with surroundings, and sometimes it has a label so it becomes easily recognisable. It is a type of strategy to make everyone know that they are entering a kampung.

If someone makes a mistake or faults in the alley (i.e. taking someone else"s or public property), people will warn or scold the wrongdoer. This normally happens, but in several cases it usually ineffective, thus people ignoring such behavior.
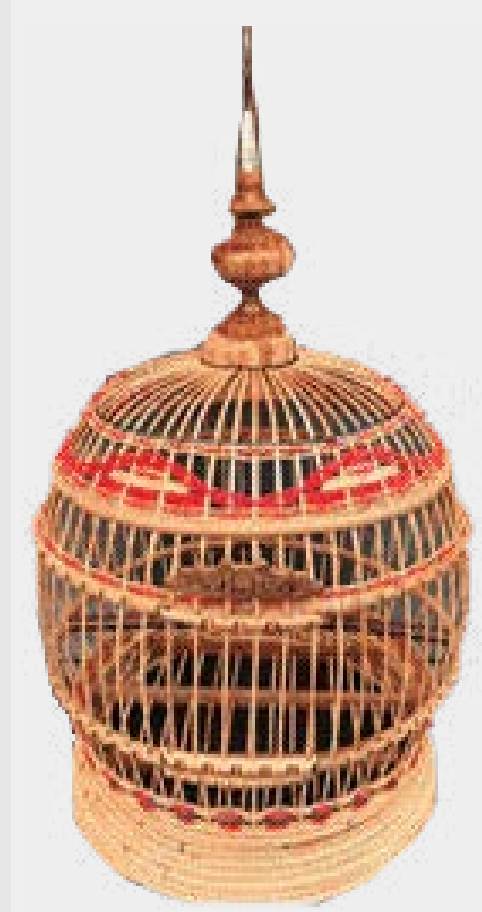
Tolerance is a consequence of pressures of living, which prevents them from effective-problem solving. Therefore, it usually takes a third person or higher authority to intervene and settle through negotiation if not it will generate conflicts, internal or external. [...] The kampung society writes a mutual understanding through a verbal agreement which works on fluidity or flexibility of their settlement. [...]
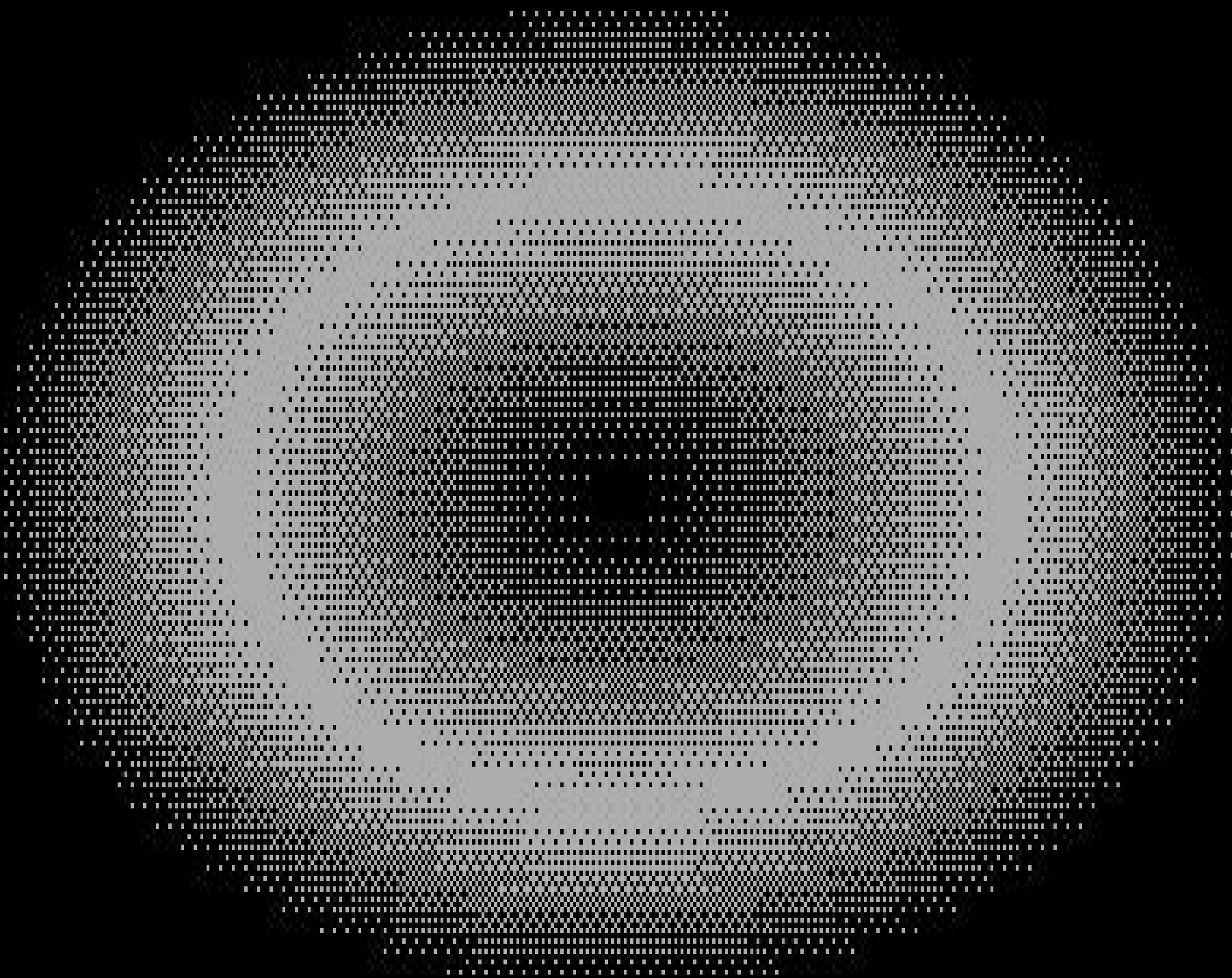
In the kampung kota, we often find people placing something above the alley. There are many types, namely, tarps, clothesline, and birdcages. [...] These imaginary territories are made by placing signage or things, making a shade, or making an enclosure. They are placing things as a strategy, a semi-permanently signs which mark a spatial arrangement, create a comfortable space for activity and adapt to a limited space. Arrangements within in the alley can be used as a form language. Bhatt and Rybczynski wrote about spatial recognition for informal activity: house extensions, workplaces, small shops, public structures, vehicles, and access street (Bhatt et al. 1990). But this is only a few compared with what is actually used by people to communicate, for instance, street vendor cart or mobile stands, motorcycles, plant pot, chair, cooler box, clothesline, etc. Even though these forms have its regular function (to sit and put something, as storage, etc.), it usually helps to inform others about things happening in the place, it also can mark the area or territory, and sometimes it is being used as a tool for arguing or confronting, or else it becomes a symbol of how the community connects each other. [...] In every of these particular cases, they always have a social norm hidden behind the forms, and it becomes our obligation to respond appropriately. If it does not respond correctly, there will be consequences like quarrel between residents.

