Youth Gangs and Streets in Surabaya, East Java: Growth, Movement and Places in the Context of Urban Transformations

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Abstract

The article investigates the nature of youth street gangs in the poor inner-city neighborhood of *kampung* Malang, located in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. Specifically, it explores the relationship of youth street gangs with urban places and their transition to organized crime in the context of migration to South Bali. It focuses on notions of social cohesion, discipline and invulnerability while placing an emphasis on work and the quest for work against a background of uncertainty and precariousness. It introduces movement as a salient feature of life in the city and in the life of young gang members and it looks at how circuits of human mobility are configured for a particular group of people, to particular ends in a particular place.

Key words: anthropology, youth gangs, growth, mobility, work, Surabaya, South Bali

Introduction[1]

Recent scholarship on male youth street gangs in urban Indonesia has insisted on the bounded temporality of these group formations (see for instance Tadié 2006; Guinness 2009; Nilan 2010). According to these studies, youth street gangs have a very limited life cycle. During school years, young teenage boys look for social recognition through temporary networks of friends and some resort to violent behavior; however, they usually leave these groups as more legitimate opportunities are offered to them in early adulthood and do not proceed into adult gangs (Nilan 2010). While this

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might be the case for middle-class youth, research among teenagers and adolescents from lower-income backgrounds in Surabaya demonstrates that youth gangs do not die with the completion (or failed completion) of school and some youths continue to be involved with gang activities well into adulthood, either in their own city or abroad.

Furthermore, while studies on male youth street gangs in Indonesia provide rich ethnographic detail about collective violence among disenfranchised youth (Nilan 2010, 2011), or the "gang", they direct very little attention towards the quality of the physical and symbolic places these youth gangs populate, protect and relate to, the streets. Youth street gangs in Surabaya, however, exhibit movement and transition, much like the urban places they inhabit, imagine, and travel.

This article investigates the nature of youth street gangs in Surabaya, their transition to organized crime, and their relationship with urban places. It discusses personal growth, social integration and movement, with a focus on how particular channels facilitate, organize and constrain movement and how circuits of human mobility are configured for a particular group of people, to particular ends in a particular place (Tsing 2000; Freeman 2001; Lindquist 2009). This article is based on ethnographic research conducted between 2008 and 2010 among male youth street gangs in Surabaya and South Bali.

Surabaya and *kampung* Malang: urban transformations and contemporary youth street gangs

Surabaya is Indonesia's second largest city, the capital of the province of East Java and the home of the country's navy. It is located in the mouth of the Mas River and along the edge of the Madura Strait. It is a gigantic port strewn with cranes, construction sites, corporate buildings, wide roads and shopping malls. For local residents Surabaya is closely linked to the birth of the Indonesian nation, as it is in Surabaya that the battle for independence began and peaked in 1945. To them, it is the city of heroes, and statues commemorating independence are scattered all over the city.

Between 1998 and 2008, Surabaya witnessed a decade of profound urban transformations as the municipal government strove to achieve order and legibility to complement the needs of the emergent middle class. The overall goal was to facilitate the circulation of persons, vehicles, and goods and to qualify Surabaya as a city of transport and consumption. Among the most prominent transformations was the restructuring of road transportation through the unclogging of existing roads (see Peters 2010). This process involved clearing the informal economy from the streets and the progressive elimination of any sign of disorder from the public space. As a consequence, some of the poor were relegated to the confined alleys of the neighborhoods

of the inner-city. By mid-2008, according to local newspaper reports (as quoted for instance in Peters 2009, 2010), Surabaya's civil policing arm achieved a systematic removal of makeshift food stalls (*warung*), mobile vendors, market places and pedicab (*becak*) drivers from the city streets in order to abate congestion and increase the flow of traffic. As a result, the sites of long-standing and well-established forms of street-side male socialization and aggregation (*berkumpul*), which served as the medium for the informal exchange of goods, work and job opportunities among underemployed men, quickly began to disappear.

The setting of my research is one of these inner-city neighborhoods, *kampung* Malang.[2] *Kampung* Malang is located south along the Mas river and spans an area of no more than one square kilometer. It is actually a cluster of about one hundred neighborhoods, each comprising about one hundred officially registered residents, for an approximate total of ten thousand inhabitants. *Kampung* Malang sits across from the once heavily industrialized industrial estate that now forms part of a congested central service district. An enormous one way road, a bridge, the Kali Mas river, and then abandoned factories, as well as new hotels, malls and apartment complexes that have surfaced since the early 1980s all converge around an intersection that borders the *kampung*. From the naked eye, the landscape of the area surrounding *kampung* Malang is characterized by an excessive number of buildings under construction, empty lots and half-finished buildings—so many in fact that many *kampung* residents describe the city as "not yet ready" (*belum siap*), as a site of perennial construction work. The city is unfinished, not yet developed, and the construction sites are a constant reminder of that.

In Surabaya, *kampung* Malang is widely regarded as a slum neighborhood, a *lorong*. The term *lorong* literally means narrow corridor. However it is also used to refer to the slum areas in many big cities in Indonesia (see, for instance, Nasir 2006; Nasir and Rosenthal 2009a, 2009b). In the *lorong*, clusters of alleyways, commonly known as *gang*, link the slum area to more affluent parts of the city.

The main alleys of *kampung* Malang were also affected by the unclogging drive that was clearing traders from the street-side. Most men in the neighborhood work (or used to work) as small-scale traders, street vendors, painters, scrap pickers, porters, and *becak* drivers; they were also considerably involved in underground or illegitimate activities, such as selling local spirits on the black market, organizing lottery games, shoplifting and thiev-

2 Under numerous pseudonyms, *kampung* Malang has been the subject of scholarly work in the field of sociology and urban development; particularly, the seminal study of Robbie Peters provides rich information about the political, economic and urban changes that have occurred in the area in the past twenty years. Throughout the article I make constant reference to this body of work (see Peters 2009, 2010, 2013).

ing. Job opportunities relied heavily on informal networks and usually became available by word of mouth, when men gathered at food stalls. When the municipal authorities sought to convert the *kampung* main alley into a thoroughfare linking two main roads at separate ends of *kampung*, they extirpated any traditional communal use of the space (see Peters 2009, 2010). Police operations cleared the alley from food stalls, vendors, markets, pigeon racing, and gambling activities with such dramatic effects on the lives of the members of *kampung* Malang that it is no exaggeration to talk of a progressive atomization of life (Rogers 2003).

Adolescents who were quickly approaching the world of the informal economy were particularly affected by these urban political, economic and social changes, as they began to struggle to find appropriate sites for aggregation and work. Unemployment and concerns about the future and the absence of recognized social status pushed a growing proportion of these youngsters to create a network of companions and to develop new forms of support, encouragement, pride and identity (Kristiansen 2003).

