‘Homogeneity of representations’ indicates not only a particular reality of our time; it is also a knowledge construct which seeks to challenge our understanding of that reality. As a problem-posing phrase, the idea of homogeneity of representations invites a debate.1 We could start by arguing whether there is such a thing as ‘homogeneity of representations’. We could also move beyond the discussion of whether homogeneity is a reality by debating if such a thing is desirable, good or bad and whether it can be a salvation or a menace. Before then, we would also need to ask what kind of representation we are in fact looking at. Are we considering the supposedly ‘universal’ (if not homogenising) Enlightenment ideas of liberty, individuality, and equality that are presumably not merely desirable but also universally possible? Or are we looking at the transnational discourses of architecture and their formal expressions which have constituted a powerful force for homogenisation for over 100 years at least? What could we say about the lingua franca of particular architecture that has facilitated homogeneity across space, such as, among others, corporate towers, Greco-Romanic state architecture and modernist or postmodernist international style housing?

On the other end of homogenisation is everything that seems to stand against it, which is ‘heterogenisation’, a counter-process that is at once intellectual and political. This binarism could be said to be one of the most productive as well as the most problematic constructs in the arts and social sciences since its formation in the 19th century. However, by posing these binary oppositions, we also often overlook the profound, mutually constitutive relations between them, in which one takes the form of the other, and how one depends on the other for its existence and effect. For instance, the profound heterogeneity exists only within the context of the homogenising ‘forms of dominance’.2 Similarly, the heterogeneous appearances of national or local specificities carries with them profound

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1 As Modjtaba Sadria points out, ‘in problem-solving, knowledge is not merely describing reality. It is performative and diversifying, because it challenges the dominant understanding of reality which has attempted, and maybe even succeeded, in being considered “true”’. See: Modjtaba Sadria (2009) ‘Modernities: Re-posing the Issues’, in Modjtaba Sadria (ed.) Multiple Modernities in Muslim Societies. Geneva: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, p. 9.

homogeneity. In my opinion, our intellectual task is to release us from the burden of (essentially) opposing norms of homogenisation – no doubt a worthwhile project – in order to insist on the other end of the antinomy. Should a choice be made between them, it would be based on our context-bound intellectual, ethical and political decisions. Let me stake out my position. I make no claims to judge what might be the best or most useful form of representation for architecture and urban space today (should it be homogeneity or heterogeneity?). I wish however to show that the antinomies pose no question of dilemma, for if a choice were to be made, it would be subjected to the socio-historical contexts within which that choice is made.

In this essay, I look at the state discourses of homogeneity and heterogeneity in colonial and postcolonial formations and how they raise intellectual and political questions. I draw illustrative cases from colonial and postcolonial worlds as I believe these places articulate most profoundly the antinomies of homogeneity and heterogeneity in both spatial and temporal terms. At the end, I look at the responses to the state’s discourses of homogeneity and heterogeneity via the narrative construct of Mas Marco Kartodikromo, an Indonesian novelist in the early 20th century, who through his writing reconfigured politically the binary contrasts that structured the colonial city in which he lived.

Heterogeneity

The notion of homogenisation of representations, if we are willing to stretch beyond the visual and spatial concerns of architecture, is a socio-temporal concept derived from Western historicism; which conceives the world as moving along a single trajectory with the West at the forefront followed by the ‘not-yet’, or ‘yet-to-be’ developed countries/colonies. In his critique of Western historicism, Dipesh Chakrabarty describes the ‘not yet’ understanding of history ‘as an imaginary waiting room … it was as though we are all going to go to the same place in the end. However some people would go there earlier because they were ready for it. Others will have to be readied’.

We should however note that the historicist aspiration of ‘going to the same place in the end’ (and its concomitant discourse of homogenisation) is remarkably different from the conservative idea found, for instance, in certain policies of the colonial government, which believed that the only way to bring order and peace to the colony was to prevent the ‘natives’ from taking any part in the ‘development’ initiative. The conservative thereby believed that the ‘natives’ should remain a ‘noble savage’ frozen in time and space – a mode of thinking based on essential difference that would take us back to the discourse of Orientalism. Within this context, the idea of developing the colony (through the stages of development ‘in order to go to the same place in the end’) can be seen as quite radical in its forward-looking vision even though we might say that such movements, under colonial conditions, carried no prospect for democratic governance. Overall, modernisation leaves an impression that the colony and its people are developing. At least if they are not-yet-developed they can be made ready for development in stages and the built environment serves as a means for representing such possibility. The developmentalist discourse of ‘not-yet’ thus keeps the colony always a step or two behind. This temporal lag preserves the gap between the coloniser and the colonised – a precondition for continuing the discourse of development in the first place.

