The urban anthropologist as *flâneur*

The symbolic pattern of Indonesian cities

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ABSTRACT

Cities are places full of symbols. In the past decades, Indonesian cities have become the cradle of urban symbolism studies. In this article, the author presents the results of these studies. The cities researched differ tremendously, ranging from the national capital to provincial capitals and small towns; some of them, such as Jakarta, are purely colonial in origin, while others are more or less traditional in character. Some of them have a top-down symbolic structure, largely the product of government activities, while others have symbolic configurations which have a more grassroots character and are based in the religious domain. The methodological aspect of urban symbolism fieldwork is explored by the introduction of the concept of *flâneur*.

KEYWORDS

Anthropology, urban, cities, symbolism, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

As the variety of their symbols and symbol carriers is abundant, very different configurations of symbols or symbolic patterns can be found in cities. These symbol carriers can be as diverse as layout, statues, monuments, landmarks, street names, murals, graffiti, rituals, festivities and so on. However, the dominant carriers and configurations of symbols in a particular city are generally as yet still unknown before research is commenced. Students of urban symbolism must be ready to expose themselves to the complex urban environment and learn from their informants what the latter think about place and space and which symbol carriers they believe are present. After an initial familiarization, including elaborate memorizing and photographing, the combination of mental and narrative mapping and extensive interviewing are the principal tools which can be used to unlock the most important symbol

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carriers of a particular city and consequently in the study of its configuration and dynamics. Most citizens have only a fragmentary knowledge of the urban symbolic order of their city and the anthropologist's task is to put together the puzzle to produce a construction of the total picture, which can be followed formulating a theory specific to that town and, wherever possible, transposing this into more general terms.

In this essay, I shall highlight the field of urban symbolism in general and describe the methods and techniques used by the anthropologist to collect data. After doing this, I shall present the theoretical results obtained so far, and shall also draw attention to the practical implications of the field. Existing case studies of Indonesian cities will be used to present a concrete illustration of the research in the field of urban symbolism. In the conclusion, the main factors in Indonesian urban symbolism will be reviewed.

Object of study

We define symbolic patterns as historically developed, culturally determined configurations of expressions attached to particular meanings which shape the daily life of people. Burms (2008: 328) in his essay is correct when he points out the historical and cultural determination of symbols and symbolic patterns, but he obscures the picture by defining symbols as meanings, neglecting the expressions to which these are attached. His definition blurs the distinction between symbol and meaning. Symbols also differ from signs. Signs refer to a particular phenomenon, and are generally simple and clear in meaning. In contrast, symbols are references to outside phenomena, an external meaning, such as a community (ethnic group), the psychic life of a person (saint), invisible phenomena (deities or ghosts) or a value or idea (development, loyalty), and therefore paradoxically symbols form both a bridge and a barrier to the understanding of and participation in a hidden reality (Ponsioen 1952: 102-109). In short, symbols are related to meanings and more complex than signs. This essay does not deal with signs but with symbols. However, signs can become symbols when they acquire a hidden meaning and, conversely, symbols can become signs when they lose their referential quality. In cities, particular types of symbols, as among them a distinctive layout, or particular statutes, monumental buildings, street names, festivities and so on can be present. In their particular context, these symbols shape symbolic patterns. The symbols are often founded in particular sectors of society, including the spheres of the government, religion, the economy, the military, and tourism. These are called symbolic domains.

It should be absolutely clear that the study of urban culture and symbolism is not the exclusive domain of urban anthropology, although anthropology applies a specific approach when studying it. The chief realm of cultural geography is the places and sectors of culture production and consumption, for example, in world cities and newly gentrified areas. Cultural economy tends to focus on changes in the cultural sector as a production unit and the old and new places in the cities which provide the breeding-grounds for the

cultural industry, which also extends to include tourism. Sociology stresses the norms, values, and related institutions in society, while the main field of environmental psychology is the perception of cities, landscapes, regions and countries. History pays particular attention to the lieux de mémoire, whereas art history sees symbolism in art as an expression of the specific (historical) society being studied. In architecture, the design and construction of tall buildings and landmarks, even of whole neighbourhoods and cities, provides symbolism with a firm basis.

Research methods and techniques

However, as mentioned above, the anthropologist has his/her own approach which perhaps the concept of a *flâneur* can be used to elucidate. When anthropologists do fieldwork in cities, the task of grasping their overall culture, their symbolic pattern or character or their soul, is highly specific and very demanding. In contrast to research in small communities – whether rural villages or urban neighbourhoods – where everybody is soon aware of the stranger entering the community, in the city as a whole, particularly mega-cities, the anthropologist is immersed in a crowd of people and a multitude of places. Their first task is to familiarize themselves with different places: their uses, functions and the people who frequent them. This undertaking transforms the anthropologist into a *flâneur*: a stroller, a wanderer who has no specific relationship with the places he or she is interested in and will be eager to make contact with passers-by, hotel personnel, taxi drivers, and other persons who happen to cross his/her path, no matter how limited these interactions might be, in the quest to discover what the inhabitants do and think. The *flâneur* is an observer and participant collecting general knowledge about the city. This task constitutes the starting point for developing a view on the basis of his/her personal background, including the relevant literature, but which can later blossom into an intimate knowledge of the views expressed by certain categories and groups of inhabitants, especially those of the key informants who play a prominent role in the research. However, besides being an observer and participant, the *flâneur* is also a detective, because his ultimate goal is to combine all he has learned into one narrative which will unite the fragmented views about the symbolic order held by the inhabitants in one, single model and thereby expose the soul of the city, its structure and dynamics.

