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Tracing Memory, Violence, and Erasure Within the Chinese-Indonesian Shophouse

by
Tara Natalia

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The Indonesian shophouse historically functioned as a unified urban framework, intertwining domestic life, commercial activity, and shared remembrance directly within the cityscape. This thesis contends that this typology serves as a critical spatial record of historical violence and cultural mediation. Furthermore, its current evolution into a site of consumer entertainment represents an archival erasure, safeguarding external structures while obscuring the profound narratives physically embedded within the typology.

Taking the May 1998 riots as its central rupture, this research delineates the processes through which the shophouse garnered distinct cultural legibility under shifting political configurations, from its consolidation within Dutch colonial districts through the three decades of cultural suppression under the New Order, and demonstrates how today's visibility has been repurposed for commodification. The typological foundations of the shophouse have been progressively destabilized even as its visual language continues to proliferate, increasingly appearing as an authored model within privatized developments severed from the social conditions under which it was produced.

Examining Disneyfication as a process of sanitization and a mechanism by which cultural visibility is produced at the cost of historical legibility, the thesis argues for a mode of architectural reading that holds form and social history together. Drawing on morphological analysis, typological theory, and autoethnographic fieldwork across Jakarta, the research reads typological evolution as architectural evidence and a record of the political forces that successively acted on the community and the type. Against the selective record produced by conservation frameworks and commercial redevelopment, the thesis constructs a counter-archive of the shophouse in its living condition, reading material traces of repair, habitation, and everyday use as spatial testimony, and positions the return to the type as the condition under which the shophouse continues to bear witness.

Acknowledgements

This thesis began as a story about a building, and somewhere along the way it became a story about the people who kept me standing.

To my supervisor, Fiona Lim Tung, thank you for guiding me from M1 to M3. However many time zones sat between us, you found the hour to talk to me through the weight of the research. You were encouraging when I had run out of encouragement for myself, and you taught me how to slowly trust the work.

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"For some, the tragedy remains in darkness. It is hidden and muted, not least by the new architecture built on and over the site of the riot. If one walks behind the wall of the new Pasar Glodok, the remnants of the riots can still be found. As for the architecture of Pasar Glodok, while it speaks of old Batavia in ways that are somewhat crude, it also totally fails to address the violent history of the building's location. The commemorators, the photographs, and the ruins behind the building register its memories of violence. They break the architectural order that seeks to distance itself from the past horror."

Abidin Kusno, ***Appearances of Memory***

0 / PREFACE

Pre-Colonial Maritime Networks

(before 1600s)

- The Indonesian archipelago is part of extensive maritime trade routes linking China, India, the Middle East, and later Europe.
- Port cities functions as cosmopolitan hubs with highly mixed populations.
- Chinese, Arab, Indian, and local traders coexists, often forming hybrid communities through intermarriage and shared commercial practices.
- Political authority is fragmented across kingdoms and port polities.

The Batavia Massacre

- Economic tensions and colonial anxieties culminates in a large-scale massacre of Chinese residents in Batavia.
- Thousands are killed, and survivors are forcibly relocated outside the city walls (present-day Glodok Area).
- The event reinforces long-standing suspicion toward Chinese communities within colonial society.

14th c. **1740**

1602

Dutch Colonial Rule

(1600S-1942)

- The Dutch East India Company (VOC) establishes control over key ports, eventually forming the Dutch East Indies.
- Batavia (Jakarta) becomes the colonial capital and administrative center.
- Colonial society is organized through rigid racial classifications: Europeans, *"Foreign Orientals"* (Chinese, Arabs, Indians), and Indigenous populations. These categories shapes legal rights, economic roles, and social status.
- Chinese communities often occupies intermediary roles in trade and taxation, making them economically important but politically marginalized.

1945

Independence & the Old Order
(1945-1965)

- Indonesia declares independence in 1945 under President Soeharto.
- The country faces political fragmentation, economic instability, and unresolved colonial legacies.

1942

Japanese Occupation
(1942-1945)

- Japan occupies Indonesia during World War II, ending Dutch colonial control.
- The occupation causes severe economic hardship, forced labor, and social disruption.
- At the same time, nationalist movements gains momentum.

1965

The Communist Massacre
(1965-1966)

- A failed coup leads to widespread anti-communist purges.
- Hundreds of thousands are killed across Indonesia.
- The events contributes to the rise of Soeharto and the collapse of Soekarno’s leadership.

New Order Era

(1966-1998, Soeharto)

- Soeharto establishes a centralized, authoritarian regime known as the New Order.
- The government prioritizes political stability, economic growth, and foreign investment.
- Political dissent is suppressed, and media and public expression are tightly controlled.
- Chinese-Indonesians faces strong assimilation pressures.

Asian Financial Crisis & May 1998 Riots

- The Asian Financial Crisis (1997-1998) causes severe economic downturn: currency collapse, rising unemployment, and social unrest.
- In May 1998, widespread riots breaks out in several cities.
- Chinese-Indonesian communities are disproportionately targeted.
- The crisis leads to Soeharto's resignation after more than 30 years in power.

1966

19

1970

Economic Growth and Urban Transformation

- Indonesia experiences sustained economic growth, particularly during oil boom years.
- Cities like Jakarta undergoes major transformations, i.e. expansion of infrastructure, development of malls and commercial centers, and growth of new residential areas.
- A new urban middle class begins to emerge.

Contemporary Indonesia
(2000s-present)

- Consumption, real estate development, and infrastructure become key drivers of economic activity, particularly across Indonesia's largest urban regions, Jakarta foremost among them.
- Political landscape is marked by the consolidation of elite networks and increasing role of media and digital platforms in political mobilization.

Prabowo Subianto Presidency
(2024-present)

- Prabowo Subianto, a former military general with ties to the New Order era, is elected president in 2024.
- His election reflects the persistence of political elites from earlier periods and the absence of a definitive break between past and present governance.

98 2000 2024

2014

Reformasi Era
(post-1998)

- Indonesia transitions to a democratic political system.
- Key reforms includes decentralization of power, greater political openness, and expansion of civil liberties.
- Discriminatory policies against Chinese-Indonesians are gradually removed.

Recent Political Developments
(2014-present)

- The presidency of Joko Widodo emphasizes infrastructure development, economic growth, and technocratic governance.
- Large-scale infrastructure projects (toll roads, MRT, new capital city) have reshaped national development priorities.

My Name Is Not My Own

1 Indonesian word for "Christmas."

My name is Tara Natalia.

My name is Tara Natalia, because despite being an Indonesian of Chinese descent, I have no Chinese name, nor do I know what it means to be one.

When I introduce myself today, especially in Canada, my name lands with a small hesitation; often misread as European, prompting assumptions of whiteness before I enter the room, and leaving people asking why an Asian woman carries a name that sounds borrowed from elsewhere. In a multicultural landscape where surnames can hold ethnicity, diaspora, and kinship, my own becomes a kind of blank field - something that I must repeatedly contextualize, justify, and interpret. Each and every time, I try my best to explain.

Growing up, I accepted my name as a simple story: my father told me that "Tara" came from Sanskrit, meaning "Goddess of Protection," and that "Natalia" simply refers to '*natal*',[1] the day I was born. My name was chosen by my parents without any explicit political intention – they simply gave me a name that felt right to them. And for a long time, that was all it was to me: a name, and nothing more.

I was in eighth grade when I learned the reason many of my friends and I didn't have Chinese surnames was because there had been a time where we weren't allowed to. Perhaps, at thirteen, we weren't meant to know why – but somehow, a classmate of mine knew.

One afternoon, Ravi would introduce me to the chronology of the May 1998 riots that broke out throughout major Indonesian cities, devastating the Chinese-Indonesian community. He told me about how Chinese-owned stores were looted and burned, and how women of Chinese descent were assaulted and killed. I remember lying on my bed, the screen of my phone illuminating details I had no framework to understand. I scrolled through images of burning, blood, families running from chaos, and storefronts reduced to their skeletons.

At thirteen, I felt as confused as I was shocked. Until that moment, I never had a reason to truly feel like a minority. My upbringing was almost completely insulated: I attended institutions that pioneered multiculturalism, spent weekends in air-conditioned malls, and moved through the city in a car that kept its frictions at a distance. I was surrounded by people who looked like me and spoke like me, untouched by history. I grew up in what I now recognize as a bubble of protection, where fractures of Indonesian history were often softened.

Over the years, I began to understand that the gap in my knowledge was not unique. Many Chinese-Indonesians of my generation carry a similar absence; a discontinuity between who we are and where we come from. What I once understood as a personal uncertainty about my identity was not an individual flaw, but a collective condition. Our distance from Chinese heritage is the product of a larger scale of erasure: the absence of public memory, and the deliberate removal of a past that might have told us who we were.

It still confuses me that the first person to tell me about the May 1998 riots was not a parent, not a teacher, or another Chinese-Indonesian, but Ravi, a Javanese classmate who had known me since childhood. He spoke casually about it, and perhaps it was because for him, the riots existed as a historical fact; something studied, discussed, and referenced without personal risk. But for me, it was a sudden and disorienting encounter with a story that, in many ways, belonged to my own community yet had never reached me. Ravi's casual familiarity, and my own unknowing, revealed something essential about how the riots were metabolized. The story of May 1998 was not transmitted through official channels; it was not institutionalized into curriculums, memorials, or state archives. Instead, it receded into the private domain, where it lived as fragments.

DAY 0: MAY 12, 1998
THE DEMONSTRATION

First Confrontation

The opening forum is marked by the lowering of the national flag to half-mast, accompanied by everyone singing the national anthem, and followed by a moment of silence. Speeches and the open forum continue,and the action proceeds in an orderly manner.

Tension rises when several security personnel appear on the flyover above the forum. Students demand to proceed with a long march to the Parliament (MPR/DPR). The crowd moves toward the main gate facing Jl. Jenderal S. Parman.

Negotiation

Around 5:30, t
Faculty of Law,
negotiates wi
and convinces
return to camp
make an organi
back into campu
most demonstrat
inside universi

08:00 10:00 12:00 15:00 17:

Protest Gathering Begins

A planned non-violent protest against the Soeharto government forms at Trisakti University.
Over 6,000 students, lecturers, and staff gather in the university's parking lot.

Standoff and Militarization

Student marshals form defensive lines at the gate, and students begin moving slowly out of the campus toward the direction of the Parliament. The march is halted near the West Jakarta Mayor's Office by two rows of police armed with shields and batons.

Student representatives negotiate with the local military district commander and the deputy police chief of West Jakarta. Negotiations return, announcing that the march is prohibited due to concerns about traffic disruption and possible damage.

Students sit on the road and continue a spontaneous open forum, chanting and singing in the rain. Gradually, some start returning to campus while police install a barricade line, and students stand about 15m behind it.

Multiple army units arrive as reinforcements, including:

* Brimob (Police Mobile Brigade Corps)
* 9th Cavalry Battalion
* 203rd Infantry Battalion
* Kostrad Air Defence Artillery Battalion
* 202nd Infantry Battalion
* Kodam Jaya riot squad



Fig. 0.2 *Situation around Trisakti University at 17:15*, 1998, Reuters, https://adhisthana.tripod.com/12mei_saksi.htm.



Fig. 0.1 CNN snapshot on May 12, 1998, Reuters, https://adhisthana.tripod.com/12mei_saksi.htm

Dean of the
Adi Andojo,
th students
s them to
us. Students
ized retreat
us. By 17:00,
tors are back
ity grounds.

Shooting Stops

Wounded students transported to nearby hospitals.

News spreads across Jakarta and spontaneous gatherings form in Grogol, Slipi, and Jelambar.

This unrest becomes the ignition point for the next day's full-scale riots.

:00 **19:00** **20:00** **22:00** **24:00**

Security Forces Open Fire

Witnesses report verbal insults from a former Trisakti student, suspected of being a paid informer and provocateur, shouting obscenities at female demonstrators, causing male students to retaliate and chase him down the police line. This triggered a police charge, and security forces open fire on the retreating students. The first two fatalities to be confirmed were **Elang Mulya Lesmana and Hendriawan Sie**, who were both trying to escape the crowd into the rectorate of Dr. Syarif Thayeb building/ Building M.

Students continue to regroup in the campus' central plaza, with soldiers positioned on nearby rooftops/elevated structures continuing to fire live rounds into campus crowds. Two additional studentss, **Heri Hertanto and Hafidin Royan**, were fatally shot and died.

Announcement and Public Outcry

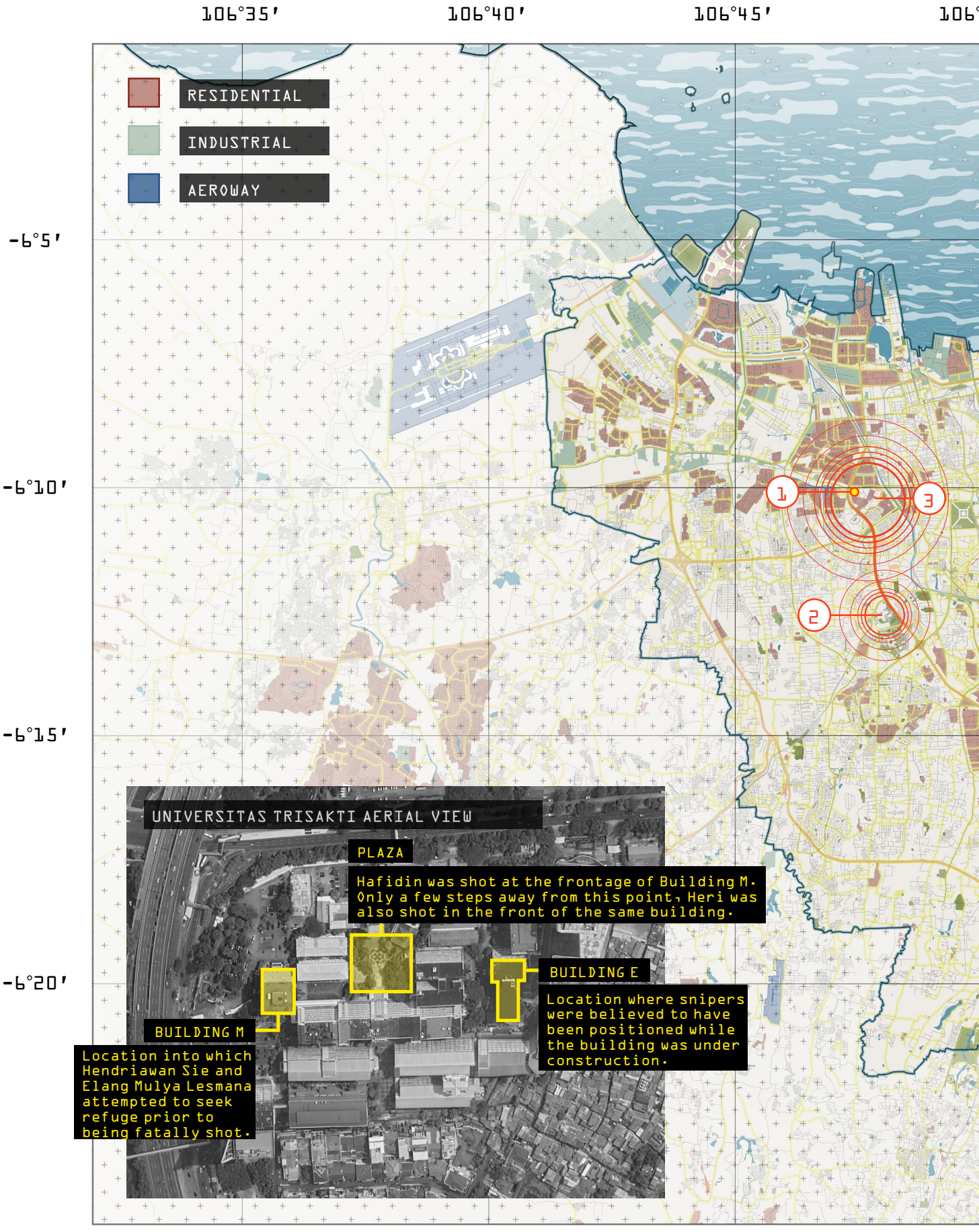
At 22:00, Dean Adi Andojo holds an emergency press conference broadcast live on campus radio (MS3 FM), announcing that four students have been killed and publicly released their names.

"We deeply regret this incident and protest to the Minister of Defense/Commander and the National Police Chief. I am convinced the students were shot while inside campus. I saw the bloodstains myself.

They could have used rubber bullets first, before firing live ammunition."

"Kami sangat menyesalkan kejadian ini dan menyatakan protes kepada Menhankam/Pangab dan Kapolri. Saya sendiri yakin, mahasiswa ditembak ketika berada dalam kampus. Saya sendiri melihat ceceran darah itu di dalam kampus.

Kan bisa terlebih dahulu menggunakan peluru karet, sebelum menembakkan peluru sungguhan."


106°35′
106°40′
106°45′
106
-6°5′
-6°10′
-6°15′
-6°20′
RESIDENTIAL
INDUSTRIAL
AEROWAY
1
2
3
UNIVERSITAS TRISAKTI AERIAL VIEW
PLAZA
Hafidin was shot at the frontage of Building M. Only a few steps away from this point, Heri was also shot in the front of the same building.
BUILDING E
Location where snipers were believed to have been positioned while the building was under construction.
BUILDING M
Location into which Hendriawan Sie and Elang Mulya Lesmana attempted to seek refuge prior to being fatally shot.

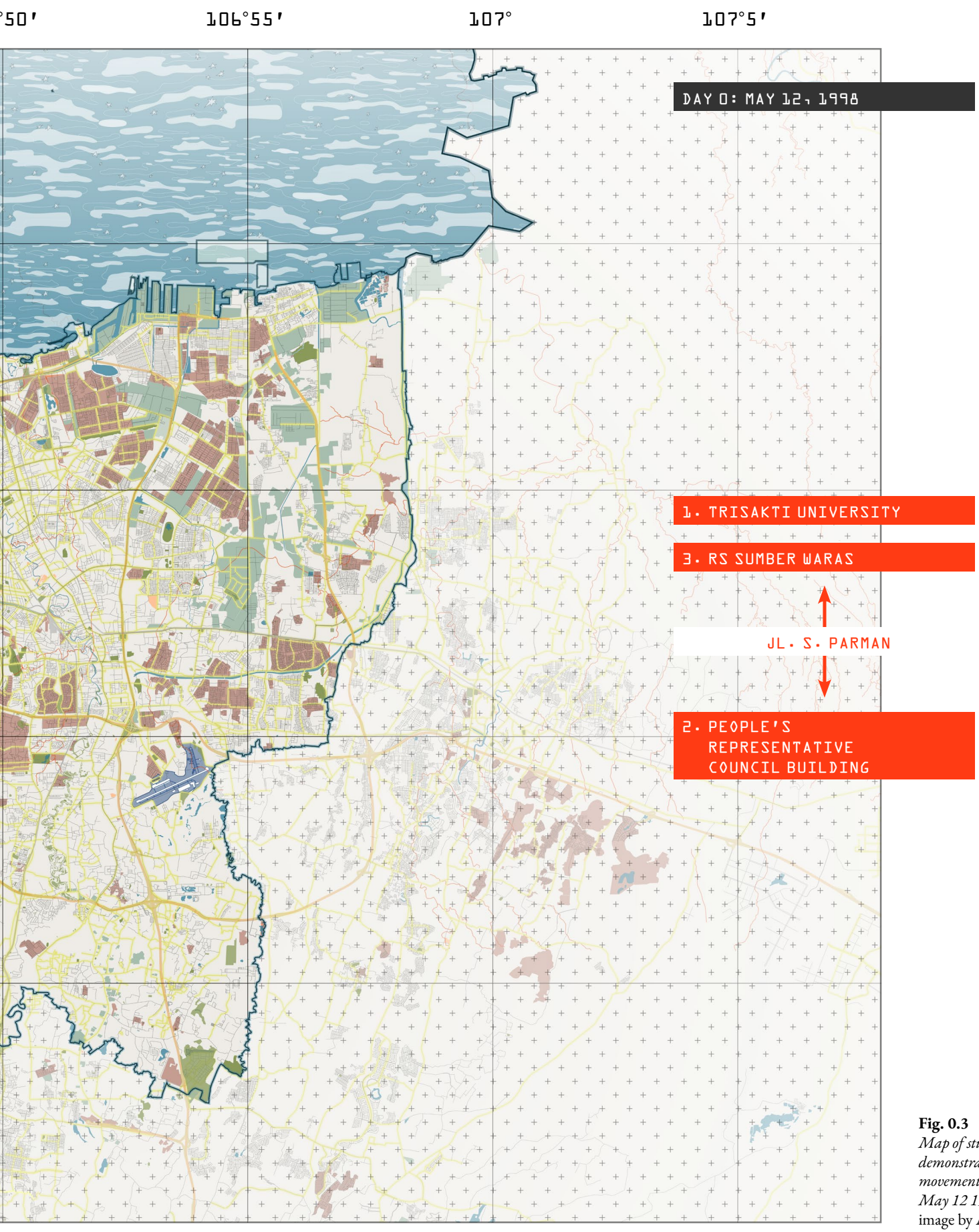


Fig. 0.3
Map of student demonstration movements on May 12 1998, image by Author.

Before the Fire

To understand why the riots unfolded the way they did, it is necessary to look much further back before 1998. The violence did not emerge spontaneously; it followed a trajectory built over centuries through colonial regulation, economic stratification, cultural assimilation, and the continual identification of Chinese-Indonesians as both essential and expendable within Indonesia's urban and political landscape.[2] This relationship has always shaped where Chinese-Indonesians lived, how they worked, and how visible or invisible they were allowed to be.

Chinese migration to the Indonesian archipelago dates back to the 14th century, when Chinese merchants and craftsmen established trading communities along the ports of Sumatra and Java, integrating into local societies through intermarriage and cultural exchange.[3] Yet under Dutch colonial rule (1602-1942), this coexistence became structured by systems of segregation and control. Chinese communities were positioned as intermediaries within the colonial economy, from tax collectors and traders, to moneylenders, while simultaneously being racialized as *the foreign*.[4] In Batavia (now Jakarta), the Dutch confined Chinese residents to designated Pecinan districts following the 1740 massacre of Chinese settlers.[5] Through walls, canals, and administrative checkpoints, racial hierarchies became inscribed into the spatial fabric of the colonial city.

When Indonesia declared independence in 1945, many Chinese-Indonesians believed the new nation would offer a fresh beginning. Yet in reality, the young republic inherited colonial administrative structures already stratified by race and economic function. Under Soekarno, tensions surrounding citizenship and national belonging quickly surfaced. Citizens of Chinese descent were often required to demonstrate loyalty to Indonesia and renounce foreign affiliations,[6] particularly as relations between Indonesia and the People's Republic of China deteriorated in the early 1960s. After the 1965 coup and the rise of Soeharto's New Order regime,[7] these suspicions hardened into state policy.[8] Chinese schools and media were banned, Chinese characters and cultural symbols were prohibited, and citizens of Chinese descent were required to adopt Indonesian-sounding names, transforming assimilation into a mechanism of regulating ethnic visibility.[9]

For my generation, that legacy remained largely invisible. The absence of Chinese surnames among my friends and family, something that I once took as ordinary, was in fact a mark of that enforced anonymity.

2 Chong, Linda Po-Yin. "Nationhood and Identity: The Chinese in Indonesia." *University of Hawaii Library* 2000: 58-64.

3 Reid, Anthony. "Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Volume One, The Lands below the Winds." *Yale University Press* (New Haven and London), 1988.

4 *Ibid*.

5 Lam, M. Bagus Sekar. "Acculturation of Java and Chinese Culture in Historical Perspective." *Sinolingua: Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol. 01, No. 01, March 2023: 1-14.

6 Winarta, Frans H. "No More Discrimination Against the Chinese." Chapter in *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia*, edited by Leo Suryadinata, 57-74. Books and Monographs. ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, 2008.

7 New Order (*Order Baru*) refers to the authoritarian regime led by President Soeharto from 1966 to 1998, characterized by centralized state control, military dominance, and policies promoting social stability, economic development, and cultural assimilation.

8 Tajima, Yuhki. "Explaining Ethnic Violence in Indonesia: Demilitarizing Domestic Security." *Journal of East Asian Studies 8*, No. 3, 2008: 451-72.

9 Winarta, Frans H., *No More Discrimination Against the Chinese*.

My own name, Tara Natalia, is not only a personal inheritance, but a symptom of this larger history of cultural erasure.

The New Order period also coincided with Jakarta's urban landscape transformation through state-led modernization and development.[10] As Abidin Kusno argues, the capital became a "project city"[11] where redevelopment displaced traditional markets and *kampungs*.[12] Chinese-Indonesians occupied an uneasy position within this transformation as their economic prominence aligned them with growth, yet their visibility also made them symbols of inequality and state favoritism.[13]

In 1997, as the Asian Financial Crisis[14] began to unfold across Southeast Asia, the *rupiah*[15] began to fall. At the same time, my father had just turned thirty-one years old, my mother twenty-eight, newly engaged and saving for a modest house on the outskirts of Jakarta. They were, by all accounts, part of the emerging middle class the New Order claimed to represent: disciplined, hopeful, and pragmatic. My father had just left his job at a small trading firm to join a larger corporation in Central Jakarta. His office was on the twenty-first floor of a glass tower, overlooking the city. He told me, as he stood there, how proud he was to be working there, to finally feel like he had a career and not just a job.

Yet behind the image of economic progress, the New Order increasingly tightened its control over dissent and public expression. As political opposition grew during the late 1990s, pro-democracy activists were abducted and disappeared in a campaign that exposed the coercive foundations of the regime's authority.[16] Beneath the narrative of stability and modernization, ethnic tensions, corruption, widening inequality, and the suppression of collective memory continued to shape everyday life.[17] When the crisis finally struck, these underlying fractures surfaced with devastating clarity.

For my parents, 1997 remained a year of beginning. In December, they held their wedding in a small restaurant. Simple, joyful, and almost ordinary.

10 *IMO's article: Jakarta 'the project city'*. The Jakarta Post. January 2, 2012.

11 Kusno, Abidin. *After the New Order : Space, Politics, and Jakarta*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013: 28.

12 *Kampung* refers to an Indonesian urban or rural settlement, often characterized by tight-knit social networks, informal housing structures, and mixed-use environments. In urban contexts, the term denotes working-class neighbourhoods that exist alongside or within rapidly modernized city fabrics.

13 Panggabean, S. R. & Smith, B. "Explaining Anti-Chinese Riots in Late 20th Century Indonesia." *Elsevier, World Development*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2011: 231-242.

14 The Asian Financial Crisis (1997-1998), which began with the collapse of the Thai baht, spread across Southeast Asia, leading to currency devaluations, financial instability, and economic contraction. In Indonesia, the crisis caused a sharp decline in the *rupiah*,[14] widespread business failures, and social unrest.

15 The Indonesian currency.

16 Nurita, D. & Arigi, F. "27 Years of Reformasi: The Abductions of 1998 Activists, Who Hasn't Returned?" Translated by James Balowski. *Tempo Politik*, 2025.

17 ICTJ & KontraS. "Detailed: Transitional Justice in Indonesia Since the Fall of Soeharto." *KontraS*, 2011: 7.



Fig. 0.4 *My paren*



…ts' wedding, 1997.

The Riots

"Ginandjar Kartasasmita, coordinating minister for finance and economy, put out a count of 2,479 shop-houses (Chinese family retail businesses) damaged or destroyed; 1,026 ordinary houses, 1,604 shops, 383 private offices, 65 bank offices, 45 workshops, 24 restaurants, 12 hotels, 40 shopping malls. Plus 1,119 cars and 821 motorcycles. A serious body count had been quickly initiated by Karlina Leksono and her Tim Relawan Kemanusiaan (Volunteer Team for Humanity) to counter army and police minimizations. In addition to summoning paramedics for help whenever possible, she organized and dispatched citizens with cameras to hospitals and morgues all over the city. They came back with 1,193 separate photographs of corpses."

– Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destinies*

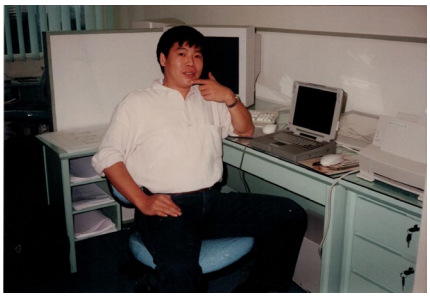


Fig. 0.5 *My father's office*, 1998.

By early 1998, my parents had just moved into the house that they had purchased through a commercial mortgage. The house was still bare, furnished mostly with pieces carried over from my father's previous rental, yet they felt grateful to finally have a place of their own. My father had recently secured a permanent position at a new company in central Jakarta, while my mother had begun working for Walmart Indonesia, whose office was 21 kilometers in the opposite direction, outside of Jakarta. Their routines revolved around long commutes across the city: each morning my father would drive my mother to a shuttle stop before heading to his own office.

As the year unfolded, Indonesia's economy deteriorated rapidly. Prices soared, and student demonstrations erupted daily across Jakarta. On his commute, my father often glimpsed the clashes between protesters and security forces, a scene that, over time, became disturbingly normal.