However, colonies being colonies, modernisation remains partial and homogenisation has never actually taken place in the colony. For instance, in colonial Indonesia, the installation of water supply was limited to the European residential and commercial areas: ‘Design criteria explicitly stated a production capacity that could serve 90 percent of the European households with 140 liters/capita/day, 60 percent of Chinese and Foreign Easterner households with 100 liters and 30 percent of native households with 65’. There are many more examples of differential treatment of urban space, and it is sufficient to say that the unevenness of colonial urban development has kept the colonial city heterogeneous. The developmental discourse of ‘not-yet’ or ‘yet-to-be’ perpetuates the space of unevenness, social differentiation and unequal heterogeneity, which has become the characteristic of colonial and postcolonial cities.

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6 The urban and rural upheavals in the late 19th and early 20th century against the colonial regime of development ‘in order to go to the same place in the end’) can be seen as quite radical in its forward-looking vision even though we might say that such movements, under colonial conditions, carried no prospect for democratic governance. Overall, modernisation leaves an impression that the colony and its people are developing. At least if they are not-yet-developed they can be made ready for development in stages and the built environment serves as a means for representing such possibility. The developmentalist discourse of ‘not-yet’ thus keeps the colony always a step or two behind. This temporal lag preserves the gap between the coloniser and the colonised – a precondition for continuing the discourse of development in the first place.

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7 The urban and rural upheavals in the late 19th and early 20th century against the colonial regime of differentiation triggered only subtler strategies of control, displacement, and surveillance. The vision of developing ‘the welfare of the population’ thus stemmed not only from the relatively liberal climate in which the city became the ‘laboratory of modernity’, but also the need to suppress the emerging urban social movements and popular radicalism. It is not coincidence, therefore, that a significant part of urban modernisation in colonial Indonesia was only put into practice after the crushing of the communist uprising and urban radicals in the 1926–27. See: Abidin Kusno (2005) The Significance of Appearance in the Zaman Nomad, 1927–1942, in Freek Colombijn et al. (eds.) Kota Lama, Kota Baru. Yokogakura: Ombak Press, pp. 493–520; For discussion on colonial politics of architecture and urban design, see: Nezar AlSayyad (ed.), (1992) Forms of Dominance. Aldershot: Avebury. Paul Rabkinow (1989) French Modern. Cambridge: MIT Press; Gwendolyn Wright (1991) Politics of Urban Design in French Colonial Urbanism. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
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In effect, colonial space is a space of exception where the homogenised notion of the ‘city-as-a-whole’ remains elusive and opaque. Heterogeneity, differentiation and division are modes of governance, and they often de-link aspects of everyday life from the possibilities of generating a common interest. The question of mass society so crucial to the formation of mass utopia of democracy and popular sovereignty was clearly outside the mission of the colonial state. To appropriate the words of Susan Buck Morris, in the colony, there is no attempt by the colonial state to ‘construct mass utopia (as) the dream of the 20th century’. Instead, differentiation, exception and unequal treatment of the legal and the political were the socially prescribed norm.

Under such conditions, can we still claim homogenisation of the built environment? And perhaps more importantly, what might be the impacts of the heterogeneity of colonial space on the public sphere? The points described above could be said to be a story specific to (Indonesian) colonial urban development. However, it is also a story of how architecture, urban design and planning participate in power relations and in reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed that call for heterogeneous architectural and spatial solutions. Now if colonies being colonies and differentiated treatment of urban space are the norms and the forms of governance, are we today living in a postcolonial time that is experiencing less heterogeneity in representations than in the past?

I use the colonial condition to reflect on the theme of heterogeneity in part because the history of colonialism continues to mark the social life and urban politics of our contemporary era. And, perhaps more importantly, it allows us to understand historically the profound heterogeneity of representations in contemporary postcolonial cities. Contrary to the homogenisation thesis, the built environment of the postcolonial ‘global’ cities (with very few exceptions) is characterised more and more by uneven heterogeneity. In this sense, it becomes rather problematic to celebrate heterogeneity and multiplicities; specificities and localities; plurality and diversity of the many. This perspective, while valuable, has also overlooked colonial formation of heterogeneity and the rule of multiplicity in delinking aspects of public life from generating a larger collective action.

