

Human scales:

Understanding places of centring and de-centring

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Abstract

One property of cities of the traditional sort that continually amazes us is the way they appear to self-organise into socially and economically structured spatial systems. While urban planners believe that cities are distributions of programme, heavily shaped by top-down forces such as zoning laws and planning directives, there are also bottom-up processes that play a critical role in city organisation, creating distributions, concentrations and centres which we recognise in situ as being of a distinctively urban order. This bottom-up process is explored as an outcome of the movement of people concatenating 'regions' from the pathways they inhabit.

Following Gibson, who proposes that the environment is perceived in the round and in movement along 'paths of observation', and Casey who proposes that 'regions' are integrated perceptually through the movements of people moving from place to place, it is suggested that people inhabit simultaneously regions of different scales, related to the different scales of their orientation and movement needs. The movement space of the city will tend to separate out into discrete more or less coherent, networks of pathways, working at these respective scales, through this space. People will shift between these nested regions depending on their immediate movement and orientation needs.

The 'shift-points' (points where one steps up or down a gear in scale) in this perceptual landscape become critical to the city's dynamic functionality. They are broadly of two types which will be called: 'coincident' – where the movement towards the shift-point at the lower scale is coincident with a movement towards centrality at that scale – and: 'non-coincident' – where that movement is away from centrality.

The cities of Jakarta and Amsterdam are considered in terms of the way scales of movement and orientation, particularly at the shift-points, condition programme, character and significance of the place in question.

Keywords

urban space, place, space syntax, networks, urban organisation, perception, movement, Amsterdam, Jakarta

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“Perhaps place is the first of all things, since all existing things are either in place or not without place.”

Archytas (as cited by Simplicius)

“the actual entity, in virtue of being what it is, is also where it is.”

Alfred North Whitehead

Introduction

There is a relation between the formal patterns of urban movement networks and those of human activity in urban space. This contribution tries to bring the discussion of the functionality of urban movement networks closer to their experience in the real world and at the same time to further develop a practical understanding of the urban fabric of (at least some) cities as a layering of movement networks operating at more or less coherent scale levels, and whose effect on functionality, centrality and character are a function of their scale levels on the one hand, and on the degree of integration and permeability between network layers on the other.

Our main concern here is the nature of an urban order – perhaps the nature of order in cities with complex historically grown fabrics, as far as their movement networks, and the everyday experience of inhabiting these networks, are concerned. We will concentrate on issues of accessibility and movement while also seeing these issues as foundational as far as the quality of place and experience is concerned. This is about the inhabitation of an urban world as much as about its function. It takes the view that we live in a mental space as well as a physical one and if the idea of an autonomous mental space implies too much of a split between human experience on the one hand, and the environment on the other, then we must say immediately that the emphasis here is on the coexistence and indivisibility of mental and physical space, and that we divide them conceptually only to understand more precisely the state of our direct relation with the material and social facts of the world which we know from our everyday experience of it. The value and purpose of this precision is in the fact that, whether explicit or not, we use understandings – mental models – in planning or designing the city, and the products of our design thinking are going to be profoundly affected by the exact understandings we use. It is hoped that better understandings of the ‘mechanics’ of the man-urban environment relation will lead ultimately to a rethinking of the design and planning models we use for making urban layout patterns, and to an urban design which is more sensitive to the lived experience of the human subject.

One of the real unsolved problems of the city as far as designers are concerned is the actual social and functional mechanics of the traditional urban centre. While this centre, when it works well, serves to give designers a sense of what the city is, and could be, as the product of our design and planning effort, it would be going too far to call it a model for design thinking. In any event we have singularly failed in giving to cities designed in the last century or so those traditional city qualities of dense social and functional layering, or the loose, non-coercive structuring that make traditional cities legible, easy to use, organised, while also being open to being used in different, new and creative ways. In order to account for this failure, the traditional centre is often seen, rather too conveniently we feel, as a product of historical time rather than of an experienced urban space-time – shifting the problem and its solution elsewhere. The vision of the city as simply an historically produced fabric of places – as an intractably complex, jumbled-up treasure box of collective memory – is all too likely to induce paralysis in the more reflective of designers who, without access to the dimension of historical time, despair of ever being able to reproduce such a fabric of richness. In any event the example (still in many parts of the world) of rich, layered urban centres, without a corresponding real understanding of the mechanics of the traditional central city generates high expectations, while the results never seem to live up to the promise.