May 13, 1998 began as an ordinary Wednesday. My parents left home for their separate jobs, the morning air thick with Jakarta's usual traffic noise. There was talk of student protests, but it didn't sound dangerous enough to interrupt the pattern of their day. From the same window where he had once admired the same city, my father now saw black smoke rising over the skyline. At first people assumed it was a tire fire, but the smoke kept spreading. Rumors of mobs and shops burning began circulating through the office, and by midmorning, management ordered everyone to leave.

Traffic outside had already collapsed into gridlock, air thick with the smell of rubber and plastic burning. As my father struggled to drive, he called my mother, who was also being evacuated from her office on the outskirts of the city, and told her that he would come to pick her up

from her bus stop. When he reached home and turned on the television, it became clear how quickly the riots were spreading across Jakarta. He called my mother again, telling her to stay where she was until he could reach her.

Attempting to drive out of the housing complex, he was stopped by motorcycle taxi drivers who warned him that cars were already being attacked and burned on the main road. He turned back home, switched to his motorcycle, and rode towards the bus stop, bringing an extra helmet for my mother.

The streets were eerily empty except for scattered groups gathering along the roadside. When he arrived, dozens of employees were still waiting for rides. My mother, her Chinese features unmistakable, stood surrounded by coworkers who stayed with her. My father quickly handed her the helmet, told her to hold on tight, and instructed her not to look around.

At an intersection near their neighborhood supermarket, the crowd had thickened. The streetlight turned red, forcing them to stop. By accident, my mother turned her head slightly toward the scenes around her, and almost instantly heard someone shouting towards their direction: "*Cina! Cina*!"[18] The crowd began moving closer. My father accelerated through the red light and drove home at high speed, reaching the house shortly before one afternoon, shaken but safe.

For the next several days, my parents stayed indoors, eyes glued to the television as Jakarta descended into violence. Residents in their neighborhood organized night patrols, dividing the men into shifts to guard the streets while others prepared food and supplies. Within the complex stood a small row of shophouses that normally served the neighborhood's daily needs. As the riots disrupted supply chains across the city, these shops became the community's only source of food. Residents worked with the shop owners to ration goods and guard the area, allowing families to survive without leaving the neighborhood.

The May 1998 riots were not an isolated outburst but a culmination of decades of racialized anxiety, authoritarian repression, and economic instability. As Indonesia's currency collapsed during the Asian Financial Crisis, public anger increasingly turned toward Chinese-Indonesians, who were often portrayed as symbols of economic privilege. Across Jakarta, Medan, Solo, and other cities, violence unfolded in the form of looting, arson, murder, and sexual assault.[19]

To understand how the city had reached that point, however, we must look a day earlier.



Fig. 0.6 *Milik Pribumi*, 1998, Reuters, David Loh.

During the riots, store owners would mark their stores with *Milik Pribumi* ("Indigenous Owned") sign to signal that their business belongs to a non-Chinese owner.

18 *Cina* is the Indonesian term for "Chinese", though it carries derogatory and racialized connotations. During the New Order regime, the state institutionalized the use of '*Cina*' in official documents and media to emphasize the perceived foreignness of Chinese-Indonesians, replacing the more neutral term '*Tionghua*'. Following the fall of Soeharto, '*Tionghua*' was reinstated in public and governmental use to restore dignity and recognition to the community, though the pejorative associations of '*Cina*' continue to persist in colloquial speech.

19 Farid, Hilmar. "Political economy of violence and victims in Indonesia" Chapter in *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia: Analysis, Representation, Resolution*. Edited by Charles A. Coppel. Routledge, 2006: 270.

DAY 1: MAY 13, 1998

OFFICIAL TIMELINE (JOINT-FACT FINDING TEAM

Crowds and students who came to mourn gathered densely around Trisakti. Crowds also amassed in Tanah Abang. At Pasar Rumput, South Jakarta, crowds that were pushed back by security forces damaged a police post.

Crowds at Trisakti moved from Jakarta K.H. Hasyim Asyari toward Jl. Kyai Tapa, the Roxy Mas intersection, Jl. Moch. Mansyur, Daan Mogot, and Bendungan Hilir. From there, they spread toward Jembatan Sempit Angke, Jembatan Dua, Jembatan Tiga, Jembatan Lima, and Jembatan Besi.

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INTERPRETIVE TIMELINE (SCHOLARLY ANALYSES DRAWING FROM JOINT-FACT FINDING TEAM + INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTS)

Tension Begins

First gatherings and road blockades appear around Grogol, Jelambar, and Slipi.

Rumors circulate of "provocateurs" preparing to incite riots.

First Signs of Unrest

Crowds gather in Grogol, Tomang, Jembatan Lima, and Cengkareng. Buses are vandalized around Slipi and Grogol. Traffic congestion increases around West Jakarta corridors.

Riots begin in West Jakarta

Burning of vehicles in Grogol (Jl. S. Parman corridor), and first looting incidents happen in Roxy, Grogol, and Jembatan Besi.

Attackers appear in coordinated groups, often arriving on motorcycles or pickup trucks.



Fig. 0.8 *Looting and arson on Jakarta street*, 1998, Tatan Agus Rst, MBM Gatra.



Fig. 0.7 *Looters carry away electronics and household goods during the Jakarta riots*, 1998, Tatan Agus Rst, MBM Gatra.

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rcial buildings
ady begun.

At all major gathering points, riots, looting, and arson erupted.

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Riots Intensify

Fires begin spreading through West Jakarta, particularly near:
* Roxy Mas
* Grogol
* Jembatan Lima
* Pinangsia

Multiple shophouses are looted and torched.

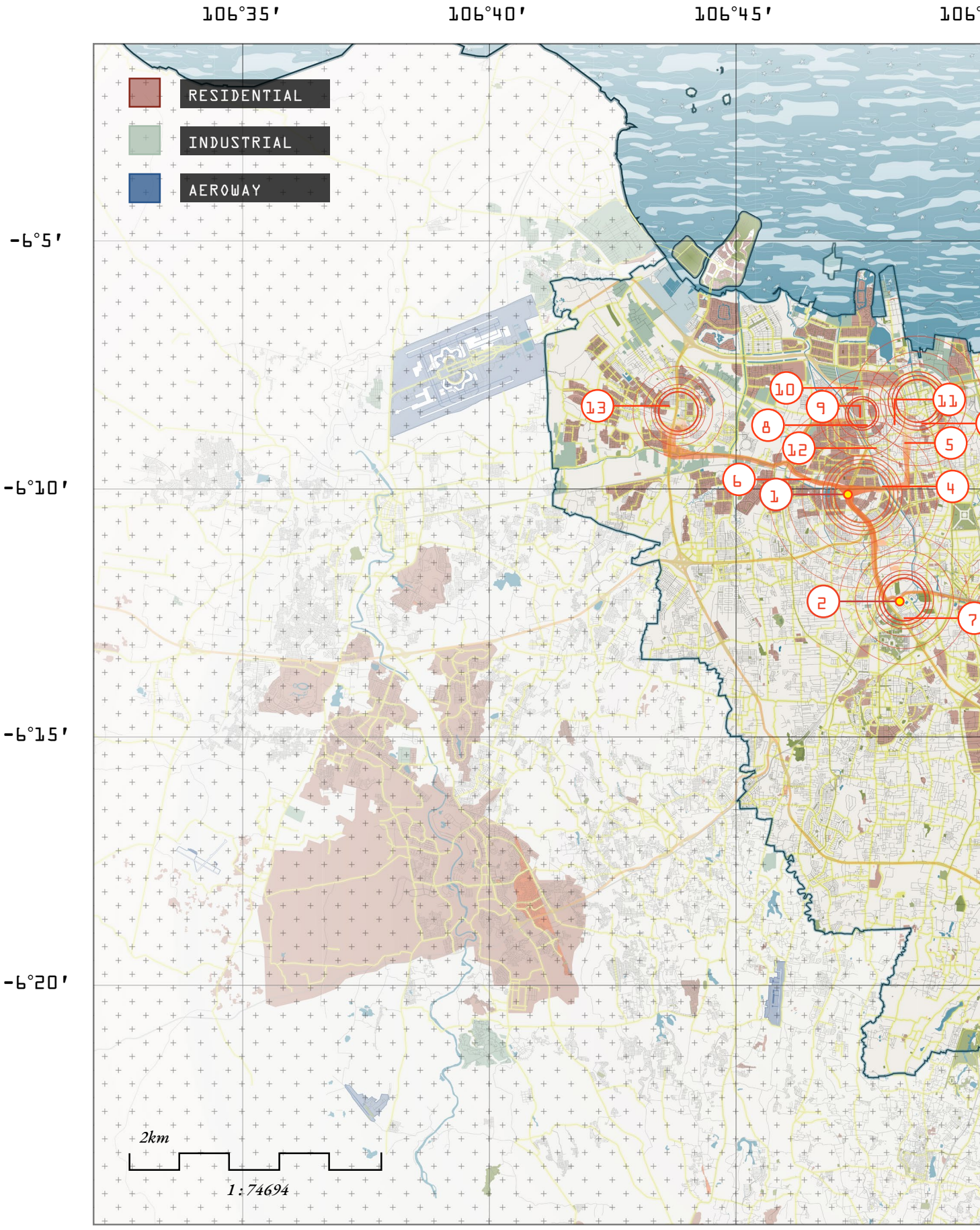
Violence Becomes Citywide

Looting spreads to Central Jakarta, including:
* Sawah Besar
* Mangga Besar
* Hayam Wuruk

Several markets are destroyed.

Day 1 ends with localized but spreading fires.

Crowds move toward Glodok, but major destruction occurs mainly the next day.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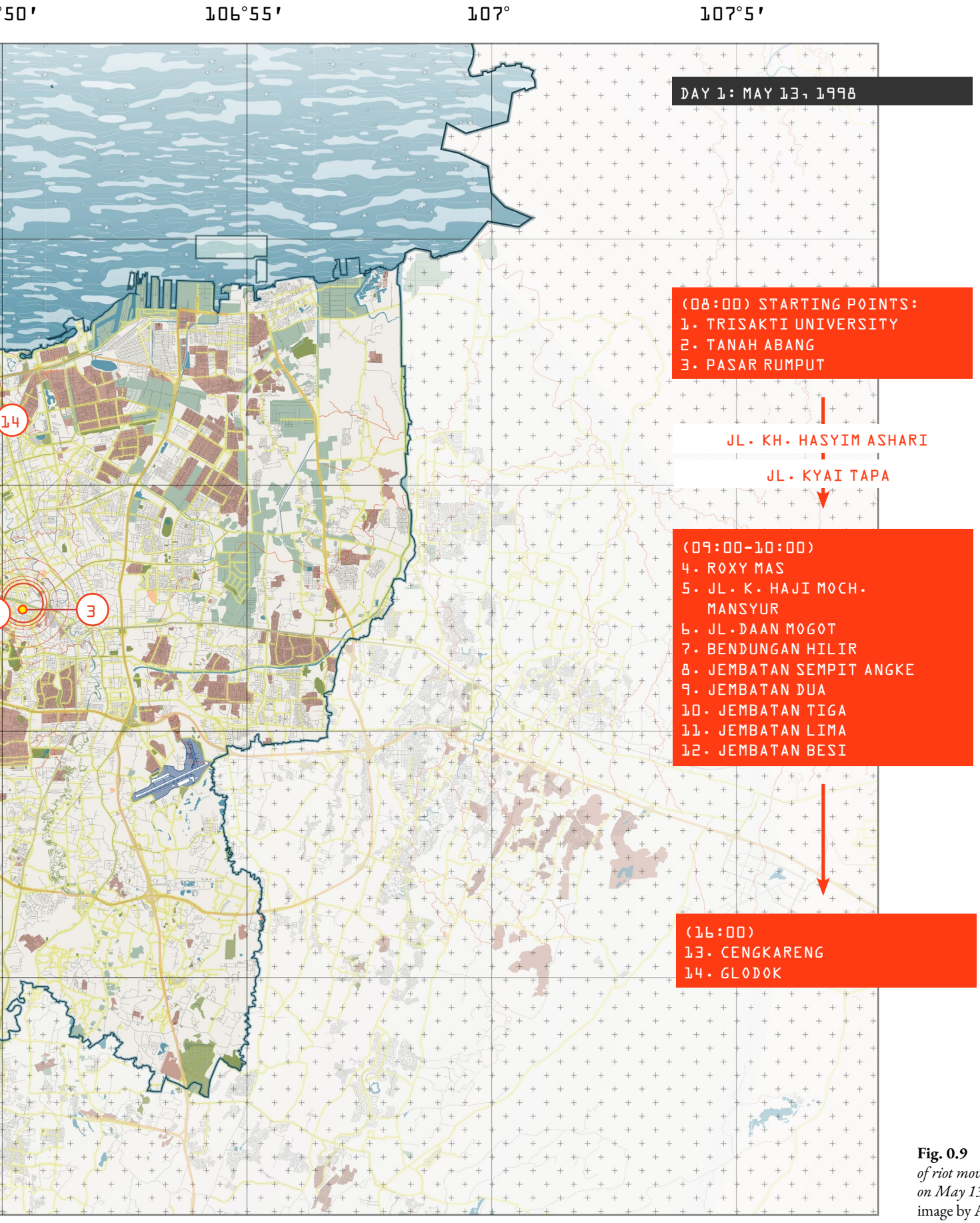
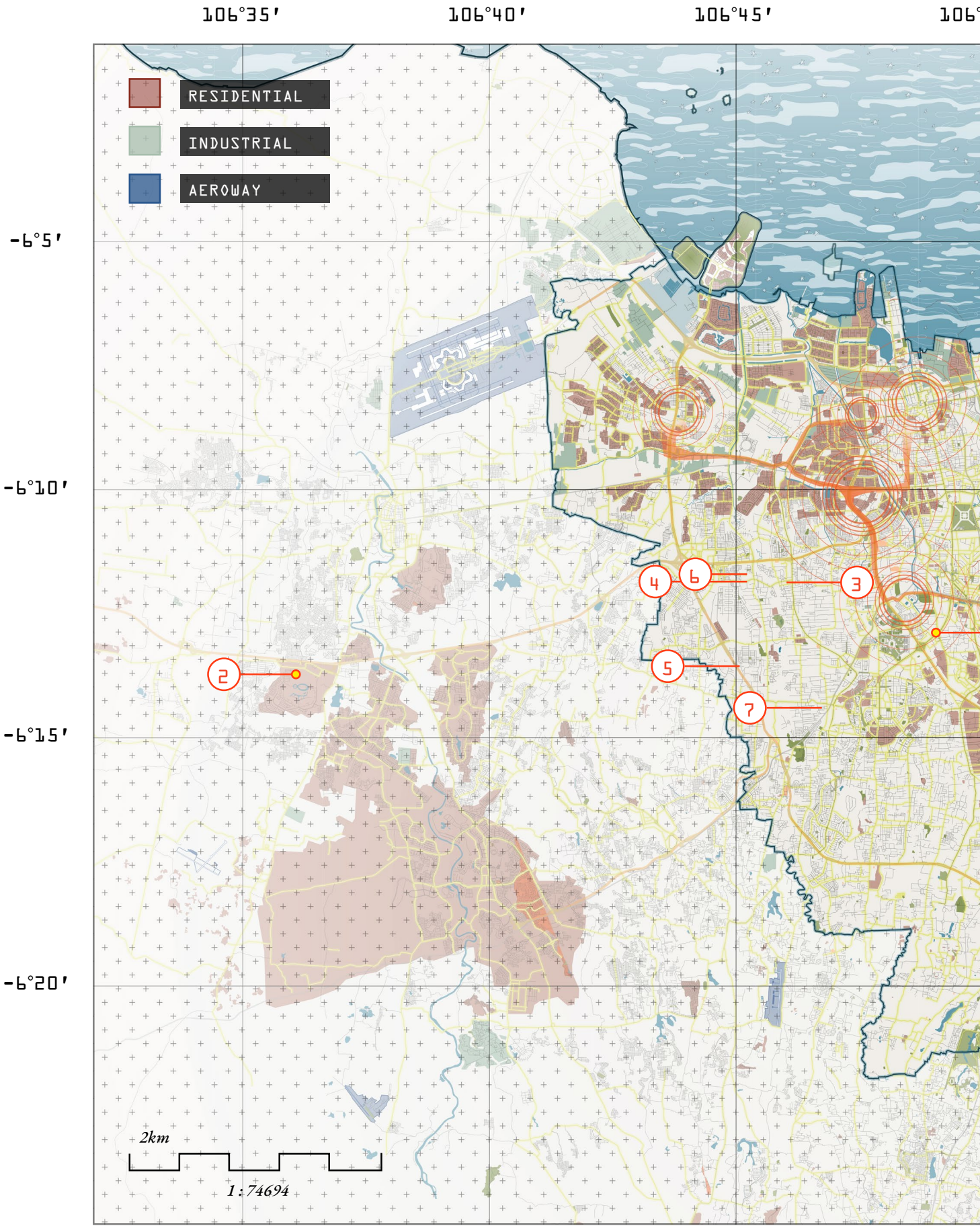


Fig. 0.9 *Map of riot movements on May 13 1998*, image by Author.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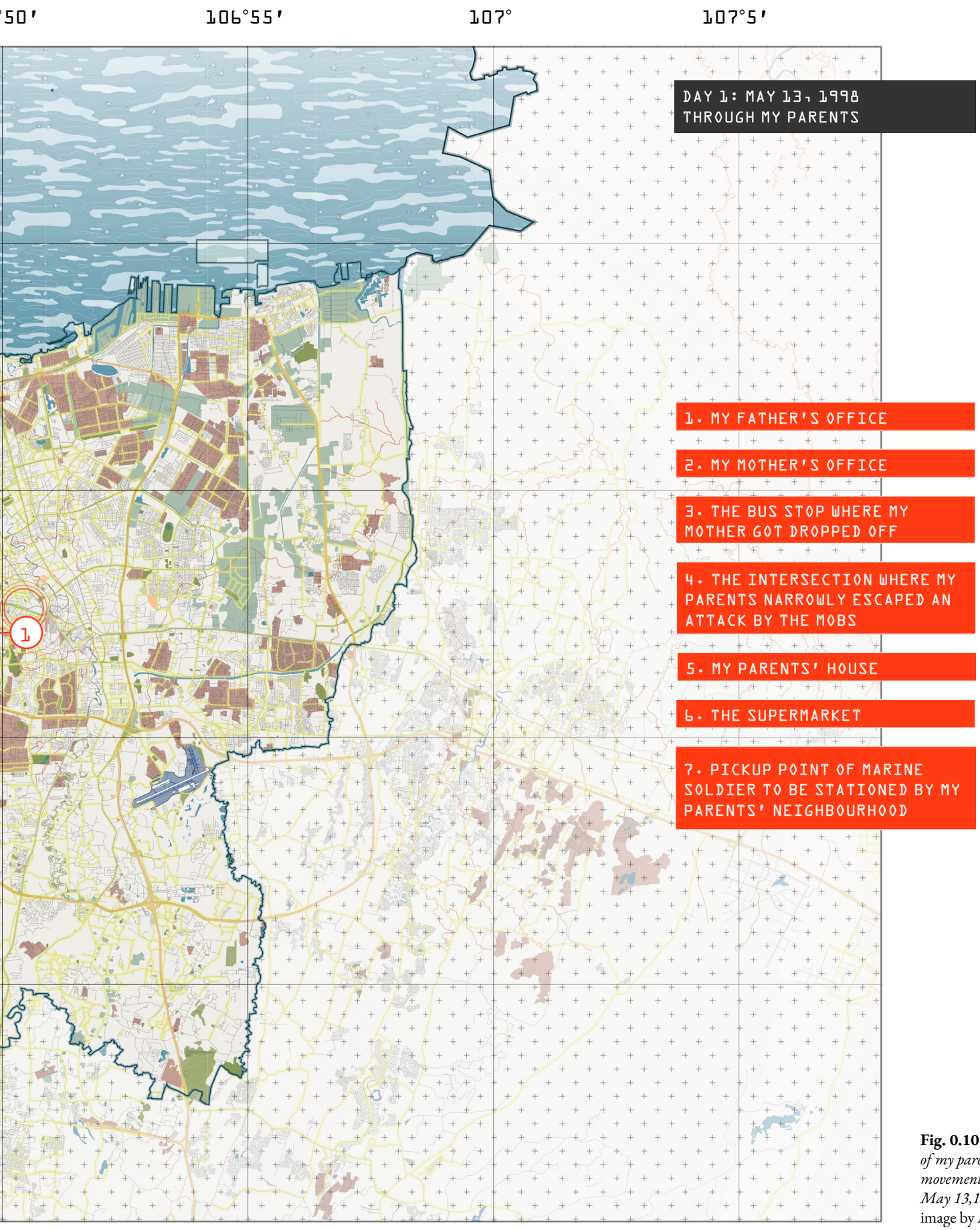

Fig. 0.10 *Map of my parents' movements on May 13,1998*, image by Author.

On May 12, 1998, thousands of students from Trisakti University in West Jakarta staged peaceful demonstrations demanding President Soeharto's resignation and democratic reform.[20] That afternoon, as students attempted to return to campus, security forces opened fire, killing four students on site.[21] Their deaths, circulated across the country, ignited outrage. Their names were Elang Mulia Lesmana, Heri Hertanto, Hafidin Royan, and Hendriawan Sie.[22]

By the next morning, anger had spilled into the streets, and what had begun as student demonstrations quickly spiraled into coordinated attacks targeting Chinese-Indonesian neighborhoods and businesses. Eyewitness accounts and human rights investigations later revealed that the violence was not purely spontaneous: while the economic crisis provided the spark, the orchestration of attacks suggested deeper complicity involving elements of the military, political elites, and organized mobs.[23] In Jakarta, Glodok became the epicenter of the destruction.[24]

At the time, communication was limited. Without mobile messaging, information travelled through landline calls and television broadcasts. As rumors of violence and murder spread rapidly, many wealthy Chinese families made the decision to flee abroad,[25] while some affluent neighborhoods were guarded by marines as security forces struggled to contain the unrest. For families like mine, who lacked the means to leave, those days were lived moment to moment. Survival depended on cooperation with neighbors, and the presence of non-Chinese residents who helped maintain safety and mutual vigilance.

Under the mounting outrage and international pressure, President Soeharto resigned on May 21, 1998, ending his thirty-two years of authoritarian rule and marking a historic turning point: the beginning



Fig. 0.11 *President Soeharto delivers his resignation statement at Merdeka Place, Jakarta*, 21 May 1998, Office of the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Wikimedia Commons.

20 Fairzuha, A. et al. "Analisis Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia Pada Tragedi Tahun 1998." *Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Undiksha*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2004: 64.

21 Tay, Elaine. "Discursive violence on the Internet and the May 1998 riots" Chapter in *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia: Analysis, Representation, Resolution*. Edited by Charles A. Coppel. Routledge, 2006: 62.

22 Fairzuha, A. et al. *Analisis Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia*, 65.

23 Panggabean, S. & Smith, B. *Explaining Anti-Chinese Riots in Late 20th Century Indonesia.* World Development Vol. 39, No. 2, 2001: 231-242.

24 Siegel, James T. *Early Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998 in Jakarta*. Cornell University Press: Indonesia, No. 66, 1998: 74-108.

25 Purdey, Jemma. *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*. University of Hawaii Press, 2006.

of Indonesia's Reformasi era.[26] Soeharto was succeeded by his vice president, B.J. Habibie. For my parents, the announcement brought a complicated mixture of relief and uncertainty. The country had changed for good, yet they remained suspended in fear.

That moment of relief encapsulated the precarious transition that Indonesia had entered, caught between collapse and reconstruction. In the face of public outrage and demands for truth, the new government sought to restore legitimacy. To that end, President Habibie established a Joint-Fact Finding Team (*Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta*, or *TGPF*) in August of 1998 to investigate the May riots.[27]

26 ICTJ & KontraS. *Detailed*, 7.

27 Purdey, Jemma. *Problematizing the Place of Victims in Reformasi Indonesia: A Contested Truth about the May 1998 Violence.* Asian Survey 1, No. 42, 2002: 605-622

DAY 2: MAY 14, 1998

OFFICIAL TIMELINE (JOINT-FACT FINDING TEAM)

Crowds in Glodok continued destroying and looting. Some moved toward Mangga Dua, near Ancol. In South Jakarta, new points of unrest emerged at Pasar Minggu. In West Jakarta, crowds spread along Jalan Hayam Wuruk and into Salemba, Central Jakarta.

In South Jakarta, crowds around Pasar
riots spread outward to numerous locat
Warung Buncit, Jl. Kebayoran Lama, Jl.
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In East Jakarta, crowds concentrated o
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INTERPRETIVE TIMELINE (SCHOLARLY ANALYSES DRAWING FROM JOINT-FACT FINDING TEAM + INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTS)

Morning Tension

Rumors of "kerusuhan besar" (major rioting) circulate from West Jakarta to North and Central Jakarta. People begin stockpiling food, closing shop shutters, and many shops hesitate to open.

Mass Mob Formation

Crowds gather around:
* Gajah Mada/ Hayam Wuruk Corridor
* Glodok (Chinatown)
* Asemka
* Mangga Dua
* Penjaringan/ Kapuk/Muara Karang

Groups arrive by trucks, pickups, and motorcycles. There were reports of individuals directing crowds and shouting instructions.

Systematic Targeting of Chinese-Owned Businesses

Major sites attacked:
* Glodok Plaza
* Harco Glodok
* Gajah Mada
* Duta Merlin
* Roxy Mas
* Jembatan Lima

Looting begins in electronic stores, appliance shops, and textile warehouses. Provocateurs mark non-Chinese shops as "PRIBUMI" using spray paint. Police presence is minimal & witnesses note officers watching but not intervening.

Typical pattern:
1. A small group breaks the lock/ gate.
2. Others enter to loot.
3. Another group sets the fire.
4. Local bystanders join in once the attack is underway.

Fires Overwhelm Glodok

Glodok Plaza is torched, as well as entire ruko blocks along Jl. Perniagaan, Jl. Pintu Besar Selatan, and Jl. Kemenangan.

Mob movements swept through Chinese commercial corridors, and not random residential areas.

Witnesses see around 200 people arriving with stones, tools, and gasoline bombs. Police fire warning shots but eventually withdraw.

Minggu began looting and burning shops. From there, the
ions, triggering unrest at Pasar Cipete, Kebayoran Lama,
Sultan Iskandar, Jl. Kyai Maja, Pasar Rumput, and Jl.

n Jl. Pemuda, near the Pulogadung Industrial Zone. They
cks and arrived by motorcycles, triggering additional
Ministry of Transportation office and Plaza Arion.

rowds began setting buildings on fire along
Sultan Iskandar Muda, Kebayoran Baru, and Pos
Jakarta, crowds burned the Yogya Department
Central Jakarta spread to Cempaka Putih.
on in East Jakarta extended to the Poncol
atraman.

Destruction, looting, and burning intensified across two main zones: in East Jakarta at Kramat Jati, and in South Jakarta along Jl. D.I. Panjiatan, Kebayoran Batu, and Pancoran.

Burning continued throughout East Jakarta.

Fig. 0.12 *Crowds throw office furniture onto a burning pile, Jakarta*, May 14 1998, Office of the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Wikimedia Commons.



:00 **17:00** **18:00** **22:00**

Riots Spread to North & Central Jakarta

New flare-ups in:
* Manggau Dua
* Pasar Pagi
* Pinangsia
* Cawang
* Jatinegara
* Klender (later a massacre site on May 15)

Transportation corridors (busways and major arterial roads) become mob movement routes, and several Chinese-owned pharmacies, hardware stores, and textile shops are destroyed.

Warehouses and mid-sized factories (mostly owned by Chinese-Indonesians) are also looted.

Citywide Chaos

Many victims are trapped inside burning buildings, especially in:
* Kebon Jeruk
* Taman Sari
* Jembatan Besi
* Jembatan Batu

Dozens of deaths are documented, caused by locked gates or jammed shutters.