Today, the homogenisation of representation is often understood (although not exclusively) as a product of capitalism, but such abstraction does not match the temporal and spatial heterogeneity experienced by millions of people in the postcolonial ‘Global South’. As suggested above, (post)colonial cities are not formed under the regime of homogeneity. Instead they are constituted under a colonial regime of differentiation in which the provision of housing, infrastructure and public services are marked by an uneven heterogeneity. This differentiation of urban services and spaces has made cities in the colonial and postcolonial societies heterogeneous from the beginning, long before the opening up of the city to the contemporary privatised market competition of neoliberal international regimes.

In their study of urban infrastructure, Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin have importantly shown how, under the current global regime of liberalisation, the major urban infrastructure networks in less developed countries have become available for the operation of international financial markets. The absence of planned convergence in many (post)colonial cities offers a ground for the subsequent ‘parallel set of processes (that) are underway within which infrastructure networks are being unbundled in ways that help sustain the fragmentation of the social and material fabric of cities’. However, we can also add that the ‘splintering’ effect of urbanism today is neither a new happening nor evolving from the core countries and expanding to the rest of the world as suggested by Graham and Marvin. Instead the ‘highly fragmented and differentiated styles of service provision with highly complex, and often hidden, geometries and geographies’ has long been taken place in the colonial cities of the Global South. The territorial unevenness, the different time regimes, and the different values embedded in the ‘everyday’ are neither new nor unproblematic conditions of many postcolonial cities. Under these circumstances, how is it possible to conceptualise urban politics (our public sphere) and to imagine political possibilities when heterogeneity sets a limit on the formation of a shared set of references?

The only convergence (and thus homogenisation) that we can see taking place is that between cities across nation-states that are relationally connected. Between Jakarta, Hong Kong and L.A. there are significant degrees of homogeneity, but between Jakarta and its own surrounding shanty town the relations are severe. The phenomenon of transnational, ‘homogeneous’ connections between major cities on the one hand and the physically-close but unconnected spaces in one city on the other hand is not quite new; they have been an essential feature of colonial cities.

In the following section, I pose the problem of homogenisation by looking at the postcolonial refashioning of time through nation-building discourses of imagistic architecture and urban form. The driving force of this process of homogenisation, as I will argue, stems from a desire to revive the ‘not-yet’ version of history. From the experiences of heterogeneity in

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8 In the criticism of homogenisation, postcolonial studies often remark upon the resistance of the local to the dominant forces of homogenisation. They often celebrate heterogeneity and multiplicities; specificities and localities; plurality and diversity of the many. This perspective, while valuable, has also overlooked colonial formation of heterogeneity and the rule of multiplicity in delinking aspects of public life from generating a larger collective action.
10 Ibid., p. 52.
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colonial cities stem, problematically, the desire for homogeneity that is at once intellectual and political.

**Homogeneity**

If heterogeneity had been part of the colonial mode of governance, the question of development, progress and ‘arriving at the same place’ is central to the politics of decolonisation. The postcolonial state in the decolonised worlds of Asia and Africa was in some crucial ways modelled on the colonial state it inherited. However, the lineage did not prevent the postcolonial state to revise the ‘not-yet’ version of history, and thus the desire to occupy the position of the ‘present’, of being equal to the West, with the effect of countering the ‘catching up’ narrative of modernisation which conceives the decolonised world as lagging behind, if not following the West. The anti-colonial nationalist movements in the early 20th century often understood the future in terms of a ‘just and prosperous society which was called a society (to appropriate a Malay term) of sama rasa sama rata (equality in feeling, equality in relation)’. They also appropriated the developmentalist discourse (in the words of Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia) by ‘bringing life to people’s awareness of their “glorious past”, their “dark ages”, and the “promise of order. He wanted Indonesia to be seen as modern ‘now’, not later. As far as political consciousness is concerned, this is a “great leap forward”, one that moves from seeing time as occurring in stages, to one that is simultaneous, comparative and of course also homogenising. The Bandung Conference of Asia-Africa in 1955 (which featured figures like Gamel Abdel Nasser, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Chou En Lai, Ho Chih Minh and Sukarno) represented a desire for a transnational collective identity against the Cold War arrangement which had started to encroach into the decolonised world. Several of these leaders (especially Sukarno) appropriated modernist architecture and urban form as a semiotic device to represent self-determination and sovereignty for ‘independence’, ‘revolution’ and ‘anti imperialism’. We thus could see the semiotic push towards the homogenisation of representation was at once intellectual and political, in the sense that it was intended to go against ‘Western imperialism’.