Charles Baudelaire (1995: 9), who introduced the concept of *flâneur* in 1863, wrote the following:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world […].

The *flâneur* is "the painter of the passing moment and of all the suggestions

of eternity that it contains" (Baudelaire 1995: 5). "He marvels at the eternal beauty and the amazing harmony of life in the capital cities […] He gazes upon the landscapes of the great city […]" (Baudelaire 1995: 11). The message Baudelaire is conveying is that the *flâneur* is a member of the crowd and a connoisseur of urban life; he is an active and intellectual observer driven by curiosity and he combines the casual eye of the stroller with the purposeful stare of the detective.

The true home of the *flâneur* was nineteenth-century Paris whose arcades functioned as his principal domain (Hazel Hahn 2006); the city was his interior, his house. That is why sometimes, in the guise of a public type, in the scientific literature the *flâneur* is restricted to nineteenth-century Paris. He was considered to have disappeared when the shopping arcades gave way to the large department stores flooded with full-fledged consumer ideology, and when the interior of those stores became the exterior of the city and the domain of the buying masses.

In this era, the whole idea of a *flâneur* played a role in the evaluation of social life in the city and the alienation which was presumed to be the inevitable complement to rapid urbanization. As all sorts of types and characters in the urban arena, the *flâneur,* the dandy and other caricatures can easily be recognized from their style and behaviour, picturing the social orientation of the inhabitants was considered to be less difficult than might have been envisaged, and urban alienation was fairly restricted.

Walter Benjamin (1991: 524) elaborates the contrast between the *flâneur* and the traveller or tourist. The tourist restricts his attention to the monumental and places of special interest, "the exotic and picturesque" as it were (Goebel 1998: 379), and is not actually involved in either urban history or city life. It is the *flâneur* who tries to incorporate the native view, as he is interested in the background and history of the urban landscape and society. *Flânerie* is constituted by the confrontation between the city and the biographical background of the *flâneur*, or the "dialectical movement of familiarity and strangeness" (Goebel 1998: 379). In this dialectical movement, the *flâneur* is also a detective. It suits him to hold himself apparently inert among the urban masses, but in reality he is a passionate observer and participant (Benjamin 1991: 554), eager to understand the city and, just as a journalist, takes notes on urban life. *Flânerie* is "an activity of ethnographic exploration" (Goebel 1998: 389).

In the course of time, the theory on the *flâneur* and *flânerie* has given rise to specific methods of enjoying and exploring the city.[1] The immobile *flâneur* might choose to take up his post in a particular café or some other location and sit down there to observe what is happening in the street. The mobile *flâneur* can follow one person during the day and write down what the person observed has been doing, perhaps visiting shops, talking with friends and so forth. He can also take up his position three times a day at different spots

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[1]   Annelies Schulte Nordholt (2008) discusses these in her examination of Georges Perec and his sociology of daily life.

in a particular square and describe what happens from different angles. Alternatively, he can observe the same place for one day over a period of several years. A more common method is just to roam the city at random in order to come across the unknown places and vistas, to become acquainted with the architecture and plazas, to enjoy accidental encounters and festivities. Nowadays, urbanists and architects still opt for this way of exploring the city.

Another possible step could be to include an imaginary exploration of the city by drawing mental maps or even by narrative mapping without setting a map down on paper. In present-day research on urban symbolism, mental and narrative mapping play an essential role as they form a rich source of insight into the city as it has been expressed by informants.

As *flâneur,* the aim of the anthropologist is to achieve a synthetic approach to the symbolic order of a city, repeatedly using observation, participation, interviewing and reflection. This is a creative and iterative process repeated until an optimal insight has been achieved. The *flâneur* is the symbol of the anthropologist mastering the city. The *flâneur* is an anthropologist *avant la lettre* and the anthropologist is a modern *flâneur*.

Case studies

The development of the field of urban symbolism is founded on a communal effort, in which the principal exponents have been anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and geographers, well-acquainted with different cities all over the world, who have been excited and inspired by the idea of developing an urban symbolic theory about their preferred locations, where they had often done fieldwork earlier. So far, urban anthropology has produced a large number of case studies in the field of symbolism, including the cities of Albuquerque, Ankara, Bagdad, Banda Aceh, Bangkok, Banská Bystrica, Beijing, Blitar, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Bukittinggi, Canberra, Cape Town, Colombo, Cuenca, Delft, Denpasar, Esfahan, Francistown, Gdansk, Ghent, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Kingston, Kudus, Kupang, Leiden, Ljubljana, Lucknow, New York, Padang, Palembang, Paris, Payakumbuh, The Hague, Tokyo, Yogyakarta, and Vitória.