A lot of discussion today about the state of the contemporary city remarks on the loss of social layering and richness and diversity, and the loss of a solid ‘sense of place’. While there is no doubt a complex of factors responsible for this loss, one of the most important, we believe, is the lack of a viable practical understanding in the minds of designers of how the properties and qualities of place are produced in actively lived urban space, and how these properties and qualities affect the ways this space is experienced and used.

The ideas proposed here are a further development of a spatial understanding of cities derived from research on Dutch cities and particularly the city of Amsterdam (Read, 1996, 1999, working paper, 2001, 2003). These ideas will be further held up against the example of Jakarta in Indonesia in order to expand the basic model (Budiarto, 2003).

Places and Regions

The problem of place and its design has been much discussed in the urban design literature, though almost all of this discussion has concentrated on surface, highly local, aspects of it. The idea of urban space having spatially extensive properties, properties which are determined by the relationships of connection of particular locations with other locations (Hillier & Hanson) is one that is well understood

intuitively when thinking about locations on strong connective routes, but is less well understood in relation to the working of the finer grained urban grid, which while displaying unevenness over its surface in terms of its 'live centrality', is not well understood by designers as a two dimensional connective tissue within which patterns of activity are powerfully influenced by the connective properties of this tissue. There is an extensive and sophisticated discussion of the notion of place in the anthropological literature, especially concerning the way place is understood either as cultural construction, or as something actively produced by human inhabitation and activity (Ingold, ch. 9). This discussion is directed however not towards the 'practical understanding' mentioned above in terms of models we can use in thinking about how to make experientially viable and supportive urban contexts but rather, and understandably, towards the objects of anthropologists' interests. It is not the intention here to turn this into an anthropological contribution or to extensively review the literature. A few key ideas will be appropriated from some more recent trends in anthropology and applied to the ends of outlining our main argument, while attempting at the same time to keep within the underlying spirit of these borrowed ideas.

The key element of the argument concerns the multi-scalar layering of the experience of place. This idea is easiest to understand when considered in relation to some of our common notions of place like 'home' or 'place of work' where, depending on our point of view or, crucially for what we are talking about here, depending on where we are, these words can mean different things. My home is an apartment on the 16th floor of a tower block when I am in my neighbourhood, it is the building or its surroundings when I am in another part of Amsterdam, and it is Amsterdam when I am in Paris or Cincinnati. My place of work is similarly a room, a building, a university campus, or a city, depending on where I am in the world. The logic of all this slips so easily past us that we barely notice it, a fact that should by now warn us that we may be dealing with something very interesting indeed as far as the foundational conditions of our experience of the world are concerned. This suggests in the first place that places are not entirely an external reality – objective, sufficient, complete in and of themselves – but are also subjectively constructed and understood. And it means that places are always seen in relation to a context – and in relation to a context of a rather particular, centred-in-the-self sort. In the world of our experience, according to Tim Ingold, we understand the world not as locations in space but rather as networks of places (Ingold, ch. 13). Places and the networks of which they form a part constitute an indissoluble whole and reference and inform one another in relation to a perspective that is our own and related to the context of intention that

we impose on it at that point. In this ‘ecological’ perspective, place, subject in movement, and environment come together in a rather special and integral relationship with one another.

J.J. Gibson proposed that our relationship with the world is not that of the reconstruction of sense data, in terms of pre-defined mental schemas, into a mental picture. We are not static receivers of perceptions of an external environment which we then work into internalised representations in order to act in the world. Rather, according to him, we act in the world in order to perceive, and perception is an active process of information pickup. We deal with the world in an exploratory way, continually moving, adjusting, reorienting in order to pick up the information we need for the task at hand. This is not to say of course that there are no mental schemas at all, but the orientation of those schemas is quite unlike those of a map; flat representations of the world, where we look at the world as if from the top down. We look at the world from the particular perspective we happen to have on it, and the orientation of our mental schemas are active, goal-directed and outward from the point at which we stand – a sort of personal funnel vision of the world (Gibson).

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Within this view of us and the world, places have a logic which is rather similar to this basic scheme, just in the reverse direction. Places gather the world around them to one point. Their meaning is not given by culturally embedded schemas, as if culture was a layer we impose over them; rather their meaning is given by the way they particularise the world by virtue of their unique perspective on it (Ingold, ch. 9). A place is the world seen from one point (and from one point of view – a point of view which may also be shared with others of course), and at a practical level that world has a breadth and scale which is appropriate to the scale at which we are acting (or actively thinking) – it is scaled to the range of the activity or movements or active intentions of the moment.