Their collective efforts however, were in contrast to the desire of Washington to create a base for ‘development’ in the region under the leadership of a capitalistically prosperous authoritarian regime – a move that leads us to the second and profoundly different style of homogenisation in the decolonised world. In Indonesia, where the Asia Africa Conference was held, the new regime of Suharto (1966–1998) constituted another form of architecture and urban homogenisation through the hegemony of market capitalism. This style of homogenisation arose as a reactionary response to Sukarno’s type of nationalism against Cold War geopolitical arrangement. In the early 1960s, Sukarno for instance, conceived the city as the site for both the symbolic construction of the nation and the liberation of Asia and Africa from imperialism. Imagining, quite wrongly, that Indonesia could lead an international revolution, Sukarno proclaimed in 1962: ‘Build up Djakarta as beautifully as possible, build it as spectacularly as possible, so that this city, which has become the center of struggle of the Indonesian people, will be an inspiration and beacon to the whole of struggling mankind and to all the emerging forces’.15

The keywords here are the ‘people’ and ‘the whole mankind’ and ‘all the emerging forces’. Through modernist architecture and urban form, Sukarno imagined a moment of freedom from the past where the gravity of colonial culture (and traditional feudalism) was overcome and when the ‘not-yet’ version of history was momentarily reversed. Sukarno was not a right wing dictator, neither was he a conventional leftist,16 but he constructed a new time for his country in relation to other decolonised nations so that his and other fellow countries would not be seen as lagging behind in the new world order. He wanted Indonesia to be seen as modern ‘now’, not later. As far as political consciousness is concerned, this is a ‘great leap forward’, one that moves from seeing time as occurring in stages, to one that is simultaneous, comparative and of course also homogenising. The Bandung Conference of Asia-Africa in 1955 (which featured figures like Gamel Abdel Nasser, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Chou En Lai, Ho Chih Minh and Sukarno) represented a desire for a transnational collective identity against the Cold War arrangement which had started to encroach into the decolonised world. Several of these leaders (especially Sukarno) appropriated modernist architecture and urban form as a semiotic device to represent self-determination and sovereignty for ‘independence’, ‘revolution’ and ‘anti imperialism’. We thus could see the semiotic push towards the homogenisation of representation was at once intellectual and political, in the sense that it was intended to go against ‘Western imperialism’.

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In the following section, I show two contrasting moments in the history of decolonisation to illustrate the diverse ways in which the ‘not-yet’ version of history is revised by the postcolonial state – the course of which have contributed to the processes of homogenisation. The first was the transnational spirit of decolonisation in Asia and Africa through city building as a way to construct a new time against the encroachment of the Cold War geopolitical arrangement. In the early 1960s, Sukarno for instance, conceived the city as the site for both the symbolic construction of the nation and the liberation of Asia and Africa from imperialism. Imagining, quite wrongly, that Indonesia could lead an international revolution, Sukarno proclaimed in 1962: ‘Build up Djakarta as beautifully as possible, build it as spectacularly as possible, so that this city, which has become the center of struggle of the Indonesian people, will be an inspiration and beacon to the whole of struggling mankind and to all the emerging forces’.

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imperial centers. It has everything to do with the Cold War in the region in which the
U.S. made every effort to create dependent, capitalistically prosperous, authoritarian, anti-
communist regimes. Under U.S. security arrangements and ‘aid’ (from Japan), President
Suharto launched his own version of homogenisation. Naming the regime the New Order,
Suharto points to a major difference between himself and his predecessor. One of the
first things he did was to re-inscribe the developmentalist discourse under the tutelage of
the IMF. With the mobilisation of oil, massive foreign aid and investment, the New Order
Regime points to a new condition of postcolonial capitalist states in Asia.\textsuperscript{17} If we look across
the region since the 1970s, capitalist urban development and its concomitant discourses of
architecture and urban design were formed largely under dictator leaderships (Thailand’s
generals, the Marcos Regime, Suharto’s New Order) and all of which was made possible
by heavy American investment in Cold War Asia.\textsuperscript{18} The growth, the management and the
vision of cities in Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand stemmed from
heavy state intervention often under dictatorship, an arrangement made possible by the
Cold War environment. The regions were made to compete with each other for aid and
foreign investment in a seemingly autonomous way, but their freedom to compete was
coordinated by the homogenising rules arranged by US-led supranational organisations,
such as the IMF and the World Bank.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that state leaders of Asia were merely passive
agents of the world power. Perhaps the best way to characterise the Asian leaders of the
time is not to see them as passive agents, but as ‘late nationalists’ who were both benefiting
from and resentful of the world capitalist order. The state leaders accommodated as
well as resisted their dependency on the world powers through various forms of official
nationalism, ones that often served to justify their authoritarian rule. In any case they
invested the globally financed urban project with a sense of ‘national strength’. Since the
1980s capital cities in Asia thus have been predicated on the idea of ‘national strength’
even as they take on the image of global cities. The governments of the region and their
business groups and technocrats have been cultivating different imagistic urban projects
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\textsuperscript{17} Suharto dismantled the political organisation of the peasantry and cultivated an urban culture suitable
for the depoliticised ‘middle class’ while retrieving strategies of colonial urban pacification (– such as the
‘kampung improvement’ project, the ‘new towns’, and the transmigration of the urban poor and radicals
– the outer islands). The ‘development’ came with an urban form that immediately overwhelmed the
‘revolutionary’ monuments of the previous era. I have discussed the politics of urban design in the Suharso
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23–39.