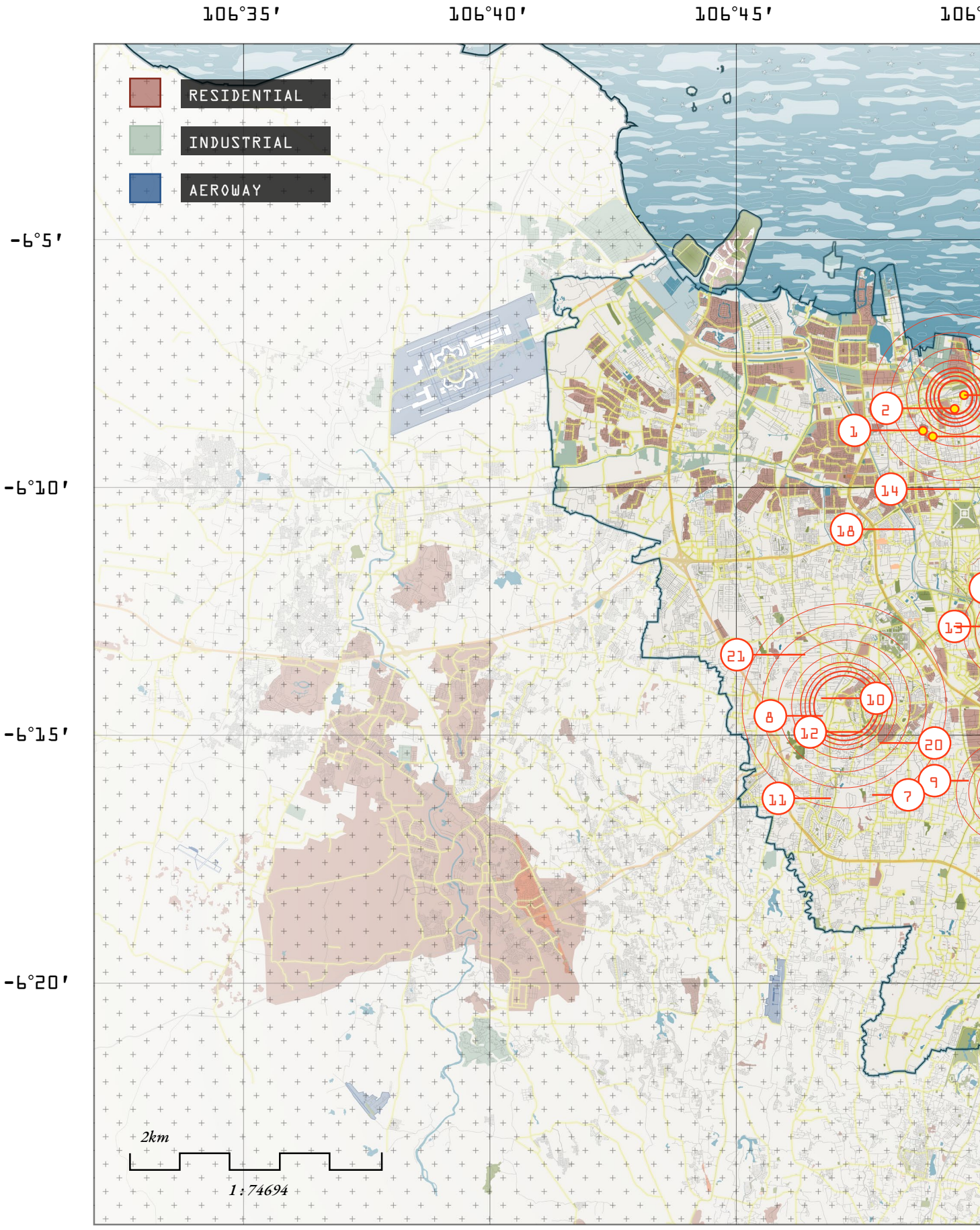
Sexual violence cases reported in:
* Kebon Jeruk
* Kosambi
* Ciledug
* Taman Sari

Large groups attempt to enter gated residential complexes in Pluit and Pantai Indah Kapuk, but are blocked by community guards.

Some neighbourhoods organize ronda malam (night patrols) to keep mobs out.

Fire brigades finally enter several areas after mobs disperse. Troops begin reclaiming key corridors:
* Grogol-Glodok-Kota
* Mangga Besar

Communities begin counting the dead and searching for their missing ones.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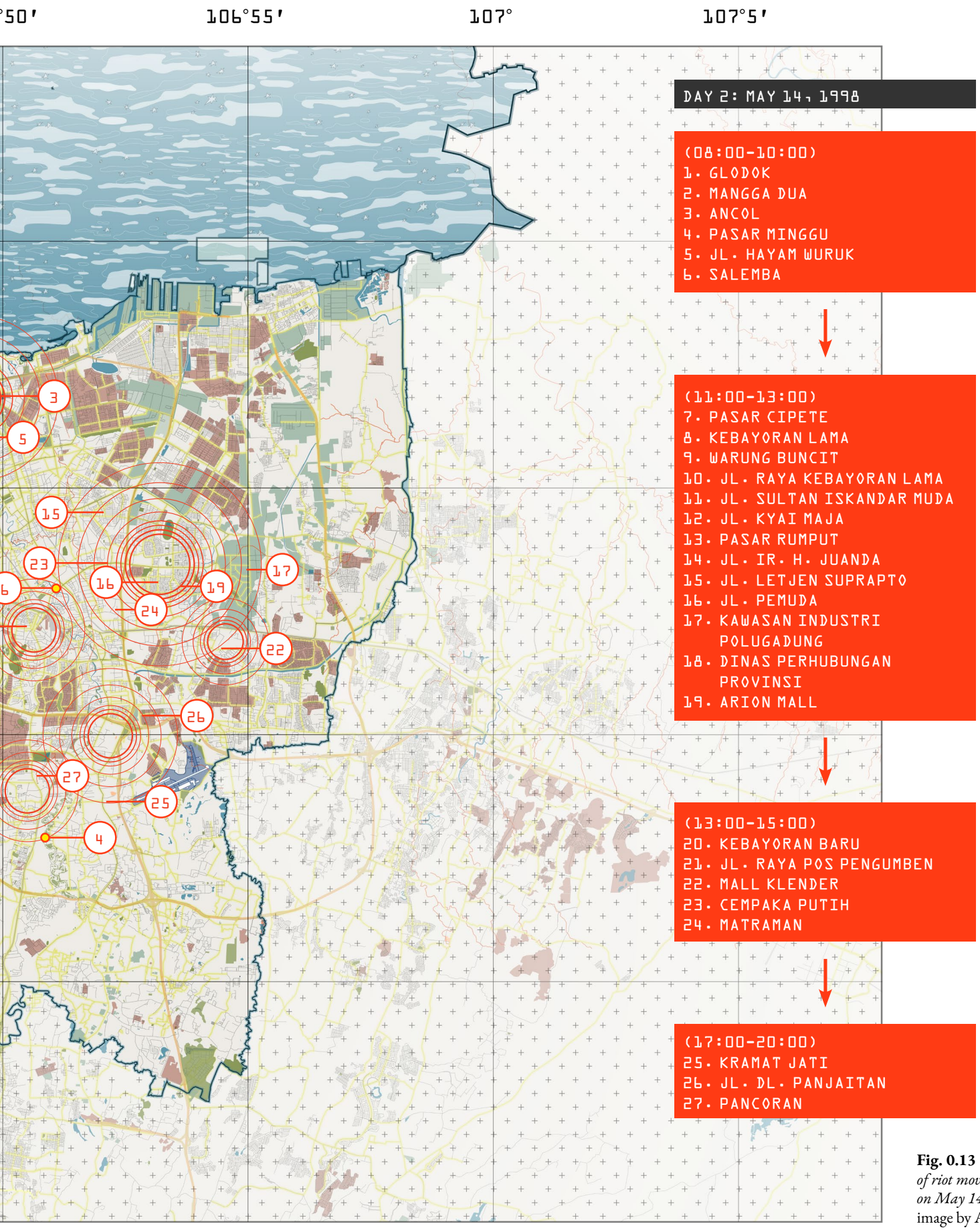


Fig. 0.13 *Map of riot movements on May 14,1998*, image by Author.

The Report

"He was variously dressed in civilian clothes, school or university shirts, or in a black uniform. They described him as skilled at throwing Molotov bombs and stones with great accuracy, able to use an iron bar to wrench open shop doors with precision, and to light fires and jump off walls and roofs effortlessly. He often rode a motorbike in a group of approximately ten others or arrived in a pick-up truck or minibus, and always appeared suddenly. He was not known locally but had a very good knowledge of the local area."

– Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*.

From the outset, the team faced formidable obstacles. They were only given roughly three months to conduct investigations, before the report was finalized on October 23, 1998.[28] The team included civil-society figures, academics, NGOs, *Komnas HAM*,[29], alongside members of the military and police – some of whom were themselves suspected of involvement in the violence.[30] Witnesses later reported intimidation during testimony for the report, and researchers described the investigative environment as one marked by surveillance and political pressure.[31]

Despite such constraints, the TGPF's report was unprecedented in its scope and candor. It documented gross human rights violations including widespread arson, looting, murder, and sexual violence against ethnic Chinese women.[32] The report also pointed to systematic failures within the military and police, including the withdrawal of security forces and delays in intervention that allowed violence to escalate.[33]

Almost immediately, the report encountered political resistance. Senior officials challenged its validity, particularly its documentation of sexual violence,[34] and the report's recommendations (ranging from further investigations to legal proceedings and structural reforms) were never implemented. Instead, official discourse pivoted toward the rhetoric of "national unity" and "forgiveness," framing closure as a patriotic duty.[35]

Given its limited timeframe, insufficient resources, and internal conflicts, including the presence of security officials suspected of involvement, the TGPF was unable to fully map out the scale of the atrocities. Countless testimonies went unrecorded, and many perpetrators were never identified or prosecuted.[36]

In retrospect, the TGPF report stands both as a breakthrough and a

28 Purdey, Jemma. *Problematizing the Place of Victims*, 605-622.

29 *Komnas HAM* (National Commission on Human Rights) is Indonesia's independent state human rights institution, established in 1993, mandated to investigate human rights violations, conduct research, and advise the government on rights-related issues.

30 Suryadinata, Leo. "Non–Intervention: The 1998 Anti–Chinese Violence in Indonesia" in *The Rise of China and the Chinese Overseas: A Study of Beijing's Changing Policy in Southeast Asia and Beyond*. Books and Monographs. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017: 53–68.

31 Purdey, *Problemetizing the Place of Victims*, 609.

32 Himawan, E., Pohlman, A. & Louis, W. "Revisiting the May 1998 Riots in Indonesia: Civilians and Their Untold Memories." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 41 (2), 2002.

33 Panggabean & Smith, *Explaining Anti-Chinese Riots*, 231-242.

34 "New Report Says Official Denials of Indonesian Rapes Hinder Investigation." Human Rights Watch. September 9, 1998.

35 Kusno, Abidin. *The Appearances of Memory : Mnemonic Practices of Architecture and Urban Form in Indonesia*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2010: 105.

36 Coppel, Charles A. "Anti Chinese Violence Post-Soeharto" Chapter in *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia*. Edited by Leo Suryadinata. ISEAS Publications, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008: 129.

betrayal. It marked Indonesia's first official acknowledgement of mass sexual violence and ethnic persecution, breaking decades-long taboos around naming such crimes.[37] Yet its legacy remains suspended between recognition and denial. The state's resistance did not end in 1998, and continued to shape how the nation remembered, interpreted, and rewrote the events.

The politics of denial did not end in 1998.[38] In the decades that followed, competing narratives continued to blur the boundaries between rumor and reality, complicating efforts to publicly acknowledge the violence. As Bubandt notes, this condition does not simply produce confusion, but a persistent uncertainty in which claims, testimonies, and fabrications circulate together,[39] even as the violence itself was undeniably real.

Today, the TGPF report operates less as an official document and more as a fragile archive. It represents a moment when truth nearly surfaced into public consciousness, only to be submerged again by political needs. The report revealed how difficult it is for a nation to speak about acts it cannot morally accommodate, how language determines what counts as "real," and how quickly violence can be rewritten when its memory threatens power.

37 Purdey, *Problemetizing the Place of Victims*, 622.

38 Recent political statements illustrate the persistence of such denial. In October 2024, Coordinating Minister of Law, Human Rights, Immigration, and Correctional Services Yusril Ihza Mahendra publicly stated that the May 1998 events did not constitute a gross human rights violation, contradicting the findings of the 1998 Joint Fact-Finding Team (TGPF) and the position of Komnas HAM. In June 2025, Culture Minister Fadli Zon similarly referred to reports of mass rape during the riots as a "rumor" lacking evidence in an interview discussing the government's historical revision project.

39 Bubandt, Nils. *Rumors, Pamphlets, and the Politics of Paranoia in Indonesia*. The Journal of Asian Studies 67, No. 3, 2008: 789-817.

Beyond the Unspoken

"In recommending that the country return to the previous, prosperous state, Habibie also maintained a persistent and problematic image of Glodok as simultaneously the place of the Chinese and the center of the wellbeing (or sickness) of the national economy. Such was the response of the Indonesian state. Yet what was the reaction of Glodok's residents to these proposals? "But how are we going to deal with the trauma, Mr. President? I don't understand how the looting could take place for two days in the daylight. We cried. But what we cried for was not even clear to us. The military commander and the head of the police had repeatedly said that they would guarantee security, but the looting still took place. How to build up a new image, a new economy in Glodok with an Indonesian spirit?"

– Abidin Kusno, The Appearances of Memory

In the month following the May 1998 riots, Jakarta behaved as if the safest thing to do was to move on. Markets reopened, traffic resumed, and the city's routines settled back into place.[40] Yet beneath this surface was a noticeable hesitation. When residents spoke about what had happened, their accounts focused almost entirely on material facts: smoke, noise, broken glass, fire. What remained largely unspoken was the experience itself, as if the violence existed somewhere just outside language.

Listening to these fragmented accounts, I began to understand that the event had produced injuries that were too difficult to name within the Indonesian public vocabulary.[41] Prior to the late 1990s, Bahasa Indonesia did not widely circulate a vocabulary for collective psychological injury.[42] The word *trauma* existed primarily within medical contexts, referring to physical shock or bodily harm rather than emotional or social experience.[43] When survivors began using the word *trauma* in the aftermath of the riots, borrowed directly from English, they were reaching beyond the limits existing of linguistic framework at the time. The term introduced a new conceptual framework, involving the concept of memory, injury, repetition, and the enduring afterlife of violence, that had not previously been articulated within everyday Indonesian discourse.[44] As Abidin Kusno notes, the sexual violence that took place during the riots were without precedent in Indonesia's history of anti-Chinese violence,[45] leaving no established cultural, linguistic, or legal framework through which the brutality could be understood.

This absence of language was not accidental. Under Soeharto, the New Order relied on a carefully curated vocabulary that emphasized stability, unity, and development.[46] Words that threatened this narrative, such

40 Kusno, *The Appearances of Memory*, 103.

41 Purdey, Jemma. *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*. University of Hawaii Press, 2006:143.

42 Lemelson, R. & Tucker, A. "Widening the Frame with Visual Psychological Anthropology: Perspectives on Trauma, Gendered Violence, and Stigma in Indonesia." *Palgrave Macmillan: Culture, Mind, and Society*, 2021: 182.

43 Pols, Hans & Suci, Eunika S. T. "Uncovering National Trauma: Indonesia's Historical Wounds and the Path to Soul Recovery." *Kompas Book Publisher*, 2025.

44 Smith, Catherine. *Resilience and the Localisation of Trauma in Aceh, Indonesia*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

45 Kusno, *The Appearances of Memory*, 102.

46 Fuller, Thomas. "Euphemisms of Soeharto Era Are Among Targets for Elimination: Indonesia Acts to Reform Language." The New York Times. December 22, 1999.

as *trauma*, *racism*, or *sexual violence*, were politically inconvenient and culturally discouraged as they implied structural harm and historical culpability.[47] As scholars of the New Order have argued, the boundaries of permissible language were shaped through censorship, surveillance, and the curating of permissible language,[48] and the press that followed the riots further reinforced this narrowing of language. Newspapers catalogued property damage and casualty counts, yet consistently relied on euphemisms such as "*kerusuhan*" (unrest) and "*huru-hara*" (chaos).[49] As Jemma Purdey argues, such terminology transforms targeted racial violence into generic civic chaos, making accountability difficult to pursue.[50]

The silence that followed the riots must therefore be understood as structural. Within Chinese-Indonesian families, painful stories were withheld because they were too stigmatized and overwhelming to voice. Even in highly affected areas such as Glodok, residents who attempted to describe their experiences often avoided psychological language.[51] The events of May 1998 were lived intensely, but remembered selectively and spoken rarely. In this sense, trauma in Indonesia was not only a psychological condition, but also a political impossibility. Survivors lacked the permission more than they lacked the memory, and many of the stories they carried remained confined to private spaces.[52]

When words were insufficient or unsafe, the consequences of May 1998 settled into other registers: into bodies, into daily routines, and crucially, into the spaces where Chinese-Indonesian life unfolded. For many families, the site of this inheritance was the shophouse: a building that was once a home, a workplace, a facade of economic survival, and one of the primary targets during the riots. Long before 1998, the shophouse had already been shaped by policies of assimilation and surveillance, making it a structure where identity, visibility, and vulnerability were negotiated in material form.[53] After the riots, these buildings absorbed what could not be spoken, from the layers of repair to the architectural adjustments made for safety or discretion. The shophouse became an inadvertent archive, retaining traces of experiences and memories that never entered official records.

Understanding the word *trauma* is a way of recognizing how the built environment holds what language cannot. Trauma, in Indonesia, is rarely spoken of or officially documented. It is instead lived, inherited, and embedded into everyday practices and routines.[54] For this research, the concept of trauma entered not as a psychological category, but as a cultural and political absence; an absence that shaped how the riots were narrated, forgotten, and displaced. The shophouse emerges as a central site precisely because it holds what its residents were unable, or

47 Rahman, Taufiq. "In a land of euphemism, speaking plain language is a heroic act." The Jakarta Post. June 30, 2021.

48 Ghoshal, Baladas. "Indonesia's New Order Under Soeharto." *India Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1979: 441.

49 Salman, D., Purwasito, A. & Rais, W. A. "How Media Remembered the Past: Framing Analysis of the May 1998 Tragedy in Indonesian Print Newspapers (1999-1998)." *Malaysia Journal of Communication*, Vol. 39 (2), 2023: 312-324.

50 Purdey, Jemma. "Describing kekerasan: Some observations on writing about violence in Indonesia after the New Order." *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 160 (2-3), 2004: 189-225.

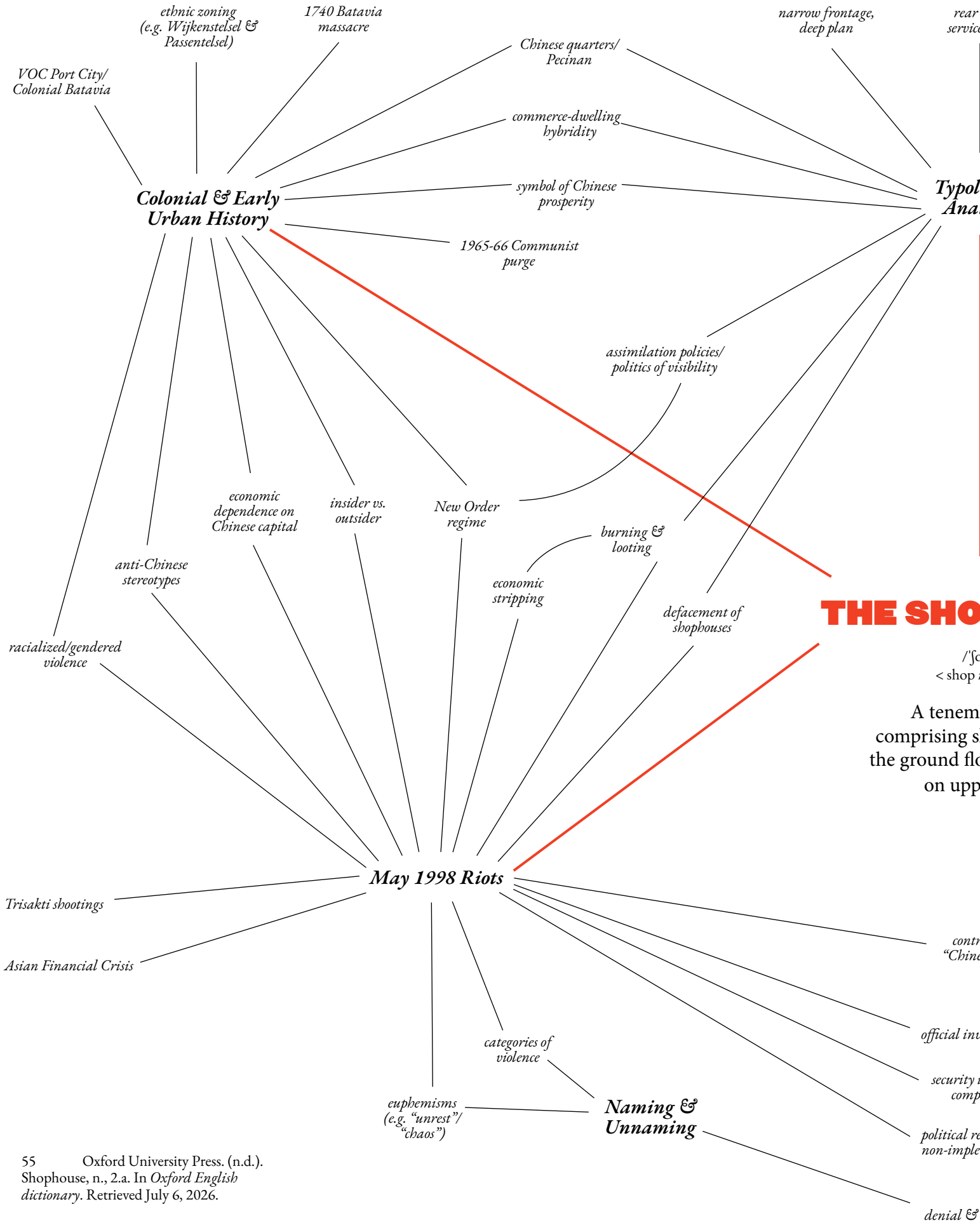
51 Kusno, *The Appearances of Memory*, 103.

52 Himawan, et al. *Revisiting the May 1998 Riot*, 245.

53 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 28.

54 Lemelson & Tucker, *Widening the Frame with Visual Psychological Anthropology*, 54.

not permitted, to voice. To approach the shophouse as a witness is to acknowledge that in the aftermath of 1998, architecture remembered what language could not.



55 Oxford University Press. (n.d.). Shophouse, n., 2.a. In *Oxford English dictionary*. Retrieved July 6, 2026.

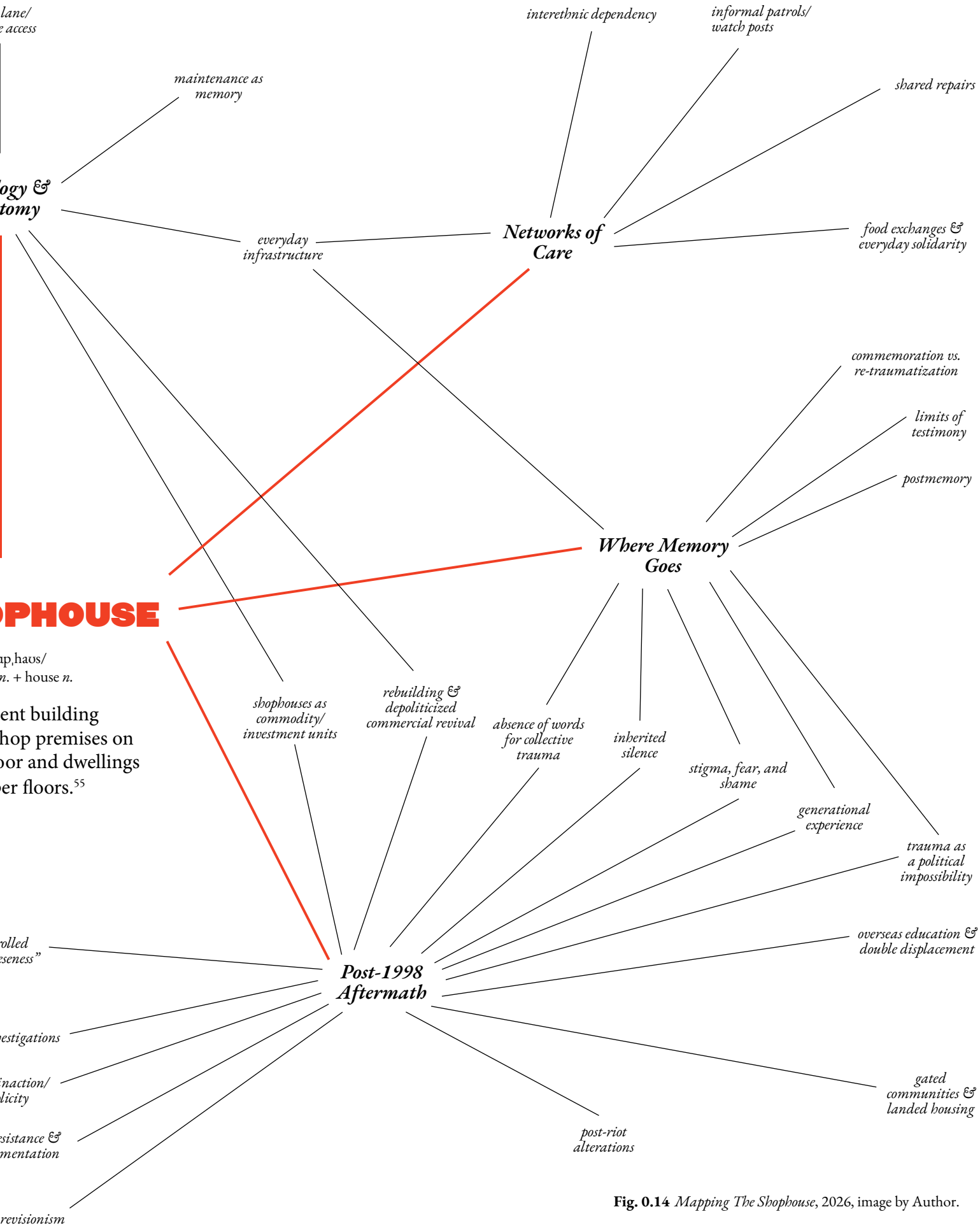


Fig. 0.14 *Mapping The Shophouse*, 2026, image by Author.

1 / THE EXTRACTED TYPOLOGY

Opening Day

On the 20th of November, 2020, in the midst of a pandemic that had shuttered Jakarta's indoor commercial life for the better part of a year, Agung Sedayu Group and Salim Group opened Pantjoran PIK on a 5,500-square metre site on Golf Island, land reclaimed from Jakarta Bay under a Soeharto-era presidential decree[1] in the waterfront development of Pantai Indah Kapuk in North Jakarta.[2] The development was curated by Amantara, a lifestyle subsidiary of Agung Sedayu Group, and its name was drawn from *Pancoran*, the historic commercial district in West Jakarta where Chinese-Indonesian food and commercial culture had taken root across generations of continuous occupation.[3] Its architectural language was designed by Jacob Tian,[4] an architect based in China working from references drawn from Guangdong, Fujian, and Straits building traditions, and organized around a series of shophouse facades, pagoda roofs and gates, plaza nodes, and ornamental murals depicting Chinese villages and commercial streets.[5]

1 Saeran, Henrico. "(Un)contested Accumulation by Reclamation in Jakarta Bay." *LSE Southeast Asia Blog*, 12 March 2024.

2 "Pantjoran PIK Resmi Dibuka, Destinasi Kuliner Baru di Jakarta Utara." Kompas, 23 November 2020.

3 Damaan, Nabila. "Lagi Hype! Intip Fakta Menarik Tentang Chinatown Pantjoran PIK" PopBela.com, 2025.

4 His surname, Tian (田), denotes 'field' or 'farmland,' tracing to the ancient State of Qi in what is now Shandong.

5 "Golf Island PIK: Where History, Culture, and Entertainment Meet." Indonesia Design, April 2024.



Fig. 1.1 *Pedestrian boulevard of Pantjoran PIK, Pantai Indah Kapuk, North Jakarta*, 2026, image by Author.

The commercial success of Pantjoran PIK was rapid and, by most measures, remarkable. During the pandemic, when indoor spaces remained restricted and middle-class Jakartans sought curated outdoor leisure in controlled environments, the development's open-air organization proved exceptionally well-suited to the moment.[6] The Pantai Indah Kapuk area was subsequently named the second most visited destination in Jakarta, attracting close to one million visitors per day at its peak.[7] On social media, the lanterns and shophouse facades generated a volume of photographic content that established the development as one of the defining visual signatures of post-pandemic Jakarta. By 2022, it had been named 'Winner of Best Retail Architectural Design (Indonesia)' at the PropertyGuru Asia Property Awards.[8]

However, its success rested on a claim that its awards did not address. Pantjoran PIK had been positioned, in its own promotional materials and in its popular reception, as a celebration of Chinese-Indonesian cultural heritage: a space for a community to reclaim visibility after decades of suppression, to be publicly and proudly Chinese in the post-*reformasi* city.[9] Yet the development had been built on reclaimed land with no Chinese settlement history, designed by an architect working from mainland Chinese/European building references, and organized by a lifestyle subsidiary of one of Indonesia's largest property conglomerates whose primary interest was, by definition, return on investment. The Chinese shophouse typology had been reproduced, and even sensationalized, with considerable fidelity. What had not been reproduced were the spatial arrangements, the social infrastructure, or the historical relationship to the communities whose centuries of inhabitation had made that typology legible as Chinese space in the first place.

While Pantjoran PIK serves as the empirical entry point for this study, it is not the research's primary subject. The development instead illustrates a broader structural shift: the transmutation of the shophouse from a lived, hybrid infrastructure into a commodified cultural product made for visual recognition and capital accumulation. This thesis interrogates the mechanics of that transformation as a way to understand the shophouse typology as witness, excavating the historical erasures and socio-political exclusions its neutralization necessitates, and the conditions of possibility that allowed it.

6 Hartanti, N. B. & Prabowo, A. H. "Redefining public space as a public life adaptation to the Covid-19 pandemic based on people preferences in Jakarta." *AIP Conference Proceedings* (2023).

7 "Kawasan PIK, Top 2 Paling Banyak Dikunjungi!" Golf Island PIK Official, Berita, 2024.

8 "PropertyGuru Asia Property Awards, Pantjoran PIK." Asia Property Awards, 2022.

9 "Pantjoran PIK Becomes a Cultural Icon as well as an Attractive Culinary Destination for Chinese New Year." Sugar & Cream, 2022.

