

Friction within harmony: Everyday dynamics and the negotiation of diversity in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Most studies on diversity in Southeast Asia focus on the nation-state, with much less attention given to everyday encounters and the negotiation of diversity in local contexts. This article investigates the discourses and practices of various actors in the historically tolerant, generally peaceful, and diverse city and special region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This study examines this ethnic, religious and cultural diversity and illustrates the negotiations among various interest groups and actors that strive to maintain this balance, or sometimes to strategically disrupt it. As such, the findings offer a different way to understand and interrogate the challenges confronting present-day diversity both on a local level in Yogyakarta, and also for Indonesia and Southeast Asia at large.

The city of Yogyakarta, in Central Java, is one of the most ethnically diverse conurbations in Indonesia. Today, the city has a population of about four hundred thousand and has become a melting pot of different religions, languages, cultures, and ethnic groups. Despite the great diversity, there have been hardly any violent conflicts, and Yogyakarta is often pictured as a community of harmony, multicultural tolerance and accommodation. In fact, this so-called ‘EthniCity’¹ has become a focal point for understanding the conditions for and management of diversity in Indonesia. Yogyakarta’s governor, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, has even received an award in 2014 from the Jaringan Antar Iman Indonesia (JAII; Inter-faith Network) for his success in maintaining the city’s pluralism.²

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1 This term refers to the ethnic diversity that has emerged in cities because of political and economic restructuring that has increased along with diversified labour and capital mobility. See *EthniCity: Geographic perspectives on ethnic change in modern cities*, ed. Curtis C. Roseman, Hans-Dieter Laux and Günter Thieme (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996).

2 Bambang Muryanto and Yuliasri Perdani, ‘Yogyakarta’s diversity in peril’, *Jakarta Post*, 31 May 2014.

However, since the shooting of four detainees from East Nusa Tenggara province in Cebongan Penitentiary on the outskirts of the city by the Indonesian Army's Special Forces (Kopassus) on 23 March 2013, Yogyakarta's reputation for tolerance and harmony has come under great pressure. The incident followed the death of one of the Special Force commanders during a fight four days earlier at Hugo's Café in the north of the city. The four suspects had been arrested and imprisoned in Yogyakarta's Police Area Headquarters. Purportedly because the detention room was being renovated, they were moved to the Penitentiary where they were killed shortly after their arrival by 11 Special Forces soldiers.³

The involvement of the Special Forces in the execution of the suspects was revealed 17 days later by the head of the investigation team, Sergeant General Unggul Yudho. The presentation of the findings led to an outbreak of unrest in Yogyakarta between opponents and supporters of this 'act of revenge'. The opponents emphasised the breaking of legal process and a breach of peace and human rights. The supporters pointed to the act as a way of eradicating gangsters from the Yogyakarta area. This idea was first promoted by an army official who portrayed the four detainees as a 'group of gangsters'. Shortly afterwards, supporters of the extra-judicial killings organised a demonstration in the main streets of Yogyakarta. The demonstrators held up banners and posters expressing support for the Special Forces and thanking them for eradicating gangsterism in the city, with statements such as: 'I love the Indonesian Armed Forces'; 'The People and the Indonesian Armed Forces are united to stop gangsters'; and 'Thanks to the Army Special Forces Commanders, Yogyakarta is safe and gangsters kept away'.

Most of the texts on the placards and banners put up in various public spaces of Yogyakarta emphasised the 'fact' that the four persons killed were gangsters from outside the city, or more specifically, from East Nusa Tenggara province. It was as if the murdered prisoners were public 'enemies' of the locals, and this somehow legitimised the killings. Following the commander's death, police and a 'group of people' investigating the murder also made frequent visits to the dormitory where East Nusa Tenggara students lived.

Various informants felt that this incident marked the beginning of several instances of ethnic and religious intolerance in Yogyakarta, which involved actors from all levels of Yogyakarta society and beyond, including from Jakarta. These incidents came to a head on 29 May 2014 when dozens of people dressed in *gamis* (long Arab-style robes) attacked a house where Catholics were worshipping and several people were seriously injured. The National Commission of Human Rights (Komnas HAM) cautioned that cases of intolerance in Yogyakarta were reaching worrying levels, and an article published in the *Jakarta Post* two days after the attack pointed out that 'increasing intolerance directed at religious minorities in recent months' was 'undermining the region's long-held pride as a champion of diversity'.⁴

So, what has been going on in this 'City of Tolerance'? What is disturbing the long-held equilibrium between Yogyakarta's different ethnic and religious groups?

3 There is speculation that Yogyakarta's police headquarters knew of the Special Forces' plan to take revenge. See 'Mystery still shrouds Cebongan Prison attack', *Jakarta Post*, 11 Apr. 2013.

4 Muryanto and Perdani, 'Yogyakarta's diversity in peril'.

Who are the actors threatening the city's long-treasured diversity? Is this just a temporary manifestation or a more enduring trend? Further, what lessons can we draw from this case to design more appropriate diversity policies, not only for Yogyakarta, but also for other cities of Indonesia?

As Francis Collins, Lai Ah Eng and Brenda Yeoh state in the introduction to a volume on migration and diversity in Asia, there are multifarious challenges and opportunities to diversity within the region's varied sociocultural landscapes.⁵ Moreover, there have been insufficient attempts to understand diversity issues within the contexts of Asia's highly distinct and varied postcolonial histories, cultures, geographies and political economies.⁶ Existing studies mainly centre around nation building or view the politics of diversity 'from above'. To fully answer the above questions, we have to dig beneath the level of the nation-state.

This article sets out to investigate some challenges to diversity on a more local and regional level by discussing the emergent discourses and practices in Yogyakarta as an exemplary case study for Indonesia. Unlike most previous studies, however, we envision the city of Yogyakarta as a contested ground, where other interests count alongside tolerance and multiculturalism. Some actors involved in this contestation come from outside Yogyakarta. To some extent, Yogyakarta provides a window for studying the issues and challenges that surround diversity, not only on a local level but also for Indonesia and Southeast Asia at large. Between 2010 and 2014 information was gathered through participant observations of ritual events and academic and governmental meetings on diversity and pluralism, in-depth and oral history interviews with a dozen key informants, and tens of members and representatives of local organisations, institutes and the royal family as well as ordinary Yogyakarta residents.

The following section elaborates the theoretical idea of 'friction within harmony' in society, which provides the framework for what follows. The third section provides an overview of Yogyakarta as a 'place-world', the term used by Keith Basso to describe the result of the place-building process.⁷ The final two sections portray the actors, discourses and practices that create the interwoven ideals of harmony, tolerance and difference, but also make up the core of unending friction in Yogyakarta.

Friction within harmony

The notion of diversity can refer to all kinds of differences, traits or attributes.⁸ Here, we draw on Fredrik Barth's use of the term diversity, by referring to the practices and discourses used in perceiving, interpreting and articulating ethnic differentiation and boundary maintenance.⁹ This may include variations in language, religion

5 Francis L. Collins, Lai Ah Eng and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, 'Introduction: Approaching migration and diversity in Asian contexts', in *Migration and diversity in Asian contexts*, ed. Lai Ah Eng, F.L. Collins, and B.S.A. Yeoh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies [ISEAS], 2013), pp. 1–28.