Youth street gangs are perhaps the most manifest form of male aggregation in contemporary *kampung* Malang. The driving force underneath these youth formations is above all social. These gangs are the social cement that contributes to the construction of a sense of shared identity. However, gang members also profit from reciprocal material help and make a living by exchanging goods, small money, and clothes; they also resort to petty crime and robbery. Furthermore, these youth gangs typically evolve into adult gangs, as young teenagers follow their older brothers, relatives and friends who come from the same neighborhood and move to South Bali, where they enter the world of professional gangsters.

Antecedents of youth gangs in Indonesia and models of violent masculinity

These youth street gangs express a powerful identity in the present and in the future. Such identity is based on notions of territory, honor, respect, fear and on norms of solidarity. This symbolism is rooted in past accounts of collective male violence and banditry, and makes reference to the deeds of local strongmen known as the *jago* (literally "cock" or "rooster"). In the following, I digress briefly on the salient features of *jago* masculinity.

According to Wilson (2010), *jago* masculinity is enacted out through the securing, control and defense of a specific territory, calculated acts of symbolic violence and the fortification of the body through the acquisition of supernatural powers (Wilson 2010, p. 2). In the world of *jago,* he argues, supremacy is determined by the extent of the monopolization over a street, a neighborhood, a market or a bus terminal, within which the *jago* controls the extraction of illegal fees on the pretext of offering protection from

criminals or other *jago*; furthermore, a *jago* normally entertains relationships and networks of patronage with the police, the military, and with government officials (Wilson 2010: 3). The *Jago* thrives on the excitement to exercise domain over a territory and the will to be recognized by the community as a leader who rules by the exercise of threats, force and violence. Moreover, the *jago* is believed to possess an array of magical and supernatural abilities: among these, physical invulnerability and invisibility are achieved through tutelage and ascetic trials under the direction of a master (Wilson 2010, p. 5).

Wilson argues that with the strengthening of the New Order, the *jago* was first criminalized, then progressively institutionalized within state-created bodies. As notions of honor and territoriality through the use of force became a threat to the state's monopolization over violence, the *jago* were contained and rationally reconstituted as obedient auxiliaries of state power (Wilson 2010, p. 12-15). In the 1980s, for instance, the term *preman* indicated young males in groups engaged in criminal activities: these groups were characterized by their tight solidarity and obedience to a chain of command, and were central to the system of violence and corruption under the Soeharto regime (Barker 2001, Kristiansen 2003, p. 111). State officials controlled and protected street-level *preman* through a system known as *bekking* ("backing"), which gave *preman* state protection while also forcing them to pay their own dues to government representatives (Kristiansen 2003, p. 115; Ryter 2005).

The critical economic and social situation brought about by the Asian crisis of 1997–1998 forced the long-time ruler of Indonesia to resign. With the downfall of Soeharto and the collapse of the New Order, Van Klinken (2007) identifies the shift from a top-down state-driven pattern of violence to a pattern of lateral and diversified struggles between different groups, including small local gangs. In other words, with the onset of decentralization and liberalization of Indonesian politics, a diffuse sense of frustration permeated civil life, where the state was perceived as weak, no longer able to perform its protective function and at the mercy of political elites and their interests, and numerous alternate groups began to proliferate. Violence became "democratic", in the sense that it came to be used as a tool to create new social bonds, foster existing social relationships, and to lay claims about social identities. At a phenomenological level, violence defined the everyday experiences of individuals and groups and became the visible aspect of numerous social interactions.

Wilson has created a rubrick for the notion of *jago* masculinity under the category of "protest masculinity" (Wilson 2010)—a form of masculine identity that emerges in poor contexts or among men who feel marginalized and socially excluded in order to protest against the state's failure to improve social conditions and in order to assert social autonomy and some type of territorial sovereignty. According to Wilson, this has been particularly the

case with ethnic and religious conflicts. Nilan (2010, among others), has expanded the use of the category of "protest masculinity" in the Indonesian context to point to the experiences of schoolboys at a liminal stage of their lives, one that is filled with a sentiment of uncertainty about the future and the desire to challenge (or to at least question) the values of patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity. In line with this analysis, young schoolboys are a part of the youth subcultures phenomenon, and their actions are informed by a will to voice dissatisfaction towards the present before progressing into adult life. Here the focus is on the opposition between a (collective) self and society in general, and on the violent (yet playful) rituals that youths perform in the school cafeterias to make a name for themselves.

Among youth street gangs in *kampung* Malang, *jago* masculinity provided young men with a model to think about themselves in a context of perceived disconnection and vulnerability. These youths certainly feel excluded, but mostly want to connect with a new landscape of opportunities, capital, goods, and ideas. They insist on notions of territory, discipline, security, and honor and work strenuously to defend their social identity against a backdrop of social and urban changes. However, to interpret their activities and social practices as a mere form of "protest", opposition or resistance would be too simplistic. Rather, I suggest reading their words and actions in a more nuanced sense, as a quest for social acceptance, reconnection and integration. In short, these youths make specific use of the spaces and the resources that are available to them to find a way (metaphorically and literally) to be a part of society and not to subvert it altogether. In doing so, they also create meaningful places.

Territory and work opportunities

In present day *kampung* Malang there are about a dozen youth street gangs (*geng*) that populate the area. They consist of youths aged 13 to 17. These gangs do not closely match the definition of gang as provided by gang studies (see, for instance Rogers 2003; Hagedorn 2005; Klein 2005; for Indonesia, see Nasir and Rosenthal 2009; Nilan 2011). For instance, they are not yet stable criminal organizations. Rather, they tend to be fluid and loosely structured associations of peers: gang members, especially at a younger age often swing from one gang to another following disputes and arguments, while many simply want to continue to hang out with their close friends who decide to seek membership in another (and in some cases rival) group. As gang members become more involved with gang activities, however, they tend to pledge their exclusive loyalty to one gang only.

Many youth gangs originate in school. School is the place where young teenagers start to form friendships and begin to think about their future. However, because these youths usually leave school at an early age to pur-

sue work in the informal economy, most youth gangs self-assemble in the neighborhood. The high level of underemployment provides large amounts of time for youths to interact in the neighborhood. Many call these activities *nongkrong*, "hanging around" or "doing nothing". The actual practice of "doing nothing" includes busy activities such as talking, joking, drinking, singing, recounting details from previous events, playing video games, fiddling with mobile phones, chatting via social networks and exchanging goods (clothes, cigarettes, alcohol), but also passing around and trading information about small job opportunities. In the neighborhood, youths come together in gangs to "make a living" or to "look for money" (*cari uang*), as they maintain (see also Brown 2009). The underlying idea is that a person leaves the home in the morning to try to earn enough to support himself, possibly with the help of others. In a broad sense, in fact, *cari uang* refers not only to the strict acquisition of small amounts of money, but also food, cigarettes, drinks, and things of everyday usage (as corroborated by Brown 2009, p. 152).