Edward Casey proposes further that places are defined by the movements (and this should include mental as well as physical movements) we make between them. He calls the “area concatenated by peregrinations between the places it connects” (Casey: 24) a ‘region’. The region can be seen then as the particular context – the network of places which contributes to the definition and meaning – of particular places in the above scheme. We have already suggested that places are capable of being nested within one another at different scale levels, and this would suggest that the regions that places depend on also stack over and nest into each other according to the scales at which they are defined.

We would like to combine this idea of a different kind of mental map – of the world seen from a body-centred perspective, engaged through time and by exploration rather than as a seen-from-above cartographic representation, without time dimension – with the idea of nested scaled regions as the necessary counterpoint of nested scaled places, to address a rather simple question regarding the spatial logic of our surroundings and how they are made. It is proposed that much of the layered quality of urban place, and the richness of the meaning it conveys in its best examples, depends on the kind of logic being outlined here; where it becomes possible to switch smoothly in the process both of one’s physical and mental peregrinations through it, from places and their regions that are defined at a more local scale, to places and their regions that are defined as being part of a more extensive urban context. For the urban inhabitant it means that the region he inhabits may be very local and then, by just a shift of the scale of his or her projected movement or intended action, related to a much wider urban context.

There would appear to be a logical proviso to all this however; if this simultaneous inhabitation of differently scaled regions is going to deliver a real sense of bringing together the local and larger scales in the active life patterns of the urban inhabitant, it needs to be possible to perform the switch between the scales concerned smoothly and while in that exploratory mode of spatial mapping and engagement. One needs to be able to shift as easily (or with only the extra energy of the footwork involved) between scales in the physical networks as one does in mental space. In order for this to be a reality, therefore the urban fabric itself needs to be organised by a logic of space which already constitutes this nested order.

Explorable City Space

Critical points in this process of layered, scaled, regioned urban engagement, will be those where the switch takes place, the places where one shifts up or down a gear in scale.

It has already been proposed that the spatial logic of the central urban fabric of Amsterdam, reveals itself as a grid pattern which splits into two distinct networks of ‘supergrid’ (explained below) and local area (or neighbourhood) (Read, working paper, 2001, 2003). This logic is reflected in the intensity of activity in these respective networks, supergrid spaces carrying very significantly higher levels of activity than local area network spaces local to them. The logic is however given not so much in this distinction with regard to intensity of use, but rather in the scales of movement for which they tend to be used. Local area spaces are used as a local, or neighbourhood, scale movement network, while supergrid spaces typically carry a complex of movement scales. They form on the one hand a coherent movement network at the

larger scale of the central city, carrying the movements of people who are travelling at anything above the most local scales, while at the same time, due to the typically direct physical connection between local area networks and the supergrid network, they carry local scaled movement as well. In fact in most cases the function of supergrid spaces at the local scale goes beyond simply constituting a part of the local area movement network; supergrid spaces tend (in Amsterdam at least) to also form centres at the local scale – at the same time as they carry this city-scale through movement. Supergrid spaces become therefore, at those points where they function simultaneously as local centres and city-scale network, those spaces where the neighbourhood and the city at a larger scale meet as far as the movements and lives of people are concerned. It has already been suggested that as far as the functioning of cities is concerned, this factor delivers particular spatial-economic conditions to supergrid spaces in the central urban fabric (Read, 2001; Hillier, 1996). It orients them simultaneously to the city and to the neighbourhood and supports the evolution and maintenance of, for example, neighbourhood high-streets whose street-edge economies are supported by city-scale passing trade at the same time as they become local centres for shopping and gathering. They may alternatively become city-oriented clusters of specialist commercial or social-cultural outlets, which are supported simultaneously by the particular populations resident at the local scale.

It is these sorts of ‘movement products’ – the ‘sedimentation’ left by the structured overlap of movement flows distinguished by scale – by the choreography if you like – of people in the movement networks of the city, that deliver the surface character and particular scenography of local high-street type places (Read, 2001). This character and scenography are seen as a product of the flows and the interaction of those flows, rather than the flows being seen as being produced by shops and other facilities acting as attractors. This gives a very different understanding of the urban surface: as a dynamic spatial field, organised around the interaction between movement networks, rather than as a neutral surface on which functional facilities are distributed and then connected. We would argue that it is important to understand the underlying logic of this field if we are to build models of urban centre functioning which are a useful framework for design thinking, and it is our contention here that this underlying logic is founded in the experience of people in movement in urban space.