Placing seats in the alley is
another example of a strategy
to communicate that this is a place
for gathering or meeting. Location of
the seat is usually formed in step by step
process following the needs and agreements
between people in the neighborhood.
According to Alexander, no
social group can survive
without constant
informal contact among
its members, and this
brings form and location
of communal areas so
critical and important.
The balanced situation is
the one where a common path,
which people use every day, runs tangent to
the common areas and is open to them in
passing. In process, if they want to, they can
keep going, come right in, and settle down
(Alexander et al. 1977). The position of
the seat gives awareness to passers
by that they are being watched.
This kind of feeling usually
makes people walk slower.
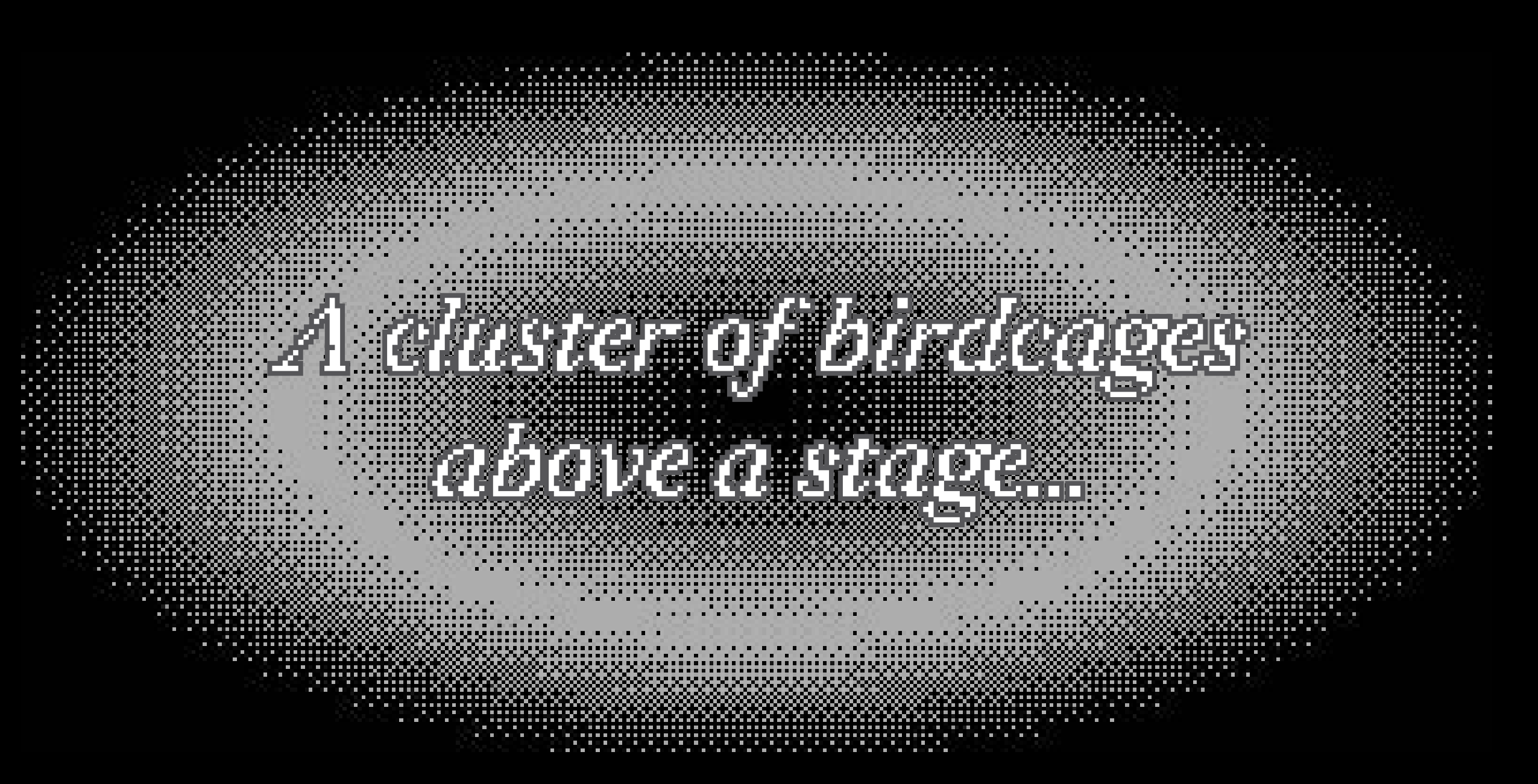
Positioning a small shop (warung) in the alley is
also an interesting strategy. These small shops
always place in the intersection, crossroads or
T-junction of an alley. This arrangement makes
customers reach small shop easily. In several
cases, there are conflicts between shops if
one shop has more customer than the other.
To avoid this kind of conflict, people usually
negotiate their selling goods or maneuver-
ing their place. They negotiate so in the end
they can have a good economic fairness.