A youth usually joins a gang through initiation. Initiation involves fighting between initiates and older gang members and usually lasts for a short amount of time. The initiate must show courage and toughness and also pay a small membership fee, a token of commitment, a tangible representation of obligation and engagement. In some ways, one might argue, gang membership is a currency in the neighborhood. Young initiates pay a certain amount of money to join a gang, and receive social recognition, prestige and help from other gang members in exchange. In doing so, they generate material and social capital and are therefore highly sought after by gang leaders who want to increase their influence over a specific territory.

A territory is what defines a gang at its best, according to what gang members say. Indeed, each gang controls its own territory in the neighborhood, what is usually known as the gang's turf (*lahan*): a whole alley (although this is a fairly rare occurrence), a segment of an alley, a bus stop, a small parking area, the back area of a building (in many cases gangs hang out in the back of the shopping malls, as the alleyways that depart from the exit of these complexes lead back into the neighborhood). Within their territory, youth gangs attempt to regulate the flow of wealth, goods and work opportunities. Ideally, all business opportunities should fall under their supervision: gangs extract fees from traders and offer protection from thieves and intruders in return; they collect information about prospective short-term or long-term work opportunities in the formal and informal market; they also monitor the sale of illegal substances and stolen goods. Gangs also manage to raise money by imposing a payment on those who cross their territory—city dwellers who enter the neighborhood to look for inexpensive labor or migrants from the surrounding rural areas who travel from one place to another looking for accommodation and a job.

Ideally, to exercise influence over a large territory is a synonym with the possibility to generate more work opportunities and more income. Particularly, there are territories that are considered to be more appealing than others because they border on wealthy city areas, such as the rear entrances of shopping malls and the alleys behind some of the new buildings in the financial districts. For instance, some gang members who control the parking lots of the shopping malls have better access to the occasional job as parking attendant (whether legal or illegal), garbage collector, or handyman. Other gang members work to satisfy the needs of some of the middle-class youth by selling drugs and stolen items. Some others again assault and rob these middle-class adolescents and steal money and telephones that they will eventually sell off on the black market. In other cases, gang members also make small profits by selling newspapers to businessmen as they leave their offices during rush hour. It is also common for gang members to try to make a living by working as street food vendors. I will return to this point later in the article.

What is interesting about the idea of territory among youth gangs in *kampung* Malang is the fact that while the boundaries of such territory might be well set and reiterated over time, they can also change at any given moment. This aspect of alteration and flexibility has been rarely addressed by gang studies, which tend to situate gangs neatly in one fixed territory. However, because gang members often defect to other gangs, a gang's territory might expand, contract or even disappear in the blink of an eye. For instance, when gangs lose a consistent amount of members over a short period of time, they might choose to cease their activities and abandon a territory altogether. Conversely, when gangs experience an exuberance of gang members, they might decide to venture out in the neighborhood and increase their authority over adjacent areas. There are also cases of gangs that merge together to establish their influence over larger parts of the neighborhood. Furthermore, many youth gangs claim they control more than one territory within the same neighborhood; these areas might be distant from one another, or even situated at the opposite ends of the neighborhood itself. As one gang member pointed out, "gangs are like dots (*titik*) on a map, some are small dots, some are bigger dots, but their size on the map can change, just as their fortune changes".

Discipline and invulnerability

There are two notions that are associated with gang membership. The first is the notion of discipline (*disiplin*), which refers to the existence of a code of apprenticeship and behavior among gang members; the second is the notion of physical invulnerability (*ilmu kebal*). To be a gang member means to embrace a set of norms of conduct and to acquire specific corporeal abilities.

These two elements are connected to one another.

The idea of discipline is inculcated in new members as soon as they become part of the group and presupposes that an initiate must understand the place he occupies within the gang. Not all members are equal, despite a diffused sense of solidarity and the sentiment that relations among members should be harmonic. However, seniority is not the logic that sustains hierarchies among gang members. There are two factors that are taken into account when a new member is accepted and that contribute to identify his place and rank within the gang: the amount of money he was able to pay to join the gang (the higher the sum, the more prestige he is given as he enters the group), and his exposure to the gang prior to his direct involvement (for instance, if he has siblings or close friends who are already a part of the gang). Hierarchies and statuses, moreover, are reworked and adjusted on a daily basis, and gang members see their influence oscillate as they compete with one another to show slickness in the attempt to make a living (to be *cerdik*, clever, ingenious). Indeed, they place strong emphasis on the aptitude to generate money, income and to gain possession of stolen goods. Particularly, gang members who become successful at obtaining a permanent job in the city are highly valued by the rest of gang as they, in turn, might be in the position to have first-hand information about small jobs and generate further work opportunities. This is the case of youths who find a relatively stable job at one of the stores or food chains at the shopping mall, or who are employed to do occasional repairs and maintenance work at one of the hotels in the city.

On a more intimate level, the idea of discipline presupposes that a novitiate must fulfill a series of duties and obligations and comply with the day-to-day exigencies of the gang, whatever these may be. There is one responsibility and task in particular that is worth mentioning, and it is the duty to "clean the house". In *kampung* Malang, youth gangs usually occupy small barracks, shacks, and abandoned homes. These squat settlements are scattered all over the neighborhood and symbolize the possession of a specific territory. In fact, they are considered as the "headquarters" of the gang and are usually the place where gang members aggregate to hang out during the day. What is striking about these informal and precarious settlements is that they are kept as neat and tidy as possible by their inhabitants. The walls are plastered with pictures of relatives and friends who have lived in the same area, as well as with newspaper articles about police raids and local thugs; bottles, drinks, glasses and snacks are arranged on the small tables which are made out of cardboard boxes; there is usually also an old mattress or a couch of some sort to accommodate gang members when they meet. New gang members are usually in charge of keeping the place cozy and comfortable: they wash the dishes, sweep the floor, and decorate the room with second-hand materials. While initiates take care of the gang's home, older gang

members usually assemble to play chess and gamble. During these activities, new members act as maids (they are ironically referred to as the *pembantu*, "the housemaids") and cook and serve meals to other gang members.