The supergrid is a network which already has, built into it by the processes of its origination, a logic of movement at the city scale. These processes have in many cases – perhaps not all but certainly in the case of Amsterdam – occurred over long periods of historical time, so that the supergrid is something evolved through the ways people in movement resolved their movement needs at scales larger than

the local. The point is that a pattern which has evolved in movement, already ‘contains’ movement in its realisation as a pattern in the real world. And it is this ‘contained’ movement factor that is actively, exploratively exploited by the mobile, exploring, body-centred subject. It is this movement factor that makes the supergrid clear and obvious to the person using it. In real world supergrids the movement factor ‘contained’ in the pattern resolves itself as geometries of continuity – long lines, wavy or straight – that can be traced through the more general fabric.

In traditional urban fabric the supergrid is a part of the more general fabric, and local-scale centrality and city-scale through movement are able to overlap in the same space. In a lot of more recently made, more consciously designed, urban space, the supergrid is, to varying degrees, separated out from the more general fabric, eventually into the pattern more typical of peripheral areas: a specialised longer-scale mobility network and spatial enclaves of living, working and shopping areas in the interstices of this network. To distinguish between these two urban layout strategies, we propose, in the more typical central city situation – where local-scaled centrality and city-scaled through-movement are coincident in supergrid spaces – to call the layout ‘coincident’, while in the typical peripheral situation – where the local scale and larger scales are separated out from each other – we will call the layout ‘non-coincident’.

The real difference between these two layout strategies and the experiential conditions they generate, can be summed up by the idea of ‘explorable city space’. This is an idea which goes further than simply talking about city space being agreeable, or easy to wander around in; to an understanding of urban order which incorporates the idea of the body-centred, actively perceiving mobile subject. While the coincidence of the two scale movement processes in coincident fabrics generates a lot of very particular ‘movement products’ like shops and other facilities, supported by the exact conditions produced, and imparting distinctiveness and readability – as has been outlined before (Read, 2001) – we believe that the impact of this particular spatial structure on the experience of the city does not stop there. What is at issue here is the foundation of the sense of place in all its multiscale and layeredness, which includes as well a practical, visceral understanding of where one is in the world in relation to the local, the city and perhaps further.

So this is not simply a matter of being surrounded by well-designed or interesting surfaces at the local scale and being able to point one’s position out on a map at the scale of the whole city. Rather it is about being able to understand the place one occupies in relation to the networks which constitute the various levels of region which form the counterpoint of the place concerned. The place of the

neighbourhood, or in particular the place of the high-street – which serves to represent the neighbourhood, both by constituting its centre at the local scale and by serving as its ‘shopfront’ to the rest of the city at the larger – is understood in relation to the region of the local neighbourhood itself, and in relation to a higher-scaled region of similar but distinctive places – moments of local intensity – distributed throughout the network of the supergrid. Both of these networks are open and ‘explorable’; one can literally and bodily move in easily indicated directions within a network which opens to the neighbourhood at the one scale, or to the city at the other. Alternatively, one can perform this ‘movement’ mentally, and in the reverse direction, gathering closer and more distant places towards oneself, simultaneously at different scale levels, gaining a practical sense of the particularity and meaning of one’s place by virtue of its relations to other places on the networks of differently scaled regions. It is worth mentioning that this process of ‘gathering’ is performed as much by others as by oneself, as whole populations of people drift and flow through the whole fabric of the city, bodily connecting places with other places.

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Urban places then, in the case of Amsterdam, are not just specified by the locations within a network of places that define their regions, they are themselves integral parts of the networks. And they are marked by thickenings of intensity of activity and ‘movement products’, as well as of what one might call experiential depth or resonance, that are set up and supported precisely by the overlap between differently scaled explorable networks. The condition of place is dependent then, as much on the networks themselves as it is on the points which the networks connect. The “peregrinations between the places connected”, mentally and physically traversible, become as vital a part of the definition of urban place as do the particular locations.