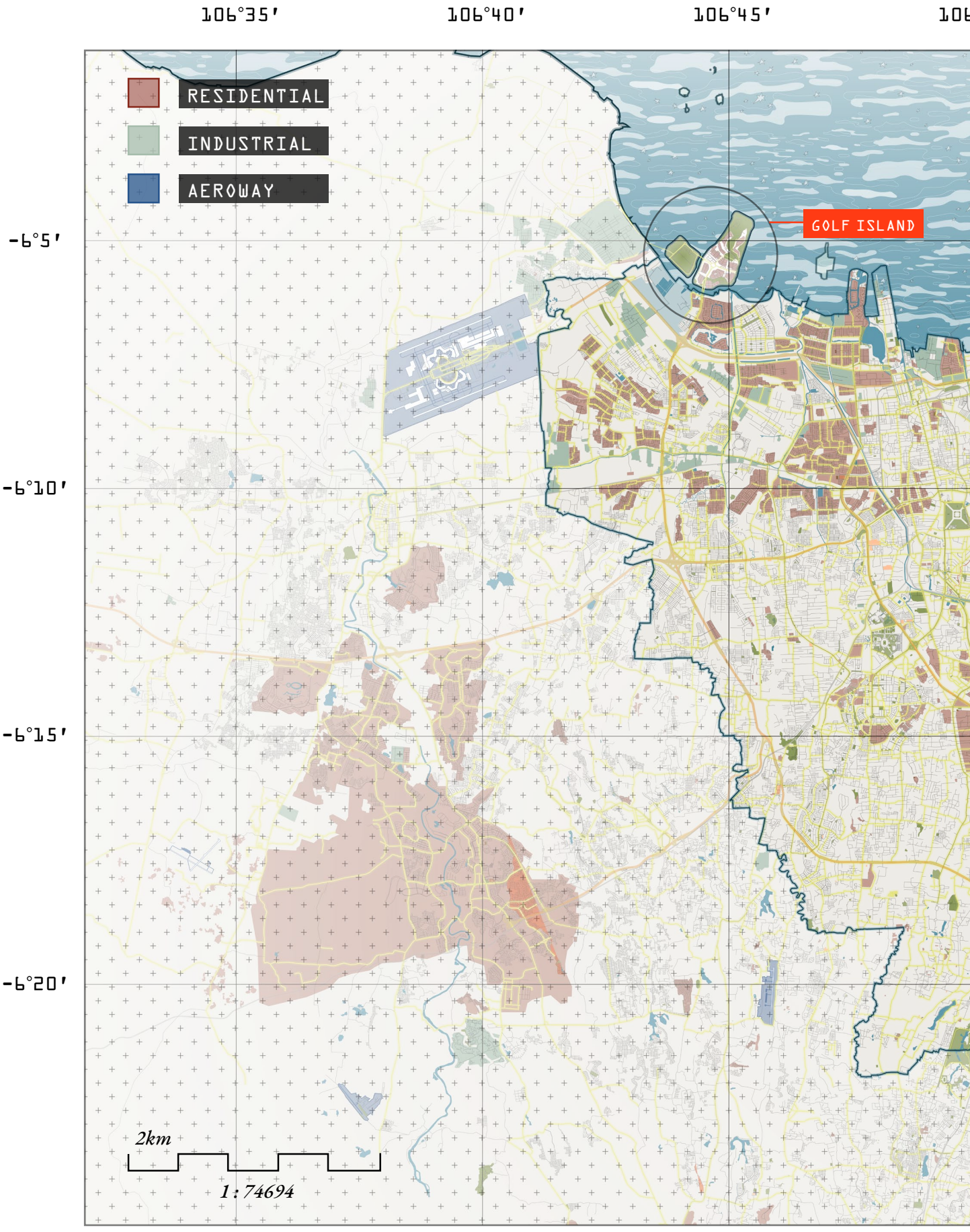

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Fig. 1.2
Location of Golf Island, 2026, image by Author.

Type, Model, and the Mechanics of Extraction

A shophouse is commonly defined as a hybrid building typology that integrates commercial and domestic functions within a single structure: typically narrow-fronted and deep in plan, the ground floor accommodates commercial activity while the upper levels provide space for residence, allowing households to operate businesses while remaining embedded within the rhythms of everyday domestic life.[10] Across Southeast Asia, this typology exhibits a broadly consistent spatial logic: buildings are constructed in continuous rows along commercial streets, sharing party walls and forming dense urban blocks,[11] while the deep interior allows for multiple functional zones extending away from the street.[12] This arrangement not only facilitates economic activity, but also produces a particular social condition in which work, dwelling, and family life are closely intertwined.[13] The shophouse is at once a building type and an economic and social infrastructure; a form that sustain small-scale entrepreneurship, dense urban settlement, and the continuous proximity of production and domestic life across generations of occupation. In the Indonesian archipelago, it assumed a central role in coastal trading centers such as Batavia, where it is commonly referred to as the *ruko* – short for *rumah-toko*, literally 'house-shop.'

Quatremère de Quincy describes a type as a generative formal principle – an idea after which architects can conceive works that bear no resemblance to each other yet share an underlying logic. A model, by contrast, is an object to be repeated as it is; all is precise and given.[14] The shophouse's proportions and spatial arrangements were calibrated to specific conditions of site, program, and community, producing an enormous variety of individual buildings that shared a formal logic without being identical. At Pantjoran PIK, the shophouse has been converted from type to model: its most recognizable formal features have been extracted, standardized, and reproduced as an experiential package.

This distinction is not between the old and the new, or between the authentic and the inauthentic in any simple sense; it is a distinction of two different relationships between architectural form and social life: one in which the form is embedded in and produced by the lived practices and socio-political realities it houses, most critically the events of the 1998 riots, and one in which the form is detached from those histories and redeployed as a sanitized representation. The thesis analyzes the model to understand the mechanisms of commodification,

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 Zhao, Wei. "Object Lesson: Shop + House: The Chinese Shophouse as a Transpacific Vernacular Form." *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2025): 68-88.

13 Zahrah, W. et al. "Shop as Home: The Meaning of Built Environment to Quality of Life of Shop Houses Residents in Medan, Indonesia." *Civil Engineering and Architecture*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2021).

14 Quatremère de Quincy, Antoine. "Type." In Encyclopédie Méthodique: Architecture, Vol. 3 (1825). Translated in Vidler, Anthony. "The Idea of Type." Oppositions, Vol. 8 (1977): 95–115.

while consistently reading back to the subject to show what is lost, transformed, and repurposed in the process.

The central argument is that the commodification of the shophouse is not a reversal of the New Order's suppression of Chinese-Indonesian cultural life but logical continuation by other means. Three decades of enforced invisibility produced a genuine and pent-up demand for cultural recognition that post-*reformasi*[15] capital was perfectly positioned to supply. The result is a spatial arrangement in which Chinese-Indonesian culture is more visible than at any point since independence, yet the terms of that visibility are controlled entirely by interests external to the community. Drawing on Nancy Fraser's distinction between recognition and redistribution,[16] extended here from its original political context into a spatial one, the community is offered cultural visibility while the structural conditions that made invisibility necessary remain unaddressed: the uncompensated violence of 1998, the unexamined mechanisms of racial vulnerability, and the absence of any institutional reckoning.

A concept from the scholarship on North American Chinatowns sit close to this material. Greg Umbach and Dan Wishnoff describe strategic self-orientalism as the practice by which a community's commercial elite produces an exotic image of its own culture for outside consumption, working with municipal authorities to make the enclave legible and protifable to tourists.[17] The concept extends Edward Said's account of Orientalism by returning agency to the orientalized, since the exotic representation is authored in part by ethnic insiders and not imposed wholly from without.[18] The Disneyfied shophouse is the architectural form this settlement takes in space.

The term Disneyfication entered the scholarly literature through several routes: from Jean Baudrillard's analysis of simulation and the hyperreal,[19] from critiques of themed environments in the mass consumption literature, and most systematically from Alan Bryman's sociological analysis of the organizational principles underlying Disney's spatial rationale.[20] Within this process, Disneyfication describes a spatial condition defined by four conditions operating simultaneously:

1. **Total theming:** the organization of an entire built environment around a single, legible cultural narrative that controls its aesthetic from above, producing a coherent world rather than an accumulated urban fabric. The theming is managed and consistent, designed to be legible to outsiders without requiring historical or contextual knowledge.

15 *Reformasi* (Indonesian: reform) refers to the political transition that followed the resignation of President Soeharto in May 1998 after thirty-two years in power, marking the end of the New Order regime and the beginning of Indonesia's democratic transition.

16 Fraser, Nancy. "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age." *New Left Review*, No. 212 (1995): 68–75. Fraser's framework was developed to describe a tension within left political thought: that the turn toward cultural recognition (i.e. the demand for visibility and respect, or the affirmation of group identity) has come to displace rather than supplement the demand for material redistribution, producing symbolic gains that leave structural injustice intact.

17 Umbach, Greg & Wishnoff, Dan. "Strategic Self-Orientalism: Urban Planning Policies and the Shaping of New York City's Chinatown, 1950-2005." *Journal of Planning History 7*, No. 3 (2008): 214-238.

18 Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

19 Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precision of Simulacra." *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. University of Michigan Press (1994): 1-42.

20 Bryman, Alan. "The Disneyization of Society." The Sociological Review, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1999): 25–47.

2. **Separation of experience from practice:** the culture is presented as something to be consumed and witnessed rather than participated in and transmitted. The form functions as a visual reference, not a social medium.

3. **Sanitation of difficulty:** the themed environment selects which aspects of a culture's history are made visible and systematically excludes those that are commercially inconvenient.

4. **Displacement of community authorship:** the representation of the culture is controlled by actors external to the community, whose primary interest is commercial return rather than cultural continuity. The community may be present as participants and consumers, but it does not control the terms of its own representations.

Disneyfication, as defined here, is not synonymous with renovation, commercial activity, or even the presence of tourists. A shophouse precinct can accommodate all of these without losing the spatial and social conditions that make it a living environment instead of a representation of one. What matters is whether the four conditions hold simultaneously, and crucially, whether the spatial relationships of the typology have been preserved or replaced by a version that retains only the facade while severing the sectional and tenurial relationship that gave those forms their meaning. This distinction aligns with the fundamental shift from type to model: the type remains legible through the spatial and social relationships that produce it, and the model functions by detaching the visual facade from those realities. Ultimately, Disneyfication is not only an aesthetic outcome, but the operative process that necessitates this transition.

The method of this thesis was shaped by the conditions of the model, as much of what the argument required did not exist in any single or settled form. The Chinese-Indonesian shophouse has been documented unevenly, and the community's spatial history sits at the edge of the official record, thinned by decades of assimilation policies that discouraged the expressions of identity this thesis traces. Where sources survive, they are scattered across formats and disciplines, held in academic theses, municipal records, experts, reportage, family memory, and the buildings themselves. This scarcity functions as a primary evidence of the erasure this thesis interrogates. Consequently, the act of assembling these fragments constitutes an argument in itself regarding what has been systematically obscured.

This research relies on compilation and triangulation, weaving together fragments from published scholarship and primary documents while reading them against the official archive. Recognizing that the archive

was incomplete, the thesis prioritizes direct engagement with the sites; through fieldwork and photographic documentation, these structures became evidence in their own rights, supplemented by dialogues with scholars who supplied vital and unwritten context that official documents fail to capture. Two further methods underpin the work: an autoethnographic approach, which draws my own family's relationship to the shophouse to position myself as both an insider and an observer, and a practice of analytical drawing. The elevations, sections, and plans generated for this thesis operate as instruments of inquiry. Ultimately, assembling a coherent narrative from these disparate materials required a degree of analytical synthesis; the reconstruction that follows should be read not as a final, comprehensive record, but as one considered arrangement of a history that remains partial.

Circulating Forms, Uneven Histories

Within the broader Southeast Asian context, the shophouse belongs to a widely circulating architectural lineage shaped by maritime trade, port urbanism, and colonial-era mobility.[21] Variants of this form appear prominently in cities such as Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hoi An. Across these sites, its spatial characteristics remain consistent: narrow frontage, street-facing commerce, and the close integration of work and dwelling.[22] Yet, while the form travels, its meanings, modes of treatment, and political afterlives diverge sharply across national contexts. The shophouse does not present a singular identity, but one whose significance is continuously redefined through processes of governance, development, and historical narration.

The Disneyfication of the shophouse is not an Indonesian peculiarity. It is a global condition, and the mechanisms through which it operates are legible across the region wherever the shophouse has been absorbed into heritage tourism infrastructure. Singapore offers perhaps the most instructive parallel because it has the most developed and internationally celebrated conservation framework for the typology.

Singapore's conservation program took institutional shape across the 1980s and was formalized at the decade's close. The Urban Redevelopment Authority unveiled a Conservation Master Plan in 1986.[23] By 1989, it had gazette ten conservation areas covering some 3,200 shophouses, becoming the national conservation authority in the same year.[24] This designation was significant as it institutionalized the state's power to define heritage, shifting the shophouse from a site of lived practice into a framework of protected, institutionalized history. The authority's governing principle is one of maximum retention, sensitive restoration, and careful repair.[25] The program has been widely praised as a model of Southeast Asian heritage conservation, and the shophouses have become internationally recognized destinations for adaptive reuse, a process in which, as Sari et al. note in their study of visitor perceptions, nearly all visitors found the reuse appropriate and the area comfortable, safe, and economically functional.[26] But the Singapore case also contains within it a different and more troubling story; one that the conservation literature rarely foregrounds.

21 Han, Wang & Beisi, Jia. "A morphological study of traditional shophouse in China and Southeast Asia." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 179 (2015): 239.

22 Aranha, J. "The Southeast Asian Shophouse as a Model for Sustainable Urban Environments." *International Journal of Design & Nature and Ecodynamics*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2014).

23 "30 years of conservation in Singapore since 1989: 30 personal reflections and stories." Urban Redevelopment Authority, edited by Serene Tng.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Widodo, Johannes. "Architectural Conservation in Singapore." *SPAFA Journal*, Vol. 21 No. 3 (2011): 4.

26 Yeptadian Sari, et al. "A Study of Adaptive Reuse: Shophouses in Clarke Quay–Boat Quay, Singapore from Visitor's Perspective," *AIP Conference Proceedings* 2689, 080005 (2023).



Fig. 1.3 *Interior of Bugis Junction, Singapore*, 2024, image by Banku, via Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 1.4 *Outside view of Bugis Junction, Singapore*, 2009, image by Jpatokal, Wikimedia Commons.

The demolition of Bugis Street in October 1985, necessitated by the construction of the Mass Rapid Transit station at Victoria Street, ending over a century of organic urban life.[27] From the 1950s until the early 1980s, the precinct had attained international legibility as a site of culinary vibrancy and its nightly gathering of trans women, famously characterized by the press in 1957 as the "Montmartre of Singapore."[28]

By the time Bugis Junction was inaugurated in 1995, approximately two-thirds of the original shophouse fabric had been demolished to accomodate the adjacent mall and hotel; while the surviving third was kept, though in a revealing way.[29] These shophouses were restructured and held on to their five-foot ways, intended fronts, and their two-storey scale, but their upper floors were repainted into a uniform neatness that drained the character preservation it has meant to hold.[30] The lanes between them were enclosed under glass and air-conditioned, while vendors were fixed in carts and their entrances privatized. Consequently, the street became another interior space of a mall. Bugis Street itself, empty of the dwellings along it, was opened out into a paved courtyard at the front of the building. [31]

The mechanism through which this operates has a name in architectural theory: facadism. Facadism in its most commonly understood sense involves retaining the facade of a building that is deemed to have some architectural or cultural value, and built afresh behind it. While it became a frequently used strategy for urban conservation in the 1960s, facadism was strongly criticized as an architecture of poor quality that led to a loss of authenticity. Zhen Li argues that facadism should be understood as, instead of a form of heritage preservation, a mode of demolition that developments has made acceptable; one that reduces the meaning of heritage to its visual surface while discarding the social histories, community relationships, and accumulated human significance that a building's fabric actually carries.[32] The argument is that facadism preserves the cultural sign while destroying the social basis that produced the sign's meaning. Disneyfication functions through a similar but different mode of erasure. In the case of Pantjoran PIK, there is no original shophouse to preserve or gut. Instead, the development manufactures a simulacrum. Where facadism keeps a signifier that once pointed to something real, Disneyfication produces a signifier that has no referent on site.

The crucial distinction between Singapore's conservation framework and Indonesia's situation is that Singapore operates through different mechanisms and with different degrees of state involvement. The URA identified six historic areas for conservation in 1986 and undertook a comprehensive masterplan that saw these areas gazetted as historic

27 Lee Meiyu, "Bugis Street: From Sleazy to Sanitised," *BiblioAsia* 11, no. 3 (October–December 2015).

28 *The Singapore Free Press*, November 1957, quoted in Lee Meiyu, "Bugis Street: From Sleazy to Sanitised."

29 Nguyen, Ly. "The Bugis Cluster: A Morphogenetic Narrative." *Cityscapes and Urban Form*, No. 2 (2017).

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 Zhen Li, "Facadist Toronto: Heritage at Face Value" (MArch thesis, University of Waterloo, 2023).

33 Aleshire, Ilene. "6 areas to be preserved." *The Straits Times* (27 December, 1986): 1.

34 Urban Redevelopment Authority. *Conservation: Built Heritage Conservation*. Singapore: URA, 2018.

districts.[33] As at 2018, some 7,000 buildings in more than 100 locations had been conserved.[34] This institutional apparatus produces a form of Disneyfication that is legible, curated, and absorbed into narratives of diverse national heritage.[35] Through this process, the shophouse's association with Chinese commercial culture visible in a controlled manner, its difficult histories absorbed into the multicultural coexistence narrative and the demands of heritage tourism. The sanitation is real; it is simply less visible because it is institutionalized.

In Malaysia, the condition is less uniform. UNESCO World Heritage designation in George Town and Malacca has stabilized the shophouse as a curated object of memory comparable to Singapore's conservation model,[36] while Kuala Lumpur, also the site of the 13 May 1969 riots, where spaces associated with Chinese economic life became targets of racial violence, offers no comparable protection.[37] The same architectural type can be stabilized, marginalized, or targeted depending on the specific historical and political conditions in which it is situated. This juxtaposition reveals that the shophouse's relationship to state protection is never simply a matter of architectural merit; it is a political question about which communities' cultural forms are deemed worthy of public investment and national narrativization.

This divergence is tied in part to differing demographic compositions and national projects, which shape what is recognized as heritage in the first place. The apparatus that does this shaping is what Laurajane Smith calls the authorized heritage discourse. Smith argues that the authority to define what counts as heritage, and how it may be used, has consistently rested with the state and its technical and aesthetic experts, who take their cue from the grand narratives of the nation.[38] The discourse privileges monumentality and national significance, and it draws a boundary between those with the standing to speak for heritage and those without. By presenting it as a matter of conservation technique and expert judgement, the discourse makes the cultural work it performs appear neutral, and the community whose identities are produced through that work are positioned as visitors to their own part rather than its authors.

Measured against this discourse, the two cases diverge. In Singapore, where ethnic Chinese constitute 75.5% of its population,[39] Chinese cultural forms including the shophouse can be incorporated into state narratives without political difficulty. In Indonesia, Chinese-Indonesians comprise a much smaller and historically contested minority, often estimated around 4% of the population,[40] though precise figures remain difficult to verify due to decades of assimilation policies and inconsistent census practices. Because it fails the discourse

35 Yeoh, Brenda S. A. & Kong, Lily. "The Notion of Place in the Construction of History, Nostalgia and Heritage in Singapore." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1996): 52–65.

36 Wagner, Ashley. "Malaysian Shophouses: Creating Cities of Character." *Architecture Undergraduate Honors Theses, University of Arkansas* (2017): 6.

37 Chia, Stanley L. H. *Dangerous Moments: An Oral History of the May 1969 Riots in Kuala Lumpur*. University of British Columbia (2021): 10.

38 Smith, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. Routledge (2006): 11-12.

39 "Population in Brief 2025." *National Population and Talent Division* (2025): 24.

40 "Speaking the Heart Language of the Chinese in Indonesia." *Far East Broadcasting Company* (2025).



Fig. 1.5 *Shophouse facade in Joo Chiat, Singapore*, 2025, image by Author.

on almost every count (i.e. carrying no monumentality, its significance attached to a minority, and bearing a past of state-ignored violence), the Indonesian shophouse has never been stabilized as heritage, remaining culturally unresolved and exposed to speculative redevelopment and generic planning frameworks.[41]

This condition becomes most visible at the scale of the city. The Indonesian shophouse is visually understated and institutionally undervalued; measured against either colonial-era Dutch buildings, coded as heritage-worthy, or contemporary developments that signal novelty and economic progress,[42] the shophouse appears repetitive, dense, and architecturally unremarkable. It is a city-making mechanism built from uncelebrated structures, and its ordinariness makes it easy to overlook and easier to erase. As public taste, shaped by development culture, increasingly privileges the new and the spectacular,[43] the old shophouse becomes a building that is everywhere but rarely valued.

The pattern of erasure is also rooted in a structural difference from shophouse districts elsewhere in the region. In Singapore, shophouses were typically built in continuous rows with shared firewalls, creating a fabric in which individual buildings were structurally and legally tied to their neighbours.[44] In Indonesia, many were historically built as detached structures on individually owned plots, producing a looser, more piecemeal urban fabric shaped by small-scale land ownership and incremental investment.[45] Because each building was structurally dependent, it could be altered, rebuilt, or demolished without affecting much of its adjacent properties.[46] What remains does so because it is still economically useful: old shophouses in fair condition typically host businesses whose operations require neither customer-facing aesthetics nor facade upgrades. Consequently, architectural continuity in Indonesian cities owes its existence to the inertia of neglect and the pragmatism of economic survival, rather than the outcomes of deliberate heritage protection.

41 Hidayat, July & Hubner, Ira B. "Heritage Transformation and Identity Construction: Peranakan Chinese Architecture in Lasem's Cultural Landscape." *Heranca - History, Heritage and Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2025): 2.

42 Kusno, Abidin. *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia*. Routledge (2000): 81–88.

43 Cowherd, Robert. "Cultural Construction of Jakarta: Design, Planning, and Development in Jabotabek, 1980–1997." PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2002): 107, 219–220, 265–267.

44 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 93.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

Memory Without Vulnerability

Memory, in Pierre Nora's formulation, does not require commemoration when it is still alive. A *milieu de mémoire*, a living environment of memory, is sustained by everyday practice, social habit, and continuous habitation: the accumulated weight of ordinary life conducted in the same space across generations.[47] A *lieux de mémoire*, a site of memory, emerges when this living continuity has been broken. It is a compensatory construction, deliberate and external, that produces the appearance of continuity where the continuity no longer exists.

Glodok is Jakarta's oldest Chinese commercial district, a *Pecinan* whose spatial fabric was shaped by the colonial concentration policies traced in Chapter 2, and whose shophouses have survived, in various states of adaptation, damage, and continued occupation, through the New Order, the violence of 1998, and the speculative pressures of the decades that followed. It is not a preserved district; there is no heritage designation protecting its fabric, and no conservation masterplan governing its shophouse rows. What it has instead is the accumulated residue of continuous inhabitation: businesses passed down across generations, shophouse interiors that carry the layered evidence of successive occupants, and a street life shaped by the informal rhythms of people who have not left. Its continuity is not curated; it is simply what remains when communities stay.

The distinction between Glodok and Pantjoran PIK is, in Nora's terms, the distinction between these two conditions. Glodok is a genuine *milieu de mémoire* because it is still inhabited, used, and carrying the weight of daily practice. Pantjoran PIK, on the other hand, is a *lieux de mémoire* in the problematic sense as it operates as a site of memory that manufactures a version of Chinese-Indonesian culture for consumption, and in doing so sets the terms on which that culture is permitted to be visible in the city.

The memory that Pantjoran PIK manufactures is, in Eric Hobsbawm's terms, an invention of tradition: assembled and formalized to produce the effect of continuity without the history that would have produced it organically.[48] But what Pantjoran PIK invented is not simply an incomplete version of the Chinese-Indonesian heritage; it is a version assembled from the wrong archive entirely. Crucially, this invention operates through a dual mechanism of self strategic-orientalism and cultural adventurism. By taking references from mainland China (e.g., pagoda roofs, red lacquered gates, and the formal language of a

47 Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*, No. 26 (1989): 7–24.

48 Hobsbawm, Eric & Ranger, Terence, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press (1983).

Qing dynasty commercial street), Pantjoran PIK discards the nuanced *Peranakan*[49] or localized history. Instead of honoring the specific Chinese-Indonesian blend of Chinese practices, Javanese material culture, and unique culinary adaptations, the development favors a generalized, pan-Chinese aesthetic. The development engages in strategic-orientalism, packaging Chineseness into a legible, marketable space designed to satisfy the consumer's desire for an 'authentic' yet sanitized encounter, resulting in a Chinese representation that travels well, rooted nowhere in particular, and legible to anyone. This, in turn, invites a form of cultural adventurism among visitors, who are encouraged to consume this stylized 'Other' within a safe, commercially controlled environment.[50] Ultimately, the Chineseness Pantjoran PIK presents is an invention, assembled for visibility rather than one inherited from actual, lived experience.

This formulation allows a more precise account of what is at stake in the shophouse's transformation. The shophouse has historically operated as a site of simultaneous memory and vulnerability, and crucially, those two conditions were produced by the same structural feature, which was its visibility at the street edge. The five-foot way, the externalized commerce, and the legible ethnic signage made the shophouse a site of memory by making it the spatial medium through which the community's presence, practices, and identity were continuously and publicly enacted.

At Pantjoran PIK, this tension has been dissolved, what remains is the appearance of memory in a space that is easily digestible and consumable. The condition this produces is what Svetlana Boym identifies as *restorative nostalgia*, defined as a cultural practice of the lost home as genuinely recoverable, reconstructing its outward forms while suppressing awareness of what made it irretrievable.[51] Crucially, restorative nostalgia does not present itself as nostalgia; it presents itself as truth, as the rightful return of what was wrongly taken rather than the manufacture of something that never existed in the form now being imagined. Pantjoran PIK operates in this register by offering its shophouse facades, its lanterns, and its programmed festivals as a community's heritage restored. By presenting manufactured memory as recovered memory, the development foreclosed the kind of historical consciousness that would require reckoning with what actually happened. The Disneyfied shophouse does not preserve the past; it aestheticizes a version of the past that was never the past as it was actually lived.

These questions regarding the manufacture of memory require a shift from the architectural to the systemic. The shophouse does not

49 *Peranakan* refers to locally born communities of mixed Chinese and Southeast Asian descent, historically formed through intermarriage between Chinese migrants and Indigenous women across several generations. Derived from the Malay word *anak* (child), the term denotes local birth and came to describe Chinese-descended populations in the archipelago whose cultural practices blended Chinese and local traditions over centuries of settlement.

50 Hooks, Bell. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press (1992): 21-39.

51 Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books (2001): 66-68.

transform in isolation; its passage from a site of lived history into an object of visual consumption is mediated by three actors: a state that licenses the transformation, capital that performs the extraction, and a community that carries the erasure without authoring it.

Before the events of 1998, the shophouse's form was tied to an identity held in visible negotiation with the city. For decades, the typology had absorbed a wide spectrum of demands, serving variously as a dwelling, warehouse, or clan house, among other functional roles while holding its underlying formal logic intact. The riots of 1998 fundamentally severed this trajectory, precipitating a critical shift that transformed the shophouse's legibility from a social and commercial necessity into a concentrated marker of racialized vulnerability, opening up a second path on which the form could travel without the people who had carried it.

In the decades since, the legibility was decoupled from its history and sold as heritage. The Disneyfied shophouse is the current form of this pivot, working as a mechanism of historical closure, and resolving the struggle over identity by replacing memory with consumer choice. Capitalizing on the community's long outsider status, this extracted typology takes an identity from the people who lived it and returns it to the city as spectacle, leaving the community outside of the frame built to celebrate them.