These everyday actions and artifacts like
bridge or stairs play a great deal for the
life of kampung. Limited resources and ca-
pacity inevitably prompts inhabitants to
adopt practical strategies and survival tac-
tics based on their living conditions within
the surrounding environment. At a glance,
alleys conceptualise a public infrastructure,
a reservoir for social and economic needs.

A cluster of birdcages above a stage...
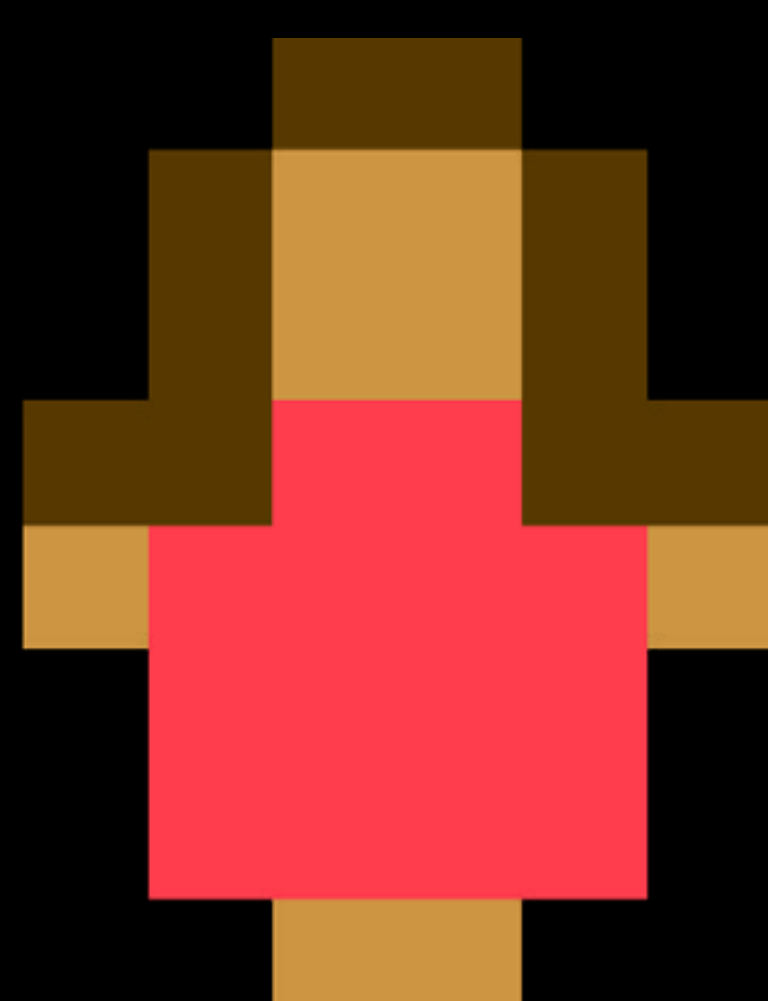
Excerpts from:
More birds in Indonesian households than in the wild, suggests study