The ‘placelessness’, so talked about, of the urban fabric on the periphery, is precisely due to the fact that while it contains locations which can be prettied up to various extents, it does not contain points on networks which are physically and mentally inhabitable in the same way. The higher scale mobility networks of the periphery offer accessibility without explorability. In particular they typically scale down to the local not on the network itself, where place thickness and particularity can be won from an overlap with another scaled region, but through passing through variously engineered scale thresholds, from the off-ramp of the highway, to the turnoff to the regional road, to the turnoff to the office or commercial estate, to the turnoff into the car-park, to the car-park itself and the pathway to the entrance of the office or shopping building.

Casey refers to the 'porosity' of place; "a place could not gather bodies in the diverse spatiotemporal ways it does without the permeability of its own limits. ... It is intrinsic to perceptual fields to possess bleeding boundaries; the lack of such boundaries converts these fields to delimited and closed-off sites such as prison cells or jury boxes." (Casey: 42-43) He proposes that places have horizons rather than boundaries; they have edge conditions which are slippery and fuzzy and tied to the mobile perceiving centre. Horizons may contract and expand, but they cannot be strictly delimited without fracturing the fundamental origination of place in its relationship with its region(s).

The case of Jakarta

The ideas reflected above emerge out of a research on the spatial structure of the city of Amsterdam. It is clear that a lot of what is said may therefore be peculiar to Amsterdam and its particular spatial and historical circumstances. Amsterdam has grown historically as a highly compact urban unit, protected for much of that history by a ring of walls against a dangerous exterior world. During the last half of the twentieth century the planning concept of the 'Randstad' maintained this compact central urban surface and worked against the sprawl of the urban tissue into the periphery which has been a feature of other European cities under conditions of massively increased mobility. Regional and metropolitan scale mobility was dealt with as an extra planning layer, without substantively changing the fundamental patterns of the separate cities themselves. Increases in mobility needs were dealt by the straight-forward addition of large scale infrastructural connection between old, well-known compact urban nodes which were understood to maintain their relative autonomy as functional units.

While European cities in general have seen, over the last hundred years or so, a tendency to decentralise, and for whole population groups to tend to leave the centres for the new towns and the suburbs, in the third world the tendency has been for rural populations to urbanise and for cities to become massively larger, with edges comprising huge rings of informal settlement of those struggling to participate in urban formal and informal economies. Jakarta has grown without a lot of planning intervention and has attained a spread of roughly 70 kilometres of mass of varying density, where Amsterdam is 15 kilometres across with a radiating lobe structure. Budiarto has looked at the social-spatial structure of Jakarta using the 'Amsterdam model' just outlined as his point of departure. He finds interesting similarities, as well as deviations from this model which can be related back to the different histories and growth patterns of these two very different cities.

In the first place, while at the scale of the whole city a very clear supergrid appears, marked by the positions of almost all the major public and large-scale commercial functions, this supergrid contains only a very particular part of the total life of the city. While there can be no question that the bulk of the formal social-political and economic power is represented here (Figure 1), many of the street edges are empty of the characteristic buzz of urban exchange and interaction. The exception seems to be the most central supergrid spaces at the historic heart of the city. In the huge sprawl of the city, coherence and legibility of the whole is maintained through this space of primary accessibility becomes appropriated by the sectors of highest, and highest-scaled, power, those of the large-scale formal economy and institutions with their links less to scales of immediate proximity than to scales of the city as a whole and to those beyond the city itself. The relative lack of interaction with the local scale of the immediate vicinity is reflected in a decreasing level of physical connection with the surrounding fabric and a gradual erosion of the degree of 'coincidence'. The street edge is lined with "fenced yards, parking lots and consolidated plots of land of dimension which make the grid rather inhuman" (Figure 2), and the place conditions produced here tend to be unsympathetic to any local appropriation which might produce street-edge vitality.