6 See Rhacel S. Parreñas, 'Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labour', *Gender and Society* 14, 4 (2000): 560–81.

7 Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

8 Sanford Levinson, 'Diversity', *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law* 2, 3 (2000): 573–608.

9 *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

and/or culture. As Anna Tsing observed, difference is both a pre-established frame for connection and an unexpected medium in which connection must find local purchase.¹⁰ More specifically, this continuous search for connection in which diverse actors find divergent means and meanings in a cause, and disagree about what are supposed to be common causes and objects of concern, leads to friction.

Friction within harmony refers to the idea that there are always both opponents and proponents of harmony and tolerance, and that these partly cooperate and partly contest with each other to realise their own interests or those of the group they represent. According to Arie de Ruijter, contestation, conflict, difference and inequality are more likely to be an integral part of living together than harmony, peace and equality.¹¹ Similarly, rather than being primarily a market in which free and equal participants trade ideas, goods and services, 'EthniCities', and in general most modern urban societies, can be considered as a form of 'contested ground'.¹² These contested grounds are, so to speak, the sociocultural frames in which various majority and minority groups who manifest themselves directly through processes of categorising themselves and others — thereby drawing borders — encounter each other in various domains and dimensions of life. Karl Weick states that everyone draws lines between sameness and difference, between inside and outside, between them and us, between me and the other, and this behaviour of inclusion and exclusion is both the source and an outcome of diversity.¹³

The process of drawing boundaries is based on varied perceptions of reality (i.e. prevailing discourses) and experienced (self) interests.¹⁴ These mental schemes become visible through structures, rules and routinised practices. In other words, according to de Ruijter, symbolic presentations and societal institutions are mutually connected and, by taking part in these structures and routines, the related mental schemes are imprinted on outsiders or new arrivals.¹⁵ Through the cultivation of traditions, the construction of myths and the performance of rituals, members of a group are continuously (re)socialised in the culture of that group.¹⁶ Through socialisation and acculturation, new individuals are integrated into the existing order. However, as de Ruitter notes, although new experiences are always interpreted within existing discourses, they are also transformed at the same time: 'integration means change'.¹⁷ This dynamic process does not take place in a vacuum, but is connected to other spaces and places.

Getting a grip on the friction within the 'harmony' of Yogyakarta thus needs to be constructed through the integration of place and the various dominant social spaces, consisting of various actors, discourses, and practices that make up the city.

10 See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An ethnography of global connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 246.

11 Arie de Ruijter, 'Invoegen en uitsluiten; de samenleving als arena', in *Multiculturalisme. Werken aan ontwikkelingsvraagstukken*, ed. C.H.M. Geuijen (Utrecht: Lemma BV, 1998), p. 30.

12 This concept has been adapted from Amita Baviskar, 'Introduction', in *Contested grounds: Essays on nature, culture and power*, ed. A. Baviskar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

13 Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in organizations* (London: Sage, 1995).

14 See De Ruijter, 'Invoegen en uitsluiten'.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

17 *Ibid.*

Following Basso's exposé on place, Yogyakarta is not just a material object and area, naturally formed or built, whose myriad local arrangements make up the landscape of everyday life, but rather the result of a process of place-making: a way of constructing the past as well as of constructing social traditions.¹⁸ This place-in-the-making is one in which friction prevails between the various groups that inhabit the city and who use locally and globally informed discourses as weapons in their struggle for power and dominance, leading to stronger or weaker stances regarding the tolerance of diversity at different times. What follows sketches the 'place-world' of Yogyakarta, 'wherein portions of the past are brought into being',¹⁹ before moving on to the actors, discourses, and practices that make up the social spaces that are at the core of the friction within its harmony.

The place-world of Yogyakarta

The sociocultural frame of Yogyakarta centres on two major cornerstones: the royal court or sultanate, and the university township. It is often the combination of these two that gives Yogyakarta its image as a place where high Javanese cultural and spiritual activities have been safeguarded, but also where many new cultural trends and political initiatives have originated and where militant student movements are born.²⁰ In other words, it is both a place built around seemingly timeless Javanese customs, arts, concepts and heirlooms — the centre of a superior civilisation — while at the same time being a highly dynamic node of sociocultural and political activism.

Yogyakarta's existence in the shadow of an ancient Javanese kingdom supports the image of the city as the centre of Javanese culture. The enormous palace, *keraton*, where the current Sultan resides, lies at the heart of Yogyakarta, a small walled-city within a city. Over 25,000 people live within the greater *keraton* walls. It is not merely a vast complex of lavish buildings, courtyards, and gardens that serves as a royal residence; it is also the court of a realm that has played a significant role in the evolution of the city's sociocultural map.

The city of Yogyakarta is located in the province of Kartamantul (Greater Yogyakarta), which includes another two districts and was formerly a sultanate. After the Giyanti Treaty in 1755, the kingdom of Mataram, located around the centre of the island of Java, was divided into a sunanate and a sultanate.²¹ The territory to the east of the Opak River became the Sunanate of Surakarta Hadiningrat (contemporary Surakarta or Solo) headed by Paku Buwono III. The territory to the west of the Opak River became the Sultanate of Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat, headed by the

18 Basso, *Wisdom sits in places*, pp. 4–5.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

20 See Hairus Salim, Najib bin Ibrahim bin Abdul Latief Kailani and Nikmal Azekiyah, *Politik ruang publik sekolah: Negosiasi dan resistensi di sekolah menengah umum negeri di Yogyakarta* [Politics in public schools: Negotiation and resistance in Yogyakarta's high schools] (Yogyakarta: CRCCS-UGM, 2011) and Mohtar Mas'od, S. Rizal Panggabean, Muhammad N. Azca, 'Social resources for civility and participation: The case of Yogyakarta, Indonesia', in *The politics of multiculturalism: Pluralism and citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), p. 120.

21 The treaty was signed by the king of Mataram, Paku Buwono III, following the VOC's (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie; Dutch East India Company) divide-and-conquer diplomacy during a power play between territory-hungry Javanese princes.

king's father's confidant and brother Mangkubumi, who assumed the title Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I. The king of the latter Sultanate ordered the construction of a palace (*keraton*), the heart of contemporary Yogyakarta.

When the British took over Java from the Dutch in 1812, they split Yogyakarta into two principalities.²² Having defeated Hamengku Buwono II, who had been cast aside by the Dutch, the British rewarded their local ally Notokusumo by naming him as the head of the new independent Paku Alaman House. This principality comprised a small part of Yogyakarta city and a tiny enclave outside to the west. This arrangement was preserved by the Dutch when they returned in 1817.²³ After independence, Yogyakarta obtained the status of an autonomous 'Special Region Province' in 1946. The two principalities of the Hamengku Buwono and Paku Alam families were re-merged to form this administrative region.