Approaches

These studies have generated new theories, chief among them urban symbolic ecology, and the hyper city and social cohesion approaches (Nas 1998; Nas, Jaffe, and Samuels 2006; Nas, De Groot, and Schut 2011; Nas and De Giosa 2011).

Urban symbolic ecology which focuses on the study of the distribution of symbols over the urban space and tries to develop spatial models for the urban symbolic order of a city was the first approach. Several concepts including the symbol carrier, layered symbolism, referential symbolism, nested symbolism and symbolic domain have been developed to describe particular situations.

Later, attention shifted to semiotics and the idea of signifier and signified. The model of hyper city was developed. This incorporated earlier concepts and added a distinction between four types of symbol carriers, namely material,

behavioural, iconic, and discursive symbols. Production and consumption plus the shadow city were important additions in the model (Nas, Jaffe, and Samuels 2006: 9), which underlined the force of hyper-reality in overpowering urban reality. The symbolic order of various cities and their development over time also emerged as a major point of interest.

More recently, research has been leading to insights into the role of urban symbolism in social cohesion and social conflict, emphasizing the collective instead of the individual views about urban symbols.

Application

The study of urban culture, more specifically urban symbolism in first instance, is a scientific and theoretical undertaking. But it also has a practical component as urban identity and image are very important to city-dwellers and local government officials. Its inhabitants prefer to reside in a pleasant city, whose history and culture are richly expressed in symbolism. This improves the orientation in the city, and its readability, that is how the city can be imagined. This situation allows citizens to appreciate the beauty of their dwelling-place more. In the case of local officials, urban culture and symbolism can deliver the ideas necessary to creating an appropriate image of their city, of course in relation to the actual and desired conditions inherent in it. City branding and city marketing have become a real industry.

Case studies from Indonesia

Since 1990 Indonesian cities, especially Jakarta, have been the starting point of the research in urban symbolism. In this essay, I shall focus on the case studies of Indonesian cities and what can be learned from them in the field of urban symbolism. The Indonesian cities researched in this field so far are Banda Aceh, Padang, Bukittinggi, Payakumbuh, Palembang, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Kudus, Blitar, Denpasar, and Kupang. They differ tremendously, ranging from the national capital to provincial capitals and small towns; some of them, such as Jakarta, are purely colonial in origin, while others are more or less traditional in character. Some of them have a top-down symbolic structure, largely the product of government activities, while others have symbolic configurations which have a more grassroots character and are based in the religious domain. So far, provincial capitals constitute the majority of the Indonesian case studies and studies of small towns are rather scarce. The cities researched cover the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali, and Timor.

Jakarta

Let us begin with the capital, Jakarta, the city I explored as a real *flâneur* for several years in the 1970s and later in the 1980s. What is its message to us? Jakarta has an abundant, multi-layered, top-down, symbolic structure established by a series of national governments and later market developments, but it also has significant bottom-up symbolism related to Ciliwung River (Nas 1990, 1992, 1993, 2007; Bakker and Saentaweesook 2011).

As it was already in existence as a full-fledged colonial city, after Independence of necessity, street names were changed from those with a Dutch orientation to those with an Indonesian connection (Grijns 2000). Successive new governments, especially the first president, Soekarno, who was trained as an architect, emphasized the Indonesianization of the city by erecting a number of colossal monuments and statutes which mark the central area and neutralize its colonial flavour. Examples are Monas, the National Monument (Picture 1); Hanuman which was in fact intended to celebrate the Russian Sputnik; and the Statue of Youth, to commemorate the young people who had played a role in the struggle for Independence. I have visited all these monuments, strolling around in their immediate environs, observing and interviewing people who happened to be there.

Picture 1. Marking the Old Order zone; *Flâneurie* at Freedom Square (Medan Merdeka) near the National Monument (Monas), Jakarta (Photograph by the author, 2003).

These monuments marked the inner city and when the second president, Suharto, took over, in an outer ring he and his wife had created the Lobang Buaya Monument (Picture 2), symbolizing the myth of the new government frozen in stone, and the open-air museum, Taman Mini Indonesia, exhibiting traditional houses from all over the country and bringing these together, symbolically reinforcing the power of the centre.

In the northern periphery of the city, one of the old colonial wards, Jakarta Kota still exists containing Dutch symbolic elements among them a Dutch-type drawbridge (see Picture 3) and Dutch façades.

Picture 2. Marking the New Order zone; Lobang Buaya, Jakarta
(Photograph by the author, year unknown).

Picture 3. Marking the colonial zone; The old Dutch draw bridge,
Jakarta Kota (Photograph by the author, year unknown).