New gang members rarely leave their squat unsupervised, as they first have to become familiar with the perimeter of the gang's territory. For this reason, they are chaperoned around the area by older gang members who take them for a jog or for a motorbike ride to show them the posts and landmarks that delimit their turf and to point out the spots where the gang operates. New gang members are usually required to memorize and be able to name all these spots that make up their gang's territory.

Discipline is also manifest in the way a gang member carries himself and walks in a neighborhood alley. In fact, gang members are required to walk in line (*jalan di garis*) and march through the neighborhood alleyways like miniature soldiers, as they often refer to themselves. The idea of walking in straight lines[3] along the narrow stretched out spaces of the neighborhood alleyways serves several purposes, some practical, some symbolic. First, by positioning themselves in line, gang members are able to move easily through tight, otherwise impracticable, interstices; second, by stomping their feet on the ground they tread noisily, announce their presence, and are recognized by the community at large. Also, by walking in line, gang members reiterate the gang's internal hierarchy, as gang leaders usually march in front of the line: in many cases gang members are able to recite out-loud the full sequence of names that make up an entire line, and this is all the more impressive as positions, just like statuses, change frequently. To know the names of gang members reflects on the self-perception of single gang members and their sense of identity: as many say, "in a line you always know who you are". Moreover, by proceeding in line, gang members fulfill the need to never backtrack (*mundur*), as they maintain: in a line, somebody is always watching somebody else's back.

Such notions of discipline have a lot to do with order, posture, gait, reciprocal help and support and it is what constitutes a person's strength and invulnerability. The idea of invulnerability here differs in part from the supernatural powers historically associated with bandits and strongmen. While gang members in *kampung* Malang also believe that the body should be impenetrable from attacks and disruption, they make no reference to the fact that such ability should be achieved through ascetic trials under the direction of a guru (Wilson 2010), or through a separation between the self and society. Rather, invulnerability is a tangible collective construction, one that is learned, reiterated and preserved with the help of all senior gang members, and other gang members in general. In short, invulnerability is achieved through integration

3 A similar idea is evoked by street children and homeless youths interviewed by Brown (2009) to describe movement through thin alleys in Surabaya.

into a group and through the physical positioning of a person into a line.

Last, there is an inherent element of ambiguity that seems to characterize the notion of invulnerability as intended here by these youths. As implied by numerous gang members, because a gang's configuration might change a great deal over a short period of time, and gang members might jump in and out from one gang to another, it is not always easy to trust an initiate's commitment to the group. While walking in line, then, many are torn between the will to trust the person who walks behind them and the diffidence towards his true intentions, between the confidence that "somebody always has your back", unconditionally, and the doubt that that same somebody "might stab you in the back" all of a sudden, as some have recounted.

A safe place

Overall, we have seen how youth street gangs in *kampung* Malang provide a means to overcome exclusion, and to seek excitement, work and a sense of identity. They are social lubricants that satisfy the need for socialization and social mobility: gang members are bound together (some more permanently than others) and support each other, materially and emotionally. They share a set of values and norms of behavior that are based on discipline and order. As a result, there is a general perception among gang members that "within a gang, a person is safe (*aman,* or *selamat*)", that they will be free from fear, danger, and will benefit from the help and protection of others.

Youths feel safe because their neighborhood is also safe, peaceful (also *aman*), as they maintain. There is a quality of order and restraint that differentiates the neighborhood territory as a whole from the city at large in the eyes of these young men. In the neighborhood there are clear-cut physical barriers and most neighborhood thresholds are marked by gates and guards (Brown 2009). There is a known local authority, the *kampung* leader, a figure that emphasizes a sense of autonomy and responsibility. The alleyways that wend rhizome-like designate a world that, in the midst of the city, remains not quite urban: once a person enters the neighborhood alleyways, it is understood that they leave the public city and, if they are not a local resident, may only proceed at the dispensation of the local community; while in theory all streets, including the neighborhood alleyways, are legally public, in practice outsiders do not ordinarily claim any generalized public right to enter such domains, and incidents of mugging, beating, or worse are very common as a result of trespassing (Brown 2009, p. 124-125; see also Frederick 1989; Barker 1999; Dick 2002).

Youth gangs themselves also contribute to create a safe and secure environment and go out of their way to protect local neighborhood inhabitants from outside intruders, robbers and criminals. In fact, while competing with each other to preserve their turf's integrity and legitimacy, these youth gangs

do not engage in open or violent confrontations and do not battle with rival gangs inside the neighborhood. They do not prey on local inhabitants and do not victimize the local population. In other words, there is no display of violence in the neighborhood, at least not one that would compromise the very existence of the neighborhood life. Rather, youth gangs attempt to collaborate to ensure the safety and prosperity of the local community. They are motivated by a certain love (*cinta*) and respect (*hormat*) for their neighborhood and vow to care about its security and good fortune.

In recent years, for instance, youth gangs in *kampung* Malang have fought vigorously to prevent the city municipality from clearing the neighborhood alleys of all traditional forms of trading and from tearing down the traditional markets. As the police were busy mapping the local city residents through documentation and validation, and continued to dislodge and relocate people and business activities to create a sort of spatial legibility that would improve circulation and revenues, many youths began to become actively involved in the defense of the informal alley-based social networks, notably by serving as lookouts for unannounced police incursions and, more frequently, by corrupting public officers. The corruption of policemen and municipal employees through payments and commission fees (*komisi*) to avoid dislodging operations has somehow become endemic in the area, and it is the symptom of a generalized sentiment of distrust towards political authorities and the attempt to (re)establish a form of collective sovereignty over a determined territory (see also Baker 2009; Peters 2009).

For the above reasons youth gangs are not perceived as a threat by the neighborhood residents. This idea is by no means implausible in a context of economic and social fragmentation. As noted by Dennis Rogers in his seminal works on Nicaraguan youth gangs (see, for instance, Rogers 2005, 2006a, 2006b), there is a substantial difference between the perception of the gang phenomenon as a whole and the value attributed to the local manifestation of a gang by a local community (Rogers 2005, p. 12). While the former is overtly and unequivocally criticized, the latter is somehow accepted, as it is seen as the principal source of security in the neighborhood. According to Rogers, youth gangs and their "violent care" are a medium through which a localized form of sustained social order is established, laying down practical and symbolic rules and norms that go beyond the gang and affect the wider neighborhood community (Rogers 2005, p. 12).