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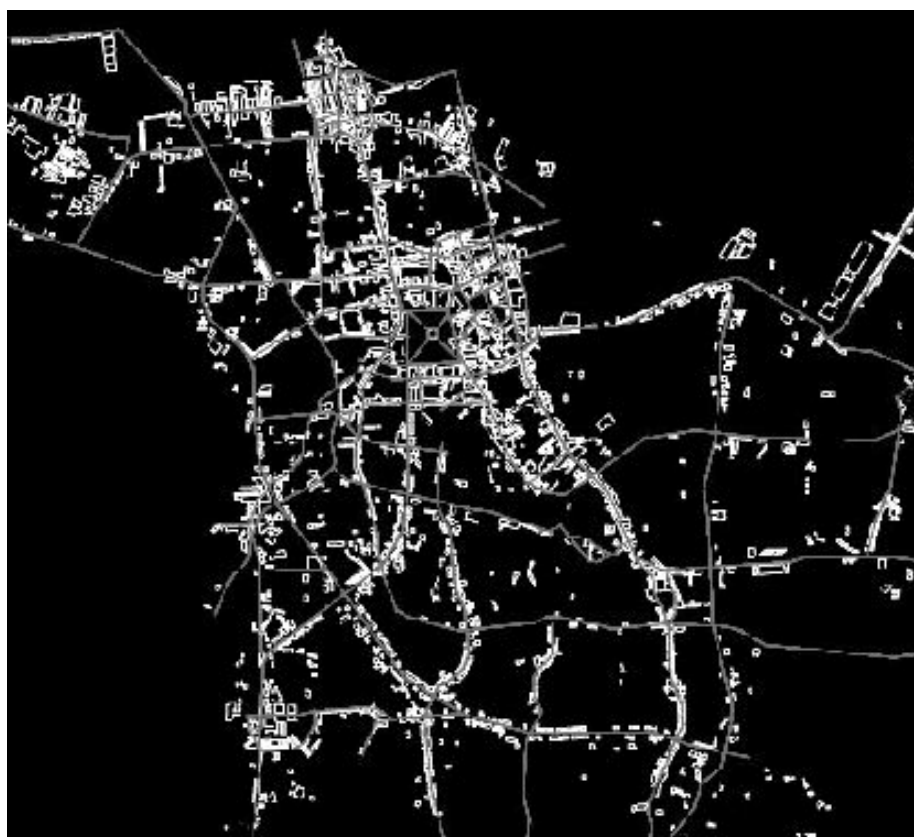


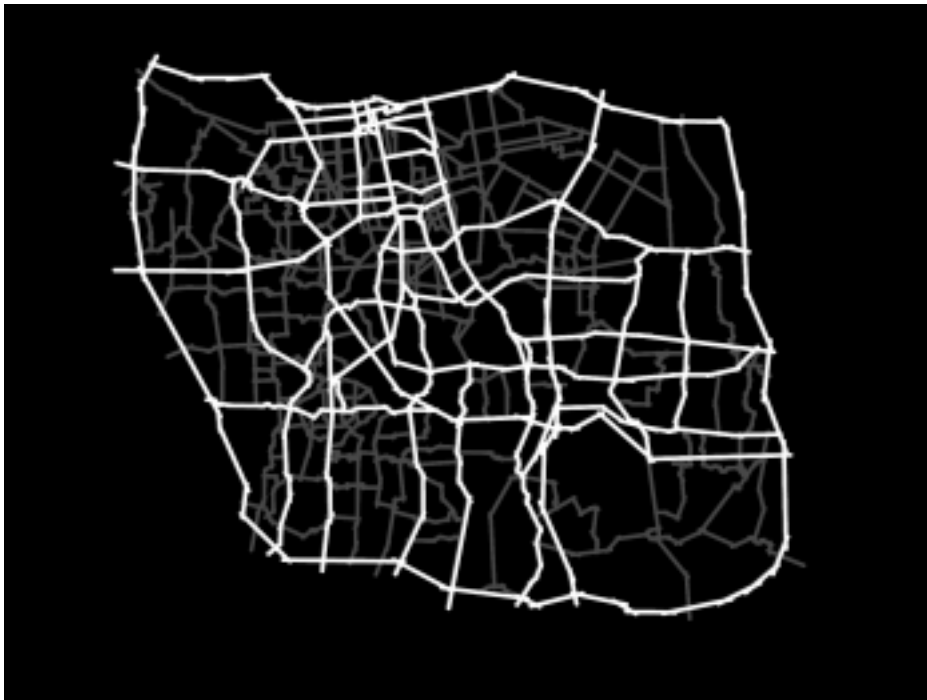
Figure 1: Public and large formal commercial functions – the first-level supergrid

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Figure 2: The first-level supergrid in the fabric

Meanwhile, the bulk of less formal economic activity and social interface, and there is an enormous amount of it, appears to be taking place in streets behind this 'first front'. In fact there is another level of supergrid operating in the interstices of the first level of supergrid, at a scale which is much closer to that of the typical supergrid pattern found in Amsterdam (Figure 3). It is here that Budiarto finds the spaces supporting the everyday social and economic lives of the majority of the city's inhabitants. These spaces connect, as he shows, local with wider city scales in ways which produce particular conditions which are supportive of particular local economies. They produce places also, related to regions at local and wider city scales, which reflect the spatial strategies of their populations. Budiarto considers three different types of informal settlement or 'kampung', with their different characteristic economies, and shows how each produce different place conditions, based in different relations between the local and the wider scales.