The descendants of Sultan Hamengku Buwono I still play a central role in governing the city that has grown extensively in all directions. The *keraton* has remained the focal point of Yogyakarta's traditional life and it still radiates the spirit of Javanese refinement. Yogyakarta, although still linked to its feudal past, has become a modern city. The Yogyanese are well known for their refined character and mild manners, and as favouring harmony over conflict. As observed by Andreas Susanto, '[a] rather liberal stream of Yogyanese Islam and the eclectic nature of the Javanese culture are represented in the life of the Yogyanese with the royal palace lying in its centre'.²⁴ Mas'oed et al. observe that the Yogyanese are often 'portrayed as people committed to a tradition of tranquillity, calmness, and moderation'.²⁵

Although the character and shape of the city and region are the result of many political initiatives of the Dutch colonial and central Indonesian governments and its past sultans, Mas'oed et al. rightly note that 'Yogyakarta today shows the marked influence of the political initiatives of the last two leaders of the royal family' (Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX and his son, the incumbent sultan Hamengku Buwono X).²⁶ In the mid to late 1940s Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX undertook some of the most significant sociopolitical initiatives, resulting in the emergence of a more open and plural polity. Alongside reforming a largely feudal system into a more democratic one, with local government councils and parliaments at all administrative levels from the province down to the village, Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX introduced mass education as the main instrument of modernisation.²⁷ One spin-off from this development of educational infrastructure was the establishment in 1946 of Gadjah Mada University, which continues to attract hundreds of thousands of researchers, teachers, students and project managers from all over Indonesia and even internationally.

22 John Monfries, *A prince in a republic: The life of Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX of Yogyakarta* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2015), p. 63.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

24 Andreas A. Susanto, 'Under the umbrella of the Sultan: Accommodation of the Chinese in Yogyakarta during Indonesia's New Order' (Ph.D. diss., Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 2008), p. 46.

25 Mas'oed et al., 'Social resources for civility and participation', p. 120.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

27 Selo Soemardjan, *Perubahan sosial di Yogyakarta* [Social change in Yogyakarta] (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1981).

Another initiative of the previous sultan that also attracted a broad range of people from Indonesia's many cultural and ethnic groups was his invitation to the new central government in Jakarta to move to the better-protected hinterland location of Yogyakarta at a critical historical moment. The Dutch colonial troops were returning to Jakarta after the Allied victory over the Japanese and the safety of the leaders of the newly declared republic was in jeopardy. President Sukarno's move to Yogyakarta with his entourage brought an influx of migrants to the city, including government officials, military personnel, politicians, journalists, academics and artists, and the city 'became a more plural community than ever before'.²⁸

The last initiative of Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX that influenced the place-world of contemporary Yogyakarta was his successful defiance of the Dutch during the Indonesian Revolution. When the Dutch reoccupied Yogyakarta in 1948, the Sultan locked himself in the *keraton* and remained incommunicado. He continued to run a clandestine government behind the scenes but, even when the Dutch found out, they did not dare move against him for fear of arousing the anger of millions of Javanese who still looked upon the ruler almost as a god. When the Sultan finally met with the Dutch officials, led by Central Java commander General Meijer, he refused their demands, and 'stiffly correct if not wholly polite', asked them to leave by stating, 'I didn't ask you gentlemen to come to Yogyakarta.'²⁹ According to John Monfries, in terms of the correct behaviour of a Javanese king, subduing his enemy without fighting was the most convincing possible sign of his high standing.³⁰

In Herb Feith's terminology, the Sultan played the role of 'administrator-solidarity-maker', in keeping with most of his ancestors.³¹ In doing so Hamengku Buwono IX cooperated with prominent 'administrators', such as Hatta, Sjahrir and Djuanda, but also gained power through the stamp of the traditionalists.³² He had astutely used his royal status in the service of the republic during a critical period. This is regarded as an important, or even essential, element of the independence struggle, and ultimately resulted in an unusual constitutional arrangement and the establishment of the Yogyakarta Special District, which remains in place — more than 65 years later.

Today, the enactment of the *garebeg* ceremonies at the palace further underline the city's diversity. In accordance with Javanese culture, the Yogyakarta court is the centre of politico-religious authority, and numerous rituals and ceremonies are held there throughout the year. As such, three *garebeg*, or religious festivals, are organised each year.³³ At each, an impressive procession, made up of people from different ethno-religious backgrounds, circumambulates the palace to symbolically protect

28 Mas'ood et al., 'Social resources for civility and participation', p. 124.

29 See Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, 'The idea of power in Javanese culture', in *Culture and politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 44–50.

30 Monfries, *The Sultan and the Revolution*, p. 280.

31 Herb Feith, *The decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 32.

32 John Monfries, 'The Sultan and the Revolution', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 164, 2/3 (2008): 269–97.

33 *Garebeg Mulud*, the most important, lasts from the 5th to the 12th day of Maulud (the Islamic month of Rabi'ulawal), and commemorates Prophet Mohammad's birthday. *Garebeg Shawwal* is

the sultanate against possible disaster. Each procession is an expression of the *keraton's* charity and gratitude towards the people of Yogyakarta and surrounding areas. The parades are a spectacle for the people of Yogyakarta: they constitute visible evidence of the sultan's openness towards the city's residents from all backgrounds. Thus the *garebeg* ceremonies, perhaps unwittingly, contribute to the construction of an appreciation of diversity amongst the ordinary Yogyanese. These rituals, together with the artefacts and remnants of a rich cultural past, such as the sultan's palace and the nearby Borobudur and Prambanan temples, along with the royalty's mythological and historical actions, provide the backdrop for what de Ruiter has called the basis for the newcomer's socialisation in the culture of Yogyakarta.

Against this somewhat static sociocultural framing of diversity, the place-world of Yogyakarta can only be fully understood by gaining a sense of the presence of the great number of students in the city since the construction of Gadjah Mada University in 1946.³⁴ Since that time, Yogyakarta has become renowned as Indonesia's 'educational city', or the 'city of students' (*kota pelajar*), with 5 state and 88 private colleges/universities and many more secondary schools. These institutions have attracted students and staff from all over the country. It is sometimes claimed that more than a quarter of Yogyakarta's population is involved in some way in the tertiary education sector.

During the past century, student dormitories, often housing students with a similar ethnic background or place of origin, have been established all over the city. Provincial governments financed, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, the construction of residences for 'their' students. Consequently, Yogyakarta has many so-called 'regional dormitories' for students, for example, from Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Irian Jaya.³⁵ Many other students stay in boarding houses together with their families who had previously migrated to Yogyakarta. As in the early days of the present sultanate, students are free to practice their own religions, use their own local languages, or conduct their cultural rituals, while at the same time meeting and interacting with 'others' in their university or high school and within their own neighbourhood; in doing so, they learn to adapt and live in a socially and culturally diverse environment. More recently, exclusive housing has also been developed for certain religious groups. In some parts of Yogyakarta (notably in the north, northwest and south), there are several Muslim-only dormitory buildings, for example, Perumahan Muslim Djogja Village Plosokuning IV, Perumahan Muslim Pesona Salsahila, Puri Sakinah and Citra Hunian Keluarga Muslim.