Rain, mud, and battles

By contrast, there is a quality of unruliness and excess that is associated with the city and with city life. In particular, the inhabitants of *kampung* Malang describe the city streets as chaotic, broken, and disorderly, and the social relations that take place in the city space as too libertine (*bebas*). The term *be-*

bas indicates confusion, muddle, while also denoting a certain disregard for morality, the opposite of discipline. *Bebas*, for instance, is the word one uses to describe the fragmentation of social relations, and also the term one uses to talk about prostitutes, or the feeling people get from drugs. Parents usually worry that if their children spend too much time in the city they might want to be free (*mau bebas*), enjoy life, and will ultimately fail to retain the importance of social boundaries. Youths (especially when involved with violence) also seem preoccupied that their behavior might not foster healthy social relationships or risk compromising the stability of social bonds. For this reason, because *kampung* Malang is, and must remain, intrinsically as safe as possible, gangs confront each other outside the neighborhood, out in the city, where disarray already seems to prevail. In short, battles and gang warfare might cause disorder, and disorder calls for a scenario of its own.

On rainy days gang members storm out of the neighborhood alleys and fight against those who have offended their honor. These battles involve gangs from the same neighborhood who compete to expand or protect the boundaries of their turfs, and also gangs from different neighborhoods who want to take possession of a particular area that lies at the intersection of two or more neighborhoods. Gang warfare is semi-ritualized, and follows set patterns. For instance, timing is crucial: heavy rain (*hujan lebat*) is the code for big battles, my informants maintain, as these fights must take place when the rain is pouring so heavily that the police are not on strict patrol. As they sense an upcoming thunder storm, gang members await for their opponents in a dirt path alongside a city street. They want to be ahead of the game and be the first to encircle (*mengepung*) their enemies to launch an attack. The battle initially involves the use of sticks, stones, and bare hands. As it escalates, however, gang members also use broken bottles and knives, but never guns. There is a wild thrill of excitement among gang members as these combats progress. To an external observer, however, these battles look quite messy: because it rains so heavily, these youths are usually soaking wet, covered in mud, and after a half hour or so one can hardly tell them apart. Many in the city speak of one "big mass of kids" having a good time, for instance. This feeling of not being able to distinguish who is who on the battlefield is also conveyed by gang members who sometimes do not notice they are beating up a member of their own gang, as several episodes that have occurred demonstrate. Oftentimes, in the heat (and, one might say, the dirt) of the moment, gang members are unrecognizable; other times, however, initiates are not yet familiar with the faces of their companions and might mistake a friend for an enemy, or vice versa, especially in the case of youths who swing easily from one gang to another.

Another common form of competition among youth gangs includes illegal bike racing. This activity usually takes place at night in the empty areas of the mall parking lots and involves the use of borrowed or stolen

motorbikes. Illegal bike racing is structured around a system of bets and circulation of money and stolen goods, and the winner (or winners) is usually rewarded with an actual prize, besides the social validation of his honor and prestige. These races are not only excuses to engage in open rivalry, but also moments of socialization, when gang members from opposing sides gather and get to know each other. For instance, it is quite common after a bike race to go to a food stall and eat with the members of other gangs, discuss the race, forge and shift alliances and occasionally try to convince an adversary to "defect", leave his own group and join a rival gang. As many youths point out, during a meal people make new friends, and after a meal many gangs change their configuration. From this point of view, bike racing has a lot in common with the traditional activity of pigeon racing (see, among others, Peters 2010), where men used to (and some still do) aggregate around the neighborhood main alleys and gamble on the fastest pigeon to return to its cage.

Rio and the gang of the repair shop

Rio is very passionate about motorbikes and likes to hang out by the motorbike repair shop in one of the back alleys that borders the big traffic intersection.

Rio is 18 years old (14 at the time of this research), and was born and raised in *kampung* Malang. He is the youngest of three children, all boys. His father has worked for over two decades as a food vendor at one of the local traditional markets (*pasar*), but eventually had to give up his tiny business when the city authorities tore down the market and began to build a mall. According to the new municipal regulations, all traders had to be registered, buy a license and sign a yearly contract, which in practice exposed them to the ever-present possibility of non-extension or replacement with others capable of paying the inflated rents and service costs for the space in the new malls. Rio's father refused to accede to these new city regulations and opted to accept a job as a part-time cook at a *warung* inside the *kampung*. Rio's mother works occasionally as a seamstress when not helping out a friend of hers at one of the phone card kiosks along a secondary alley.

At the age of 14, Rio was planning to leave school and look for a job as a mechanic, or at least he said he wanted to start working at a body shop in some fashion, learn the tricks of the trade, and possibly make some extra money repairing the occasional motorbike that breaks down along the road (which is actually a rather frequent possibility in Surabaya). When talking about leaving school, Rio never mentioned dissatisfaction with the type of education provided by his institute, and did not complain about his friends and school mates. Strictly speaking, Rio liked going to school very much, as did many of the young adolescents I talked to in Surabaya. However, while still in school,

Rio felt excluded (or at least disconnected) from the flow of opportunities that characterized life in the city. Obviously, just by hanging out with his friends in the back of the malls, Rio had been exposed to the expensive goods and the lavish lifestyle of the new middle-class youth. However, the decision to leave school was not motivated by the desire to show off valuable clothes, cars and state of the art tablets and mobile phones. Rio did not say he wanted to drop out of school in order to "be a rich kid" (*anak kaya*) but to "become a rich man" (*orang kaya*), a statement that goes hand in hand with his dream of learning a trade and being able to build a profession, and that underlies the will to acquire a particular work skill and express it to its fullest potential:

> There are many things you can learn how to do in the city, and then you can make money. In school they teach about life skills and how important it is to start a business, but in the end you have to go out and get it for yourself. They don't give it to you in school. You have to use your strength. And find somebody with the same intention. (Rio)

Rio became involved with a street gang as he was collecting information about job opportunities. Like many looking to make some money, he began asking friends at school, then turned to friends he had known on the neighborhood streets for a long time, who hung out in groups and seemed to know their way around the area. Although street gangs in *kampung* Malang are quite visible, they are not at all dreaded by the community, as I have explained, and youths, especially those new to the gang business (and one might say a bit naïve), do not have a particular problem approaching a gang member or even the gang leader. After all, teenagers in *kampung* Malang know for a fact that at any time they can buy their way into a gang by paying a small amount of money. Rio stole some money from his father and also offered a top-up voucher he swept from his mother's friend booth and joined a gang that normally hangs out by a bike repair shop, which also serves as an improvised petrol station and a food stall from time to time. Since every now and then groups of thugs from another neighborhood might try to steal the petrol bottles from the repair shop, the owner leans on the gang to watch over his business. The gang offers protection in exchange for a monthly fee. Rio, on his part, found himself a new group of friends and finally the chance to spend some time at a repair shop.