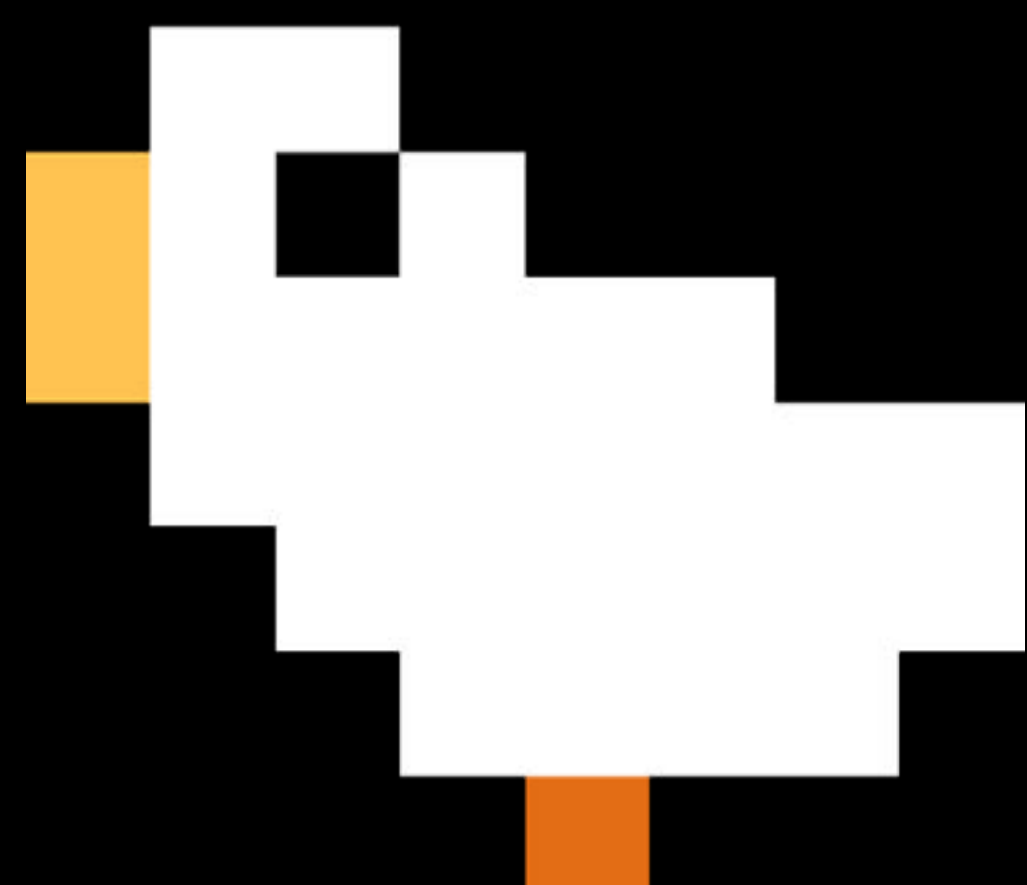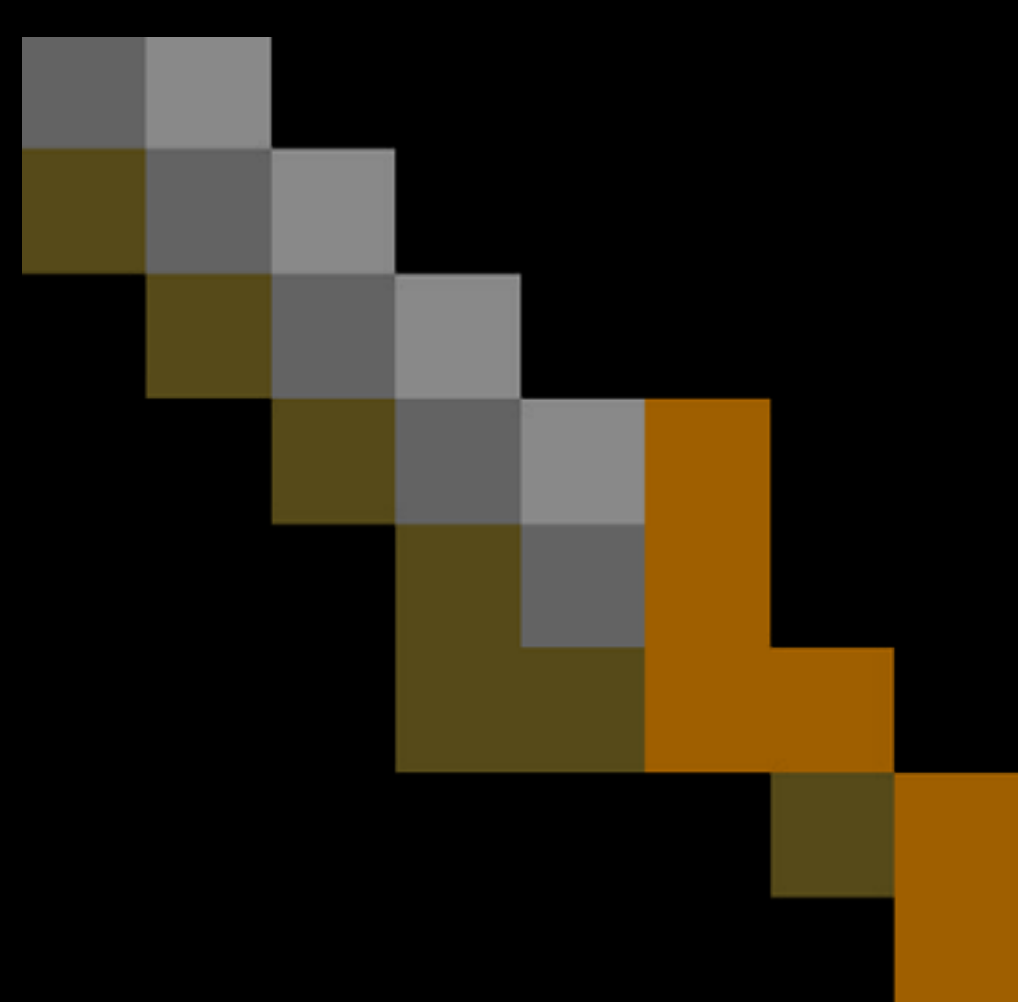A (Javanese) man is
considered to be
a real man if he has a