MIGRATION

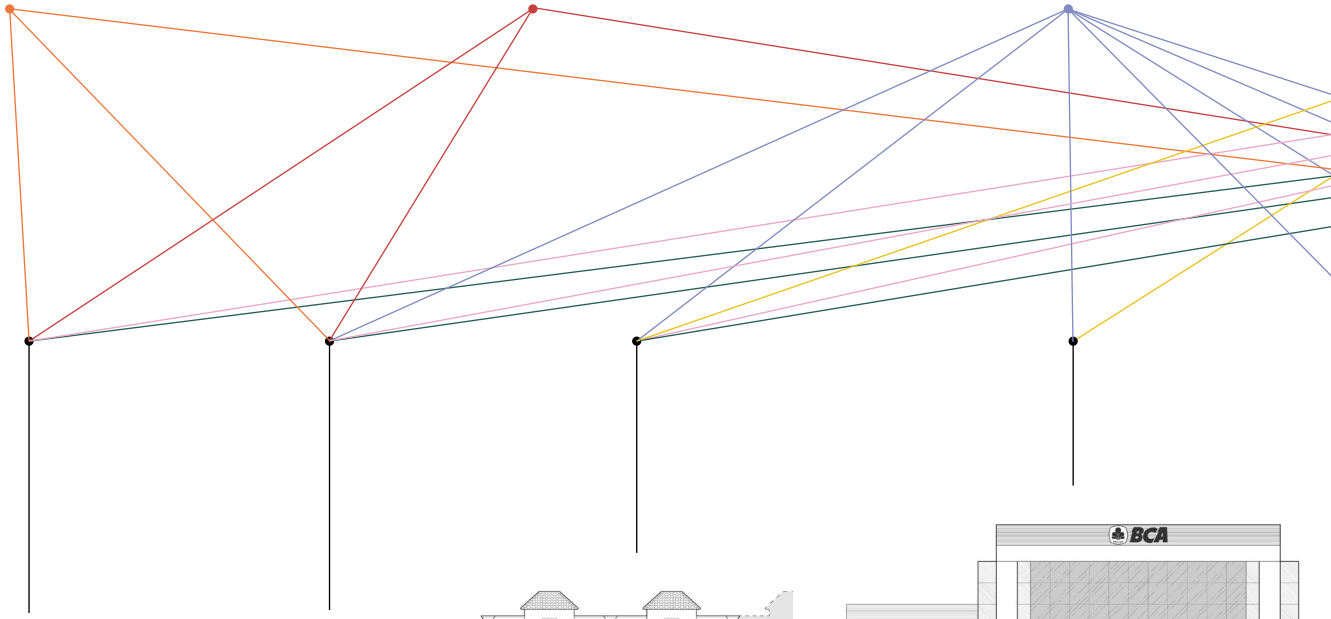
BRINGS THE TYPE INTO THE ARCHIPELAGO ALONG TRADE ROUTES

COLONIALISM

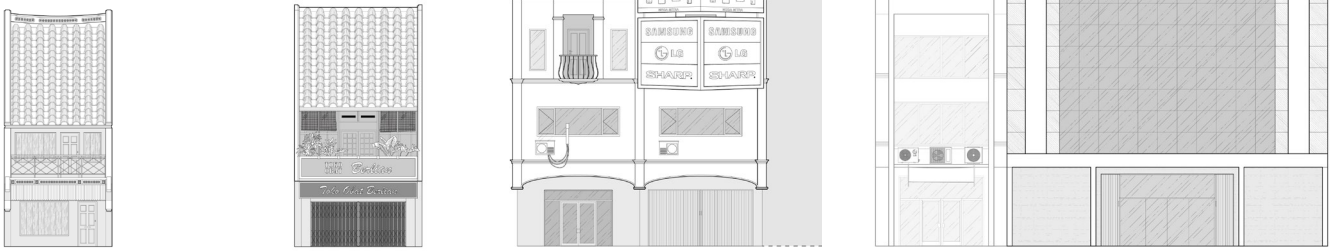
CONFINES THE TYPE TO SEGREGATED QUARTERS

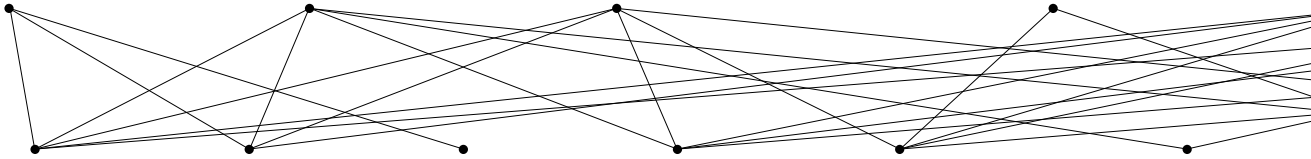
POLITICAL

SETS WHAT THE TYPE MAY DISPLAY



FRONTAGE THROUGH TIME





PROGRAM THROUGH TIME

SHOPHOUSE AS DWELLING — *SHOPHOUSE AS COMMERCE* — *SHOPHOUSE AS CLAN HOUSE* — *SHOPHOUSE AS WAREHOUSE* — *SHOPHOUSE AS SERVICE SPACE* — *SHOPHOUSE AS POLITICA INFRASTRUCTURE*

STYLE EMERGENCE THROUGH TIME

LOCALIZED — *COLONIAL-STYLE* — *ASSIMILATED* — *SIGNAGE-DOMINANT* — *CORPORATE* — *NEOCLASSICAL* — *ART*

18TH C. — ***1960s*** — ***1970s***

COLONIAL ERA

CONSTRUCTION BOOM

NEW ORDER ERA

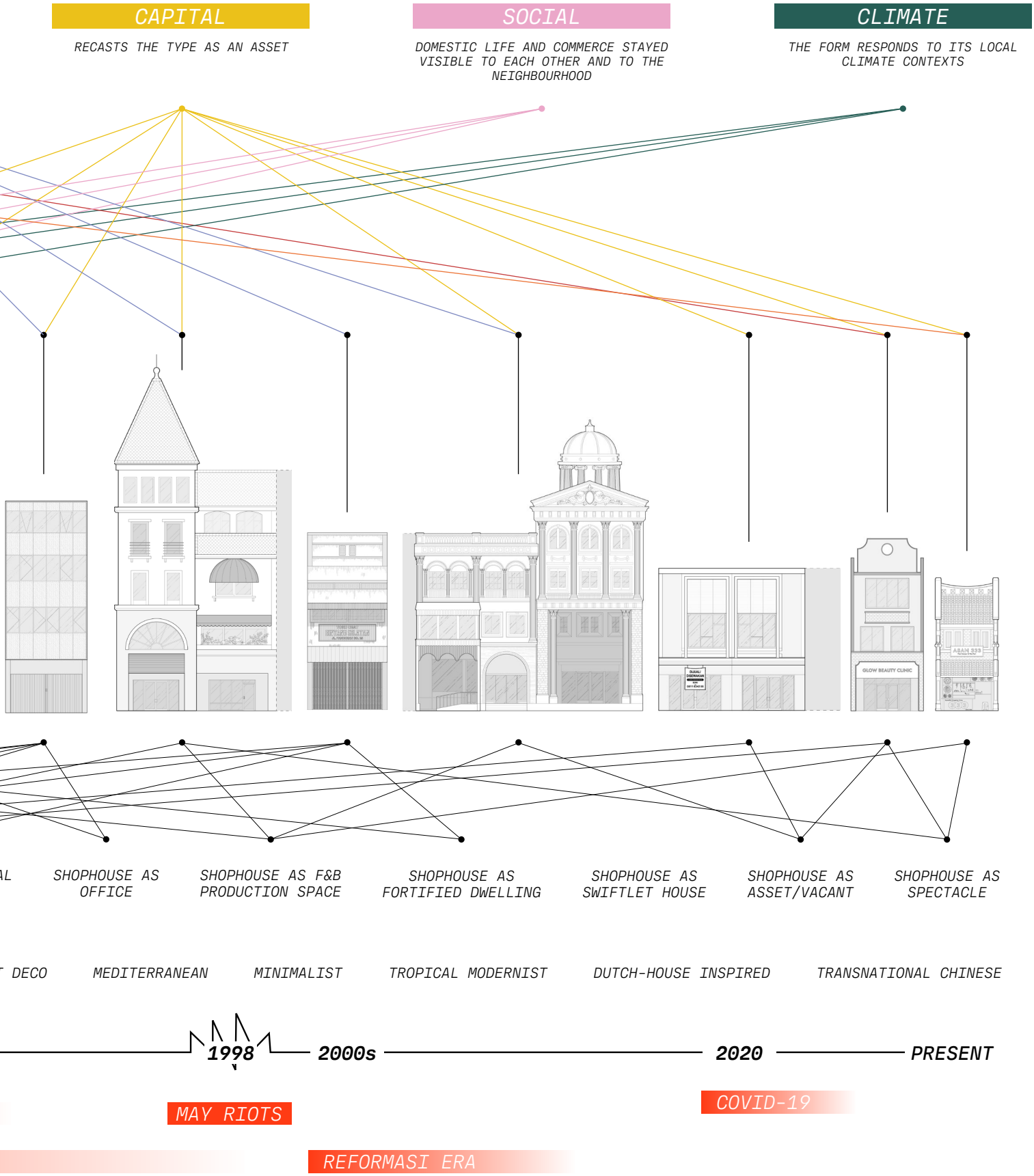


Fig. 1.6 *Shophouse timeline diagram*, 2026, image by Author.

2.1 / DISASSEMBLING THE SHOPHOUSE

A Shophouse, Remembered

In 1994, my father moved to Jakarta to follow my mother, who had begun working in the city two years earlier. Fresh out of university, he had already secured a stable job in Semarang, but Jakarta offered something different: proximity, opportunity, and the promise of a shared urban future. Not long after arriving, he was hired by a booth design and exhibition contractor based in the Duta Merlin area of Central Jakarta, its office operating out of two adjoining four-story shophouses.

Duta Merlin at the time was a dense commercial district situated just west of Harmoni, geographically and historically contiguous with Glodok, Jakarta's old Chinatown. The area was lined with rows of aging shophouses, some still functioning as mixed-use buildings while others fully converted into offices, warehouses, or workshops. The shophouse my father worked in was structurally sound but visibly dated, bearing the accumulated wear of decades of commercial use. Like many of its neighbors, its facade was modest and unassuming: a glass door, a simple company logo, and little else to distinguish the building from the rest of the street.

Inside, the shophouse had been retrofitted to accommodate an office environment: full-height partitions divided the deep floor plate into a sequence of narrow rooms, producing an atmosphere that felt cramped by contemporary standards but was typical of office adaptations at the time. Each floor served a specific function: sales and administration on the ground floor, management offices above, designers and drafters on the third level, and a shared pantry and dining area on the fourth.

Working in a shophouse for my father did not feel fundamentally different from working in a purpose-built office tower, yet certain conditions were unmistakable: noise from nearby restaurants and nightclubs carried easily through the party walls, parking was scarce, and the street remained present, audible, and unavoidable. At the same time, the building fostered a sense of proximity: colleagues encountered one another frequently on the stairs, meals were often shared, and interaction with neighboring offices happened organically through the immediacy of the street.

This was my parents' first sustained relationship with the shophouse: not as a domestic dwelling, but as a place of work, circulation, and everyday routine. The building did not announce itself as culturally

significant, nor did it appear exceptional. It simply functioned as an urban infrastructure: a practical container for labour, commerce, and movement within the city.

Deconstructing the Chinese Shophouse

Despite its apparent consistency, the shophouse should not be understood as a singular or culturally fixed architectural form. Rather, it is a mutable urban form that emerged, evolved, and diversified through specific historical, economic, and spatial conditions.[1] Within Indonesian architectural discourse, the shophouse is often genealogically linked to Southern China, particularly Fujian, as its point of origin.[2] This lineage can be reinforced linguistically: the English term 'shophouse,' which emerged in the British Straits Settlements, is commonly understood as a direct translation of the Hokkien phrase *tiam-chu*/店屋, meaning "shop-house."[3] Such interpretations have encouraged the assumption that the shophouse arrived in Southeast Asia as a culturally bounded Chinese 'export.'

While this origin narrative is historically significant, it risks obscuring the extent to which the shophouse took shape through circulation, adaptation, and hybridization across regional trade networks. Even within Southern China, the shophouse did not emerge as a fixed or inherited typology. For much of imperial Chinese history, strict separations between residential and commercial districts were enforced, and it was only during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) that these divisions began to loosen, allowing for mixed-use arrangements in port cities such as Suzhou in response to rising land values and the needs of small-scale traders.[4]

When situated within the Indonesian context, this seemingly stable definition quickly becomes further unsettled. Rather than existing as a standard architectural type, the shophouse operates as a shifting assemblage shaped by colonial governance, economic adaptation, and postcolonial urban transformation. What comes to be recognized as a shophouse is therefore less a fixed building form than a spatial response to a set of imposed conditions, and what counts as a shophouse is not determined solely by architectural or typological characteristics, but by social perception and historical association. Buildings that diverge significantly in form may still be identified as a shophouse, while others that resemble the conventional typology may fall outside of this categorization.

To understand how the shophouse emerged as a mutable and regionally differentiated form, it is necessary to examine the historical conditions through which it circulated and took shape. Among these, patterns

1 Kusno, Abidin. "Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia." *Rowman & Littlefield International* (London, 2016): 47.

2 Haryanti, R. & Alexander, H. B. "Asal-usul Ruko, Dari Fujian Hingga ke Pecinan." *Kompas*, 2019.

3 Saputra, E. E. & Raidi, S. "Tipologi Fasad Bangunan Rumah Toko di Jalan Kembang Jepun, Surabaya." *Seminar Ilmiah Arsitektur IV* (2023): 291.

4 Davis, Howard. "Living Over the Store : Architecture and Local Urban Life." *Routledge* (2012).

of migration and maritime exchange across Southeast Asia played a defining role in shaping both the spatial configuration of the shophouse and the social worlds in which it operated.

By the fourteenth century, Southeast Asia had become deeply embedded in maritime trade networks linking China, South Asia, the Middle East, and later, Europe.[5] These networks circulated not only commodities, but also people, skills, social practices, and building knowledge.[6] As early as the fifteenth century, Chinese merchants across the region established commercial communities that required constant engagement with the street, and within these dense trading environments, the integration of commerce and dwelling of the shophouse became both practical and necessary.[7]

Large-scale migration from mainland China intensified only after the mid-nineteenth century,[8] driven by political upheaval, dynastic collapse, rebellion, and famine.[9] This wave of migration brought diverse Chinese dialect groups, including Hokkiens, Hakkas, Cantonese, Teochew, and Hainanese, who formed distinct migration networks across the region, influencing settlement patterns, commercial activity, and social organization.[10] Within these environments, the shophouse was progressively reshaped through interaction with local climates, materials, street patterns, and social conditions.

5 Hall, Kenneth R. *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 100–1500*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.

6 Reid, Anthony. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*. Vol. 1: *The Lands Below the Winds*. Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 5–7.

7 Taylor, Jean Gelman. "The Chinese and the Early Centuries of Conversion to Islam in Indonesia." in *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*, edited by Tim Lindsey and Helen Pausacker. Books and Monographs. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute (2005): 153.

8 Lindquist, J. & Xiang, B. "Space of Mediation: Labour Migration, Intermediaries and the State of Indonesia and China since the Nineteenth Century." *Asia Pacific Migration*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2019).

9 Sopandi, Setiadi. "Vanishing Dwelling Culture: The Transformation of Shophouse and Chinese Quarter in Bogor, Indonesia (From Late 19th Century to 1990s)." *National University of Singapore*, (2002): 30.

10 Permana A., Septian & Purwantinigsih, Ari. "Chinese Community under the Soeharto Era in Indonesia." *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2021): 107.

The shophouse is better understood, in Anthony King's analysis of the bungalow, as a mobile spatial logic rather than a culturally owned object, shaped by the exigencies of empire, trade, labour, and climate.[11] The shophouse underwent a similar process of transformation, and responded to the practical constraints of the mercantile port city and was adapted, remade, and regionally differentiated at each point of its circulation. This adaptability is visible in the architecture itself: in cities such as Medan, shophouses often more closely resemble those in Malacca or Penang more closely than those in Batavia, reflecting historical trade orientations toward the Malay Peninsula; facades incorporate Malay timber detailing, European ornamentation, and other hybrid decorative motifs that register the form's circulation through multiple cultural contexts.[12]

Crucially, shophouse structures in Indonesian port cities were never exclusively occupied by Chinese communities. Within the pre-colonial and colonial contexts, they were also inhabited by Muslims, Arabs, Peranakans, and Indigenous merchants alike, functioning as a shared urban device for trade, storage, and dwelling in dense coastal environments.[13] Even within *Pecinan* districts, ethnic boundaries were never as fixed as their symbolic coding suggested: communities frequently regrouped along economic rather than ethnic lines, and the *Pecinan* functioned as a porous environment shaped by trade, rental agreements, and informal labour networks.[14]

And yet, within specific colonial geographies, this mobile and adaptable form became so consistently and visibly associated with Chinese commercial life that its formal vocabulary came to function as an ethnic marker. To understand how that accumulation occurred is key to understanding why it is now so readily exploitable.

In the Indonesian archipelago, the shophouse's consolidation within urban life cannot be separated from the racialized organization of urban space imposed by the colonial administration. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Dutch recognized the Chinese community as economically indispensable intermediaries within the colonial economy and encouraged Chinese settlements around Batavia to support sugar cultivation, milling, and regional trade.[15]

By the 1730s, however, falling global sugar prices, the closure of mills, and increasingly repressive policies generated widespread anxiety among Chinese workers,[16] and the colonial authorities began to frame the growing and mobile Chinese population as a political and security threat. These tensions culminated in the Batavia Massacre of 1740, during which thousands of Chinese residents were killed or expelled

11 King, Anthony D. *The Bungalow : The Production of a Global Culture*. Routledge & Kegan Paul (1984).

12 Ellisa, Evawani & Narumi, Kunihiro. "Classification and Transformation Typologies of Shop Houses in the Core City Area of Medan, Indonesia." *Technology Reports of the Osaka University*, Vol. 46, No. 2263 (1996): 282.

13 Sopandi, Setiadi. "Peculiar Shophouses in Indonesia: Types, Variants, and Contexts." Wordpress, 2012.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Surya, Riza Afita & Fikriya, Rif'atul. "Chinese Merchants Role of Java Trade in 19th Century." *Jurnal Pendidik dan Peneliti Sejarah*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2021): 19-26.

16 Lohanda, Mona. "The Kapitan Cina of Batavia: 1837-1942." *University of London, ProQuest* (1994).

beyond the fortified walls of the colonial city, and where relocated survivors later established what would become Jakarta's Chinatown.[17] The violence marked a decisive turning point: that Chinese presence was no longer understood primarily as economically useful, but as a population to be contained.

Under Dutch colonial rule, this system of racial governance became increasingly formalized. By the early 19th century, policies such as the *Wijkenstelsel* (Settlement Restriction, introduced in 1841) and the *Passenstelsel* (Travel Restriction, introduced in 1821) mapped legal and economic classifications directly onto the built environment.[18] The *Wijkenstelsel* required Chinese residents to live and work exclusively within designated quarters, reinforcing social distinction from Indigenous populations.[19] The *Passenstelsel* further intensified control by restricting Chinese mobility beyond the district, requiring official permission for movement and placing each district under the surveillance of a colonial-appointed *wijkmeester* – a local administrator responsible for surveillance, documentation, and enforcement.[20] These policies ensured that Chinese communities remained spatially concentrated and administratively monitored within colonial cities. While such enclaves provided Chinese communities with a clear spatial focus within the city, they simultaneously positioned them as places apart, distinguished by different social practices and urban atmospheres. Within this time period, the shophouse allowed families to live above their livelihoods in environments where mobility, land ownership, and social autonomy were restricted. Over time, the concentration of commercial buildings within these quarters rendered architecture itself ethnically legible, and repeated association transformed the shophouse into a visible marker of "Chineseness" in the urban landscape.

Racial differentiation was further entrenched through legal and cultural prohibitions designed explicitly to prevent assimilation and contact between the Chinese and Indigenous populations. The Chinese were formally classified as "Foreign Orientals" under the 1930 census, positioned in an unstable middle tier between Europeans and Natives,[21] and intermarriage with Indigenous populations had been prohibited since 1717.[22] During the height of the Cultivation System (1830-1880), this intermediary status took on a distinct economic dimension. Chinese entrepreneurs were increasingly positioned as brokers between Dutch colonial capital and Indigenous agrarian labour through revenue-farming privileges, which intensified resentment among Indigenous populations who bore the burden of forced cultivation and taxation.[23]

Through this process of functional assignment and spatial restriction, commerce became repeatedly aligned with a specific population and

17 *Ibid.*

18 Sumantri, K. & Yulianti, L. "The Policies of Indonesian Government on Ethnic Chinese in the Context of Multiculturalism." *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Social Sciences Education* (2017).

19 Suryadinata, Leo & Dorcas Gan. "Concepts and Patterns of Chinese Migration, with Reference to Southeast Asia, vii–viii." *Trends in Southeast Asia. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute* (2022): 6.

20 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture*, 39.

21 Sumantri & Yulianti, *The Policies of Indonesian Government on Ethnic Chinese*, 6.

22 De Wilde, Calvin. "Forced Assimilation and Development: The Chinese-Indonesians under Soeharto's New Order (1965-1998)." *Massey University*, 2014.

23 Claver, Alexander. "Dutch Commerce and Chinese Merchants in Java: Colonial Relationships in Trade and Finance, 1800-1942." *Brill*, 2014.

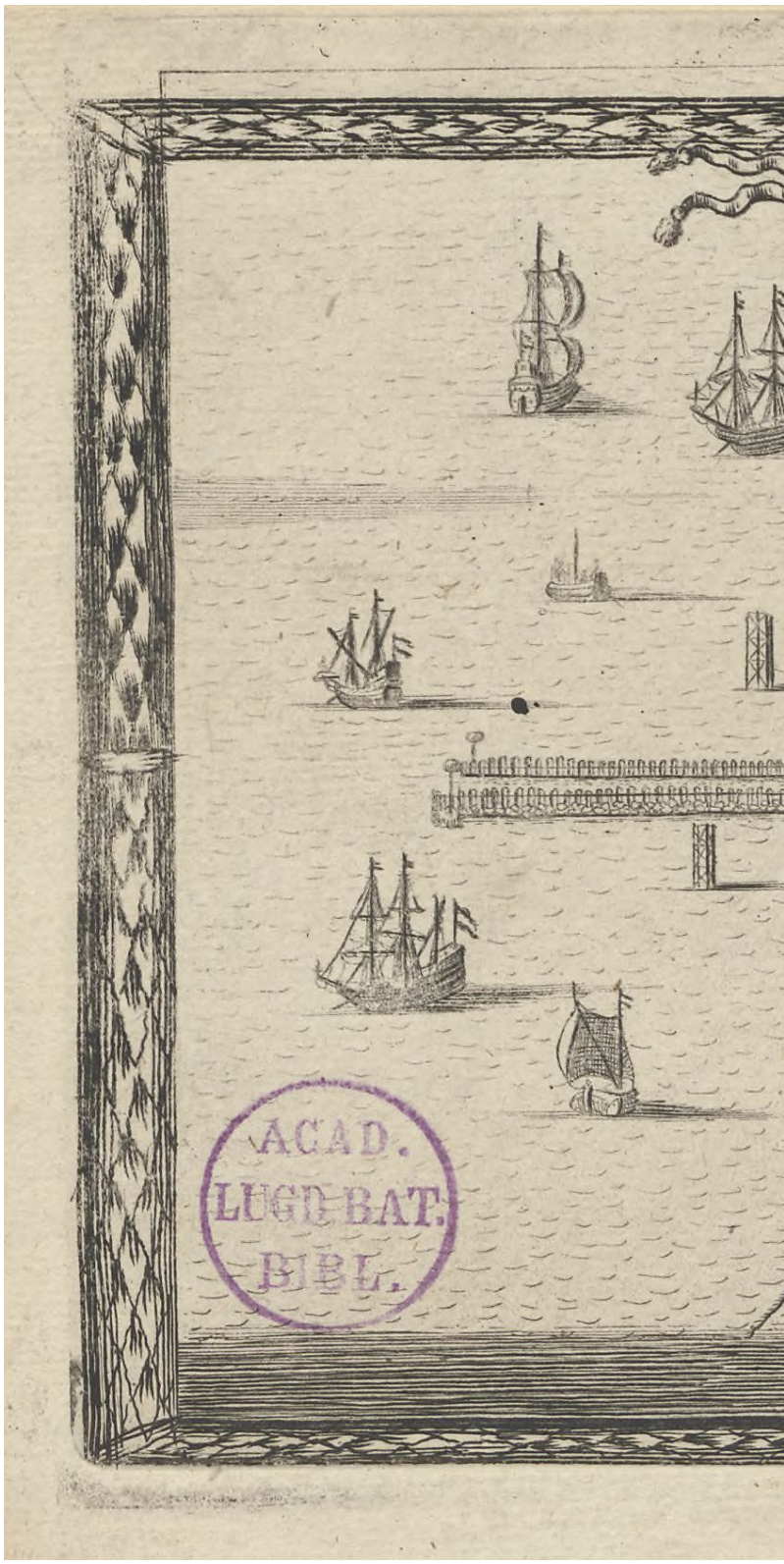
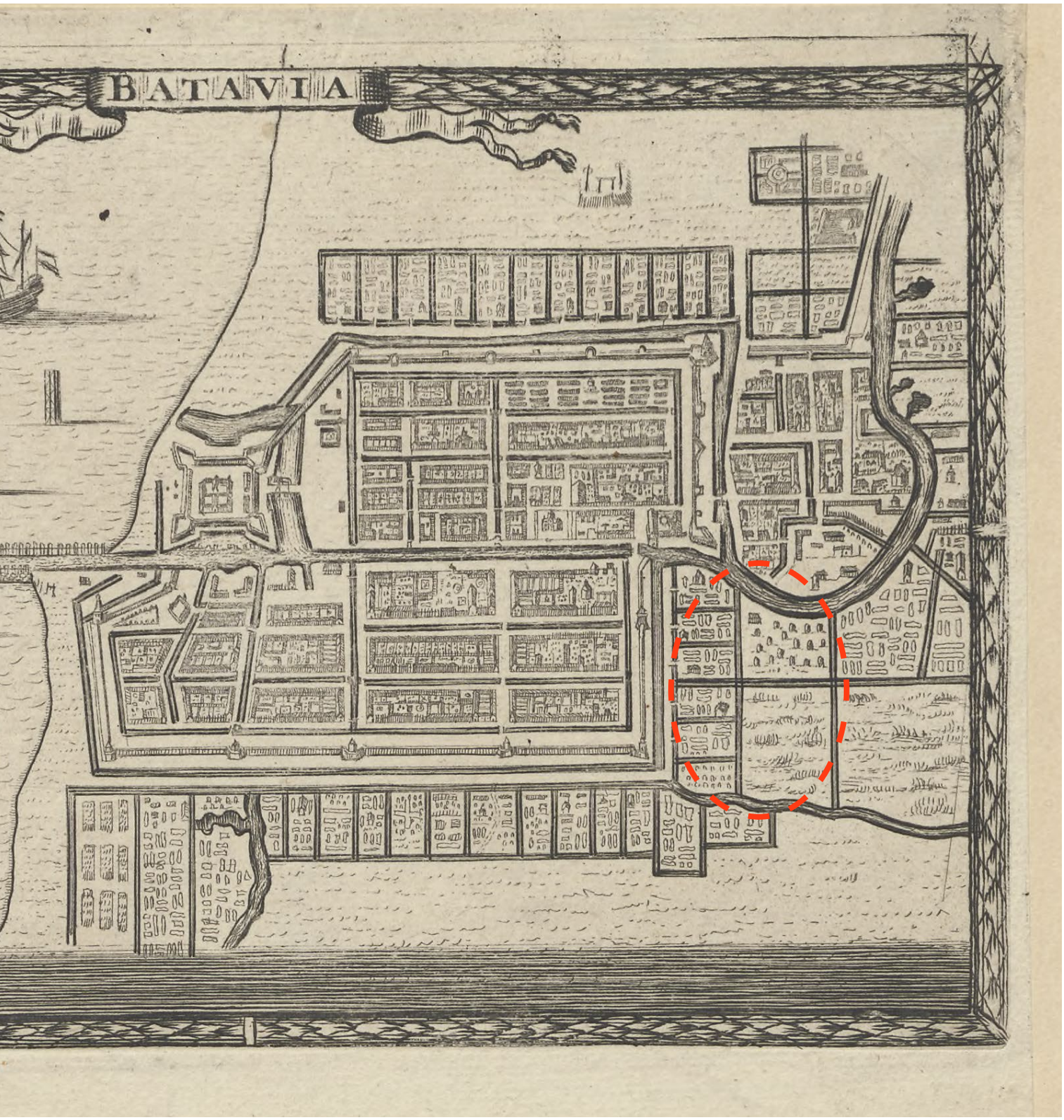


Fig. 2.1.1 *Map of Batavia*, 1652, Laiden University Libraries.

The Dutch East India Company's fortified city occupies the upper portion of the plan, organized around a regular grid of canals and defended by a continuous wall. The red dashed circle marks the area designated for Chinese settlement outside the city walls, where the Pecinan developed following the VOC's post-massacre spatial reorganization of 1740.


BATAVIA

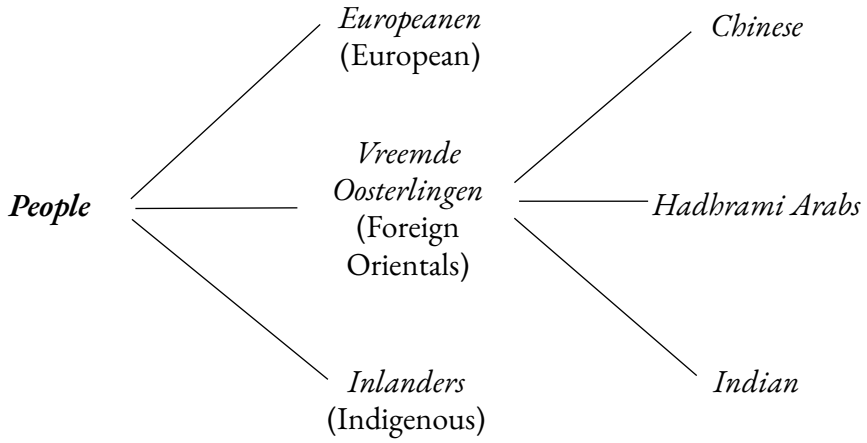


Fig. 2.1.2 *Dutch colonial racial classification system diagram*, 2025, image by Author.

staged at the scale of the street. Over time, this repetition produced what Todd Levon Brown identified as a racialized architectural imaginary:[24] the shophouse accumulated both exchange value as a site of economic activity and sign value as a legible marker of ethnic identity. The typology became ethnically coded through its consistent linkage to a particular role within the urban political economy, and through the visibility of that role in space. The concentration of shophouses within *Pecinan* districts materialized this ambiguous position assigned to Chinese communities with the colonial order.[25] These districts functioned as dense commercial zones that accommodate migrant livelihoods, while simultaneously fulfilling colonial demands for service provision, extraction, and economic efficiency – and over time naturalized the association between Chinese life and commerce, embedding it into the everyday fabric of the city.