Rio's initiation followed a common pattern for this particular gang. He was beaten up, and then ate some rice and beef with his new friends. He is quite the reserved type and was reluctant to talk about the hits and the punches. What he recalls with most pride about his initiation is the meal he shared with the rest of the gang, the moment

> When you are still bleeding but you're also very hungry, and everyone is

> watching you and you feel so much power, and respect. I don't want to talk about the combat because I had a nice meal afterwards and I didn't even have to pay for it! My friends paid for me! (Rio)

Among the things Rio enjoyed most about being an initiate in the gang was taking care of the gang's shack. In particular, he was in charge of fixing things around the house (especially his friends' telephones, which were in most cases stolen mobile phones that had to be unlocked or disassembled before being sold onto the black market), but also of repairing his friends' motorbikes, a task that gave him a lot of prestige and credibility, especially when it came to checking the bikes to put together an illegal bike race. Here again, he recounts that the meals (lunch, especially because like most of his friends, he would return home for dinner) were the most pleasurable time of the day, and that those who were assigned to cooking duties worked busily to run around the *kampung* and find some vegetables or soup. Shopping for food was largely based on the exchange of goods among *kampung* people, but gang members could also profit from the fees they were owed by small scale business entrepreneurs, who were more than willing to pay off their protection by offering food. According to Rio, during a meal a gang member had the chance to meet with the rest of the gang and discuss their daily activities and become familiar with the faces and the names of the youths who made up the gang, especially the newcomers,

> Because so many come and go it is hard sometimes to know everybody, but almost everybody, actually everybody, comes to the office [a colloquial expression to indicate the gang's barracks] to eat.

Also, during a meal gang members learned about new work opportunities, a moment of trepidation and surprise that Rio describes with much excitement because all of a sudden a gang member might have something unexpected to do for the rest of the day, or even the rest of the week.

When the circumstance presented itself to engage directly with violence or violent practices, Rio was certainly less enthusiastic and, by his own admission, felt quite inadequate. He actually hated a lot the mess, the confusion and the sloppiness that surrounded those big battles under the heavy rain, and has admitted more than once he found it difficult to spot his own companions among the crowd of people fighting, drenched and dirty, their faces covered with mud. One of the accidents that stuck on his mind happened the time he involuntarily struck a broken bottle of beer on a friend's head, which almost resulted in the young boy losing an eye.

Two points should be made here. The first is the nature of youth gangs in *kampung* Malang, which so distinctively sets them apart from the life and the experiences of youth gangs elsewhere in Indonesia and the world

(see for instance Krisiansen 2003). These groups are born out of the need for youths to participate in social relationships, to come together, share a meal, spend time with one another and possibly find a small occupation. When youths join one of these gangs, they do so to avoid feeling lonely and underestimated, to voice their need to grow up and express their capacity to develop into adults. Obviously, the quest for a job plays a crucial role in the desire to become a part of a gang, as the story of Rio suggests. But what Rio's words also suggest is that violence plays a secondary role in the construction of social relations. Here, violence is merely the language that youths use to communicate, while never the message they try to convey. These gangs are not glued together or motivated by hatred and intolerance towards a significant otherness (a religious group, an ethnic minority for instance, as demonstrated largely amongst others by Kristiansen 2003) but are driven by the need to partake in something: a piece of beef, a stroke of luck, but most definitely not a broken jaw.

The city at large: small jobs and construction sites

Gang members flock to the city streets to be close to where they perceive the circulation of money is. This is an important aspect of gang life, one that is perhaps less captivating than those stories of games of territory and honor but that nevertheless provides useful insights in the day-to-day experiences and interactions of youths in this area. In fact, aside from marking their own turf, acting out as strongmen, and confronting each other in "epic" fights and battles out in the open and under the rain, these young teenagers and adolescents work hard to make a living. A variety of money-generating activities on the streets includes busking, begging, petty trade in magazines and papers or other cheap goods, acting as brokers for people who are looking for more expensive goods, trash-picking, pedaling *becak* (pedicabs), and selling parking vouchers.

Virtually anyone can beg and sell goods on the streets, although there are obviously territories and rents paid for engaging in small business on a particular street. When gang members venture out on the streets inevitably come across some other gang's (or somebody's) territory and are subjected to pretty much the same rules and extraction fees they expect from those who want to do business on their turf. For instance, parking attendants are very territorial, a good example where links to organized crime are evident. Attendants pay a fee to work a spot on the street. In theory, they purchase official parking slips from the municipality and then sell them to drivers at a nominal mark-up, which provides a revenue stream but saves the city from having to invest in parking fee infrastructure and enforcement in busy areas. In practice, most prefer to take parking money without giving a receipt slip. If they can manage, they also collect parking fees from drivers stopping in

privately owned areas, sometimes from the owner of the land himself, or from owner's friends and customers (see Brown 2009, p. 179, for a further description of the informal system of parking fees). These jobs are quite coveted but, as gang members admit, to find the right channels and work as a parking attendant is very hard. Many youths improvise and sometimes hang out in the parking lot, only to run up to drivers and ask for money to watch over their vehicle.

At night, young gang members seem to be drawn by construction sites. The trespassing of construction sites is without doubt a playful activity, and nevertheless one that carries a deep valence because youths who enter construction sites illegally are curious to know what the future city spaces will look like, which in itself is a way to connect visually and personally with the new urban landscape. From another point of view, one could argue that when youth gangs play around these construction sites they are making a use of the spaces that someone else (the city planners and developers above all) have imagined for the city and its residents, but not necessarily for these youngsters. The construction sites are quite easily accessible in the late afternoon and the early evening, while they are fully uncontrolled at night, when youths dare to jump the fences (if there are any) and explore these areas. They play games of courage that involve climbing the scaffolding and exploring the dark empty spaces of the new buildings, but even more frequently they play games of manhunt.

Going home: the return of the gangsters

While many envision Surabaya as a city of passage (Brown 2009; Peters 2009, 2010) in *kampung* Malang, both the older and younger residents were eager to discuss the idea of *pulang*.

After a long day of hanging around, fighting, making new friends and experimenting in the city areas, youths return home (*pulang*) to their families, much like all *kampung* and city workers, and city dwellers in general. There is a sense of relief that is associated with family life, and with the idea that no matter what the day unfolded, a person will return home. Among *kampung* youths, this is all the more true as these youths struggle to find employment and leave their home in the morning to try to find work, to make a living, as I have illustrated so far.