Clearly, the presence of a great number and variety of students in Yogyakarta provides an important backdrop for framing diversity and has, since the beginning of the twentieth century, added to the dominant ideal of harmony and tolerance in

held during the fasting month of Ramadhan. *Garebeg Besar* is held on the 10th day of the month of Besar, and commemorates the holy feast of Idul Adha.

³⁴ The influx of students started earlier, with the establishment of the Islamic organisation Muhammadiyah and its schools in Yogyakarta in 1912, followed in the late 1920s by Taman Siswa's modern private boarding school, with more than 11,000 students. See Merle C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia modern* [A history of modern Indonesia] (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2007). Nevertheless, this development did not really gain momentum until the late 1940s.

³⁵ See Mas'ood et al., 'Social resources for civility and participation', p. 126.

Yogyakarta. This is not only because of their appearance but, as we will see, also because of their participation in the various demonstrations and protests which have become part of the city's life.

Weaving ideals of harmony, tolerance and difference

At first sight, Yogyakarta appears to be a typical Indonesian city. Government offices, Chinese and Indonesian shops and markets, Muslim and Christian places of worship are found, along with a mixture of well-to-do, middle-class, and poor neighbourhoods with public life conducted in Indonesian and Javanese. Since the late 1980s, the city has also seen the establishment of various national chain stores, international five-star hotels, department stores and fast-food restaurants, giving Yogyakarta 'a "good-looking" image'.³⁶ This urban development also gives the impression of greater privatisation. Although the city cannot be compared to Jakarta, capital of Indonesia and its largest city, urban development in both seem to be embodying a 'big city' ideology. Bakti Setiawan notes that this process has been criticised by officials, politicians and businesspeople as 'closed', 'elitist', and as 'the arena of capital accumulation'.³⁷ Yet, unlike most Indonesian cities today, Yogyakarta is still primarily a centre for administration and education as well as Javanese culture.

Parallel to this urban development, however, are both overt as well as behind-the-scenes struggles for control, power, financial benefits and rights among officials and politicians, activists and student organisations, and the royal family (and to a minor extent some businessmen).³⁸ As such, it is these actors that make up the ground on which Yogyakarta's diversity is contested: each uses different symbols, discourses and practices, sometimes purposefully, and sometimes pragmatically.

Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, the current sultan and governor, and his relatives, form the most influential group of actors. The sultan is one of the most well-known advocates of diversity in Indonesia. After his father's death in 1988, President Suharto instead appointed Paku Alam VIII, the ruler of a dynasty in Yogyakarta that had split from the Hamengku Buwono sultanate in 1812, as its governor. When he passed away in 1998, Jakarta again attempted to appoint an outsider as governor. But the people of Yogyakarta took to the streets and successfully demanded that Sultan Hamengku Buwono X become the governor. The son of Paku Alam VIII then became the vice-governor. As Koji Miyazaki observes, 'one may regard the area of Yogyakarta as still ruled by the king or the kings, though their official statuses are in accordance with the administration system of the Republic'.³⁹

36 Paschalis M. Laksono, 'Yogyakarta berhati nyaman' [Yogyakarta's peaceful heart], *Buletin Antropologi* 8, 17 (1993): 44.

37 See Bakti Setiawan, 'Tipologi teori perencanaan kota: Agenda riset untuk Indonesia' [Typologies of urban planning theories: Resetting the agenda for Indonesia], *Forum Perencanaan Pembangunan* 11, 1 (1994): 30–39.

38 Hamengku Buwono IX had 5 wives, 7 daughters and 15 sons, including the current sultan, the eldest son. In addition to the current sultan's own 5 daughters, most of his siblings and their children are to some extent involved in Yogyakarta's affairs, even while most of them live outside the city. The same is true for the other members of the Paku Alam lineage.

39 Koji Miyazaki, 'The king and the people: The conceptual structure of a Javanese kingdom' (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 1988).

Sultan Hamengku Buwono X has also been an outspoken supporter of reform and became a key player in post-Suharto opposition politics, primarily due to his role during the massive student demonstrations against Suharto. On 20 May 1998, about a million people gathered on the esplanade outside the palace. The sultan managed to pacify the crowd and prevent the rioting that had taken place in other cities by keeping the military and police out of sight and by telling the people what they had come to hear: that Suharto had lost his legitimacy and that Indonesia needed reform.⁴⁰ One day later, Suharto stepped down.⁴¹

Since 2006, the royal family has been strengthening its power by taking over several of the province's prime assets, on the grounds that they were reclaiming land previously loaned to Yogyakarta society.⁴² The sultan's younger brother, GBPH Hadiwinoto, has started to manage this reclaimed land.⁴³ The sultan's eldest daughter, Gusti Kanjeng Ratu (GKR) Pembayun, was recently granted the title GKR Mangkubumi — a move seen by many as preparing her succession to the crown. She is also effectively in charge of the economic assets on this land — the Tartumartani cigar factory, the Maduskismo sugar factories and several other companies. The palace has changed the firms into shareholder companies, with the royal family holding the majority of shares. Another of the sultan's brothers, Gusti Yudhaningrat, was put in charge of the provincial government bureaucracy, while the sultan stipulated the involvement of his wife, GKR Hemas, and another brother, Gusti Prabukusumo, in various nongovernmental and community-based organisations.⁴⁴

Once Sultan Hamengku Buwono X had served the maximum allowable number of terms as governor (1998–2003 and 2003–2008), the people of Yogyakarta again took to the streets, demanding a life-long position for the sultan, which was eventually granted by the government in Jakarta in 2012.⁴⁵ The period between 2008 and 2012, during which various demonstrations took place in the city, has become known as the struggle for 'Status Daerah Keistimewaan' (Special Region status) — ending with far-reaching autonomy for the Yogyakarta government, headed by the Sultan as the governor for life. As Mark Woodward explained, this call for a Special Region 'also should be understood as Yogyakarta nationalism — as an attempt to unite the throne (the kraton) and the day-to-day administration of the Sultanate'.⁴⁶ During this time, many organisations in Yogyakarta joined to form the 'Kesekretarian Keistimewaan' (Special Region Secretariat), partly as a result of efforts by the Sultan's family.⁴⁷

40 See further Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 229–62.

41 Theodore Friend, *Indonesian destinies* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 421.

42 These are the so-called 'Sultanaat Gronden' (SG; the Sultanate's land). The land of Paku Alam is referred to as Pakualamanaat Gronden (PG).

43 GBPH Hadiwinoto is head (*penghageng*) of Kawedanan Hageng Wahono Sarto Kriyo, which runs the palace's daily affairs.

44 Gusti Yudhaningrat was head of the Department of Culture (Dinas Kebudayaan), Yogyakarta Special Region (Nov. 2011–Nov. 2014); since November 2014, he has been Regional Secretary General Administration Assistant (Asisten Administrasi Umum Sekretaris Daerah) of Yogyakarta Special Region.

45 Under the terms of the 2012 'Yogyakarta Special Region Law' (Law no. 13/2012) the governorship is linked to the sultan.

46 Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, p. 259.