The consequences of this arrangement extended far beyond the colonial period. By repeatedly positioning Chinese communities in visible commercial roles and in close proximity to colonial power, the colonial economy produced a durable stereotype of the Chinese as economically privileged and politically aligned with authority.[26] Even as the legal and structural foundations of colonial rule receded, this perception persisted and reappeared during moments of crisis.

This transformation of social life into a permanent, readable architectural sign is what this thesis characterizes as morphological memory, which is the accumulation, within a built form, of cultural associations that begin to operate independently of its current use or occupants. Because the association was produced by generations of the same community inhabiting the same form under conditions that made their presence continuously visible, it has become embedded in the typology's formal vocabulary itself. A shophouse can be converted into a dental clinic, a franchise outlet, or a heritage food court, and its exterior will still be

24 Brown, Todd Levon. "Racialized Architecture Space: A Critical Understanding of its Production, Perception and Evaluation." *Architecture_MPS*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2019): 3.

25 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese*, 51.

26 Walujono, Amanda. "The Discrimination of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Perceptions of Nationality." *Scripps Senior Theses*, Paper 508: 23.

read as a marker of Chinese commercial culture.

Aldo Rossi understood the city as the collective memory of its people; a claim he grounds in the argument that the city is not only a physical artifact but also the spatial accumulation of everything a community has done, endured, and built over time.[27] Architectural form, in his account, is the material through which that memory persists: type, in his formulation, is a "logical principle that is prior to form and that constitutes it," inseparable from the history of use and inhabitation that produced it.[28] His analysis of the city of Split, where new uses and new meanings accumulated within unchangeable forms over centuries, suggests that form and history exist in a relationship of mutual dependency. As long as form relates to the practice that generated it, it remains within the domain of history. When those practices are displaced and only the form persists, as Peter Eisenman summarizes in his introduction to the text, "history shifts into the realm of memory."[29] The building ceases to be a living practice and becomes a sign: legible as the residue of something that once happened within it, but no longer animated by the social life that gave it meaning.

The shophouses in contemporary Jakarta stand at this threshold: legible as Chinese space, increasingly no longer inhabited as such, its morphological memory available for extraction by developers who require the sign without the community that historically inhabited it. What the developers seek is not an innate Chineseness in the architecture, but the meaning that centuries of enforced and visible inhabitation have deposited in the form, and which now circulates independently of the people whose labour of survival created it.

Understanding the shophouse in this way allows a productive contradiction to remain intact. The typology can be genealogically linked to Southern China without being reduced to "Chinese architecture." It is at once ordinary and overdetermined: an everyday building shaped by pragmatic demands, and a form onto which meaning, suspicion, and violence have been repeatedly projected. Its ordinariness allowed it to proliferate across the archipelago; its public presence made it recognizable; and in times of crisis, that recognizability made it vulnerable.

27 Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Translated by Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA (1982): 130.

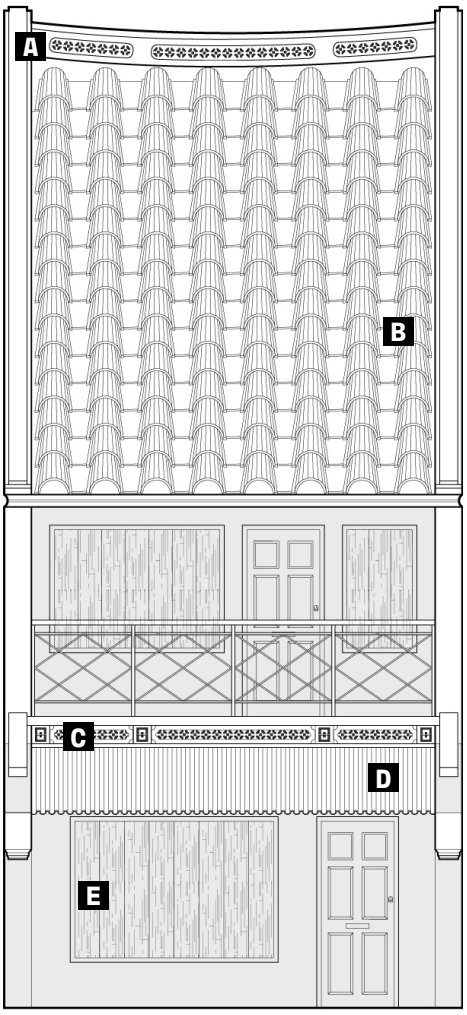
28 *Ibid*., 40-41.

29 Eisenman, Peter. "Editor's Introduction." In Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*: 7.

The Typical Colonial

~ 18th Century - 1942

The colonial period marks the moment when previously fluid spatial practices started to become codified, segregated, and racialized, transforming the conditions that would later produce the shophouse as a legible 'Chinese' space.



A. MAIN CURVED ROOF RIDGE

B. THE INTEGRATION OF LOCAL TERRACOTTA ROOFING WITH IMPORTED CHINESE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES DEMONSTRATES EARLY ADAPTATIONS TO THE TROPICAL CLIMATE

C. CERAMIC AIR-VENT

D. CANOPY; THE SHELTERED WALKWAY NEGOTIATED THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN PUBLIC THOROUGHFARE AND PRIVATE COMMERCE, CREATING A VITAL ZONE FOR INFORMAL STREET LIFE

E. FLEXIBLE TIMBER OPENINGS ALLOW PASSIVE VENTILATION AND MAINTAIN A POROUS VISUAL AND ACOUSTIC CONNECTION TO THE STREET

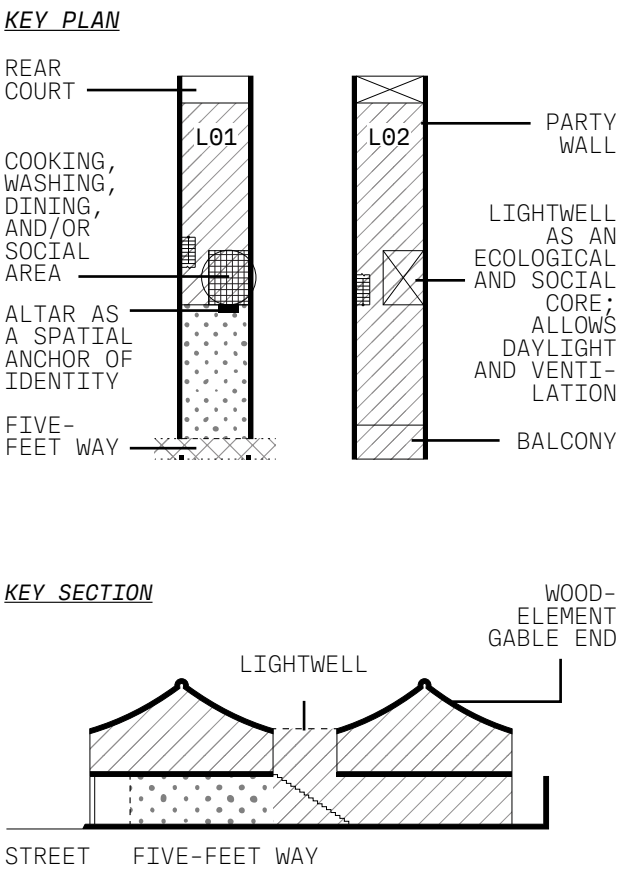


Fig. 2.1.3 *Colonial shophouse analysis*, 2025, image by Author.

The Anatomy of the Shophouse

To understand what was at stake in the shophouse's later transformation, it is necessary first to grasp the spatial logic of the building in its historical condition. Typologically, the shophouse can be understood as a compact yet highly efficient urban structure, characterized by low-rise but high-density construction, walkable street-oriented environments, and affordability enabled through narrow footprints, shared party walls, and a single primary facade facing the street. This configuration makes the shophouse structurally and socially oriented towards exposure, making economic activity legible in the public realm and everyday labour performed openly at the street edge as an integral component of the city's spatial life.

In many Southeast Asian cities, shophouses were built on narrow parcels most commonly measuring between 3-5 meters in width, with depths going up to around 20-50 meters.[30] With this elongated footprint, the narrow frontage aligns with the subdivision of urban land parcels, while the depth allows for multiple functional zones to extend away from the street. The regional archetype is a continuous row bound by shared party walls, as in Singapore. In many Indonesian quarters the pattern varies, as some buildings were historically raised individually, while contemporary

30 Fahim, Mashudur & Mou, Ishrat. "Comparative Analysis of Traditional Shophouse and its Subsequent Diffusion in Southeast Asia." International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 8, No. 12 (2025): 3017.

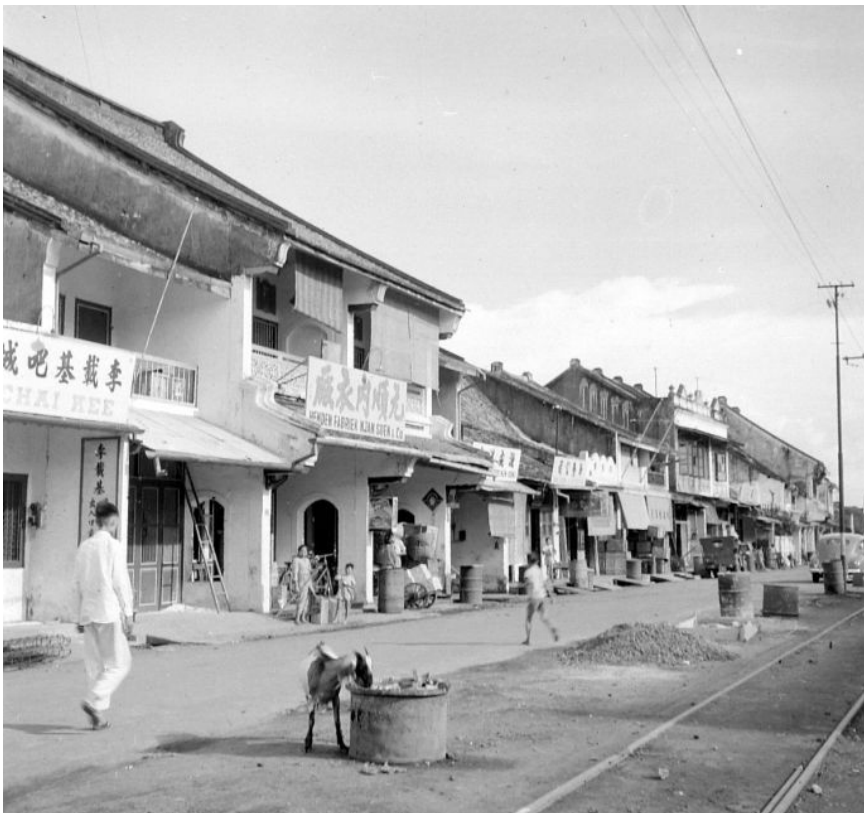


Fig. 2.1.4 *Dwellings and shops in old Chinese style, Old Djakarta, West Java*, 1949, Tropenmuseum Collection, Wereldmuseum, Wikimedia Commons.

The image shows the arcade in active use, and the boundary between commercial interior and public street remains unfixed. The two-storey shophouses show the narrow frontage and projecting upper floor characteristic of the type as it settled into the Pecinan under colonial-era plot constraints.

development had been increasingly defined by consolidated rows tied together by shared party walls. Regardless of these historical variations, the shophouse does not function as a a freestanding object but always part of a row, part of a street, and part of a larger urban logic.

Internally, spaces were arranged in a sequence from public to private that extended both horizontally and vertically. The ground floor served as the commercial front, while the upper levels functioned as the domestic core, housing living and sleeping quarters accessed through narrow corridors, with service spaces such as kitchens and bathrooms at the rear.[31] A central staircase connected these domains, tethering the household's private life to the commercial operations unfolding below (see Fig. 2.1.3).[32] Similar plan types appear across the region, indicating that this layout emerged from shared urban conditions, including plot subdivision, density, and the demands of mercantile life.

At the street edge, the shophouse's relationship to the city was articulated through the five-foot way, forming a continuous pedestrian corridor that links buildings along the street and functions as an intermediate threshold between the private interior of the shop and public circulation of the street.[33]

Historically, the five-foot way emerged as a practical response to the tropical climate of Southeast Asian port towns, protecting pedestrians from the sun and rain while enabling movement between neighboring shops.[34] Over time, the space evolved beyond circulation, as shop owners increasingly used it to display goods, while itinerant vendors (known as *pedagang kaki-lima*, or "five-foot vendors") appropriated it to sell small commodities.[35] The arcade thus became a zone of everyday contact where commercial activity, pedestrian movement, and informal social interaction overlapped. When the Dutch established Batavia in the seventeenth century, they attempted to impose a more formal European model of urban order, emphasizing regulated streets, controlled pedestrian movement, and visually uniformity.[36] The informal commercial use of sidewalks by migrants and local vendors often clashed with these colonial ideals of spatial discipline, transforming the space into a site of contestation where vernacular practices of commerce and sociability confronted colonial attempts to regulate the street.[37]

This spatial ambiguity was also reflected in its governance. In post-independence Jakarta, ownership of the kaki-lima was often unclear: while physically attached to individual buildings, the space was sometimes regulated by municipal authorities or informally controlled by local actors who collected fees from vendors and shop owners.[38] In practice, its use was negotiated through everyday arrangements among

31 Zhao, *Object Lesson: Shop + House*: 72.

32 Tran, Tung V. "Shophouse: A Mixed Use Building Type." *SJSU ScholarWorks* (2004): 53.

33 Ellisa, Evawani & Narumi, Kunihiro. "Classification and Transformation Typologies of Shop Houses in the Core City Area of Medan, Indonesia." *Technology Reports of the Osaka University*, Vol. 46, No. 2263 (1996): 283.

34 Siong, Tan Sai. "Eat, drink on 5-foot-ways." *The Straits Times* (1998): 10.

35 Kusno, Abidin. "After the New Order: Space, Politics, and Jakarta." *University of Hawai'i Press* (2013): 42.

36 Izumida, Hideo. "Kaki Lima as Contesting Space between European and Asian Values." *The 1st International Conference of Malay Architecture*, Vol. 1 (2005).

37 *Ibid.*

38 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 42.

shopkeepers, vendors, pedestrians, and authorities.

Another defining spatial element of many older shophouses is the internal courtyard or lightwell. Derived from courtyard traditions in Chinese domestic architecture, the lightwell evolved from the open courtyards of earlier dwelling types and was adapted to the narrow, elongated plan of the shophouse as a semi-outdoor space positioned near its center.[39] Within the dense interior of the shophouse, the lightwell served multiple environmental and domestic functions, allowing daylight and ventilation to penetrate deep into the building while facilitating rainwater collection and supporting everyday domestic activities such as washing, cooking, and dining.[40] In many earlier examples, the space was paired with a shared well and bathing area, forming a composite zone of living, service, and circulation where different household activities unfolded along its edges.[41] Although semi-private and typically reached only after passing through the darker front corridor, it often functioned as the social heart of the house.[42]

The shophouse's interior was also marked by flexibility that allowed it to accommodate shifting uses over time. Because interior partitions were often made of lightwell timber panels, spaces could be expanded, contracted, or reconfigured as household needs shifted.[43] Within this sequence, an ancestral altar typically played a central role, often positioned between the commercial front and the domestic interior.[44] It represented the continued presence and protection of a family's ancestors, and served as a key site that mediated lineage, memory, as well as moral obligation, effectively embedding the commerce within a framework of ritual continuity and familial responsibility.[45]

Shophouses frequently came to house multiple generations, with businesses passed down over time and domestic routines organized around collective labour.[46] In some cases, the shophouse also functioned as a clan house or association base, hosting social gatherings, organizational meetings, or communal rituals.[47] Through these overlapping uses, the shophouse operated as a form of social infrastructure that contained and organized kinship, labour, and everyday life within a single hybrid space. Over time, this sustained occupation transformed these buildings into material archives of family history, reputation, and continuity.

Relationships to the shophouse were also shaped by broader patterns of settlement within Chinese-Indonesian communities, particularly the distinction between *Peranakan*[48] and *Totok*[49] communities.[50] *Peranakan* families often treated the shophouses as inherited assets and material anchors for family continuity, with care expressed through

39 Bahauddin, A. et al. "Biophilic design patterns and local knowledge of plants application in Baba-Nyonya heritage shophouses' courtyard." *ARTEKS Jurnal Teknik Arsitektur*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2021): 305-314.

40 Erdiono, D. et al. "Studi Pengamatan Terjadinya Pola Pergeseran Fungsi Ruang Pada Bangunan Rumah-Toko di Manado." *Media Matrasain*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2012: 60.

41 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 92-101.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 Rangkuty, Gladies. I. U. "Karakteristik Pola Penataan Ruang Dalam Shophouse di Kawasan Pecinan Bagansiapiapi, Riau." *Jurnal Arsitektur Komposisi*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2021).

45 Aswanti, C. et al. "Eksplorasi Karakteristik Pecinan dalam Arsitektur Vernakular Ruko Jap Loen di Bandung: Warisan Budaya dan Adaptasi Lokal." *TEKSTUR: Jurnal Arsitektur*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2025).

46 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 56-103.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Peranakan* refers to locally born communities of mixed Chinese and Southeast Asian descent, historically formed through marriages between Chinese migrants and Indigenous women. Derived from the Malay word *anak* (child), the term denotes local birth and came to describe Chinese-descended populations in the archipelago whose cultural practices blended Chinese and local traditions.

49 *Totok* refers to first-generation or recently arrived Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia who retained closer linguistic, cultural, and political ties to China.

50 Suryadinata & Dorca, *Concepts and Patterns of Chinese Migration*: 6.

51 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 35-94.

52 *Ibid.*



Fig. 2.1.5 *Shophouse courtyard/airwell in Malacca, Malaysia*, 2007, image by Someformofhuman, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0.

maintenance, incremental modification, and long-term occupation; whereas *Totok* migrants tended to relate to property more instrumentally, and were generally more willing to sell or redevelop.[51] These differing orientations shaped building conditions and rates of demolition within the *Pecinan*, determining, at the scale of individual plots, whether a building accumulated layers of inhabitation or was replaced. Their difference was also legible on the street: *Totok*-owned shops prominently displayed Chinese characters, signaling continued orientation toward Chinese literacy and cultural affiliation, while *Peranakan*-owned shops used personal or family names or local place names.[52] Shop signs, being affordable to modify and highly visible, became one of the most immediate surfaces through which identity was negotiated in public.

In this way, the shophouse facade functioned as a negotiable interface between community identity and the urban street, where language, commerce, and belonging were made publicly legible. Through these everyday acts of naming and display, the shophouse participated in shaping how *Pecinan* streets were read by residents, authorities, and outsiders alike: as Chinese-identified, hybrid, local, or cosmopolitan urban environments.

Within this accumulated visibility, violence finds its spatial anchor. Every outbreak of violence comes with its own immediate triggers: economic, crisis, political upheaval, or fear, but these reasons are layered on top of a much older structure of racialized memory already embedded in the city. While the justifications shift from one moment to the next, the same communities and spaces are repeatedly targeted because they are already marked within the urban imagination. Architecture does not cause violence, but it becomes a stage on which long-standing anxieties are replayed; one that would be progressively disciplined and erased under the New Order, setting the scene for forgetting and rupture in the decades that followed.



Fig. 2.1.6 *Ancestral altar*, 2025, image by W. Cahyono, SuaraBaru.id.

2.2 / THE WORK OF FORGETTING

A Precarious Belonging

In the years following Indonesia's independence in 1945, the newly formed republic was not only building a nation, but also renegotiating the meanings of belonging, identity, and participation within it. Indonesia's post-independence political order initially took shape under the leadership of Soekarno, who envisioned Indonesia as a plural, postcolonial nation unified through a shared anti-imperial struggle.[1] This vision was articulated through the *Pancasila*, a philosophical framework that sought to stabilize diversity through a synthesis of nationalism, social justice, humanitarianism, deliberative democracy, and belief in a single divine principle.[2]

Yet the early republic also inherited deep structural colonial ambiguities it had set out to dismantle. The unresolved position of ethnic Chinese-Indonesians, whose classification as *Foreign Orientals* under Dutch rule did not dissolve with independence, persisted into the new national framework.[3] Under Soekarno, Chinese-Indonesians continued occupying a legally precarious position: many became Indonesian citizens under post-independence nationality laws, others retained ties to the People's Republic of China, and the question of dual nationality generated periodic political tension.[4] Eventually, the Indonesian citizenship legislation in 1946 required individuals to formally declare their national allegiance.[5]

Amid this instability, economic nationalism intensified. In 1959, the government issued Presidential Regulation No. 10 (PP-10), prohibiting *Foreign Orientals* from engaging in retail trade in rural areas.[6] Framed as a measure to protect indigenous traders and consolidate economic sovereignty, the policy disproportionately affected ethnic Chinese merchants, compelling many to relocate into urban centers, or leaving Indonesia altogether.[7] This effect was architectural as well as demographic: the existing concentration of Chinese commercial life within the *Pecinan* was deepened, and the shophouse became the primary physical infrastructure through which this compressed urban presence was organized and sustained.

Also in 1959, Soekarno instituted the Guided Democracy, which consolidated power within the presidency and subordinated parliamentary institutions. Under this system, he sought to balance three competing forces: military leadership, political Islam, and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) within a single structure.[8] The move was a means of restoring decisiveness to governance in a

1 Karim F., Moch. "A Revolutionary's Call to Justice: Lessons from Sukarno's Indonesia Menggugat." *Global South Forum* (2025).

2 Szabo, Anna G. "Ethnic Policies Toward People of Chinese Descent in Indonesia and Malaysia." *Universitat Wien* (2015): 40.

3 Walujono, A. "The Discrimination of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Perceptions of Nationality." *Scripps College* (2014): 40.

4 G. Sanzhuan & M. Tim. "Dual nationality and national belonging: A case study of Chinese diaspora in Indonesia from 1949 to 1960s." *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationale*, Vol. 39, No. 2. Université de Poitiers (2023): 163.

5 Walujono, *The Discrimination of Ethnic Chinese*, 40.

6 Suryadinata, Leo. "Three Examples of Anti-Chinese Violence in the Twentieth Century" in *The Rise of China and the Chinese Overseas: A Study of Beijing's Changing Policy in Southeast Asia and Beyond*. ISEAS Publishing (2017): 46.

7 Heidhues, Mary S. "Violent, Political, and Administrative Repression of the Chinese Minority in Indonesia, 1945-1998." *Wacana* Vol. 18 No. 1 (2017): 94-105.

8 Israr, et al. "Sukarno, the Army, and the PKI during the Guided Democracy Era: A Complex Triangular Relationship." *Analisis Sejarah: Mencari Jalan Sejarah*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2025): 185-91.

fragmented nation.

Among these actors, the PKI came to be a particularly significant political presence, expanding its mass base through labour unions, peasant organizations, and cultural institutions.[9] Its growing visibility intensified ideological polarization at a moment when the state itself was already unstable.

9 Roosa, John. "Indonesian Communism: The Perils of the Parliamentary Path" in *Volume 2: The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941-1960s,* edited by Norman Naimark, Silvio Pons, and Sophie Quinn-Judge. The Cambridge History of Communism: Cambridge University Press (2017): 4.



Fig. 2.2.1 *Street view with shops at Djakarta's Chinese area Glodok*, 1953-60, Tropenmuseum Collection, Wereldmuseum, Wikimedia Commons.

The shophouse facade carry bilingual signage in Chinese characters and Indonesian Latin script across the same elevation. The kaki-lima fills with bicycles, pedestrians, and a *becak*, a three-wheeled cycle-rickshaw that was the dominant informal transport of that period. In the decade following Independence, the *Pecinan* continued to function as a visibly multi-cultural commercial district.

Learning Fear & Regulating Culture

Between 1965-1966, Indonesia underwent one of the largest anti-communist purges of the twentieth century.[10] Following the events of 30 September 1965, the Indonesian military, under the leadership of Soeharto, initiated a nationwide campaign against individuals and groups accused of affiliation with the PKI. Over the course of several months, an estimated 500,000 people were killed, detained, or disappeared.[11] Though the intensity varied regionally, the effects were national; reshaping families, neighborhoods, and urban life across the archipelago.

Almost immediately, the violence was incorporated into a new state narrative that framed the purge as an act of national salvation. An official history was constructed in which PKI's alleged betrayal justified military intervention,[12] and this refusal of reckoning established a foundational condition of the New Order: a political order stabilized through the management of memory.

When Soeharto formally assumed presidency in 1967, the New Order regime recast political authority through developmentalism, displacing the rhetoric of revolution with an emphasis on economic growth, technocratic expertise and bureaucratic control.[13] Under this framework, ideological conflict was treated as a problem of mismanagement, to be resolved through stabilization and disciplined governance.[14] This promise of unity rested on a contradiction that order would be achieved through the systematic regulation of difference and the narrowing of what could be publicly seen, said, or remembered.

The effects of this narrowing were not limited to former leftists. Although the primary targets of the violence were associated (accurately or not) with leftist politics, the broader climate of suspicion reshaped the position of other communities, including ethnic Chinese-Indonesians.[15] Longstanding anxieties regarding Chinese economic presence were intensified: the community would often be seen as politically ambiguous, economically powerful, and culturally external to the nation.[16] Even when not directly subjected to the mass killings, Chinese-Indonesians were drawn into a pervasive environment of surveillance and pressured toward conformity.

This was soon formalized through a series of assimilationist policies: Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967 prohibited the public expression

10 Tajima, Yuhki. "Explaining Ethnic Violence in Indonesia: Demilitarizing Domestic Security." *Journal of East Asian Studies 8*, No. 3, (2008): 451-72.

11 Henschke, Rebecca. "Indonesia massacres: Declassified US files shed new light." *BBC News*, 2017.

12 Henry, Adam H. "Polluting the Waters: A Brief History of Anti-Communist Propaganda during the Indonesian Massacres." *Genocide Studies International*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2014): 159.

13 Kusno, Abidin. "Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, urban space and political cultures in Indonesia." *Routledge* (2000): 106.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Ananta, A., Arifin, Evi. N & Bakhtiar. "Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia and the Province of Riau Archipelago: A Demographic Analysis" in *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia*, edited by Leo Suryadinata. ISEAS Publications, Singapore, 2008: 28.

16 Walujono. *The Discrimination of Ethnic Chinese*, 52.

of Chinese religion, customs, and cultural practices. Lunar New Year celebrations, lion dances, ancestral rites, and Chinese characters in public spaces were banned. Decree of The People's Consultative Assembly no. XXVI/MPRS/1966 closed down Chinese-language schools, newspapers, and publishing houses, disrupting linguistic transmission across generations.[17] Cabinet Presidium Decree no. 127/U/Kep/12/1966 regulated Chinese-Indonesians to adopt Indonesian-sounding names.[18] Meanwhile, the term *Cina*, with its pejorative undertones, was institutionalized in official discourse, reinforcing racial distance. These policies defined Indonesian-ness as cultural indistinction and political compliance.[19]

These policies had direct architectural and urban consequences: buildings associated with Chinese life, from temples, schools, clan houses, to shophouses, became politically sensitive sites.[20] This sensitivity did not always result in outright demolition, and more often produced a more subtle strategy of de-politization where buildings were made to survive by becoming unreadable.

The shophouse occupied an ambivalent position within the state's apparatus of control. Unlike temples, schools, or clan houses, which could be closed, banned, or made illegal outright, the shophouse could persist because it could be framed as a neutral commercial infrastructure, albeit its survival was conditional. One of the examples of this condition was the systematic removal of Chinese signages from the street-facing facades:[21] from clan names, family surnames, "hometown" references, to Chinese scripts.[22] In their place, generic Latin lettering and Indonesian names, often abstract virtues such as *Jaya* (victory) or *Makmur* (prosperity), or neutral descriptors like *Elektronik* (Electronic), *Sparepart*, or *Sembako*. These substitutions echoed the ideological language of growth, stability, and economic optimism, translating a culturally specific facade into one legible as national and unthreatening.

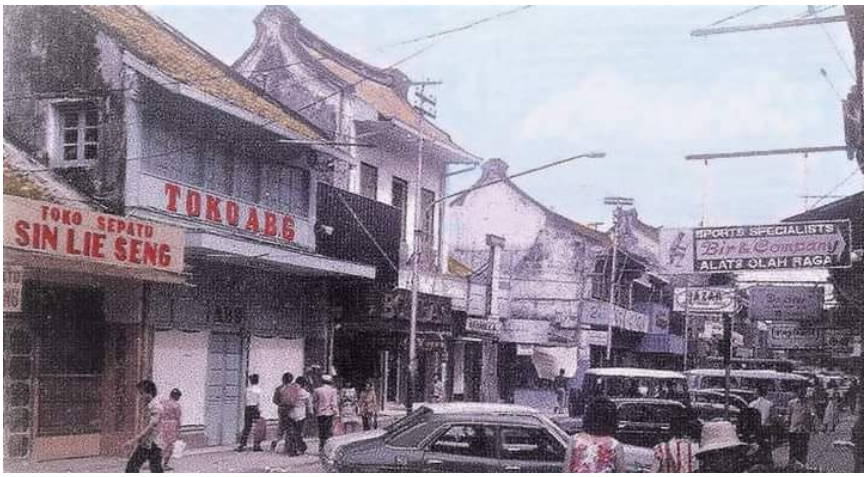


Fig. 2.2.2 *Commercial street in Pasar Baru, Central Jakarta*, 1977, Bintoro Hoepoedio.