the region’s own strategic resources, such as ‘the tropical city’, ‘the intelligent city’, ‘the
knowledge city’ and the ‘multimedia super corridor’.

For instance, when Mahathir Mohamad, ex-prime minister of Malaysia, launched his
Multimedia Super Corridor in 1990s he was thinking about the hi-tech knowledge city
project as a platform for Malaysia to become a nation ultimately free from the dictates of
developed nations – namely the West (even though this is not a singular category).

Without being a duplicate of any of them (meaning other developed nations), we can
still be developed. We would be a developed country in our own mould. Malaysia
should not be developed only in the economic sense. It must be a nation that is
fully developed along all dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually,
psychologically and culturally.\textsuperscript{19}

Behind the homogenising image of the high-tech city, Mahathir was concerned with
overcoming the ‘West’ and taking charge of Malaysia’s own modernity. His emphasis
on development was aimed at domesticating the West through an imagined national
autonomy. Mahathir in the 1990s worked in a different context than that of Sukarno in
the 1960s. The Malaysian leader harnessed the market economy for the promotion of
a national sense of autonomy. He too called for the forging of state-led ‘Asian values’
or (to refer to the neighbouring Singapore) ‘communitarian ideology’, discourses which
claim their own form of homogenisation.\textsuperscript{20} This claim of an Asian union represented an
aspiration of the region to benefit from the world order. It was by no means a call of anti-
imperialism. Instead it was a claim for finding a unique fast-track road to economic growth
and prosperity. While developed by some Asian nations to counter individualism and
capitalist liberalism, it lacked the ‘revolutionary’ impulse of the previous era. It registered
instead the idea that the region has its own agency in playing with the neoliberal game
and in maintaining the power of the state to re-inscribe values and recharge its population
with new energies of entrepreneurship. The call for ‘Asian values’ could be seen as an
attempt by capitalist states to reposition their countries to take advantage of the dynamics
of neoliberalism, the changing sense of the geopolitics of the region, and the desire of
overcoming American-led globalisation.

What I have shown in this section is that the homogeneity constituted by the city building
of the postcolonial nation has often been defined in opposition to the colonial history of
differentiation, and the idea that the postcolony is still ‘not-yet-modern’. As Chakrabarty
points out, the nationalists in Asia were basically fighting against the colonial perception of

the Asia Pacific Rim}. NY: Spon Press, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{20} For a discussion of ‘communitarian ideology’ and political legitimacy of the state, see Chua Beng Huat
imperial centers. It has everything to do with the Cold War in the region in which the U.S. made every effort to create dependent, capitalistically prosperous, authoritarian, anti-communist regimes. Under U.S. security arrangements and ‘aid’ (from Japan), President Suharto launched his own version of homogenisation. Naming the regime the New Order, Suharto points to a major difference between himself and his predecessor. One of the first things he did was to re-inscribe the developmentalist discourse under the tutelage of the IMF. With the mobilisation of oil, massive foreign aid and investment, the New Order Regime points to a new condition of postcolonial capitalist states in Asia.17 If we look across the region since the 1970s, capitalist urban development and its concomitant discourses of architecture and urban design were formed largely under dictator leaderships (Thailand’s generals, the Marcos Regime, Suharto’s New Order) and all of which was made possible by heavy American investment in Cold War Asia. The growth, the management and the vision of cities in Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand stemmed from heavy state intervention often under dictatorship, an arrangement made possible by the Cold War environment. The regions were made to compete with each other for aid and foreign investment in a seemingly autonomous way, but their freedom to compete was coordinated by the homogenising rules arranged by US-led supranational organisations, such as the IMF and the World Bank.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that state leaders of Asia were merely passive agents of the world power. Perhaps the best way to characterise the Asian leaders of the time is not to see them as passive agents, but as ‘late nationalists’ who were both benefiting from and resentful of the world capitalist order. The state leaders accommodated as well as resisted their dependency on the world powers through various forms of official nationalism, ones that often served to justify their authoritarian rule. In any case they invested the globally financed urban project with a sense of ‘national strength’. Since the 1980s capital cities in Asia thus have been predicated on the idea of ‘national strength’ even as they take on the image of global cities. The governments of the region and their business groups and technocrats have been cultivating different imagistic urban projects for the reshaping of their nations and citizens. Several new urban concepts have been proposed to register a sense of creativity, innovation and recovery by putting forward the region’s own strategic resources, such as ‘the tropical city’, ‘the intelligent city’, ‘the knowledge city’ and the ‘multimedia super corridor’.