In the more mundane sense, *pulang* indicates the movement of returning home, to the place where a person lives. *Pulang* is also what people do periodically. For instance, every year as the fasting month of Ramadan winds to a close, hordes of migrants begin to anticipate the Idul Fitri celebrations, and return home to pay respect to their parents, families and to revisit their village (see Brown 2009, p. 112). The desire to *pulang*, as highlighted by Brown, becomes irresistible this time of year, and even people who steadfastly

insist they would rather stay put than travel home abruptly change their mind and go out of their way to quickly collect the money to pay bus fare and go to their village. In this particular sense, the term *pulang* is imbued with a sentiment of longing and nostalgia (Brown 2009).

Brown, again, suggests that the word *pulang* contains a thick affective pull: it is one word that encompasses both "home" and "return" and that therefore differs from the Indonesian word *rumah* or the Javanese word *omah*/griya, two words that have a connotation closer to "house", "building", or from the verb *pergi*, which means "to go to" but it is not used to indicate the movement of going home. *Pulang* concentrates the idea of "home" and the "movement of going" all in one term. The efficacy of such term, according to Brown, lies precisely in its verbal component: after all, while the particular location to which one returns is variable, what remains constant across plaintive appeals to *pulang* is the movement of returning itself (Brown 2009, p. 113).

In *kampung* Malang, for instance, migrants do not just return home to celebrate Idul Fitri and visit their family. In *kampung* Malang there is one category of people whose return home causes excitement and preoccupation, and that is the category of the "gangsters" (*gengster*), young men who return home from South Bali. Their cyclical presence in the *kampung* is crucial to better understand the process of socialization of youths who are involved with gang activities in this particular area and their transition to organized crime. In this final section, I will illustrate what happens when these gangsters return home.

Between *kampung* Malang and the area of South Bali there seems to be a corridor of internal migration that connects young men from the inner parts of the city to the affluent tourist areas of Kuta, Legian and Seminyak. Robbie Peters's analysis of Surabaya's urban development (2009) indirectly documents (he only hints at the subject) nearly three decades of male labor migration between this particular area of Surabaya and South Bali. Since the 1980s, an increasing flow of people from other parts of Indonesia, especially the relatively poor neighboring province of East Java, have traveled to Bali in search of work and a better life (MacRae 2010, p. 16). By the mid-1990s, most of the hard, heavy, dirty and dangerous work in South Bali, especially building and road construction, was being done by immigrant men, many of them young and single; they also dominated the informal economy of street stalls, door-to-door sales of house goods, as well as scavenging for recyclable materials from rubbish. Javanese contract teams have also taken over much of the rice harvesting in the western half of Bali (MacRae 2010, p. 22). Such migrants are attractive for employers because they have a reputation for working longer and harder for lower wages; they also do not require the irregular but frequent time off work that Balinese employees expect for attendance at ceremonies *(ibidem).* Under national law, all

citizens of the Republic of Indonesia are free to travel and settle wherever they choose provided they have employment, notify the local authorities and are registered as temporary residents. However, the presence of Javanese migrants poses a problem for the Balinese communities in which they live, because membership in such communities presupposes religious as well as social, economic and political participation. To be a community member also presupposes a state of marriage. Javanese single people therefore cannot become full members of local communities; many actually live in some sort of immigrant neighborhoods, where their relationships with Balinese people are reduced to nothing (*ibidem*).

Some immigrants disregard the laws and arrive unregistered and invisible: this is for instance the case of young men, the "gangsters", who come from East Java and are involved in the smuggling and sale of drugs in the tourist areas of South Bali. Among those who travel the corridor that links the inner-city neighborhood of *kampung* Malang and South Bali, there are adolescents and young men who act as drug couriers while simultaneously being involved with sex work. For this particular group of young people, the business of selling drugs goes hand in hand with the sale of compensated sex on the vigorous sex market for foreign homosexuals (Alcano 2013). The two business activities animate the nightlife of South Bali. However, while the former is overtly condemned by Balinese authorities and Balinese people, the latter has somehow found a way to proliferate out in the open, as Balinese strongmen and youth vigilantes extract fees from sex workers in exchange for protection from the local police. The fact that East Javanese immigrants enter the island illegally, are not legally employed or registered, makes them all the more vulnerable to these forms of local control and exploitation.

In the Legian region, in the heart of South Bali, the young men of *kampung* Malang come together as a gang (*geng*). The geography of gangs of sex workers who also are involved with drug sale in South Bali follows a regional pattern and young men group up in antagonistic street gangs based on their place of origin. They usually live in small unsupervised boarding houses, which are owned by Balinese people, and strive for the control of the sex market. I have detailed elsewhere (Alcano 2011, 2013) the logic and the practices that regulate the gang of youths that come from Surabaya and live South Bali and their idea of sex work as a form of entrepreneurship. What is relevant to the present discussion is the shift that occurs in the transition from being a part of a street gang in Surabaya and the acquisition of membership status to a full-fledged gang in South Bali. While on the streets of *kampung* Malang, youths were animated by the desire to join a gang in order to make new friends, socialize, and possibly find a temporary work activity to make a living. Once in South Bali, they are determined to make a career out of sex work, accumulate capital, find a long-term part-

ner and gain financial support. The driving force underneath these types of youth formations is now above all economic. Eventually, these youths wish to make enough money on their own to support their family through remittances, buy some land, build a house back in their home village, and get married. In short, they wish to embrace a fully recognized and socially regulated masculine gender role.

When it comes to *pulang*, the migrants from Surabaya who live and work as sex workers in South Bali return home quite frequently, especially during Bali's tourist low season as the flow of tourists decreases and the business is slower than usual. Their visits serve numerous purposes: first and foremost, migrants return home to bring some money to their families, to transport drugs back and forth from Surabaya to South Bali and vice versa, and also to revisit their village, towards which they express a sentiment of longing and nostalgia and spend time with relatives, siblings and friends.

The subject of remittances is a tricky one. In *kampung* Malang, most people, especially among the older men, suspect that these youths are involved with the smuggling of drugs: after all, the amount of money that circulates is considerably high when compared to local salaries and many find it hard to believe that such money is earned through entirely legal means. However, almost nobody is willing to discuss this topic, a social secret that nobody wants to reveal to avoid getting in trouble with the police. Youths who return home usually brag about their gangster activities and share stories about the risks and adventures that accompany the drug business, thus exposing the secret out in the open. Sex work is a different matter. Over the years, people have heard stories of young migrants who sell sex in South Bali: accounts of female sex workers abound and even stories of young men who look for "sugar daddies" and engage in promiscuous behavior are widespread across the city neighborhoods and the region in general. However, people are usually reluctant to acknowledge the issue when their sons appear to be involved in first person. They are uncomfortable with the idea that the money these youths bring home (and they, the parents, take with a certain ease) is earned through morally despicable acts such as compensated sex acts with older men. For this particular reason, many prefer to accept the money without questioning where it comes from. On their part, youths usually lie about their work activity, and many recount to be employed in high-class hotel and resorts and to make a lot of money in tips; others tell their parents they work as waiters in fancy restaurants, or as brokers in the business of renting luxurious villas to foreign tourists; these are jobs that people in *kampung* Malang imagine to be quite remunerative.