47 The Secretariat's use of 'enforcers' is discussed later in this article. Kesekretarian Keistimewaan included: more locally grounded organisations, e.g. Forum Jogja Rembug, Garda Songsong Bawono,

Sultan Hamengku Buwono X has undertaken many actions to maintain peace and pluralism in the city, leading, as noted in the introduction, to being given a pluralism award in 2012. The Sultan and other members of the royal family often refer to ‘Javanese philosophy’ and Javanese identity as a reference point in the struggle over diversity. The people of Yogyakarta have long perceived the palace (*keraton*) as the centre of the world — or even the universe. As such, the *keraton* with all its buildings, art, trees and location, has deep philosophical meaning. Under Sultan Hamengku Buwono I, the *keraton* was built in 1755–56 in line with the Javanese architectural principle of Catur Gatra Tunggal, or the four elements within a single integrated entity. Each element or dimension has a function: the centre of authority (*keraton*), of prayer and worship (*masjid*, mosque), of social and cultural activities (*alun-alun*, square), and of economic activities (*pasar*, market). The *keraton* is built on a sacred axis that stretches from Mt Merapi in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south. Merapi, an active volcano, holds significant cosmological symbolism as it is believed to house the palace of the spirits of ancestors who died as righteous people. The Indian Ocean is home to Nyai Roro Kidul (‘the Queen of the South Sea’), an ocean deity who is the legendary consort of the sultans of Mataram and now also those of Yogyakarta. Merapi is the spiritual counterpart of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, and Nyai Roro Kidul its protector:

Interpreted liberally, the moral of the story is that a prosperous and peaceful community can be achieved only if the people are ready to live with different and conflicting groups and interest, and try to serve as a ‘bridge’ or a mediator working towards common ends.⁴⁸

Essentially, the *keraton* aims to maintain harmony, both in the natural (real) and the supernatural (invisible) worlds. The sultan is the personification of this idea, guided by the ‘Divine Soul’ of his ancestors.⁴⁹ Soemarsaid Moertono notes that a king (sultan) is burdened with the temptations of unlimited power and having the single and wide responsibility for keeping peace and order in this world and, as such, requires extraordinary eminence and wisdom.⁵⁰

This idea is often used in discussions on diversity, and relates closely to the Javanese philosophy of living in harmony: ‘The truth is harmony, harmony is the truth. He who lives in harmony will know the truth.’ This philosophy of harmony has been materialised by Sultan Hamengku Buwono I through the erection of the *golong gilig* monument. This 25-metre-tall Yogyakarta icon consists of a cylindrical bottom section (*gilig*) and a round top (*golong*), and is located on the imaginary

Gerakan Fajar Nusantara, Gerakan Rakyat, Kawulo Mataram, Kelompok-kelompok Seniman, Komunitas Malioboro, Legium Veteran, Mataram Binangun, Paguyuban Pengemudi Becak, Paksi Keraton, Prajurit Bergodo Ngeksigondo Kotagede and Srikandi Mataram; regional organisations, e.g., Asrama Papua, Asrama Padang (West Sumatra), Paguyuban Masyarakat Nusa Tenggara Timur, Paguyuban Masyarakat Kalimantan Barat (West Kalimantan) and Paguyuban Pengusaha Warga Kuningan (West Java); and national organisations, e.g., Forum Komunikasi Putra Putri Purnawiran (FKPPI).

48 See Mas’oed et al., ‘Social resources for civility and participation’, p. 119.

49 See Monfries, *A prince in a republic*, p. 65; see further, Anderson, ‘The idea of power in Javanese culture’.

50 Soemarsaid Moertono, *Negara dan usaha bina-negara di Jawa masa lampau* [State and statecraft in old Java] (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor, 1985), p. 47.

line connecting Merapi to the South Sea. The monument symbolises the spirit of *golong gilig*: the unity of Yogyakarta society in emotion, mind and will, and also between its people and the sultan. The statue has often been used as a symbol or even central marker for peace, tolerance and diversity during student and activist demonstrations and protests. A former member of Yogyakarta's Cultural Council explained that the '*golong gilig* philosophy means unity beyond ethnicity and religion; the unity embraces every person, between the king and his people'. He went on to say that closely related is the philosophy of living side-by-side: 'Javanese people with their culture have to accept and live alongside non-Javanese people who bring their own culture.'

Such ideas go far beyond cultural diversity and can be found in all dimensions of living in the city, such as professional life, physical appearance, language and religion. As an informant from the Javanology Institute in Yogyakarta explains:

The Yogyakarta Sultanate is formally an Islamic kingdom, but in reality it consists of a combination of Islam and Javanese beliefs. The title of the sultan '*Sayidin Panatagama Kalifatullah*' means sultan as the centre of religious administration (*Panatagama*). As the *Panatagama Kalifatullah*, the sultan is leader of all human beings and able to unite every religion under his great umbrella. He cannot take sides or discriminate against other religions or beliefs but, above all, he is the protector of diversity and difference.

This statement strengthens the ideals of diversity as well as the expectations of the role of the Yogyakarta sultan as the protector and unifier of differences in the territory.

Not surprisingly, the present sultan has often referred to this philosophy in his struggle against acts of violence against religions other than Islam. In March 2012, for example, when conducting the ritual 'Laku Budaya Taruparwa' planting together with six religious leaders in the northern region of Yogyakarta, he expressed his concern about the many violent outbreaks in the city in the name of religion. In recent years, Yogyakarta has seen a wave of Islamisation, often fuelled by support from Islamic organisations in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East as well as Pakistan. This has resulted in the preaching of radical Islam in various mosques, a departure from the traditionally tolerant and syncretic Islam of Yogyakarta.

The planting of seven different types of trees — symbolising the six officially recognised religions of Indonesia: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism as well as Javanese animism (*aliran kepercayaan*) — became a symbol for the revival and growth of cultural values, including harmony among the religions, among people as well as between people and the environment.⁵¹

Another important philosophy closely related to living harmoniously side-by-side that is often mentioned in discourses on diversity in Yogyakarta is *hamemayu hayuning bawana*. One of the palace's spiritual advisers explained this philosophy as follows:

51 See also Olivia Lewi Pramesti, 'Pohon kerukunan antar umat ditanam di Yogyakarta' [Trees of harmony between (religious) members planted in Yogyakarta], *National Geographic Indonesia*, 9 Mar. 2012; <http://nationalgeographic.co.id/lihat/berita/2932/pohon-kerukunan-antar-umat-ditanam-di-yogyakarta> (last accessed 12 Mar. 2015).

What is meant by *bawana* is nature, but it is not external nature, rather it is spiritual nature. *Hamemayu hayuning bawana* refers to our own spiritual nature and, thus, if we implement it in our behaviour, it will surely lead to kindness to others and the preservation of the wider world.

The Yogyakarta kingdom is not pushing these normative rules as a law with clear clauses and criminal offences. Rather than the rule and management of life being controlled by external powers, they are embedded in values or philosophy ‘that can be felt by every citizen or person’, according to the spiritual adviser. This amounts to a model or frame for establishing and dealing with relationships and helps to shape or channel this philosophy into ideas of living side-by-side in harmony.