house,

wife,

horse,

a dagger,

and
a bird

The biggest source for this demand is Indonesia, where levels of ownership have put a huge drain on wild populations causing an Asian songbird crisis, which may now be approaching a tipping point, threatening wild bird populations with extinction.

More songbirds could be living in captivity on the Indonesian island of Java than in the wild, leading to the possible extinction of many species, according to new research led by Manchester Metropolitan University and Chester Zoo. Some 75 million birds are kept as pets in Java, threatening to wipe out some wild bird populations. Across South-East Asia, thousands of songbird species are extracted from the wild for a variety of reasons, but many are sought after to enter into singing competitions or to be kept as ornamental pets.

Keeping songbirds has a long tradition in certain parts of Indonesia and is seen as an important part of a balanced life for Javanese men the most populous ethnicity in Indonesia. The researchers found that bird-keeping is more common in the Eastern provinces of Java with the largest Javanese populations. In recent years however, bird-keeping has evolved into a modern hobby, often referred to as *Kicau-mania* singing contests for the birds. The competition has become a ubiquitous part of urban life, where birds' songs, or kicau in Indonesian, are judged on melody, duration and volume.

Excerpts from; A bird in a cage puts all Java in a craze by *Paul Jepson* 14th July 2008

In the cities of Java the massive popularity of birds revolves arounds their song, and the beautiful song of one particular thrush arouses such passion amongst bird enthusiasts that the best singers exchange hands for upwards of £15,000.

An appreciation of birds is deeply rooted in Indonesian culture but if you live in a city on the densely populated tropical island of Java our mode of bird-watching is not really an option: there are no accessible reserves, green space is rare, the traffic jams are awful, it's sweltering hot, pours with rain most afternoons, and what birds there are suffer heavy persecution.

Given these conditions is hardly surprising that Indonesians love their cage-birds. A recent survey found that one-in-five urban households keep a bird and when asked why, most respondents chose the answer to remind me of my village. [...] Some favored species, such as the crow and the black-naped oriole, are considered good-luck charms. While keeping birds is an entrenched part of Indonesian home life, it's also increasingly a part of public culture too, as bird singing competitions have exploded in popularity.

Amongst urban bird keepers
the pride and satisfaction that
villagers traditionally take from
rearing animals is finding a new
and cosmopolitan expression in the
form of songbird contests. Although
money is central to the hobby it
would be wrong to surmise that
most hobbyists are motivated
solely by the promise of financial
rewards. When
asked about the appeal of
the hobby they describe the
satisfaction they feel when a
bird they've trained successfully
competes, the sense of fraternity
that comes with participat-
ing as well as the opportunity
to be "someone", to be known,
talked about and counselled on
b i r d - r e l a t -
ed matters. Some
hobbyists have
a more mystical bent and
talk about the experience of
connecting with another life-form.