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the ‘not-ready’ or ‘not-yet’ version of colonial ideology. They wanted to be independent now, not later; and such desire has often been represented as an expression or projection of ‘national spirit’. However, unlike the earlier attempts to distance the Global South from American hegemony, contemporary global urban projects incorporate, rather than break away from Western-led development.

But what will come out of the reconstitution of time and space? How does the city show itself as a model when the city has become the stage for the major restructuring of capitalism, the declining state power to provide basic services to its urban residents, and the struggle for social justice and the rights to the city? For those who live in and through the city spaces of the Global South, for instance, it is hard to ignore both the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the shanty town which, to quote Mike Davis, ‘are the grizzly antipodes to the generic fantasy-scapes and residential theme parks (…) in which the global middle classes increasingly prefer to cloister themselves’. In this space of contradiction, we are brought back to where we began, that is, that colonial and postcolonial societies are governed by an uneven space of heterogeneity driven by the neglect and lack of common trajectories. What effects would the experience of heterogeneity and homogeneity have on the subjectivities of urban dwellers? How the power of heterogeneity and homogeneity enter everyday life, and on what terms and for what purpose, are questions related to the public sphere.

The Public Sphere

The idea of the ‘public sphere’ as an arena of political deliberation and participation stems from the aspiration for a democratic governance. It relates to the question of how politics of space might be connected to the emergence of socio-political consciousness, and how differentiated urban space might encourage or discourage political participation. These are questions of reception and of how the intended meanings of urban and architectural projects are received and transformed through occupation and use. The connection between intention and reception would however remain speculative. The best we can do is to indicate some potent points of linkages between them.

In this following section, I illustrate the relationship between the physicality of public space and the politics of public sphere to show how the force of modernisation and its politics of differentiation was articulated and experienced with direct (or indirect) political implications for the emergence of anti-colonial nationalist imagining. For this case, the context for the political struggles in the public sphere stemmed not so much from the homogenised representation than from the unevenness and the differential treatment of colonial space.

In the 1920s, Mas Marco Kartodikromo, an Indonesian anti-colonial radical who was finally detained by the state and died in a penal colony, wrote about the popularity of new urban cultures that emerged in the colonial cities of Java. In the remarkable series of writing, Mas Marco used both poetic and political references to illustrate the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the urban visual environment. The city where Mas Marco lived was by then undergoing a series of ‘modernisations’ (or should we call it ‘homogenisation’), such as the broadening of asphalt roads, the lighting of streets, the construction of European suburbs, the modernist zoning of the city, the proliferations of shops, restaurants, hotels and cinemas and not least, the experiment with modern architecture. One could analyse the modernisation of the city as an organisation of space that is at once social and political – a technique based on the belief that a relatively modernised city signals as well as calls for the well-being of its inhabitants. There is a theatrical as well as pedagogical aspect to all this, for the city is believed to be capable of playing the role of a ‘model’ for the viewers to learn collectively about themselves. As a result, some kind of collective identity and social life is expected to be formed from the shaping of physical space for the proper functioning of governance. The discourse of modernisation (which in the colonial context entailed homogenisation) can thus be considered as a technology of governance and self-governing in order to pacify and optimise the productivity of its population. Mas Marco recorded what he saw in 1924:

Now if a person came back to Surabaya after being away for seven or eight years, he or she would certainly be amazed at the changes in this great city… The gas and electric lights lining the street lit the place up like daylight… Even at midnight the main streets are still busy – not all that different to the day time. Horse carriages, cars and all sorts of vehicles still sped along the roads, sounding their horns loudly. Cinemas like the Royal, the East-Java and dozens of other large cinemas in the main market had just finished showing films to audiences of thousands, who were now streaming out of the ‘flicks’, waiting for taxis or other vehicles. Why were the people still waiting even though the film was over…?