In the 1990s, the rise of the middle class and new market dynamisms
stimulated the construction of large numbers of condominiums and malls
all over Jakarta and its environs (Picture 4), not to mention the planning of
complete new cities. In this last phase, the neat marking of the city area in
concentric circles was broken, as the condominiums and malls were built in
conjunction with toll roads at various places in the city. In symbolic terms,
as Evers (2011) points out, Jakarta has become a normal world city, highly
layered and complex but also featuring modern types of symbols including
skyscrapers and toll roads.

Picture 4. New malls and condominiums; The market development of the 1990s spreading over the city (Photograph by the author, year unknown).

Besides this top-down and market symbolism, the bottom-up, natural symbol of the river which cuts through the city and causes heavy flooding each year is very strong (Caljouw, Nas, and Pratiwo 2005). In poems inspired by Jakarta, the River Ciliwung is perceived as "the source of life and provider of water to many households", nevertheless the great power of the destruction it can bring when it floods is also acknowledged (Bakker and Saentaweesook 2011: 236). Over the years it has functioned as a natural symbol, as a stable counter-symbol during various administrative phases.

*Flâneurie a*nd tourism are quite common at the harbour, the place where the river enters Jakarta Bay. Notwithstanding this strong Ciliwung counter-symbolism and the shared joking on all sorts of pompous monuments to neutralize the heavy top-down, state symbolism, Jakarta is the leading city in national development and some of its symbols have national significance.

At the lower level of provincial capitals, I want to compare Islamic Banda Aceh in Sumatra with Hindu Denpasar on Bali, traditional Yogyakarta in Java, and Christian Kupang in Timor. Padang and Palembang also figure at this level of cities.

Banda Aceh

Banda Aceh, situated at the northernmost tip of Sumatra, is a fundamental Islamic city and the Baiturrahman Mosque (Picture 5) in the centre is its most conspicuous symbol (Nas 2003). During my fieldwork – some years before the 2004 tsunami hit the town – I wandered through the centre and in the environs of the mosque.

In its initial form, the mosque had only one dome. It was a gift from the Governor-General after the destruction of its predecessor at the beginning of

the twentieth century during the struggle when Aceh was subjugated by the Dutch. Later, after it had been extended and the number of domes increased, it became the icon of Banda Aceh and the province of Aceh in general. Its fame spread throughout the Archipelago and after the tsunami was extended to the whole world. When the tsunami struck people found refuge on its roof, which has strengthened the symbolic force of the building.

After the disaster, new symbols have joined it, among them the large ship which was hurled ashore by the power of the tsunami, the large mass graveyards and the Tsunami Museum (Van Leeuwen 2011).

Picture 5. The Baiturrahman Mosque as main symbol of Banda Aceh (Photograph by the author, 1997).

Another symbolic item I encountered during my *flâneuries* was the tiered roof and some characteristics of the traditional Acehnese house (Picture 6) transferred to modern constructions. These features include pillars and the triangular windshields atop the façades. In the Suharto era, many ethnic groups in Indonesia seized upon the traditional roof constructions of their houses to adorn modern administrative and bank buildings as a symbol of urban and provincial identity. The tiered roofs in Banda Aceh do not actually refer to the traditional houses, but to a small colonial bell tower which was transposed into the source of the widespread symbolism (Picture 7). Just as the mosque which also has a colonial background, the double roofing, notwithstanding its colonial origins, is considered a profoundly Acehnese characteristic, and is completely integrated into Acehnese culture.

In a nutshell, integrated colonial elements, mosques and monumental graves of Islamic and other leaders, traditional house construction and the tsunami constitute the main elements in the symbolic configuration of Banda Aceh.

Picture 6. Traditional Acehnese house, Banda Aceh (Photograph by the author, 1997).

Picture 7. The bell tower (Cakra Donya), Banda Aceh (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cakra_Donya.JPG).

Padang and Palembang

Padang and Palembang are the provincial capitals of West and South Sumatra respectively. Colombijn (1994: 330-358) discusses several symbolic issues of Padang to be found in the ethnic, religious, politico-historical, modernization, and sacral domain. Stretching from the colonial to the Suharto era, he observes a change from a fairly pluriform symbolic structure to more uniform conditions in which the Minangkabau are the dominant population group and their spectacular *gonjong* roofs are the most potent symbol of the city. Colombijn (1994: 357-358) states:

> In the colonial period symbols were private affairs (religious processions, statues, the buffalo head on the town hall, construction of prayer houses), and now the establishment of symbols is in the hands of the administration which creates them (statues), orders them (*bergonjong* roofs of banks), or forbids them (*barong sai*). New symbols made by the people themselves, like the cemetery in Kuranji and the Taqwa Mosque may have stronger symbolic power than those made by the administration.

Colombijn presents examples of competition between ethnic groups in the field of urban symbolism and particularly centred on the Chinese cemetery.

The main symbols I found as I wandered through Palembang are the River Musi and its impressive AMPERA Bridge (Picture 8), the history and the archaeological excavations in search of the Srivijaya kingdom, some holy graves and the typical *limas* roof which is used profusely on modern buildings. Taal (2003: 153-211) focuses her description of Palembang symbolism on naming, architectural structures, statues and monuments, graveyards, annual founding celebrations and archaeological excavations related to Srivijaya.