Latin-script signage predominates across the shophouse facades; Chinese surnames are retained in phonetic transliterations but Chinese characters are absent.

17 Winarta, Frans H. "No More Discrimination Against the Chinese" in *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia*, edited by Leo Suryadinata. ISEAS Publications, Singapore, 2008: 62.

18 Tanasaldy. "From Official to Grassroots Racism." *The Political Quarterly*, 93 (2022): 461.

19 De Wilde, Forced Assimilation and Development, 36.

20 Winarta, *No More Discrimination Against the Chinese*, 63.

21 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 35-100.

22 *Ibid.*

This pressure toward neutrality and assimilation extended beyond signage and to the architectural surface itself. Decorative elements associated with Chinese identity were often removed, obscured, or gradually replaced with modernist planes or even European motifs.[23] These changes accumulated over time and unfolded in a setting where visible cultural markers felt increasingly dangerous, hence making a building less legible was, in part, a way of making it less vulnerable.

For families who ran these shops, making a building less legible was a practical calculation. These were small acts of survival repeated across thousands of buildings and decades, accumulating into a citywide transformation that looked, from the outside, like assimilation. The shophouse's morphological memory was driven inward, preserved in the material fabric of buildings whose surfaces had been stripped of what they once announced. The New Order could regulate what appeared on the walls, but it could not undo the history that had made the form legible in the first place. That history stays in the building, waiting.

23 Lestari, S. & Tohjiwa, A. D. "Perubahan Elemen Arsitektur Tionghoa di Kawasan Pecinan Glodok." *Tesa Arsitektur*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (2022).

Modernization & the Loss of Home

The New Order's political repression of Chinese cultural expression coincided with a period of rapid urban transformation that placed additional pressure on the shophouse from a different direction. Beginning in the 1970s, Indonesia entered a sustained "construction boom" driven by oil revenues, foreign investment, and state-led development agendas.[24] Jakarta, in particular, was reshaped into a showcase of modernity: highways, office towers, shopping centers, and new residential enclaves proliferated, indicating progress, efficiency, and global integration.[25] This transformation was also explicitly anti-historical as older commercial districts, informal economies, and pedestrian-oriented urban life were systematically displaced in favor of sanitized,[26] automobile-centered environments that privileged speed, visibility, and capital circulation over continuity and memory. The de-ethnicization of the shophouse facade and the commercial intensification of the shophouse building were, in this sense, two aspects of the same project making Chinese urban presence legible as economic utility and nothing more.

Within this landscape, many older shophouses had reached a state of physical exhaustion and were increasingly misaligned with the pressures of expanding cities. Rising land values, intensified commercial activity, and new zoning laws made replacement more economically viable than maintenance.[27] Reinforced concrete and iron gradually replaced earlier timber-based construction and load-bearing masonry, allowing for faster construction, greater structural spans, and standardized repetition.[28] Building practices no longer revolved around incremental growth or long-term adaptability, but around rapid assembly and formal efficiency. The shophouse was absorbed into postwar modernization aligned with bureaucratic planning, speculative development, and short-term return on investment.[29]

The most significant architectural consequence was the beginning of the live-work dissolution. The shophouse's defining spatial logic, the vertical integration of commerce and dwelling, began to unravel as domestic aspiration shifted and urban conditions changed. Suburban imaginaries associated modern living with separation from work: the ideal house was no longer stacked above work but set apart from it, buffered by gardens, gates, and distance from the street.[30] As private vehicles became more common among urban households, residential architecture increasingly oriented itself toward garages and driveways.[31]

24 Soemardi, B. W. & Pribadi, K. S. "The Indonesian Construction Industry, 1995-2019" in *Construction Industry Advance and Change: Progress in Eight Asian Economies since 1995*, edited by Michael Anson, Yat Hung Chiang, Patrick Lam, and Jianfu Shen. Emerald Publishing Limited (2001): 64.

25 Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial,* 109-110.

26 *Ibid.*

27 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 79-109.

28 Pradoto, Rani G. K., et al. "An Overview of Technology Landscape in Construction Materials for the Indonesian Construction History." *Jurnal Teoretis dan Terapan Bidang Rekayasa Sipil*, Vol. 30 (3), 2023.

29 Cowherd, Robert. "Cultural Construction of Jakarta: Design, Planning, and Development in Jabotabek, 1980-1997." *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* (2002): 106.

30 Pratama, Daniel C. "Jakarta Gated City: Gated Communities and The Deepening Inequality." Medium, 2022.

31 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 108.

Under these combined pressures, domestic life began to withdraw from the shophouse. Buildings increasingly functioned as purely commercial spaces (i.e. restaurants, retail outlets, warehouses, financial offices) while owners and workers commuted from elsewhere.[32] New shophouses were built with different assumptions: that occupation would be temporary, and interiors should be adaptable to shifting commercial demands rather than long-term habitation. The upper floor, which had historically housed the family whose labour operated the ground floor below, was increasingly sublet, converted to storage, or left vacant.[33]

Within the shophouse itself, these pressures reorganized domestic space in ways that loosened the spatial integration between living and working that defined the typology. Living rooms increasingly came to be understood as clean and socially legible areas for receiving guests, while activities associated with labour were gradually displaced to the rear, loosening the central role of the lightwell.[34] This reorganization was formalized through the introduction of a dual-kitchen arrangement: a *dapur kering* (dry kitchen) positioned within the main body of the house, and a *dapur basah* (wet kitchen) located at the back (see Fig. 2.2.3).[35] The arrangement allowed the front interior to function as a space of social presentation and domestic respectability, while tasks involving smoke, grease, and water were relegated to less visible service areas. This distinction reinforces notions of domestic order and classed arrangements of labour, segmenting the constrained interior of the shophouse.

Ritual life registered these pressures in spatial terms. The ancestral altar had historically occupied a position at the threshold between the commercial front and the domestic interior, so that commerce was conducted within the altar's domain. This placement embedded the act of trade within a framework of ancestral obligation, making the shophouse something other than a purely transactional space. Under the New Order, where visible expressions of Chinese cultural identity were discouraged and surveilled, the positioning became untenable.[36] Altars were often reduced in scale and spatial prominence: pushed further into the interior, folded into living rooms where they occupied modest shelves or symbolized into family photographs. The altar's withdrawal from the commercial front severed the spatial relationship between commerce and ritual that had given the shophouse its moral interior, and in doing so, eroded the spatial language through which the shophouse's hybridity had been inhabited and meant.

The commercial functions of the building demanded new spatial accommodations for refrigeration units, storage areas, display systems, and customer interfaces.[37] With the growing adoption of

32 Kusno, Abidin. "Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia." *Rowman & Littlefield International* (London, 2016): 49.

33 Sopandi, Vanishing Dwelling Culture, 107-109.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

36 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese,* 57.

37 *Ibid.*

air-conditioning, the lightwell itself was often reduced or eliminated entirely, marking a broader transition from climatic mediation through architectural form to the mechanical conditioning of interior environments.[38] These competing pressures intensified the strain on the narrow floor plans, producing interiors that were increasingly pulled between incompatible demands.

Moreover, the internal organization of the shophouse was also reconfigured. What was once a single interrelated vertical household unit became increasingly subdivided, with each floor functioning as an independently owned or leased unit, additional floors built above the original structure,[39] and ownership fragmented across investors, franchise operators, and portfolio holders who may never inhabit the building themselves.[40]

Architecturally, this meant a fundamental change in the building's relationship to time. Domesticity had made the shophouse accretive: through everyday living, the building accumulated objects, smells, routines, obligations, and forms of care that could not be easily abstracted. These layers produced temporal thickness in which daily repetition intertwined with generational continuity. Stripped of habitation, the building became easier to subdivide, lease, and reprogram – yet thinner in time, detached from lineage, and from the lived duration within the city that had made it, for so long, something more than just a container.

38 *Ibid.*

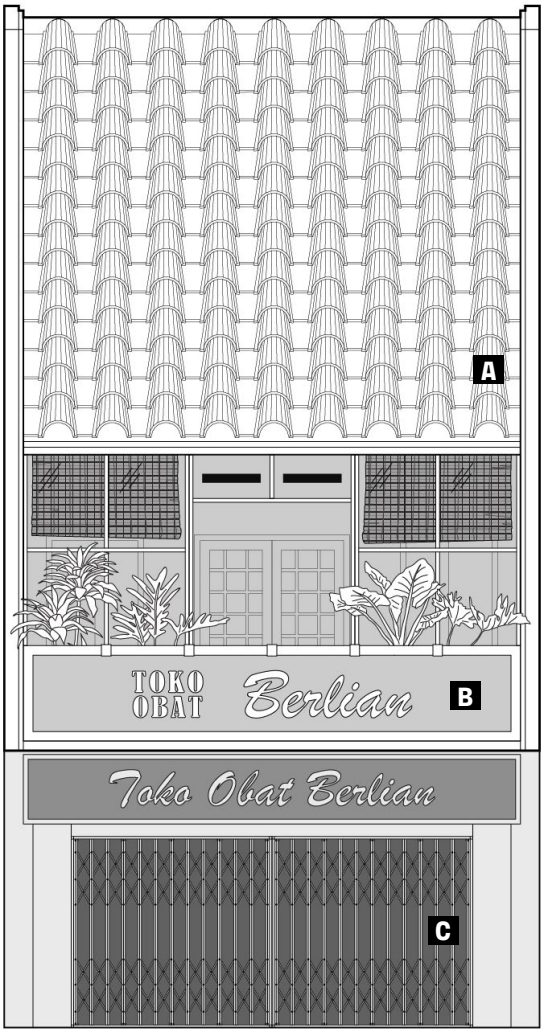
39 *Ibid.*

40 Rahmi, M. et al. "Kajian Tipologi terhadap Perubahan Elemen Fasad Ruko ditinjau dari Jenis Fungsi Layanan Kasus Studi: Ruko Paskal Hyper Square Bandung." *Jurnal Lingkungan Binaan Indonesia*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2018: 200.

The Early New Order

1970 - 1998

During the New Order period, the shophouse underwent a process of cultural sanitization and material hardening. Driven by state policies and early modernization, the architecture began to pivot away from fluid street-level engagement toward secure and assimilated commercial spaces.



A. TERRACOTTA U-SHAPE TILES

B. FOLLOWING THE 1967 BAN OF PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF CHINESE CULTURE, TRADITIONAL CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY IS REPLACED BY LATIN LETTERING AND ABSTRACT, NATIONALIZED BUSINESS NAMES

C. THE REPLACEMENT OF PERMEABLE TIMBER LOUVERED DOORS WITH STANDARDIZED, IMPORTED STEEL GATES MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOPHOUSE'S DEFENSIVE POSTURE

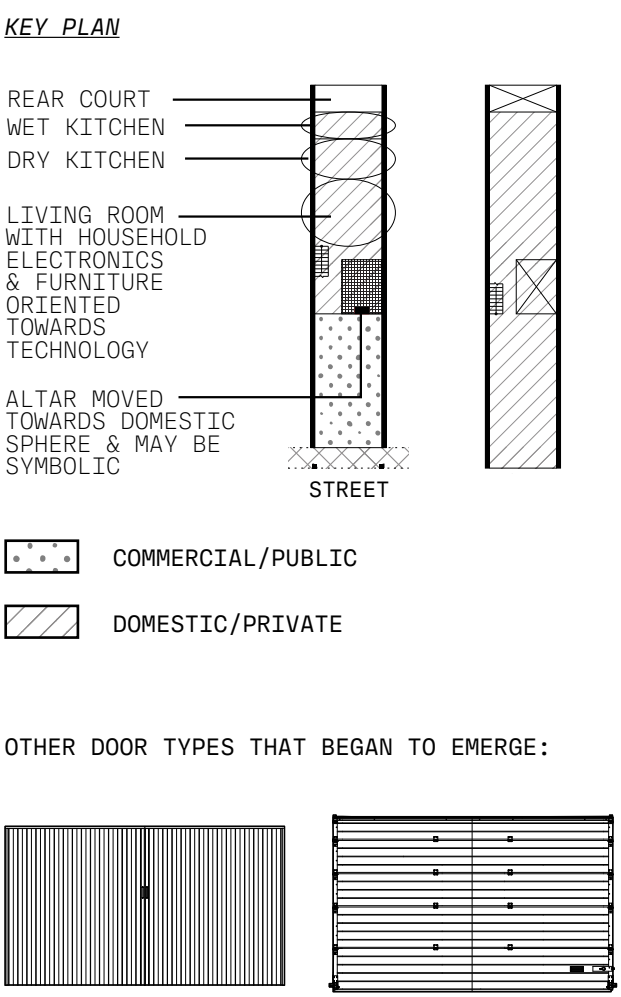


Fig. 2.2.3 *Early New Order shophouse analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

The Generic Skin

As domestic life withdrew from the shophouse, the building's architectural logic gradually turned outward. This shift was most visibly expressed at the level of the facade, where one of the most pervasive mechanisms of transformation took place: covering.

The emergence of the "billboard shophouse" marked a critical turning point; large-scale signage did not merely advertise goods or services but effectively replaced the building's face with a detachable skin.[41] Architectural detail, material aging, and signs of generational occupation were obscured beneath surfaces designed for rapid replacement. Where the surface and the second-floor domestic sphere once indexed family presence and continuity, and had been made to suppress that indexing, the billboard transformed it into a generic lease surface: solid, interchangeable and anonymous.[42] In this process, the building's authorship dissolved, repositioning the shophouse as an infrastructural support for branding rather than a site of lived history.

Glass shopfronts, aluminum composite panels, and globally recognizable retail systems[43] introduced an aesthetic of placelessness that flattened local differences through homogenization.[44] These materials signaled efficiency, institutional credibility, and modernity, translating a metropolitan corporate imaginary into a low-rise context. This transformation performed a political function as well as a commercial one: a pre-emptive de-ethnicization that neutralized cultural specificity and historical depth without requiring demolition.

By the late 1990s, developers began producing shophouses with increasingly explicit stylistic identities, drawing from globally circulating architectural languages, such as Mediterranean, neoclassical, or minimalist, designed to align the building with class aspirations and global real estate imaginaries.[45] As Istanto documents in his study of Mediterranean architecture in Indonesia, the style's appeal to Chinese-Indonesian families was inseparable from the suppression of Chinese cultural expression under the New Order that had produced a generation oriented toward placeless, globally legible aesthetics that carry connotations of upscale globalism.[46] This stylistic transformation also worked to disentangle the shophouse from its earlier associations with ad-hoc commerce, ethnic visibility, and informal street economies– – and therefore, political risk. Whereas older facades functioned as flexible surfaces open to layering and negotiation, contemporary shophouses were increasingly designed to resist such interventions: deep

41 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese,* 53.

42 *Ibid.*

43 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture,* 110.

44 Jingga, F. & Lukito, Y. N. "Ethnic identity and its response to the growing environment in the urban space of Glodok, Jakarta." *AIP Conference Proceedings*, Vol. 2376 (2021): 5.

45 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 40.

46 Istanto, Freddy H. "Mediterranean Architecture in Indonesia: Style Migration and the Adaptability of the Ethnic Chinese." *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2006, p. 90.

moldings and ornamental profiles made it physically difficult to mount informal signages, and in doing so recast the layered visual identity of older shophouse streets as disorder.[47] The controlled facade aligned with a different regime of value: capital-intensive investment, standardized tenancy, and a clientele imagined as orderly and upscale.

Regulatory changes introduced in the 1990s produced a further morphological rupture. Revised building guidelines permitted medium-rise commercial buildings in areas previously dominated by continuous rows of low-rise shophouses, requiring clearance and consolidation of multiple adjacent shophouse plots.[48] The fine-grained, accumulative urban fabric structured by incremental growth and close-grained repetition was replaced by singular, free-standing commercial objects that asserted scale, visibility, and autonomy. Moreover, the introduction of building setback requirements (*Garis Sempadan Bangunan*, or *GSB*) inserted a foreground space where none had previously existed[49] – a gap typically absorbed into surface parking and vehicular access rather than any form of meaningful public use.[50] The resulting disruption weakened the direct interface between shopfronts and pedestrians that had long structured everyday commerce in Jakarta's *Pecinan*; as entrances drifted away from the sidewalk and pedestrians were forced to navigate forecourts, ramps, and parked cars, walking gradually shifted from the default mode of access to an optional one.

The shophouse, once described as having been "emancipated" from its earlier association with Chinese identity, had not only shed the burden of racialized visibility but also the conditions of inhabitation that had given it social meaning.[51] Identity becomes distant and interchangeable,[52] while the building circulates primarily as a financial object whose value lies in liquidity and resale potential rather than in use. Its survival depended on becoming anonymous, and its detachment from history is what enabled its exchangeability.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Sopandi, *Vanishing Dwelling Culture*, 109.

49 *Peraturan Daerah Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta Nomor 7 Tahun 1991.*

50 Rachmita, Fani. "Work It Right: Park(ing) and recreation." *TheJakartaPost*, 2023.

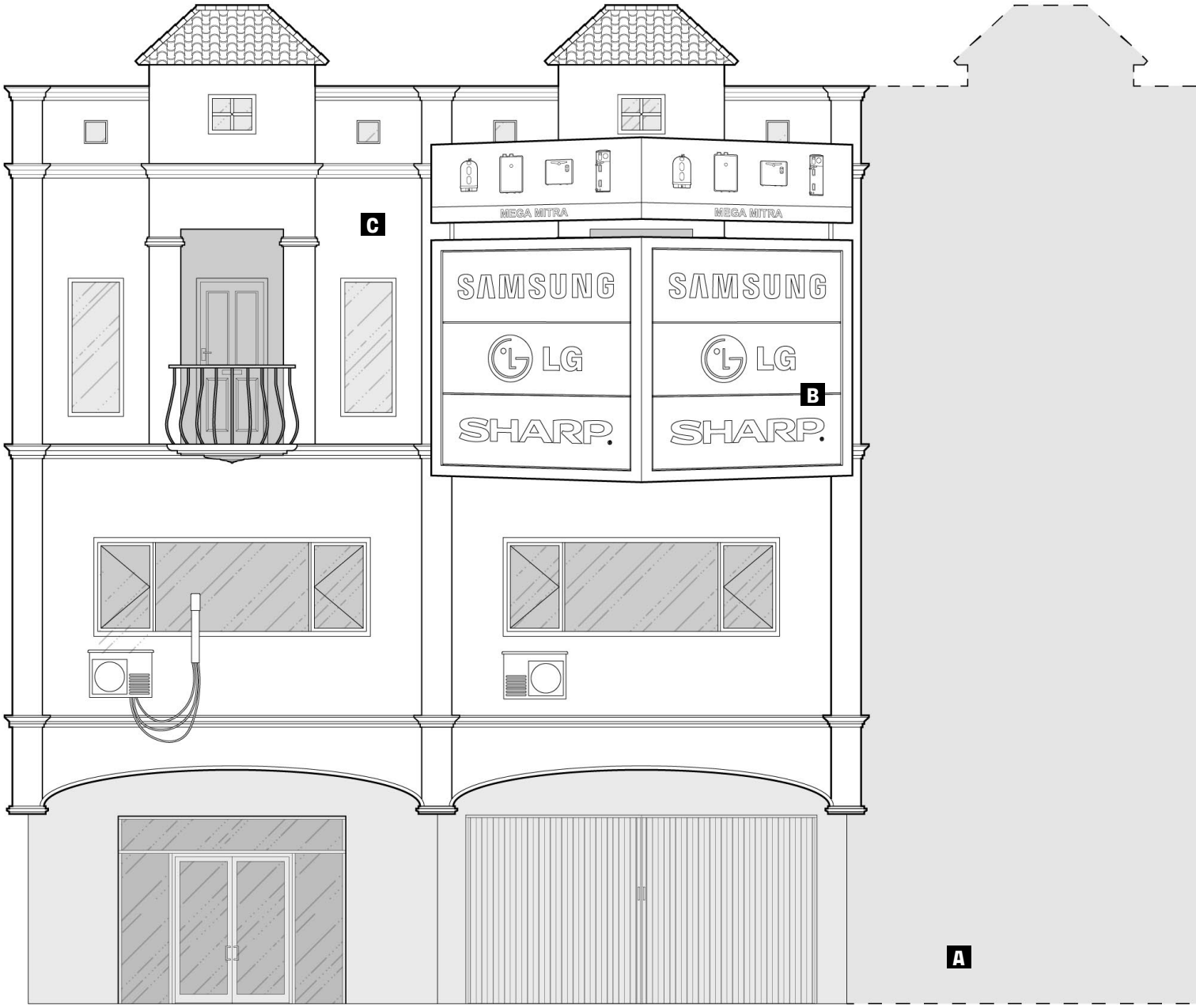
51 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 41.

52 Kathleen & Fionna, *Research on Contemporary Indonesia*, 238.

The Billboarded

1970 - 1998

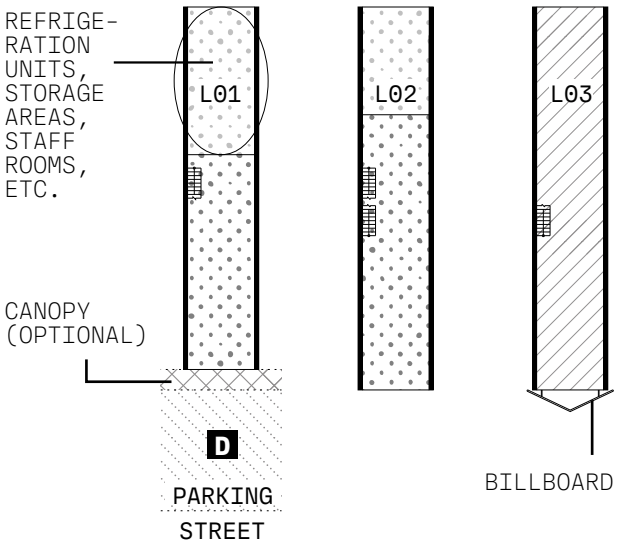
The late New Order combined a boom in global consumerism with the introduction of modern, industrialized building materials. By replacing traditional timber and porous facades with reinforced concrete and sealed, mechanized environments, the shophouse became a standardized, structural billboard serving multinational franchised retail.



COMMERCIAL/PUBLIC

DOMESTIC/PRIVATE

KEY PLAN



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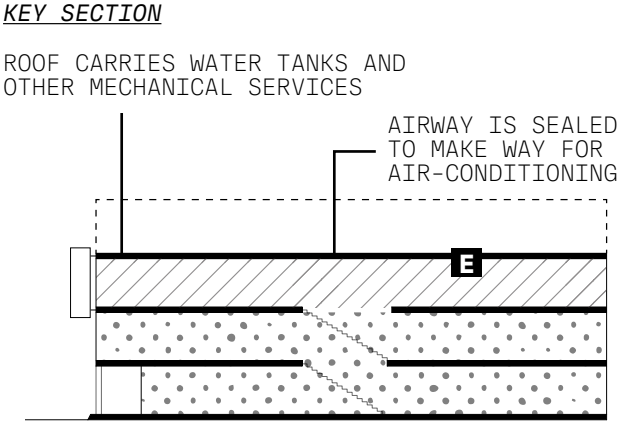


A. MODULAR 'COPY-PASTE' COMMERCIAL UNITS

B. TO SERVE AS NODES IN GLOBAL FRANCHISED RETAIL NETWORKS, THE SHOPHOUSE FACADE IS TRANSFORMED INTO A CONTINUOUS BILLBOARD. MASSIVE CORPORATE LOGOS OBSCURE THE SECOND-STORY WINDOWS, SACRIFICING THE RESIDENTIAL QUALITIES AND EXPOSURE OF THE UPPER FLOORS TO MAXIMIZE COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING FOOTPRINT

C. DEVELOPMENT OF 3-4 STOREY SHOPHOUSES

D. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FRONT SETBACK SEVERS THE BUILDING FROM THE PEDESTRIAN SCALE. BY PRIORITIZING CONSUMER PARKING OVER THE CONTINUOUS PEDESTRIAN ARCADE, THE SHOPHOUSE CATERS TO AN INCREASINGLY MOTORIZED, MIDDLE-CLASS CONSUMER BASE

E. THE SHIFT TO FLAT, REINFORCED-CONCRETE SLABS MAXIMIZES USABLE FLOOR AREA AND CREATES A CHEAP, STANDARDIZED BASE FOR VERTICAL EXPANSION

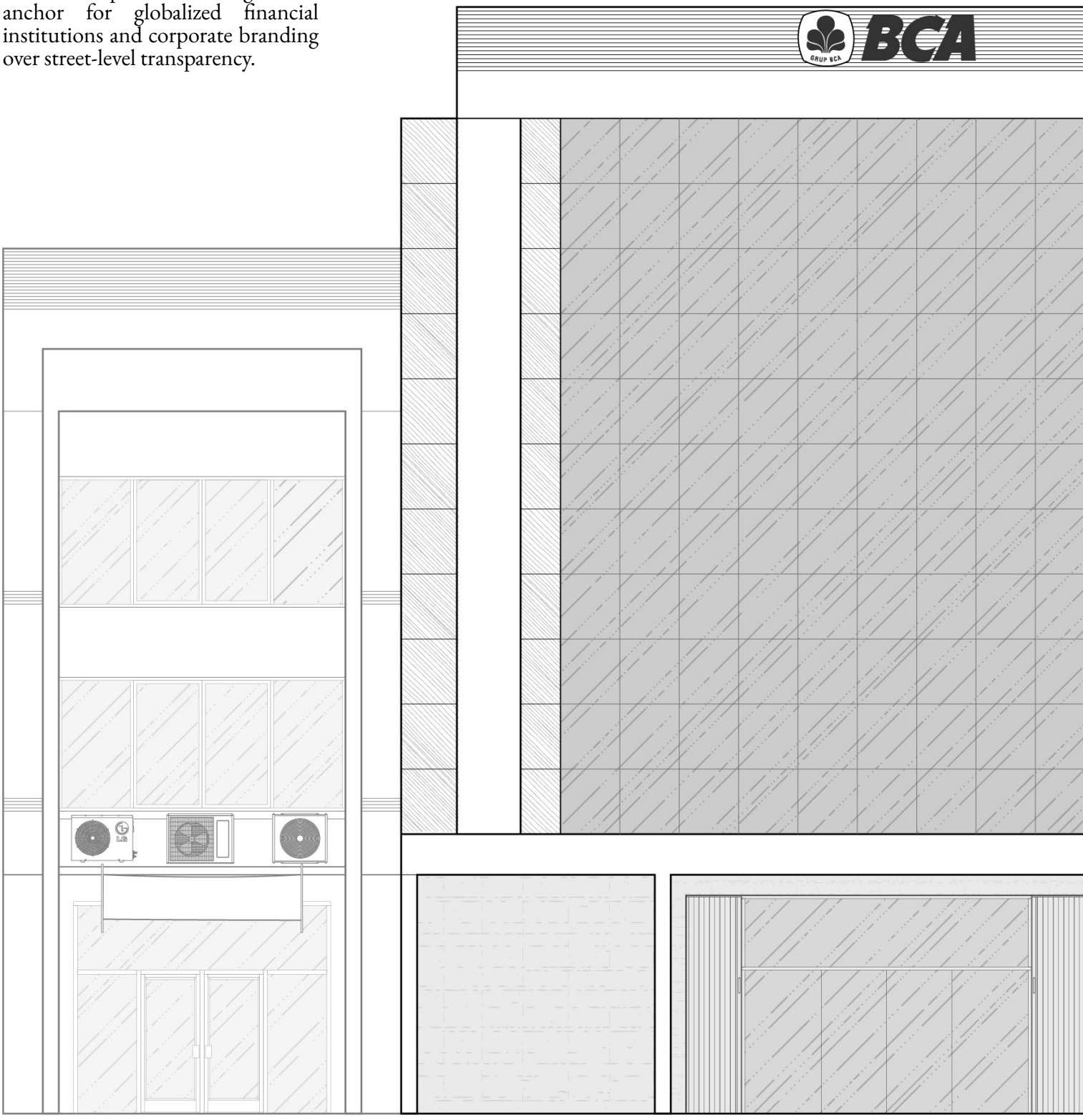
ROOF	
THRESHOLD	STEEL GATE ADDED; THRESHOLD HARDENS
DWELLING	DWELLING KEPT; ALTAR TO DOMESTIC/SYMBOLIC
CULTURAL SIGN	DE-SINICISED; LATIN, NATIONALIZED NAMES
USE & OCCUPANT	FAMILY OWNER-OCCUPIED; SEGMENTED & RENTED OUT

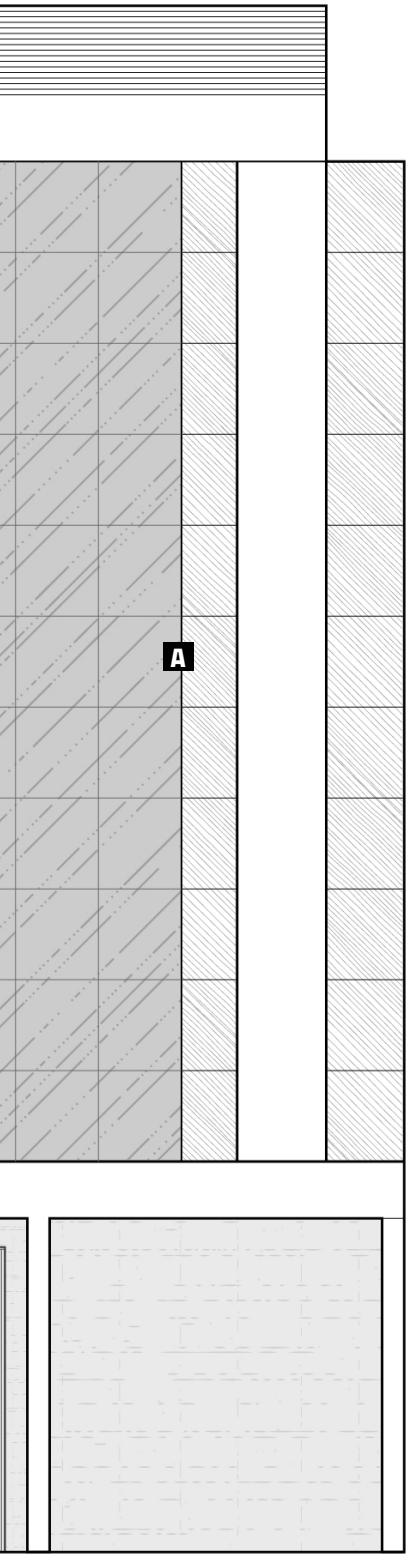
Fig. 2.2.4 *Billboarded shophouse analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

The Corporate

1970 - 1998

The deregulation boom of the late New Order gave rise to the corporate finance shophouse, serving as an anchor for globalized financial institutions and corporate branding over street-level transparency.