Many hobbyists comment on the fact
that participating in song-contests
brings people from all social strata and
ethnicities into contact with networks of
entrepreneurs that link city with village
and city with city.

The way of enjoying birds on Java
clearly contributes important social
and economic benefits to the contempo-
rary urban culture.   [...] It is telling
that the songbird   hobby took off
during the Asian   economic crisis
of 1997 to 1998 when many men were
made redundant and the expecta-
tion of employers providing a job for
life was challenged. Unfortunately it
also impacts negatively on the wild
populations of the most popular species.
[...]   The fact that an appreci-
a   tion of birds is so widespread
and deeply embedded in the urban
culture of Java and Bali is something to
celebrate. [...] Introducing conservation
regulations heavy-hand-   ily
could over-time marginal-   ise this
love of birds or more likely undermine
the conservationist cause. The goal is
to introduce a conservation ethos to
the songbird hobby whilst retaining
a culturally distinct way of enjoy and
relating to birds.

A television absorbs your attention...

Excerpts from:

Watching Indonesian Sinetron: Imagining Communities around the Television.

(a thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Curtin University of Technology)

by Rachmah Ida

[...] For more than thirty years Indonesian
television functioned primarily to reinforce
the ideological constructions promoted by
the New Order with a view to preserving
national identity and unity. TVRI (Televi-
sion of Republic Indonesia) in particu-
lar was utilised by the regime to promote
those concepts and ideals necessary for
national integrity and political stability.
Kitley argues that television in Indonesia
is best understood as part of the political
national culture project (Kitley, 1998, p. 4).

He also demonstrates how Indonesian
television dramas, particularly, served
as the medium to construct the idealised
Indonesian subject and reinforce national
identity and unity (Kitley, 1998 & 2002).
Television programs, like other Indone-
sian cultural performing arts and
media, were also used to promote the
local and national processes of citizen-
ship and identity formation (Creese, 2000).

While the level of government interference
in the media has declined since the end of
Soeharto's New Order era, the influence and
power of the capital holders, the so-called
media barons, is crucial in the Indonesian
television industry. The economic motive
greatly emphasised in national program-
ming policies and patterns. The higher
the rating of a program, the more similar
programs are produced and screened. [...]
The industry's socio-economic system and
that of overriding profit motive appears to
mechanize creativity, resulting in formulaic
programs that restrict audience creativ-
ity for making their own meanings. This
can be seen from the trends of the national
private television stations program-
ming between 2000 and 2004 that are
examined in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Sinetron melodrama like Tersanjung
(Flattered) and Kehormatan (Honour)
portray the lives of rich families, their
love affairs and tears, and glamour
and are upper class oriented. [...]

Types of Sinetron

Drama

[...] Drama Sinetron is always created in the urban-based settings of upper class communities with glossy and glamorous presentations.

Drama comedy

[...] In contrast, sinetron comedy is typically produced by utilising the "uniqueness" or the apparently bizarre characteristics of particular ethnic communities living in the marginal areas of metropolitan Jakarta.

Colossal legends

[...] Sinetron legend colossal is quite distinct from these two urban-based sinetron as it use pre-modern historical periods of Indonesia as indicated by the costumes, the landscapes, and style of life.

I would suggest that this dilemmatic position, to some extent, has caused the criticism that Indonesian sinetron can only sell dreams.

Thus, the portrait of the Indonesian sinetron industry since the late 1990s continues similar to the trends in the film industry during the New Order. As Taufiq Ismail (1977) and Salim Said (1987) pointed out, Indonesian cinema in the New Order era was always middle class and nouveau rich oriented (cited in Heider, 1991, p. 27).

Sinetron have mostly dominated the primetime of the national programming schedule. The shows have also become the most-watched television programs over a decade and have been exploited as the mechanism to attract commercial advertising for the private television stations and the sinetron producers.

Sinetron-syndrome has been acknowledged in Indonesia for over a decade. Local television dramas have attracted domestic viewers, particularly since the emergence of private television stations in the 1990s. The story above is an example of those who are addicted to the sinetron shows. Every single day the melodramatic episodes flourish on the airwaves. Sinetron have become a fixture for most Indonesian families. For some, their presence is like the best friend you are always waiting for.