Both provincial capitals, Padang and Palembang, show a great diversity of symbols as the local governments are active in the symbolic field by the erection of statues and construction of monuments. In Padang, in congruence with national policy under Suharto, roofs became dominant unifying its symbolic structure. The shape of the roof of the traditional Minangkabau house is very spectacular for example in stylized form on bank and university buildings (see Picture 9).

In Palembang the unified symbolic structure related to the River Musi is strengthened by the prominent bridge and yearly rowing contests celebrating the founding of Srivijaya as well as the city. The deep historical roots of the early Indonesian city state of Srivijaya, supposedly located nearby the city as shown in excavations, is considered to legitimize the original scale of the Indonesian territory which included Sumatra long before Dutch colonization.

We may conclude that both provincial capitals display a rather monolithic symbolic structure based on rich subordinate layers in various domains.

Picture 8. The River Musi and the AMPERA Bridge, Palembang (Taal 2003: cover).

Picture 9. Replica of a traditional Minangkabau house in Taman Mini Indonesia, Jakarta (Photograph by the author, year unknown).

Denpasar

In Denpasar, the provincial capital of Bali, I used a motorbike to explore the city which is fundamentally Hindu in layout and culture, being oriented towards the north-eastern holy mountain, Gunung Agung, with the Besakih Temple (Nas 1995; see Pictures 10-11). The persons I spoke to generally drew mental maps featuring the statue of *Catur Muka* (Brahma with the four faces; see Picture 12) in the middle of town near the *alun-alun*, which is as tradition

demands bordered by the palace or residence of the raja or governor situated on the northern side, the temple on the eastern side and by the market (in this case at some distance) on the western side.

Picture 10. Gunung Agung, view from Denpasar (Photograph by the author, 1992).

Picture 11. Pura Besakih, Gunung Agung (Photograph by the author, 1992).

The specific Hindu layout is repeated in the altars in the houses, which always are situated on the upstream side and are oriented towards the holy mountain, and by the temples and altars along the streets and the ubiquitous evidence of the wealth of offering activities.

Statues are also important and many religious sculptures have been erected

at the potentially dangerous points such as crossings and bridges. Besides the statues in the religious domain, a great many also refer to the historical and the governmental domains (Puputan and Independence) as well as to tourism (see Picture 13).

Picture 12. The statue of Catur Muka, Denpasar (http://www.panoramio. com/photo/38078277).

Picture 13. Puputan Monument, Denpasar (http://upload.wikimedia. org/wikipedia/commons/7/77/1906_ Puputan_monument_in_Denpasar.jpg).

One specific domain is that of the common people who erect small cement statutes to beautify their immediate environs.

The Hindu religion dominates the impressive symbolic configuration of Denpasar. It shapes the layout of the town by the statue of Catur Muka marking the centre and by the sacred direction of the holy mountain determining the location of temples and all sorts of cultural expressions. The state and the common people also play an important role in symbolism, albeit less prominent than religion. The symbolism of the massive tourist domain is relatively new. It is represented by some statues and an extensive network of hotels and culture selling points covering the city and a large part of the island.

Yogyakarta

In the 1970s the best way to familiarize oneself with Yogyakarta was to take a *becak*, a bicycle taxi. The *kraton* (palace) of the Sultan including the water palace (Taman Sari) dominates the city, the symbol of the traditional power vested there. The symbolic configuration with the *kraton* at the centre is both

linear and circular.[2]

The linear segment is a north-south axis connecting the holy mountain, Merapi, via the Tugu Monument with the *kraton* and continuing farther south via the Krapyak (the hunting lodge of the Sultan) to the glittering stone (the Batu Gilang at Parangtritis) on the southern coast, where the goddess of the South Sea, Ni Loro Kidul had a historic meeting with Panembahan Senopati, the first Muslim king of Mataram (De Giosa 2011a: 87).[3] In the segment of behavioural symbolism, some ceremonies are more circular than linear in nature, as they are performed as processions proceeding around the *kraton* or the city (the rituals of Tapa Bisu and Jumenegan) (De Giosa 2011a: 99).

Yogyakarta also still has a strong colonial presence revealed in the fort (Vredenburg), the mansion of the former colonial authorities, and the railway station and other colonial buildings juxtaposing with the *kraton*.

There is another highly significant post-Independence symbolic domain. After Independence, the university was laid out in the northern part and Yogyakarta has developed into an important educational city housing a great number of such institutions.

Therefore, the traditional power of the Sultan and the influence of the modern educational sector constitute the basis of the elaborate symbolic configuration of Yogyakarta. The dominating lineal symbolic structure runs from the Merapi through the *kraton* to the southern coast. It has a strong religious connotation often supported by ceremonies, sometimes of circular nature. Some colonial buildings were superimposed on the fundamental traditional lineal structure. They remained intact, but the fragmentation of the lineal symbolism faded away by their absorption in the daily life of the citizens.