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There are plenty of opportunities here to interpret the diversity of homogeneity and the singularity of heterogeneity in this remark. The urban modernity described by Mas Marco

could be seen as an example of the ‘compression of time and space’ in which the lively main streets brought together asphalt roads, motorcars, billboards, offices, hotels, the movie house, restaurants, fashionable shops, dancing halls and other wholesale ensembles of imported commodities. For Mas Marco, such panoramic experience provides not only an escape from traditional bonds, but also offers a space for the criticism of that order and the larger colonial cultures embedded in it.\(^{25}\) For Mas Marco, the fascinating thing about the modern city is not just that it is new and accessible to the public (who can pay) but rather because it represents a sense of detachment from the order of ‘home’ and the earlier way of life. Mas Marco addresses this landscape of colonial modernity both in a mix of shock and an exhilarating sense of engagement. He juxtaposes the novelties of the modern built environment with indigenous power as if to make a point that his urban generation is on the move, leaving behind the feudalistic cultural tradition of Java sanctioned by the Dutch colonial government.\(^{26}\) On the other hand, he also reads the streets marked by restaurants and shop fronts each displaying signboards of various kinds as a phenomenon of a larger force of colonial hierarchy working on the city. The main road brings the world of commodities and consumptions closer to him, allowing him to reflect on the question of who has the ‘rights to the city’. It triggers a sense of collective consumption but it also heightens the feeling of unevenness in urban life.

In *Semarang Hitam* (The Dark Semarang), Marco wrote about the city by comparing spaces in the city. He depicted the unevenness of the city by moving in and out of representation: ‘A young man turned the pages of the newspaper … all of a sudden he came upon an article entitled: PROSPERITY: “a destitute vagrant became ill and died from exposure on the side of the road”’.\(^{27}\) In dismay, the young man went off to stroll around the city. What he saw there revealed only more about the unevenness of the colonial city.

“In the big cities of our Indonesia, it is quite common for streets to be called the Heerenstraat (the Master street) – a name which has its roots in the capitalist spirit which divides social classes. If all things were fair, for every Heerenstraat, there should be a Kinderstraat (Children street), shouldn’t there? … Usually Hereenstraats are busy, wide and have shops and large tiles along them. It is of course apt that such streets are called Heerenstraat, for along this street in Surabaya are many grand restaurants, like the Simpang Restaurant – establishments whose expensive prices stop any ordinary worker having a drink there. You have to be one of the rich tuans (Europeans) to go in there … If we compare the Heerenrestaurant on the Heerenstraat with the Tjap Krusek Warung (street vendors) on a narrow, smelly kampong alley, the capitalist ‘caste system’ becomes most obvious … In one place people are happy, in another they are sleeping in the rubbish of those drinkers … If you don’t have the ability to study high-flown theories from foreign books, it is surely enough to understand the practical realities of everyday life. Comparisons show up injustices, don’t they?\(^{28}\)

Though the unevenness of the colonial city was hardly a surprising item of news, and though Mas Marco’s dramatic rendering of his discovery emphasises the significance of the everyday built environment, his experience alerts us to at least two things: first is the role of representation in forming the experience of the city and second, the importance of comparison in the formation of critical consciousness. Before the era of print, news about the ill, the poor and the dead were made available only in oral forms, but in the era of the urban generation of Mas Marco, the oral transmission of such news came only after the signs were printed in the newspaper. Second, the media representation works together with the material space of the city to develop a critical consciousness based on the sense of being discriminated against and left behind. Teasing out the uneven heterogeneity that lies behind the homogeneity of the colonial city, Mas Marco demands justice, equality and ‘rights to the city’.

The arrival of new visual environments and the provision of new infrastructure and urban cultures in the colony while registering a sense of new (homogenous) times, also generates the experience of unevenness which inflected consciousness and the possibilities for politics in the public sphere. The lived experience of colonial subjects seems to indicate that critical responses to the rhythms of colonial architecture and urban form are constituted on the basis of comparison. We know well that in most cases colonial cities are divided cities (never homogenous), but this division also quite often brought elements together and established a comparison between them. This comparison may have not been planned, but it is capable of constituting political imaginations. For Mas Marco, the uneven heterogeneity of the colonial city constitutes an aspiration for a homogeneous treatment of colonial space – a desire, which has led him to a duel with the colonial state. He traces the tensions in the heterogeneity of the built environment and understands it as the politics of territority which marginalise the urban poor population. He compares different urban spaces, which are treated unevenly, and through comparison he articulates his critical consciousness.

\(^{25}\) We can reflect on the urban theories of Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth. With their primary concern on the urban experiences of the West, Simmel and Wirth overlook the ways in which urban modernity (in the colony) was formed outside of the struggle against the colonial/monarchical order. The spatial coordinates of Wirth (rural and urban split) and the temporal contradictions of Simmel (the old and new social relations based on money) does not take into account the disjuncture between the authority of the traditional royal center and urban modernity especially in the context of a colony.