In 2008 the *Hamemayu hayuning bawana* philosophy was adopted by the government of Yogyakarta in a special regulation (no. 72) stipulating the ‘obligation to protect, maintain and develop the safety of the world and give more importance to the work of society than to personal ambition’.⁵² This regulation is part of a package introduced to offer a framework for Yogyakarta society such that it could ‘live side-by-side in harmony and balance’. These ideals were reinforced by proclaiming Yogyakarta as a ‘City of Tolerance’ in 2011, an idea put forward by various elements of society and representatives of religious groups and adopted by Herry Zudianto, mayor from 2001 to 2011. Zudianto explained that tolerance meant harmony, understanding and the willingness to accept, acknowledge and cooperate with each other.⁵³ These moves had been preceded by the slogan ‘*Berhati nyaman*’ (lit., peaceful-hearted), used since 1992 to promote Yogyakarta as a pleasant and good place, not only to live but also to visit.⁵⁴

The Yogyakarta philosophy of harmony and tolerance equally frames its activist and student movements. Student demonstrations, especially those against violence and in favour of tolerance, are quite common, but these mass marches rarely get out of hand. Protests are generally framed by the idea of a *pepe* rite: reducing conflict and looking for solutions that do not destroy societal order and harmony.⁵⁵ Peaceful actions expressing one’s aspirations have become more commonplace since Sultan Hamengku Buwono X and Paku Alam VIII participated in the demonstrations for political reforms in 1998 and called for peace and calm. The frequent demonstrations in Yogyakarta in the *Reformasi* era have synergised the philosophy and symbols of

52 The full regulation in Bahasa Indonesia is as follows: ‘*Hamemayu Hayuning Bawana* mengandung makna sebagai kewajiban melindungi, memelihara serta membina keselamatan dunia dan lebih mementingkan berkarya untuk masyarakat daripada memenuhi ambisi pribadi. Dunia yang dimaksud mencakup seluruh peri kehidupan baik dalam skala kecil (keluarga), ataupun masyarakat dan lingkungan hidupnya, dengan mengutamakan darma bakti untuk kehidupan orang banyak, tidak mementingkan diri sendiri.’

53 Herry H. Zudianto, *Kekuasaan sebagai wakaf politik: Manajemen Yogyakarta kota multikultur* [Power as a political endowment: Management of the multicultural city Yogyakarta] (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2008), pp. 49–50.

54 *Berhati* is an acronym of *Bersih* (clean), *sehat* (healthy) and *indah* (beautiful); *nyaman* means pleasant or comfortable.

55 The *pepe* rite traditionally takes place between two trees in the courtyard of the *keraton* when a person wants to draw the attention of the Sultan. This person dresses in white to symbolise purity and sits motionless between the trees until he or she comes to the attention of the Sultan. See Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, p. 234.

local culture in ways that are perceived as ‘unique to Yogyakarta’ — marked by calm, harmony, peace, and often artistic expression.

On 24 June 2012, for example, thousands of university and high school students, artists and many others took to the streets to protest against the increase in acts of violence and intolerance in the name of religion and ethnicity, and presented a ‘Manifesto for diversity in Yogyakarta’.⁵⁶ Notably, the sultan, as governor of Yogyakarta Special Region, and the rector of Gadjah Mada University both participated in the demonstration. This peaceful campaign also included a cultural parade in which people representing various subdistricts, and many other groups such as transgenders and those from different ethnic backgrounds, presented the city’s unique attractions.

Humanists, artists, academics, and NGO and pro-diversity activists are often the engine of these mass demonstrations at the local or even national level. However, in Yogyakarta, several nongovernmental and community-based organisations and other kinds of (religious) institutions also conduct activities in the ‘shadow of the media’, most notably Dian Interfide, of Forum Persaudaraan Umat Beriman (FPUB; Interfaith Brotherhood Forum) and the Centre for Religious Studies and Cross-Cultural Studies (CRSCCS) at Gadjah Mada University. Through forums, research and workshops, such as a two-week CRSCCS course on multicultural advocacy for activists in 2013, these organisations actively contribute to attempting to maintain Yogyakarta’s diversity and peace.

FPUB is probably the best-known religious institution fighting for diversity. Centred in Yogyakarta and, with its many boarding schools (*pesantren*) and an enormous network across Indonesia, it has had far-reaching effects. It was established in 1988 and its traditional Islamic boarding schools admit people of any faith and from any ethnic or national background. ‘Despite the school’s traditional nature, it includes such subjects as nationalism, human rights pluralism, multiculturalism, gender and the environment in its curriculum.’⁵⁷ According to the founder and coordinator of FPUB, Kyai Muhaimin, Islam is basically a source of peace for all, regardless of their faith. Abdul Muhaimin, who shared the story of his childhood with us, explained that, in his time, *pesantren* were part of, and in harmony with, the community, while

56 The ‘Manifesto for diversity in Yogyakarta’ reads: Diversity is a daily fact of life which cannot be denied in Indonesia. The founders of the nation formulated Indonesia as a country based on the Pancasila, not on a particular religion or tribe. This formulation is the foundation of the national spirit that is tolerant, respects diversity, and upholds freedom of thinking and of expression. Its long history shows that Yogyakarta is the education city and one of the centres of Javanese culture, always giving space for cultural diversity and the freedom of thought and speech. It was this understanding that forms the basis of Yogyakarta’s uniqueness. Recently there has been violence in the name of religion, tribe and group. We, the society of Yogyakarta, declare that we: (1) Reject intimidation and violence for any reason because intimidation and violence in the name of religion, tribe, group, gender and ideology does not accord with the principle of diversity; (2) Support the national apparatus in the prosecution of any individual or group committing intimidation and violence; and (3) Invite society to respect and appreciate diversity and not let violence and intimidation against civil rights to happen. Therefore, we, the society of Yogyakarta, invite the nation of Indonesia to support and guard the diversity of Indonesia. Yogyakarta, 24 June 2012. See further: <http://jogjanews.com/semarak-aksi-budaya-dari-yogyakarta-untuk-indonesia-bineka-habibah-pimpin-pembacaan-manifesto-yogyakarta-untuk-keberagaman#sthash.EEehUtCy.dpuf> (last accessed 1 Oct. 2016).