Picture 14. Taman Sari before the restoration, Yogyakarta (Photograph by the author, year unknown).

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[2]　　For Taman Sari see Picture 14.

[3]　　See Picture 15 for important symbols of Yogyakarta as presented by Irene Hoek (2005) on the cover of her MA thesis.

Picture 15. Mount Merapi, Tugu Monument, *kraton*, Krapyak and South Sea (Irene Hoek 2005: cover).

Kupang

Kupang also is a provincial capital and centre of the administration of the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) consisting of the islands of West Timor, Flores, Sumba plus a number of smaller ones. It is a Christian city with a Protestant/Roman Catholic majority, but is nonetheless very multi-ethnic, as the population is composed of people from various islands and backgrounds, among them Timorese, Sawunese, Rotinese, Chinese, and Arab, as well as from the islands of Flores, Sumba, Java and Sumatra. De Giosa (2011c) has described the symbolic system of Kupang in detail and I shall make grateful use of his report in my remarks.

The Christian character of the city is obvious from the transport vehicles, especially the small buses (*bemo*), which feature paintings such as the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci and Jesus Christ Superstar.

In Kupang as elsewhere the fashion for adorning the tops of administrative buildings with quasi-traditional roofs has caught on, but as no ethnic group is dominant the town hall sports no fewer than three such roofs borrowed from the major population groups: the Timorese cone-shaped lopo roof, the Florenese roof with buffalo horns and the Sumbanese peaked roof. This is quite unique in Indonesia, as generally one population group and one quasi-traditional roof dominate the cities of, for example, Banda Aceh, Padang, and Palembang.

The main symbolic axis in Kupang is the Al Tari axis, which De Giosa calls the axis of harmony (2011c: 73). It is lined by several monuments, among them the Patung Burung Merpati, the Peace Dove Monument (Picture 16), consisting of a white dove as symbol of love, peace and the Holy Spirit; the

Tirosa Bersatu (Picture 17) or monument of three statutes with three figures representing the major islands of the province, Timor, Roti, and Sawu; and the Patung Kepedulian or statue of solidarity, erected for the celebration of the Indonesian Day of Social Solidarity. Somewhere in the middle of the axis is situated the Museum NTT which strives to represent the whole province and all the islands and peoples who live in it. Nevertheless, the Chinese who constitute an important population group in the city are not included in this museum.

The basic theme of the symbolic configuration of Kupang can be understood as a striving to develop peace and harmony in the face of the multi-ethnicity of the city which is increasing rapidly. In 1998, when tensions between Muslims and Christians surfaced in Jakarta resulting in the burning of churches there, these actions elicited retaliations in Kupang where Christians attacked mosques. In the case of Kupang, these actions could be more or less restrained by calls for tolerance.

So, the driving power behind the symbolism of Kupang is the desire to establish harmony between the ethnic groups. The main symbol carriers are statues and monuments, which are elaborately described by De Giosa who explored them intensively as he wandered the axis. He also mentions the street names which refer to national and regionally prominent leaders representing various ethnic groups. The fundamental meaning of symbolism in Kupang is harmony and its distribution is lineal, along the symbolic axis. In addition Kupang joins Indonesian roof symbolism in an original way by incorporation various styles of different population groups on one building.

Picture 16. Peace Dove Monument, Kupang (De Giosa 2011c: 74).

Picture 17. Tirosa Bersatu Monument, Kupang (De Giosa 2011c: 76).

Now we shall turn to the city at the lowest level of the urban hierarchy. I have found descriptions of symbolism of four examples, namely the garrison towns of Bukittinggi and Payakumbuh in Sumatra and the pilgrim towns of Kudus and Blitar on Java.

Bukittinggi and Payakumbuh

Bukittinggi and Payakumbuh are described by Nas and Van Bakel (1999) and also Nas and Sluis (2002). In colonial times, both settlements were garrison towns which had also acquired a market function for the surrounding area.

Bukittinggi, built on two hills and encircled by a ring road, remained a garrison town into modern times which meant that there was a strong military presence, but more recently it has developed into a tourist city as it has various attractive features including a cool climate, a clock tower (Jam Gadang; Picture 18), the remains of the old fortification (Fort De Kock), a zoo with a spectacular traditional Minangkabau house (*rumah gadang* with a *gonjong* roof), and a very impressive, steep, natural canyon (Ngarai Sianok, Karbouwen Gat).

As I walked through the city centre and the entire length of the ring road, the symbolic continuity of this garrison town from the colonial into the post-colonial era became more evident as the symbols I encountered were related to the struggle for Independence, the Japanese occupation, military education, the police force and so on. Bukittinggi was a garrison town in colonial times and remained one after Independence. Only later under the influence of the Suharto cultural policy this continuity was broken and the ethnic roof characteristics and the tourism symbols gained influence.