Among those who have lived in South Bali for a longer period of time, some have set aside a sufficient amount of money to begin scouting for a plot land in their home village. Especially those sex workers who have been involved in a long-term relationship with a foreign man (or multiple

foreign men) feel confident enough to start imagining their return to their hometown and make frequent trips home to inquire about land for sale and land prices. There even have been cases of young men returning home accompanied by their partners, who were interested in investing money on land property. These visits arguably caused embarrassment among community members, family and friends, but rumors and gossip about the identity of the older men entering the village were quickly hushed-up as everyone liked (and opted) to assume that these men were just land developers, foreign contractors who were doing legitimate business with their sons and friends. In fact, in most cases, young migrants who returned home with the intention to buy land ended up purchasing a legal business license for their families, thus making it all the more plausible (and enjoyable) for everyone to believe that they, and their older partners, were in town for business.

Whether they buy land or start a business to hand over to their family and relatives, these young migrants who return from South Bali are held in high regard by their community and their peers. Their stories prove that there is a way to achieve personal development through work and that a person can express his full potential if given the means and circumstances. In this particular case, people seem to assert the primacy of social and work networks into fostering a person's aptitude and inclinations and into attaining success.

Furthermore, and equally importantly, these young migrants return home to recruit new gang members and to lure their friends into moving to South Bali to improve their work and life conditions. Once in Surabaya, these "gangsters" spend time with their younger brothers, cousins and friends, hang out with local gang members and even participate in battles and fights by watching youths as they confront each other and by closely scrutinizing their initiative and skills. They show off their expensive clothes, telephones, and some even go as far as purchasing a motorbike for their father; they tell numerous stories about a world of endless job opportunities, but more than anything they stress the fact that in South Bali a person can earn his own money and develop a form of personal entrepreneurship: there is a network of connections and friends that facilitates the thriving and flourishing of a person's good fortune and that will ultimately help improve a person's social status. Youths like Rio, who at the time of the present research was eager to move to Bali and make money, do not necessarily associate the island of Bali with the prospect of easy money, but ultimately with the opportunity to achieve a particular long-term goal, in his case to open a repair shop, buy a plot of land, help the family, and become a man (*orang laki-laki*).

These stories are interesting because they encompass the *kampung* life while being intimately tied to it. Obviously, and from another point of view, these stories are also interesting because of what they do not tell. Not everyone leaves Surabaya or the village to go to Bali. Many are well aware of the risks, dangers and demands that the South Bali arena (and sex work)

involves and prefer to stay in Surabaya and wait for another job opportunity, perhaps more contained and less ambitious, but one that will suit better their personal inclination. Many migrants who return home come empty-handed, having spent all of their earnings on drugs and expensive items: they certainly cannot afford to buy a license, let alone purchase land. Many others become sick while working in the Balinese sex industry, and once home lead a life of physical suffering and social stigma. Some do not return at all, and continue to stay in Bali: among these, many struggle with alcoholism and substance abuse. While these stories somehow fall outside the orbits of youths in Surabaya, they nevertheless constitute the flip-side of the movement of *pulang*.

When young migrants return home, they trigger the desire to move forward among *kampung* youths. However, the mere notion that poverty pulls people into criminal activities and sex work is quite reductive and offers little explanation here. In Surabaya youths feel disconnected from the flow of capital and opportunities. What the prospect of migration discloses is the chance to enter a stable network of solidarity and work, one that will provide the means to grow up, progress in life and ameliorate a person's position in the social scale. For many, this translates into the opportunity to become an active agent in the handling, circulation and accumulation of capital and goods. The notion of *pulang*, here, suggests that there are two equally powerful forces at play: the wish to go, which influences and draws youths towards traveling and seeking a better future in South Bali, and the will to return home, the irresistible force that pulls young men towards their home, where they will try to reconnect with the flow of things. If Surabaya is a city of passage, then one must not neglect to consider the significant yet inverse movement of returning home.

Concluding remarks

The youth gangs of *kampung* Malang and the urban places of Surabaya that I have presented in this article seem to exude the same attributes of movement and transition. Youth gangs originate at school, and more importantly in the hearth of the spaces and in the heat of the social relations of the local neighborhood, only to expand and to evolve into adult group formations. While not all gangs follow this pattern, ethnographic evidence suggests that a consistent number of youths from this area who are involved with youth gangs early in their adolescence eventually travel (or aspire to travel) along the corridor of migration that links *kampung* Malang to the region of South Bali, and many attempt to become affiliated with professional criminal organizations. The streets of Surabaya, on their part, have been restructured and reinforced to facilitate the flow of capital and goods and to accommodate the need for unimpeded circulation. There is virtually no limit to

the extension of these streets and to the creation of new roads, nor to the possibility to connect areas as far away from one another as possible. Potentially, the growth of youths mirrors the growth of the streets and roads, and vice versa, because they both seem to be permeated by a relentless passion for expansion.

I have shown how city planners and municipal authorities in the past decade or so have envisioned Surabaya as a middle class-oriented metropolis, one built on the opposition between ordered wide urban spaces and chaotic urban interstices: to some extent, the city needed those disordered urban enclaves to sustain and legitimize the need for urban improvement and development. In the midst of urban, political, economic and social upheavals, many youths have felt disconnected from the new stream of opportunities and have searched for personal ways to re-connect their life trajectories with the flux of things and opportunities that were made available. To this end, they have created a geography of their own, one which serves the purpose to come together, connect with a particular territory, create discipline, look for a job and give entrepreneurship a try. In short, they have also created intelligible places in the midst of a certain unruliness of things.

There is one last similarity that can be drawn between the life of these youth gangs and the streets of Surabaya. As I have suggested when discussing the movement of returning home, many youths do not leave Surabaya, and many return home to their families and friends empty-handed. Although my informants tend to insist on stories of personal success, the process of growing up almost never follows a linear pattern, and youths encounter several bumps along the road of self-development and success. I have also mentioned in the beginning of the article that the developmental force behind Surabaya's urban changes presents many flaws which are visible in the numerous buildings and construction sites that are left abandoned and that crumble as the years go by. Just like many attempts at "moving forward" and achieving success fail, are interrupted by contingencies, never fully take off, or are forced to retreat, many roads and buildings lie unfinished when one looks at the city horizon.

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