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Yes… dear reader! Things are like that. In the big cities of our Indonesia, it is quite common for streets to be called the Heerenstraat (the Master street) – a name which has its roots in the capitalist spirit which divides social classes. If all things were fair, for every Heerenstraat, there should be a Kinderstraat (Children street), shouldn’t there? … Usually Hereenstraats are busy, wide and have shops and large tiles along them. It is of course apt that such streets are called Heerenstraat, for along this street in Surabaya are many grand restaurants, like the Simpang Restaurant – establishments whose expensive prices stop any ordinary worker having a drink there. You have to be one of the rich tuans (Europeans) to go in there … If we compare the Heerenrestaurant on the Heerenstraat with the Tjap Krusek Warung (street vendors) on a narrow, smelly kampong alley, the capitalist ‘caste system’ becomes most obvious … In one place people are happy, in another they are sleeping in the rubbish of those drinkers … If you don’t have the ability to study high-flown theories from foreign books, it is surely enough to understand the practical realities of everyday life. Comparisons show up injustices, don’t they?28

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To return to the theme of this volume, in what ways does the increasing homogeneity and/or heterogeneity of the built environment contribute to the emergence of political consciousness—a precondition for the formation of the public sphere? And with what knowledge and intellectual framework could we trace the consciousness of urban subjects to the homogeneity and/or heterogeneity of the built environment as they are represented in the city? The distinction between homogeneity and heterogeneity is possible, and there are various ways of dealing with their mutual criticism of each other based on our intellectual, ethical and political positions. But are they two different universes or one? Are homogeneity and heterogeneity not comparative terms that have meaning only in relation to one another? Through Mas Marco, I have shown that neither homogeneity nor heterogeneity could in itself contribute to the emergence of political consciousness. Instead it is by the relations between them that their impact on the public sphere can be traced to give rise to the intellectual, the ethical and the political questions of the lived environment.

The narrative constructs of Mas Marco also represent both the erosion of and challenge to the historicist narrative of homogenisation. For him, the temporal march of history, moving in multiple paths from one stage of development to the next, is ideally supposed to bring everyone to the same place in the end. Yet, this seamless march of history, which guided developmentalist discourse of progress, has been challenged (internally) by the urban spaces it has helped to produce. The most visible signs of this contradiction have been the increasing gaps and unevenness of development and the concomitant emergence of various claims of ‘rights to (survive in) the city’ (and in the village). The disjuncture between time and space can no longer hide a range of social differences even though different strategies of urban governance and governing, including a new framing of knowledge in spatial products, continue to be produced. This uneven development has generated possibilities of struggles for justice and equality in the space fragmented by heterogeneity. Through Mas Marco, I have shown just how the relationships between the temporal and spatial concepts of homogenisation and heterogenisation might impact on the formation of a critical public sphere. I have also shown how these antinomies could productively raise intellectual, ethical and political questions that are central to our engagement with the built and lived environment.

Fragmented Representations:
A critique of cross-border homogeneity in the built environment

MOHAMMAD AL-ASAD

Veering Away From an Academic Discourse

This essay generally is about crossing physical and cultural borders. More specifically, it deals with how architectural and urban models defining the built environment cross such borders and the extent to which they consequently have the capacity to homogenise built environments in different parts of the world.

The subject of homogeneity and its manifestations in the built environment addresses themes that directly or indirectly affect so many people throughout the world on a basic, personal, and continuous basis. This ever-present and highly-relevant subject is intimately connected to our lives, and consequently is far more wide-reaching than the subject matter for theoretical (and often esoteric) academic discourse. One consequently may write extensively and intelligently about homogenisation in the built environment without the need to link, ground or define one’s writing in relation to the texts of others, as is predominantly the case in so many academic writings.

In this context, the subject of homogenisation in its wider sense is intimidating to write about considering the tremendous amount of both academic and popular writing that has appeared on it, particularly over the past two decades. There accordingly is the valid concern that any new writing on homogeneity will end up being not much more than a literature review, critique, or commentary on existing publications, or worse yet, simply ‘spinning’ what already has been written, without adding much that may be considered new or insightful. In contrast, writing on homogeneity in the built environment can be considerably informed through direct and personal experiences and observations, which very often can replace the need for a substantive reliance on other writings for referencing and documentation.

I am making these remarks since this monograph has evolved out of an academic workshop, with the participants belonging almost exclusively to the world of academia. In