Under the Dutch, Payakumbuh was a border stronghold, a function it later lost. Now it is a small regional market centre, especially marked by traditional and modern Minangkabau and Islamic symbols as well as Independence symbolism. These symbols range from great numbers of Minangkabau traditional (*adat*) houses, the mosque and some statues commemorating liberation from colonial rule.[4]
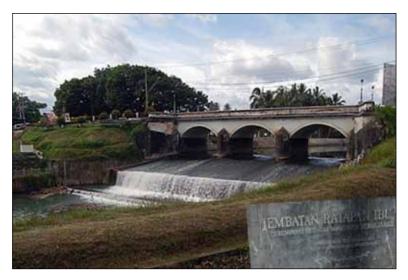
Nas and Van Bakel (1999) have characterized Bukittinggi symbolism as an elaborate, crystallized system and that of Payakumbuh as an emergent symbolic system. In the Suharto era, Minangkabau symbolism was strongly promoted, especially by the use of the traditional Minangkabau roofing-system on administrative and bank buildings, on the main bridge between the hills in Bukittinggi and at bus stops, as well as a number of other places. More recently, globalization has gained force as international super-market chains and hotels, representing tourism, have been introduced.

We can conclude that the symbolic structure of contemporary Bukitinggi is composed of four layers, "namely those referring to the colonial, the post-colonial, the ethnic revival and the globalization period" (Nas and Sluis 2002: 140). The symbolic structure of Payakumbuh is rather feeble with an abundance of traditional houses and their roof shapes.

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[4]   One of the important symbols of Payakumbuh see Picture 19.

Picture 18. Clock Tower (Jam Gadang), Bukittinggi (http://farm4.staticflickr.com/346 1/3202137649_7101f0c97b_o.jpg).

Picture 19. Monument of the Weeping Mother, Payakumbuh (http:// stat.ks.kidsklik.com/statics/files/2011/01/129642159378394312. jpg; https://fbcdn-sphotos-c-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash3/ q79/s720x720/554938_1020081573).

Kudus and Blitar

The Javanese pilgrim towns of Kudus and Blitar are two distinctive iconic towns on Java. This means that their symbolic system is generally strongly determined by one famous person. Kudus and Blitar have been described in great detail by De Giosa (2011b). In Kudus lies buried Sunan Kudus, one of the nine saints who played a role in the Islamization of Java and the subsequent decline of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Majapahit. In Blitar is the grave of Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia. These are two small but unique iconic towns in which the symbolism is focused mainly on these two significant persons.

In Kudus, west of the city square lies the Great Mosque and two kilometres from there are located the El-Aqsa Mosque with its famous minaret and the tomb of Sunan Kudus (Picture 20). Hindu-Javanese and Islamic influences are combined in this early Islamic missionary post.

Picture 20. The tomb of Sunan Kudus (http:// www.eastjava.com/ books/walisongo/html/walisongo/kudus.html).

This combination is also found in the Blitar graveyard where Soekarno is buried. It is composed of a courtyard, a terrace and a mausoleum. However, the grave of Soekarno (Picture 21) has not always been that impressive. During the first years it remained a simple anonymous tomb in line with the wish of Soekarno and the policy of Suharto. Only later rehabilitation took place resulting in the present-day sacral space referring to Javanese tradition.

Both iconic places (the tomb of Sunan Kudus and the grave of Soekarno) have a magnificent Majapahit-style entrance gate through which pilgrims have to pass. A lively tourist industry has also developed in both iconic towns as pilgrims and tourists have to be entertained and fed, as well as provided with souvenirs by which to remember their visit.

Picture 21. Grave of Soekarno; Graveyard Pavilion, Blitar (De Giosa 2011b: 206).

These pilgrim cities are characterized by a fairly coherent symbolic configuration. Blitar has other pilgrim sites within the city which are clearly dominated by the site of Soekarno and do not compete with it. Kudus, however, is also famous for the manufacture industry of clove cigarettes. It is known as clove cigarette city (*kota kretek*), which renders its image more complicated. Nevertheless, the symbolic competition is restricted and the promotion of the town as a whole prevails. These two cases show how "the supremacy of a single iconic symbol is able to attract magnetically not only the attention of pilgrims, devotees, and tourists, but also to bring together other symbols within a whole city" (De Giosa 2011b: 212).

Conclusion

An anthropologist working in an urban setting acts as a *flâneur* as described by Baudelaire. He/she combines wandering, observing, participation and investigation, but in a circular or iterative process. In Indonesia, the work of anthropologists has yielded a great number of case studies of cities of different scales in various islands. Many of these deal with the national and provincial capitals. The number of small towns investigated is still quite limited. Taking stock of the results so far, Indonesian cities are obviously profuse in their symbolism and rich in their symbolic diversity. The most dominant factors in their symbolic configurations are religion, administration and the common people.

Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity have their own symbolic repertoire or fund in Indonesian cities, and each religion is strongly rooted in the population groups concerned. In Islam mosques, tombs and graveyards are very prominent symbols. In Hinduism, this role is accorded a holy mountain, temples, altars, and statues. Christian symbolism focuses on churches, statues

and processions. Religious symbolism is deeply rooted in all layers of society and should not be considered as either purely top-down or completely bottom-up. It is not class bound as in the case of top-down, state symbolism produced by the administrative elite.