57 See Simon Sudarman, ‘KH Abdul Muhaimin: A “pesantren” transcending the limits’, *Jakarta Post*, 27 May 2013.

today the boarding houses tend to be in their own separate enclaves within the surrounding environment: ‘you do not know each other, which results in misunderstanding each other.’ However, for Abdul Muhaimin, ‘diversity and togetherness are not separate dimensions. The first is abstract and the second is everyday practice. They look like separate domains but actually they are two sides of the same coin.’⁵⁸ He argues that FPUB, with its school network, is strong and has a lot of power and influence. Although its communities are scattered across many territories, they are tied to one organisation and because of their active involvement in interfaith dialogues with many other religious organisations and communities, such as the Kibaith Interfaith Group and the Catholic Church, they are able to act or react quickly, by using ‘Banser or Ansor’.⁵⁹

The humanitarian performance and the contribution of Muhaimin as evinced by his boarding school have been nationally and internationally acknowledged. When the tsunami hit Aceh and the Merapi volcano erupted in Central Java [in the vicinity of Yogyakarta city], Muhaimin also mobilised relief efforts. ‘The operational costs for humanitarian activities and expenses for my visits to America, China, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and remote parts of Indonesia, including the running of this *pesantren*, are fully borne by NGOs, religious networks and contributors sharing the same vision, rather than by the government,’ said the recipient [Muhaimin] of a cultural award from Yogyakarta Governor Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X in 2009.⁶⁰

During natural disasters such as Merapi’s eruption in 2006, FPUB, together with the local religious institution Kawula Ngayogyakarta, headed by the spiritual leader Suwaldji, and Sapto Dharmo, a local spiritual institution that promotes the Javanese ideals of retrospection and seeking forgiveness from the creator, have mobilised their grassroots support to hold a traditional ritual called a *merti dusun* (offering rite). *Merti dusun* is performed to bring society closer to the surrounding environment, to create mutual balance, harmony and care, specifically with regard to nature. In 2006, the crown princess GKR Pembayun approached these organisations and coordinated and controlled the *merti dusun*. In hindsight, this act certainly enhanced the royal family’s reputation and influence.

To summarise, various actors in Yogyakarta produce and reproduce a plethora of more-or-less traditional philosophies in the struggle to maintain the status quo on ethnic and religious diversity. In addition, the ideals of harmony, tolerance and difference are sometimes pragmatically and strategically woven together, expressed and presented by groups of actors for the sake of their own political or economic interests.

Balancing conflict and harmony

During the outbreaks of mass violence just before the downfall of the New Order in 1998 — with some cities in Indonesia seeing the destruction of homes and buildings, robbery, arson, rape and murder — the media commentators often wondered

58 Interview, Abdul Muhaimin.

59 Banser is an acronym of *Barisan Ansor Serbaguna*, a multipurpose Ansor brigade (a paramilitary wing) under the youth group of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Ansor, or GP Ansor, refers to the Gerakan Pemuda youth movement.

60 Sudarman, ‘KH Abdul Muhaimin’.

whether Indonesia as a nation, that is known as friendly, compassionate and polite, had lost its 'mind'? Such a question may point to the fragility of human values in the face of a 'real' crisis, when the cultural symbols which guide sociocultural interactions seem not to be able to withstand the power of mass violence. Another way of looking at the events of 1998 is through historical patterns of violence that may well resurface under crisis conditions.

Every major royal or political transition in Javanese history has been accompanied by violence and intrigue. James Siegel writes that following Indonesian independence, there were various large-scale outbreaks of violence with massive loss of lives and material, most notably during the Indonesian Revolution beginning in 1945 and peaking in 1949.⁶¹ Siegel points out that Indonesians clashed not only with the Dutch colonial forces, but also among themselves. Until the *Reformasi* era, most major post-Independence political transitions have been invariably accompanied by the spilling of blood (often perpetrated by the armed forces and political leaders). Such large-scale violence occurred during the establishment of the New Order (massacres of communists and suspected leftist sympathisers in 1965–66); the final phase of the New Order in 1997–98 (anti-Chinese pogroms, other ethnic or religiously-targetted killings, murders of college students), and the killings following the declaration of East Timor's independence. The list goes on, and we can add to them the massacres of Papuans and Acehese during the state's actions against what it termed 'Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan' (GPK; Security Threatening Movements).

Since *Reformasi*, violence and discrimination have continued in some parts of Indonesia. Most of these incidents originate in communalism and fundamentalism, and include the killing of and discrimination against Ahmadiyah followers, opposition to building non-Islamic places of worship, wrecking of nightclubs, and raids on shops selling alcohol.

While Yogyakarta escaped the widespread chaos associated with the downfall of Suharto, it has not been historically free from mass violence.⁶² During the Indonesian Revolution (1945–49), Yogyakarta, as the temporary capital of Indonesia, became the scene of heavy fighting between the Dutch military and Indonesian guerrilla fighters. The 1965 massacre of communists that was initiated in Jakarta by the military under the command of General Suharto also had victims in Yogyakarta. Unlike these events, the mass-murder of criminals during the New Order in 1983 and 1984, again initiated by the military, actually started in Yogyakarta. In all these tragedies, there were many deaths, but without any formal prosecutions and much blame apportioned, these events polarised society.

Though the 2012 Cebongan Penitentiary attack was of a completely different scale and nature, it shows some similarities to the above-mentioned incidents. As one anonymous informant from the palace circle explained, 'The incident of the attack on and killing of the four inmates of Cebongan Prison was actually related to an internal conflict within the noble circle as one of the four victims killed was

61 James T. Siegel, *Penjahat gaya (Orde) Baru: Eksplorasi politik dan kriminalitas* [Criminals, New Order-style: Explorations of politics and criminality] (Yogyakarta: Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial, 2000).

62 Ibid.

the *preman* of one of these nobles.⁶³ This shows that the problem does not only lie in the violence itself, but also in the efforts to legitimise violence. Groups of offenders justify themselves by using certain ideologies, values or discourses (e.g. the nation or a specific religion) to label their victims as public enemies. For example, the 1965 massacres were framed as justifiable actions against those trying to destroy the nation. Similarly, the Cebongan assassinations have been framed as the eradication of gangsterism. By attempting to legitimise their acts of violence in this way, the perpetrators have kept their hands clean, and minimised the risk of being arrested. These patterns are often used in Yogyakarta and elsewhere in Indonesia to cover the involvement of the authorities, military or police who are really behind many of these actions.

When Yogyakarta became part of a united Indonesia, it could no longer avoid interventions and interference from the central government and national elite. Yogyakarta, as an open area, faces friction in its development. Local constructions of harmony and peace under the umbrella of Javanese culture are faced with the reality of a society that is becoming more open to outside interests and interference.

A former gangster, who survived the extra-legal killings in 1982 and 1983, shared his life story and explained the role of gangsters in Yogyakarta in maintaining the equilibrium within a diverse society. After Suharto initiated the sweeping away of security guards and gangs by a 'fully armed state vigilante squad' in 1982,⁶⁴ the gangs that survived or emerged fell under government control or under the wing of a political party.⁶⁵

In Yogyakarta, the surviving 'repentant gangsters' (*preman*) affiliated themselves to various martial arts schools. This affiliation enabled them to play a central role in handling crime or violence: by solving them or acting as peacekeepers between opposing parties, individuals as well as whole communities. The gangsters also built good relations with the police (Mobile Brigade, Brimob) and the Indonesian Army in the early 1990s because the gangsters were recruited to train the police and army in martial arts techniques, in turn often becoming informants for the law enforcers. When the police could not find the criminals, they relied on information from the *preman* to find their targets. The *preman* were also recruited by shop owners and rich people who needed a security service. Many lower-class young men joined security groups as bodyguards and debt collectors in Jakarta, Bandung and also Yogyakarta during the mid-1980s and 1990s.⁶⁶ In the power vacuum that followed the fall of Suharto

63 *Preman* is a common term for members of Indonesia's active community of (semi-) criminal strongmen. In reality, these organised gangs include both street-level criminals and crime bosses. See Tim Lindsey, 'The criminal state: *Premanism* and the new Indonesia', in *Indonesia today: Challenges of history*, ed. Grayson J. Lloyd and Shannon Smith (Singapore: ISEAS, 2001), pp. 283–97, and Tim Lindsey, 'From Soepomo to Prabowo: Law, violence and corruption in the *preman* state', in *Violent conflicts in Indonesia: Analysis, representation, resolution*, ed. Charles A. Coppel (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–36.