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Figure 3: First-level supergrid (white) and second-level supergrid (grey)

In the case of the inner-city kampung, with its high involvement in the street-level informal economy, local area spaces maintain a close (low depth) relationship with adjacent second-level supergrid spaces, supporting a high degree of ‘coincidence’ in these spaces. The street is “crammed with stalls, peddlers, and street artisans tempting passers-by – either on foot or by vehicle – to stop” (Figure 4). Place quality is supported by the overlap of networks working at the local and at that of the above-local scales that has already been described as typical in Amsterdam. The peripheral kampung is of more recent origin, of lower density, and often occupied by people who have been forced to move due to inner-city kampung ‘upgrading’. Here informal trade is supplemented by some market gardening or crafts or light industry, making use of enclosed yards attached to inhabitants’ houses. The relation of the local area to the supergrid has not been maintained by a close interaction between the two and the level of ‘coincidence’ is much lower than in the case of the inner-city kampung. Inhabitants often travel to their place of usually informal employment, but, in an interesting parallel to ‘edge-city’ type developments in suburban areas the world over, a large proportion of informal trading takes place on a major crossing on the first level of supergrid close to the area – taking advantage of the large volume of traffic passing this point. The so-called woodland kampung is more rural again and still more removed from the higher-scale networks of the city. The kampung is made up of clusters of dwellings with market-gardening lots, connected together by pathways. Inhabitants survive either by selling their produce locally or travelling with it into the centre, or they travel to their again usually informal employment. ‘Coincidence’ of local with supergrid spaces is almost non-existent and the local area forms an enclave with respect to supergrid spaces.



Figure 4: Second-level supergrid activity

Conclusion

What is particularly interesting in the case of Jakarta is the way that the more regional or metropolitan scaled network of the first-level supergrid, disengages itself from the local scale in spite of the fact that such disengagement is not any part of an overt planning idea as it is in the Netherlands. The central area appears to be held together at the scale of the local by the second-level supergrid; at more or less the equivalent scale to the supergrid in Amsterdam. Street-edge economies typical of central urban space are supported in both cases by this interaction between the local and the scale just above. Further from the centre, the second-level supergrid becomes relatively weaker or is still in the process of emerging, and one sees a more or less spontaneous emergence of suburban type patterns – areas beginning to form into enclaves and even the emergence of ‘edge-city’ type functional patterns. The network on which one sees powerful place formation is the second-level supergrid and again that place formation is related to overlaps between local and (second-level) supergrid networks.

It is not the intention here to adjudicate on ‘good city space’. It is accepted that patterns of urban layout typical of the periphery both serve a perceived need, and are incorporated within social practices in relation either to the workings of the property market, or the livelihood tactics of certain groups. The contemporary urban surface is far from being even, and the demands of different groups far from uniform. The resurgence of the attraction of the centre – of that point of thickening of social and economic interactivity and exchange within a wider urban landscape – is something that has more recently been a factor, for different reasons, in the first world as well as the third. Our point here is that we need to incorporate far more

sophisticated notions of urban place in our urban thinking, in order to be able to construct and renew viable central urban fabrics. We propose that the understanding that will support a workable design practice of urban centres is one which takes on the centre as a choreography rather than as a composition, one which acknowledges the fundamental relationship between central urban places and their layered, nested regions, and one which confronts directly the issues of social diversity and overlap in public space and the relation of this to the issue of urban networks and scales. In particular, what is required we believe is an understanding of the mechanics of 'coincident' urban fabrics and an understanding of 'explorable urban space'.

The case of Jakarta in particular shows up the way congestion and simple extension, need to be dealt with in the contemporary city within a framework of both centre and periphery. The issues of concentration and deconcentration are related to particular contextual conditions and need to be tackled at political and planning levels on a case by case basis. In any event, it seems certain that we face an urban future where both the non-explorable city more typical of the present-day periphery, and the explorable city we know from the examples of our historical centres, will play roles. These different cities have each their own logics as fields of sociality, economy and experience, and part of our role is to expand our understanding of these logics to the end of supporting particular human need and initiative within rich, various and enabling urban environments.

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