[…] Like a magic lamp, sinetron hold millions of Indonesian viewers spellbound in front of their TVs, day and night (Chudori, 2001b, p. 46). Just like Ina in that story, some other sinetron fans restructure their routines to fit in with TV schedules. As reported by the national daily paper, Media Indonesia, the Indonesian (Medical) Doctors Association (Ikatan Dokter Indonesia, IDI) protested the sinetron screened during the 9 am - 11 am timeslot distracted mothers from participating in the maternal and child health program (known as Posyandu) conducted in their local area. According to IDI, the running of sinetron shows in the daytime meant about 40 per cent of mothers were reluctant to come to the Posyandu (Penayangan, 2000, p.12).

The success of locally made television dramas (sinetron), celebrity gossip shows, the popularity of programs dealing with mysticism and magical practices and reality TV shows adapted from Western TV productions, all exemplify the totalitarianism (Powdermaker, 1950) within the television industry's social structure. As such, the industry's creation of audience appears to negate the formation of off screen audiences that feature differences in media experiences as examined throughout the audiencehood chapters of this thesis.

[...] Philip Kitley (2000) has demonstrated the construct of national audience during the (Indonesian) New Order. The way the television industry imagines audience is important to determine what goes on air; conversely, the way the government imagines audience may determine the things that cannot go on air.

In the context of New Order, the audience was imagined as childlike, needing to be controlled in his/her attitudes and moral development, to be strongly taught in his/her religious faith, and as a child of a nation, whose national identity is vulnerable and needs to be evoked all the time.

Kitley maintains that the New Order government used television to teach audiences through drama/sinetron such as Dokter Sartika (Sartika, a Medical Practitioner), Keluarga Rahmat (Rahmat's Family), Jendela Rumah Kita (Our Window), and other programs laden with sponsored development messages of the government agencies (Kitley, 2000). More than that, the sinetron was governed by educational principles, whereby it provided entertainment containing ideological and instructional materials for the unsuspecting viewers. Therefore, positioning sinetron as electronic drama theatre to teach the difference between the good and the bad had situated this televisual pop culture as an integrated institution between the government, education, and the media.
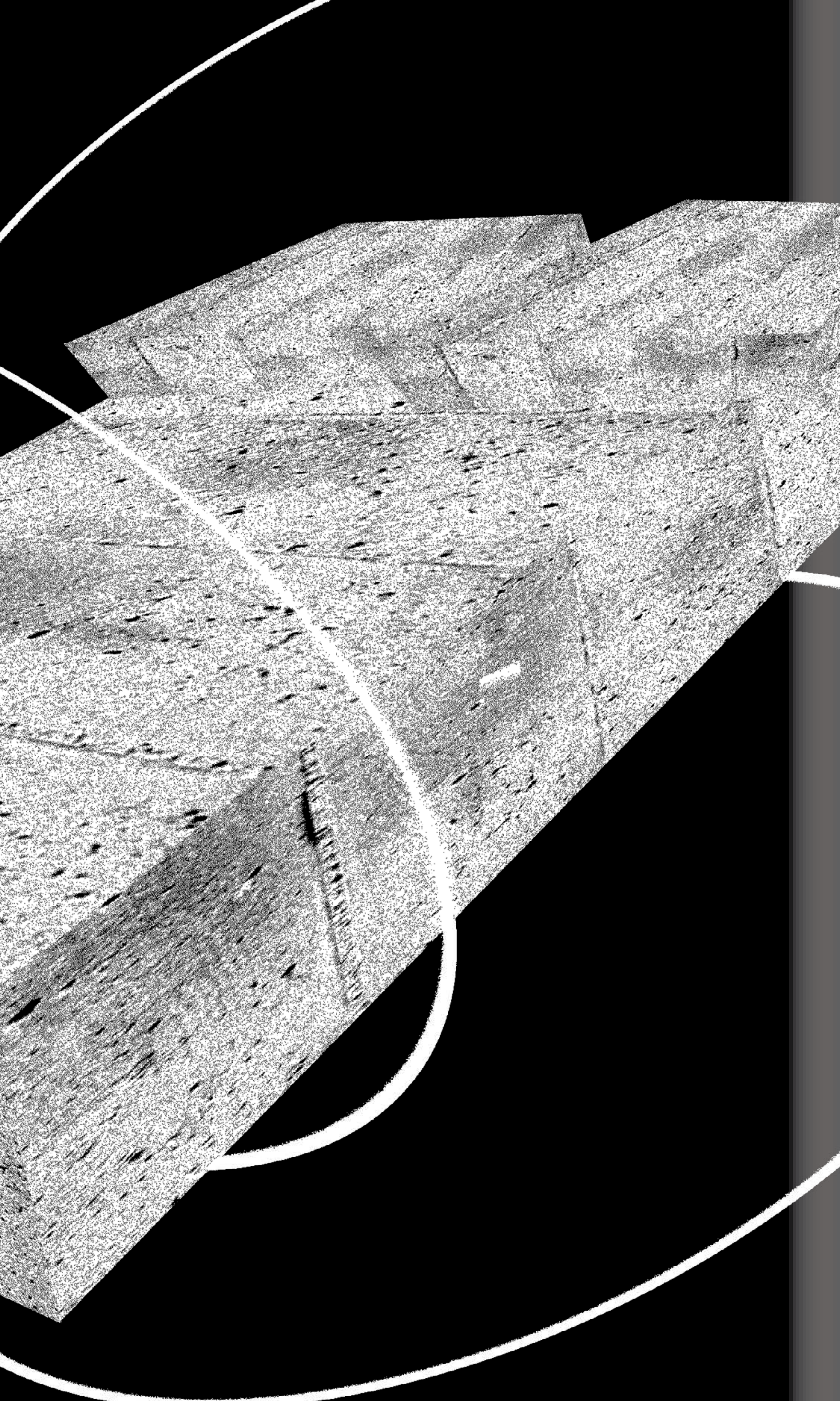
Dreaming in Concrete