64 See also John Pemberton, *On the subject of 'Java'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); James T. Siegel, *A new criminal type in Jakarta: Counter-revolution today* (Durham: Duke University, 1998).

65 Hatib A. Kadir, 'School gangs of Yogyakarta: Mass fighting strategies and masculine charisma in the city of students', *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 13, 4 (2012): 352–65.

66 See Joshua Barker, 'State of fear: Controlling the criminal contagion in Suharto's new order', in *Violence and the state in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict O'G. Anderson (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 2001), and Jérôme Tadie, *Wilayah kekerasan di Jakarta* [Zones of violence in Jakarta], trans. Rahayu S. Hidayat (Jakarta: Masup, 2009).

in 1998, the use of private security guards, youth gangs and local vigilante ‘mass organisations’ (*organisasi kemasyarakatan*, or *ormas*) to acquire or protect one’s assets became more widespread. These people and organisations set themselves up as brokers and enforcers who represent specific political and royalist interests, and capable of and willing to use violence. Some of the organisations position themselves as NGOs, albeit with violence at their disposal, and refer to national laws as well as to public support to legitimise their activities.

According to Sudarto, a retired civil servant from the Provincial Cultural Department, certain royal family members often use the services of these *preman* to secure their positions and businesses. For example, some *preman* are authorised by royals to manage parking lots in central Yogyakarta, where they are expected to act as security guards as well as controllers of conflict. Some of them are involved in political parties and organisations. Sudarto noted that many *preman* joined in the mass demonstrations during the struggle for Yogyakarta’s special status between 2008 and 2012. Sudarto noted that the organisations that mobilised the masses to put pressure on the central government in Jakarta to give Yogyakarta special region status sometimes used these *preman* as enforcers. These mass organisations were united in the Special Region Secretariat mentioned earlier. The chairman of the Secretariat, Widihaso, and some of the others involved in the struggle were appointed as courtiers (*keprajan*) by the *keraton*. According to Marjoko, one such courtier, the Secretariat met at a publishing house that provided facilities for their actions. Cultural action was chosen as a strategy for protest because of Yogyakarta’s history as the ‘Cultural City’ of Java, although he admitted that violence was used at times:

We brought forward the image of the ‘city of culture’ in each action to give the impression that our actions were different from other actions that highlight violence. Although, in certain cases, we also had people who used violence when necessary.

Marjoko continued,

It was also said that the group led by Anglingkusumo (the brother of Paku Alam IX who lost the struggle for the throne after Paku Alam VIII died) and by Hanafi Rais (the son of Amien Rais, who lost the election for Mayor of Yogyakarta in 2011) was against the special region status for Yogyakarta. We needed to keep a watchful eye on them, including the mass demonstrations by organisations such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), to not obstruct the struggle for special region status. We were not just coping with Jakarta; there were also many groups within Yogyakarta who disagreed with having that status.

The royal family’s shadowy use of *preman* to manage the city’s parking lots allows them to be used to keep the peace, while at the same time serving as pressure groups for specific financial or political gains. Eko, a carpark guard, said that some of the parking areas are controlled by *preman* from outside Yogyakarta and that some businesspeople and politicians even hire military personnel alongside *preman*, to secure their interests. The *preman* are closely related to other higher, often less visible, powers and interests. They can be ‘brought out’ to cause conflict as well as keep the peace. In other words, gangsters, vigilante groups and the military are used

both as instruments for producing friction within harmony, as well as tools for bridging the divides.

Everyday dynamics and the negotiation of diversity in Yogyakarta

The reality of harmony and diversity in Yogyakarta seems to be a little more complicated than it first appears. The general harmony in the life of ordinary Yogyanese is the result of negotiations between various parties, such as the police, the military, political parties, entrepreneurs and the royal family. As such, the Cebongan incident can be seen as more than friction or conflict between the military and various *preman*. Behind violent events, there are often hints of various kinds of ‘friction in motion’, such as friction among the nobles, among the supporters of the nobles backed by their societal organisations, rivalry among the *preman* or entertainment service providers, or elsewhere, between various actors with opposing interests who seek to benefit from the tragic consequences of conflict and violence. The construction of Yogyakarta as the city of tolerance and harmony, pluralism and diversity is therefore true for some, but used as a cover by others — outsiders, gangsters and nonconformists — to achieve their interests by fighting against those who oppose this ideal.

Alongside these hidden agendas of violence in Yogyakarta, small-scale clashes are also part of the everyday dynamics of urban life. The presence of so many student dormitories cannot be ignored given the conflicts and disputes between various student groups, and also between students and other groups in the city. When non-Javanese students started to appear in Yogyakarta, small-scale inter-ethnic conflicts occasionally occurred.⁶⁷ Notably, however, such disputes were often played down or resolved and neither led to larger conflicts nor a negative stance towards diversity.

In conclusion, the maintenance of harmony, peace and tolerance of diversity in Yogyakarta depends not only on everyday encounters, but even more on the power plays between major actors within the city and elsewhere and their mobilisation of student and activist groups to express support for existing frameworks of diversity. In some cases, however, major actors have even been deploying people or organisations from the ‘grey zone’ to undermine the city’s diversity.

There is always friction in any diverse society and, depending on time, place and space, this will be harmonised, reconstructed, reproduced or even blown up. The attributes or boundaries of differences and sociocultural harmony are dynamic and can be changed, or redefined, depending on context and interests. Differences and similarities can sometimes be threatening, but may at times also be beneficial. Sociocultural homogeneity or differentiation is vulnerable to politicisation by ruling elites, by other powerful actors or even by the population at large. In essence, this model of ‘friction within harmony’ in the city of Yogyakarta is the result of the everyday dynamics of society or, in de Ruijter’s words, ‘an integral part of living together’. It is heightened by the continuous renegotiation of harmony by various actors with

67 See also *Politik multikulturalisme: Menggugat realitas kebangsaan* [Politics of multiculturalism: Criticising the reality of nationalism], ed. Robert W. Hefner (Yogyakarta: Impulse-Kanisius, 2007), pp. 210–12.

different interests. Yogyakarta, through its sultan and by virtue of widely accepted values of harmony and tolerance, has given rise to many exceptional institutions, NGOs and ways of dealing with friction when it arises. To date, these have been successful in stemming conflict, violence and reworking friction into the 'harmonious' fabric of Yogyakarta society.