The national and local administrations excel especially in marking their urban areas by placing sometimes-colossal memorials, but they also do not eschew smaller statues and monuments. The bulk of their symbolism is top-down and, when experienced by the common people as either too extreme or too overpowering, they can be neutralized by storytelling and joking, which has happened more than once in Jakarta. In the national capital, such monuments as the National Monument, Monas, really do have a national, even international, impact, as they are widely known. In provincial capitals and smaller towns, the symbols can be less pretentious referring to local projects, for example, the encouragement of literacy or family planning, but sometimes they can surpass the local level, an outstanding example being the mosque in Banda Aceh. During the Suharto era, Chinese urban symbolism was suppressed by the state, but it is becoming more prominent now.

As urban symbolism is very flexible and does not need to be related to expensive and conspicuous artefacts, the common people are well versed in the symbolic domain. They attach their own meanings to religious and state symbols and create their own by giving specific meanings to natural elements such as a river or mountain. They can use their own, unofficial street names or erect small, cheap concrete figures to beautify their immediate environs, thereby substantiating their personal success in development.

Other important factors are national, regional and local history and identity. These usually are present, although often not too prominently, in small statues and street names. They refer to the myths of origin of the dominant people, the struggle for Independence, national, regional or local public or military leaders and to important religious figures.

One relatively new but influential symbolic domain is that composed of the flow of tourists. As cities are modernized, touristic selling-points are created or upgraded. Hence, these symbols are found in various cities which are emerging as major tourist destinations.

The relationship between urban symbolism and the class structure of Indonesian cities is rather complex because of the flexible character of symbols, which are just as easily forgotten as created, and their referential potential can be attached to almost every physical element in the urban arena. Notwithstanding this flexibility, it is obvious that all social, ethnic, professional and religious groups have their own symbolisms, which can contradict each other and emerge as a source of conflict. Therefore, street names can be changed and statues and monuments can be stripped of their meaning. One good example is the Lobang Buaya Monument in Jakarta which tells the story of the rise of the Soeharto regime, but whose force has nowadays ebbed away. The Indonesian elite and the military are generally prominent in the production of symbolism, wielded as a tool to strengthen their legitimacy. Now

the middle class is requesting modernization in the shape of landmark malls and condominiums. Yet, besides playing a mediating role between conflicting groups, urban symbolism also has a bridging and binding power. Examined in its full extent, symbolism generally fosters group cohesion in the city as well as the cohesion of the city as a whole, especially shown in the case of Kupang. In addition to strengthening the position of certain classes or ethnic, religious or professional groups, it can be used as a powerful instrument in the development of a city. This function leads us to the aspect of city branding and city marketing, in which urban symbolism can play a basic role and might emerge as a fruitful ground for generating operative ideas. When new towns and cities are designed in Indonesia, urban symbolism should be one of the aspects taken into consideration.

The Indonesian case studies presented above allow crucial factors in city planning to be deduced. In Indonesia, in accordance with tradition, a new city should preferably have a large alun-alun in the centre with the most important religious and administrative buildings as well as the market or a landmark mall grouped around it. It should express national, regional, and local identity by means of naming, monuments and statues referring to the struggle for national Independence, as well as the origin, culture and history of the city and its population groups, as well as national and local leadership. In addition, the most prominent asset in the economic sector should be clearly expressed in the symbolic character of the city. Depending on its natural environment and its role as a hill resort or a garrison, pilgrimage, administrative, educational, trading or industrial city, all sorts of symbols should be allowed to express its character and create a lively, enjoyable, comprehensible urban environment.

The symbolism of Indonesian cities has crystallized into various configurations both lineal and circular, and into central and peripheral shapes or combinations of these. Jakarta has a layered, concentric, circular configuration, which has been thrown into confusion by modern developments in the late-Soeharto era and present-day changes. Kupang displays a prominent lineal shape referring to harmony. Banda Aceh and Palembang are heavily focused on the centre, but both also posses strong peripheral symbols. As a garrison city, Bukittinggi has a combined central and peripheral, circular configuration. The symbolism of the iconic towns of Kudus and Blitar is fairly peripheral, focused on the pilgrimage sites of Sunan Kudus and President Soekarno respectively, but in Blitar the peripheral location of the pilgrimage place is combined with circular ritual activities. Yogyakarta combines the lineal distribution of symbols from the holy mountain via the *kraton* to the sea with a circular use of space in various rituals. Denpasar has a lineal symbolic structure directed towards the holy mountain and the sea.

Even though basic forces in the urban symbolic configurations of Indonesian cities bear a strong resemblance to each other, there is still enough room for these cities to express their own innate nature, their unique style. The dynamics between the general forces which operate in the field of urban symbolism and the unique outcome for every city is what makes the life and

work of the citizens interesting and enjoyable, to say nothing of satisfying the urban anthropologist, the modern *flâneur* of the stone jungle, both thrilling and stimulating.

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