Looking back at the moon, reflecting...

Excerpts from:

Indonesia in the 1950s: Nation, modernity, and the post-colonial state

by Henk Schulte Nordholt

The making of a new national culture
was very much seen in terms of
mobility-seeking inspiration from
various parts of the world and moving
to a better future, and in so doing
emphasizing discontinuity with the
past. Building a new future implied
that the past had to be abandoned.

However, the search for a national
identity and efforts to define what
a national culture should be, would
remain an unfinished project in
which mobility, open- mindedness
and an orientation towards the
future collided with a desire for rooted-
ness, essentialized identities and a
focus on the past. The debate about
Indonesia's national culture therefore
oscillated between an outwardly
ori- ented modernity and modernity
and inward-looking nativism.

In Mimbar Indonesia debates concen-
trated on questions about whether
a culture should be rooted in the past
or based on a forward-looking belief
in modernity, expressed in terms
such as newness (kabaharuan),
progress (kemajuan),
and dansa (dance) in contrast to tari
(traditional dance) (Bogaerts 2011)

["] Identity and modernity were
therefore inextricably intertwined.
On 18 February 1950 a young poet, Asrul
Sani (1928-2004), published with his
friends a cultural manifesto entitled
'Surat kepercayaan' (Testimonial of
beliefs) in 'Gelanggang', the literary
section of the weekly magazine Siasat.

On behalf of his literary colleagues,
later known as Angkatan 45, or
Generation of 1945, Sani wrote: 'We
are the legitimate inheritors of the
culture of the whole world, [...] and we

shall transmit this culture in our own way. We come from the ordinary people and for us the people are a mixture of everything from where a new and healthy world would be born.' (Quoted in Taufik Abdullah 2009:200.)

According to Taufik Abdullah, this manifesto made the boundaries and rootedness of culture irrelevant. Indonesian culture was no longer localized and materialized in ancient objects, because 'Indonesianess (ke-Indonesia-an) does not rest in our brown skins and cheek bones but rather in the expression of our hearts and minds. Indonesian culture should therefore be seen as a process of continuous creation. 'Surat kepercayaan' was not a clear-cut definition but a declaration about the future, a statement that the modern world is a source of inspiration, and that a new national culture is not passively inherited but actively created. Culture was seen as the process of creativity itself.

I have argued that the linear development from urbanization to modernization (Wertheim 1956) or modernity (Vickers 2005), leading to nationalism, which features in many historical accounts of nationalism in Indonesia, obscures another important development. This concerns the rise of a substantial indigenous (lower) middle class of approximately half a million people, the majority of whom were either employed by the colonial state or earned a living in the key sectors of the colonial economy. For them modernity was an attractive lifestyle, but this was not automatically connected with nationalism, because any affiliation with nation-

alism might endanger their career within the colonial state. Here we see a link between modernity and the state, but not necessarily with nationalism. My hypothesis is that the Revolution and Independence took these people by surprise, and that they were still primarily oriented towards the state and to a much lesser extent to the nation. Another hypothesis is that middle-class bureaucrats felt less comfortable with the elusive modernity propagated by Asrul Sani and his friends. Instead, they felt more at home with the call for national unity, rooted in the mythical past of Majapahit, in order to carve out a more authoritarian role for the state.

Gradually the political climate started to change. From 1952 onwards optimism about the future of the nation faced the grim realities of power struggles. Although identifying a specific point in time may be an arbitrary exercise, by 1956 the revolutionary honeymoon was definitively over.

Dreams of a national cultural identity based on an open-minded modernity and projected into a promising future were overtaken by an alliance of state-oriented politicians and a post-co-lonial middle class which dominated the administrative bureaucracy. Or, to return to Greenblatt in the opening pages of this essay, mobility and a future-oriented modernity were defeated by rootedness and unity. This resulted eventually in a law of the rulers instead of the rule of law, causing the death of the Indonesian citizen.