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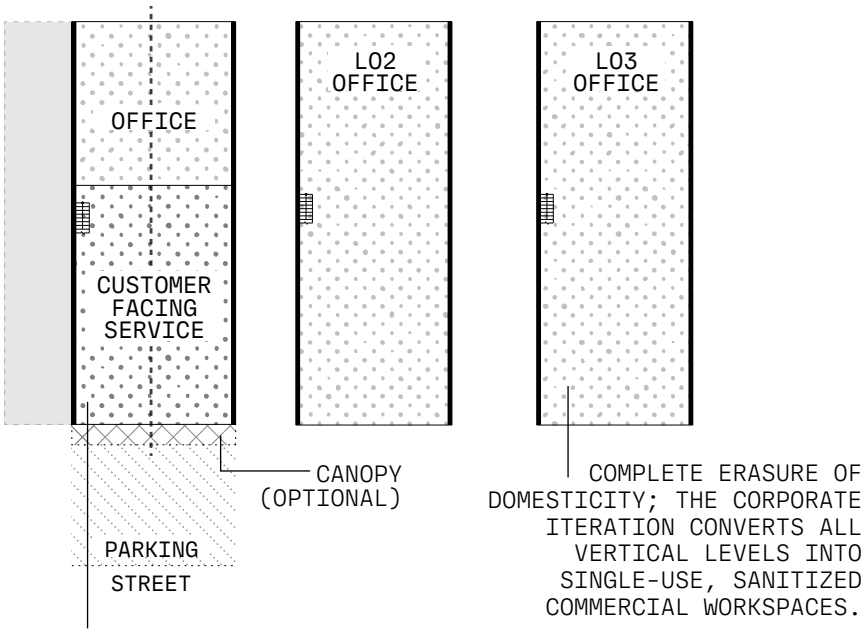


BY CONSOLIDATING MULTIPLE SHOPHOUSE LOTS INTO A SINGLE MONOLITHIC BLOCK, THE CORPORATE CAPITAL BREAKS THE HISTORIC URBAN RHYTHM, SIGNALING A SHIFT TOWARD SPATIAL MONOPOLY AND A LARGER-SCALE FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

COMPLETE ERASURE OF DOMESTICITY; THE CORPORATE ITERATION CONVERTS ALL VERTICAL LEVELS INTO SINGLE-USE, SANITIZED COMMERCIAL WORKSPACES.

ROOF	
THRESHOLD	REFLECTIVE GLASS SEALS THE STREET
DWELLING	DOMESTICITY ERASED; SINGLE-USE
CULTURAL SIGN	FINANCE/FRANCHISED BRAND; NO ETHNIC SIGN
USE & OCCUPANT	BANKS & SERVICES; LOTS MERGED, NO 24H RESIDENTS

A. THE USE OF UNIFORM GRID PANELING OR REFLECTIVE GLASS PROJECTS AN IMAGE OF MODERN EFFICIENCY, SEALING THE INTERIOR FROM THE STREET.

Fig. 2.2.5 *Corporate shophouse analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

1998: Re-Symbolization in Crisis

The shophouse was never designed to remember, nor to be remembered. It was built to work, to trade, to store, to house families, and to survive. Yet, in May 1998, shophouses became primary sites of violence in Jakarta and other cities, targeted because of what they were read to represent at a moment of political rupture: Chinese economic presence, proximity to wealth, and the visibility of commerce in public space.[53]

For much of the New Order period, Chinese-Indonesian life was permitted to remain present in the city primarily through economic participation, while public cultural expression was restricted or discouraged. The shophouse could remain because it was legible as a shop without necessarily being readable as an ethnic sign. But that neutrality was never stable — it depended on a specific political order: the de-politization of Chinese identity, the suppression of ethnic discourse, and the idea that commerce could remain unmarked. The shophouse enabled a mode of presence without assertion, allowing Chinese-Indonesians to remain visible as economic actors while remaining unreadable as a racialized collective. When the Asian Financial Crisis and the political collapse of Soeharto's regime shattered that interpretive order, the same buildings were retranslated almost overnight. Shops were no longer just shops; they became evidence of Chinese ownership, accumulation, and unequal privilege.[54] Nothing in the architecture itself had changed for its meaning to flip; what changed was the regime of legibility.

The ordinariness that had once functioned as a survival strategy became a liability when economic visibility was reinterpreted through racialized resentment. Within about three days, rows of shophouses along commercial corridors were looted, burned down, and dismantled in rapid succession. Journalistic reports and the findings of the TGPF indicate that buildings associated with electronics, textiles, gold trading, and food, forms of commerce long racialized as Chinese, were systematically attacked.[55] The facade of the shophouse, designed to display goods and invite exchange, simultaneously exposed it to collective resentment: glass storefronts were shattered, barriers were pried open, goods were extracted, and only then was fire set, collapsing economic livelihood and domestic refuge in a single act.[56]

53 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese,* 45.

54 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 39.

55 Panggabean, Samsu R. & Smith, B. "Explaining Anti-Chinese Riots in Late 20th Century Indonesia." *Elsevier, World Development* Vol. 39, No. 2 (2011): 231-242.

56 Siegel, James T. "Early Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998 in Jakarta." *Cornell University Press*, No. 66, (Indonesia, 1998): 74-108.



Fig. 2.2.6 *Looting of a shop during the May 1998 riots*, 2025, image by Author, original photograph by Reuters.

The spatial configuration of the shophouse intensified this exposure. In older districts, ground floors opened directly onto the street with minimal buffering, while upper floors still housed families living above their businesses. During the riots, this vertical arrangement collapsed the distinction between public violence and private life: an attack on the storefront immediately endangered those upstairs. The porosity that had once been the shophouse's commercial strength became its acute vulnerability.

At the same time, survival was often negotiated through informal networks of proximity. Neighbors, street vendors, and local youths sometimes stood guard, redirected mobs, or marked shops with signs such as "*milik pribumi*" to deflect attacks. These acts reveal that the shophouse was never exclusively Chinese in ownership or use, and that protection depended also on relationships within the surrounding street environment as much as on the property itself.[57] The riots swept through a neighbourhood whose everyday life had always been shared, which meant that the violence was at once more personal, directed at people and places that were known, and less discriminate, reaching across social ties that had once made the same streets liveable for everyone.

57 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese,* 56.



Fig. 2.2.7 *"MILIK PRIBUMI" painted on the shutters of a photocopy business*, 2025, image by Author.



Fig. 2.2.8 *Shophouse row on a commercial street in Glodok,* 2016, Rony Zakaria.

What made the targeting of shophouses possible without individual verification of ownership was the building's position within the urban racial imaginary that had already performed the identification. As Kusno observes, during the riots the shophouse ceased to register as an ordinary feature of the built environment and instead came to connote Chineseness and the perceived domination of economic commodities whose belonging to the nation remained, in the popular imagination, unresolved.[58] The cultural associations deposited in the form through centuries of enforced and visible inhabitation had become, in this moment, self-executing: a building could be identified as a legitimate target for racialized resentment solely on the basis of its form and its location within the *Pecinan*, without knowledge of who owned it or lived within it.

But to understand the full nature of the violence, it is necessary to look beyond its destructive effects and attend to its constitutive dimensions. James Siegel's analysis of the May 1998 attacks argues that the violence was not exhausted by what is materially destroyed, that the looting and burning of Chinese commercial property enacted something beyond the transfer of goods, functioning as a public claim about identity, belonging, and the legitimate relationship between a community and the nation's economic life.[59] In Kusno's reading, the attacks on Chinese commercial property operated simultaneously as enforcement and self-constitution: an act directed at the Chinese community to assert that the wealth concentrated in these buildings did not legitimately belong to them, and an act directed inward, through which the perpetrators established their own position as the nation's rightful subjects.[60] The shophouse was the material site through which this double claim was made legible, and its destruction was a judgement about who the city, and the nation, truly belonged to.

58 Kusno, *After the New Order,* 39.

59 Siegel, *Early Thoughts on the Violence*, 74-108.

60 Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial*, 154-165.

The Aftermath of Unresolved Memory

After Soeharto stepped down and B.J. Habibie assumed the presidency, the state did not convert May 1998 into a site of sustained public reckoning.[61] Instead, the post-New Order response operated through containment: limited acknowledgements without prosecutorial follow-through, gestures of recognition without institutional reform, and a swift restoration of administrative normalcy. Questions about why Chinese-associated commerce was targeted, why particular urban corridors were attacked, and why shophouses became focal points of violence were never publicly stabilized. In the absence of a stabilized narrative, interpretation shifted downward, leaving individuals and communities to assess risk and vulnerability on their own terms.

This produced an unresolved public memory, as the riots were neither fully denied nor systematically explained, leaving their meaning suspended within the national narrative, and when public narration stalls in this way, fear relocates. It withdraws from official discourse and re-enters material life, settling into architecture, routine, and spatial practices. The shophouse stood as a particularly exposed typology as the state issued no directive to remake it after 1998 and offered no meaningful protection as a site of collective memory nor as an ordinary domestic environment. This absence was consequential because it signaled that security would not be publicly guaranteed, and that restoration of safety would have to be privately negotiated.

In the aftermath of the riots, the Jakarta police announced the provision of 24-hour security to Chinese shop owners in Glodok, Mangga Dua, and other commercial centers.[62] On its surface, this appeared to be a protective measure; an acknowledgement that the community had been wronged and that the state had an obligation to prevent further violence. But the terms on which this security was offered revealed its true character: shop owners were required to fund the police facilities, from food, accommodation, to logistics, through which the security would be provided. Protection was extended conditionally, at the community's own expense.[63]

Kusno's reading of this arrangement cuts into its structural logic: the offer of conditional security did not simply fail to address the conditions that had made Chinese commercial space a target; it actively reproduced them.[64] By designating Glodok and Mangga Dua as sites requiring special surveillance and policing, the state re-described the designation

61 Titulanita, F. et al. "Kerusuhan Pasar Glodok: Studi Kasus Etnis Tionghoa di Kelurahan Glodok Kecamatan Taman Sari Jakarta Barat." *Publika Budaya*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2015): 15.

62 Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial*, 160.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*

of Chinese commercial space as categorically different from the rest of the city: exceptional and exclusive. It did not distribute security as a general civic right but supplied it as a commodity available to those who could pay, and in doing so, it reproduced the image of Chinese-Indonesian commercial wealth as something separate from, and financially responsible for, its own management within the national territory.

As public guarantees of safety dissolved, the shophouse's threshold became a primary site for navigating this new, lingering anxiety. This form of fear is often manifested in small tactical modifications. For example, iron grilles or trellises proliferated across shophouse facades. While ostensibly installed as anti-theft devices, they also functioned as boundary thickening agents that recalibrated the building's relationship to the street as a matter of safety. In many cases, nets were often installed behind glass windows to catch shards if the glass shattered, whether from forced entry or thrown stones. Additional iron doors were installed at the main entrance, while upper floors were often subdivided by secondary metal gates or barriers.[65] PVC canopies were added above windows and entrances to prevent passersby from looking directly into the interior.[66] Where the earlier shophouse facade had been organized around porosity, display, and invitation, the post-1998 facade increasingly organized itself around delay: delay entry, delay visibility, and delay the street's access to what lay within.

These modifications subtly redefined the shophouse while leaving its silhouette intact: the same two-storey facade and covered arcade persist, though now shielded by layers of addition that recorded the street's history. To understand the contemporary shophouse is to see it as a structure that persists through time, actively functioning while bearing the heavy, enduring imprint of the violence it has witnessed.

65 Tsai Yen-Ling. "Spaces of Exclusion, Walls of Intimacy: Rethinking 'Chinese Exclusivity' in Indonesia." in *Indonesia*, No. 92 (2011): 126.

66 Tan, Herman. "Kehidupan Masyarakat Tionghoa Setelah Kerusuhan Mei 1998; Hidup Dibalik Rumah Berterali Besi." *Tionghoa Info*, 2021.

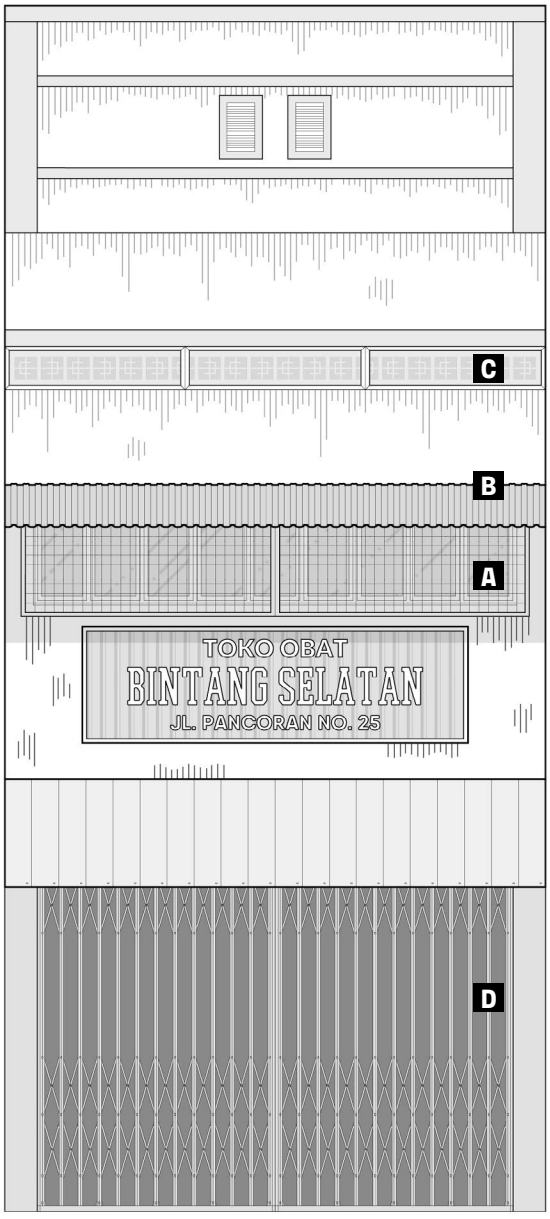


Fig. 2.2.9 *Shophouses sealed behind steel trellis,* 2026, image by Author.

The Fortified

1998 - 2010s

The May 1998 riots turned the shopfront into a defensive surface. Owners sealed the ground floor behind steel gates, caged openings above it, and drew domestic life up and away from the street. The building recorded violence in its own hardware, keeping a memory of the riot in steel and wires that the official record would not hold.



A. STEEL GRILLE FIXED OVER GLASS WINDOWS, THE OPENING REMAINS VISIBLE BUT UNREACHABLE.

B. LOUVERED UPPER SHUTTERS, CLOSED TO THE STREET.

C. AIR VENTS SEALED WITH PLASTIC SHEETING.

D. EXTERIOR FOLDING STEEL GATE ACROSS THE SHOPFRONT, TYPICALLY INSTALLED OVER A SECOND INTERIOR DOOR.

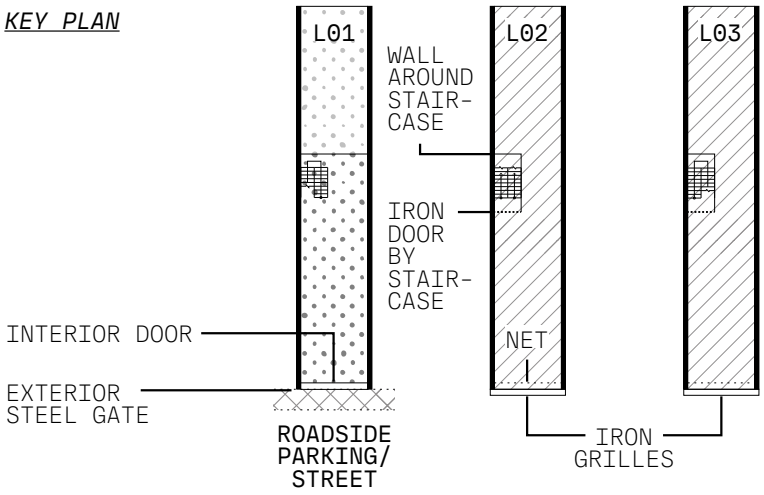


Fig. 2.2.10 *Fortified shophouse analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

2.3 / AFTER THE RIOTS

Soeharto's resignation marked a significant shift in the status of Chinese-Indonesians. Under President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), the government began dismantling several discriminatory regulations that had long restricted Chinese cultural and civic life. Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967 was rescinded in 2000, and Lunar New Year was reinstated as an optional public holiday; his successor Megawati Sukarnoputri elevated it to a national holiday in 2002. Since then, public celebrations such as lion dances, red lanterns, and other festivities have become visible across Indonesian cities.[1]

The 2006 citizenship law removed the formal distinctions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Indonesians, opening access to public office at all levels.[2] These reforms marked a genuine shift in what Chinese-Indonesian identity was permitted to be in public space, but they did not restore the urban environments through which Chinese-Indonesian life had been organized.

Post-1998 reconfigured the spatial order of Chinese-Indonesian life even as it restored the right to express it. The reforms did not return the shophouse to domestic life, nor address the decades of modernization and violence that had moved Chinese-Indonesian life indoors, upward, and elsewhere. In these new environments, the shophouse ceased to be a site of active dwelling, becoming a static shell, and a backdrop for brief, fleeting encounters rather than a place to truly occupy.

1 Ananta, A., Arifin, Evi. N & Bakhtiar. "Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia and the Province of Riau Archipelago: A Demographic Analysis" in *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia*, edited by Leo Suryadinata. ISEAS Publications, Singapore, 2008: 18.

2 Winarta. *No More Discrimination Against the Chinese*, 65.

The Piano

When I was a kid, my parents wanted me to learn how to play the piano.

Every Saturday morning, my sister and I would be driven fifteen minutes out from home to a shophouse complex just off a three-way intersection, with traffic pressing in from all sides: *ojeks*[3] weaving through cars, trucks idling at the corners, and the sound of horns and engines folding into a constant background hum. It was one of the few places in my childhood where the city felt close.

The music school occupied the second floor of a mixed-use shophouse. Below it, a restaurant opened onto a small courtyard with a swimming pool, acting as an interior buffer that softened the building's relationship to the outside. We entered by car, passed a security post that collected parking fees, and climbed a narrow staircase beside the restaurant. With each step, the restaurant's smells thinned out and the air grew cooler, before emerging into a small studio with muffled echoes of different classes practicing different instruments. My teacher's room was small, cold, and carpeted. There was no window, only a thin strip of glass on the door which children would occasionally peek into.

This was one of my earliest relationships with the shophouse. Not as a home, not as the center of a family's livelihood, but as a place I entered briefly and left immediately after, once a week. It was a space of errand-like transience. I never imagined anyone living in the rooms above or behind these shops; the upper floor existed, to me, only as lesson rooms, storage units, or empty squares meters meant for businesses that never materialized. I only knew the shophouse as the site of a sixty-minute piano lesson on a Saturday morning, and it was simply where the piano was.

For many middle-class Chinese Indonesians who grew up after 1998, this is how the shophouse is known. It is a place we pass through: where we go for *bakmi,*[4] haircuts, dental appointments, and piano lessons, but not where we sleep, wake up, or come of age.[5] When I think of my own childhood in Jakarta, the spaces that organize my memory are not the narrow corridors of an upper floor above a store, but air-conditioned malls, gated housing clusters, and the interior of a car. The shophouse, which for earlier generations was both home and livelihood, appears instead as a backdrop: outdated, traditional, and increasingly emptied out.[6]

3 *Ojek* is an informal motorcycle taxi, now often organized through ride-hailing apps such as Gojek and Grab.

4 *Bakmi* refers to a style of Indonesian wheat noodles of Chinese origin, commonly served with toppings such as minced meat, vegetables, and broth, and widely associated with everyday street and neighborhood food culture in urban Indonesia.

5 My description of Chinese-Indonesian youth spatial patterns is based on personal experience and informal conversations but resonates with broader ethnographies of Jakarta's new middle class and their consumption geographies. See Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds., *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Soeharto Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007).

6 Erdiono, D. et al. "Studi Pengamatan Terjadinya Pola Pergeseran Fungsi Ruang Pada Bangunan Rumah-Toko di Manado." *Media Matrasain*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2012): 52.

When I return to those Saturday mornings at the piano school, this dynamic becomes clearer: nearly every child waiting outside of the lesson rooms was like me: Chinese-Indonesian, brought there by parents who believed that piano lessons, English tutoring, and weekend academics were part of the proper repertoire of middle-class advancement. At the time, I never questioned why the waiting room felt so homogenous. It felt nothing more than the normal clientele of a music school.

The piano school was not a community center, nor was it a cultural institution. It did not teach our language, rituals, or history. And yet it became one of the few regular environments after 1998 where Chinese-Indonesian families encountered one another in large numbers. At a time when visible cultural expressions had long been suppressed, middle-class enrichment centers offered a depoliticized domain through which the diaspora could circulate. The shophouse became the shell through which this gathering could occur, not because it was culturally meaningful in itself, but because its facade was neutral enough to mask the presence of a racialized minority while enabling a form of continuity.

This continuity was organized around safety, class mobility, and repetition within controlled interiors. The shophouse of my childhood already embodied many of the dynamics that shaped contemporary Indonesian life: retreat from domestic-commercial occupation, clustering of Chinese-Indonesians in depoliticized middle-class spaces, and the architectural neutralization of ethnic visibility. The lifestyle-shophouse districts of today exaggerate and aestheticize these tendencies, but they did not invent them. Their genealogy includes small, unnoticed sites like the music school above a restaurant on a busy intersection, a space where the diaspora continued to gather under the cover of the ordinary.

Suburban Ideals & the Mall Children

For many Chinese-Indonesian families, the search for safety after 1998 aligned with aspirations that had already been taking shape throughout the New Order period. The regime's developmental model had produced a new urban middle class whose economic mobility was closely tied to property ownership, access to credit, and the consumption of privatized domestic space.[7] To own a landed house in a guarded estate was already, by the 1980s and 1990s, the aspirational template: proof of professional stability, spatial separation from the density of commercial streets, and a domestic life organized around the interior.[8] Upward mobility had become legible through distance – from the street, from the market, and from the racialized visibility that the shophouse had historically required its occupants to manage.

Kusno describes this spatial paradigm as the product of a "culture of fear" that the New Order had organized around two poles of urban anxiety: the *kampung* (understood by the Indonesian majority as the informal or the lower-class) and the Chinese (the wealthy, the foreign, and the exclusive).[9] These were structurally produced fears cultivated over decades by a regime whose developmental model depended on maintaining the distance between ethnic groups and on keeping Chinese economic presence visible and politically contained. Middle-class spatial organization became a response to both poles at once: the gated estate and the surveilled mall offered protection against the threat of the *massa*,[10] but they also offered a domesticity no longer organized around the street-facing infrastructure, and no longer requiring its occupants to manage their visibility as an ethnic minority in public commercial space.

The violence of 1998 did not create this aspiration, but accelerated the search for environments that promised security and control.[11] Middle-class residential development in Jakarta and its outskirts increasingly took the form of gated housing estates and guarded apartment complexes, where walls, checkpoints, and controlled access points offered a spatial buffer against urban uncertainty.[12] The question was no longer only whether the building or *Pecinan* could be repaired, but whether its foundational promise of partial co-existence between market and home could be believed again.

7 Robison, Richard. "Authoritarian, Capital-Owning Classes, and the Politics of Newly Industrializing Countries: The Case of Indonesia." *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1988: 63-64.

8 Hun, Kim Jee. "Notes on the Making of a "Gated Community": A Study of an Inner City Neighborhood, Jakarta, Indonesia." *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2002): 100.

9 Kusno, Abidin. *After the New Order: Space, Politics, and Jakarta*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2013, pp. 165–166.

10 *Massa* (Indonesian: "masses" or "crowd") carries significant political weight within Indonesian discourse, particularly regarding the New Order's management of public order. While literally referring to a collective, the term often functioned as a code for volatile, unrestrained street-level activity. In the context of ethnic Chinese urban anxiety, the *massa* became a racialized construct: an unpredictable threat that served to justify the retreat into the controlled, interiorized environments.

11 Hun, *Notes on the Making of a "Gated Community,"* 100.

12 King, Anthony D. *Spaces of Global Cultures : Architecture, Urbanism, Identity*. Routledge (2004): 82.

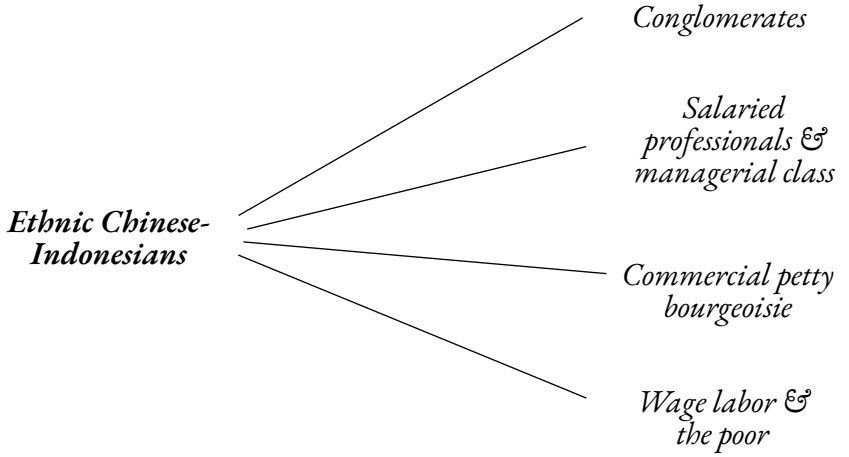


Fig. 2.3.1 *Internal class stratification of the Chinese-Indonesian community*, 2025, image by Author.

Kusno's analysis of the suburban development boom traces its organization through the "*Cendana-Cukong* alliance:" the partnership between Soeharto family members (*Cendana*, named for the street where Soeharto lived) and ethnic Chinese business conglomerates (*Cukong*, literally "boss" or "patron") who jointly developed the new-town belts surrounding Jakarta, including BSD, Alam Sutera, Kelapa Gading, and Pantai Indah Kapuk.[13] The developers who built these environments were predominantly ethnic Chinese conglomerates whose economic ascent had been made possible by Soeharto-era patronage, which is an arrangement that, as Wijaya documents, paved the way for Chinese capitalists to be more active in the economic sector "at the expense of their political rights and cultural freedom."[14]

This alliance institutionalized consistent spatial characteristics across the region. Each new town functions as a paired product: gated residential clusters provide security and exclusivity, while arterial strips of standardized, three-to-four storey shophouses supply the commercial infrastructure necessary to inflate land value. By integrating the shophouse into these new gated zones and away from the historic Chinese districts, the building type effectively gained a new sanitized identity, becoming a standardized component of a master-planned development rather than an organic outgrowth of the street.[15]

This arrangement reorganized residential and commercial life into a strict binary: the gated housing estates, typically affluent and predominantly Chinese-Indonesian, occupy the core of the development, while wide boulevards face outward, lined with commercial strips intended to serve the residents within. The commercial row faces outward onto a road built for cars; the residential life it serves faces inward, shielded behind a gate and security checkpoint.[16] This spatial bifurcation is the physical manifestation of a specific political economy of urban development. As

13 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 83–105.

14 Wijaya, Trissia. "Chinese Business in Indonesia and Capital Conversion: The Chain of Patronage." *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, August 2019" 295-296.

15 Kusno, *After the New Order*, 40-41.

16 "Jakarta's Superblocks Continue a Legacy of Urban Segregation." Failed Architecture, 2019.



Fig. 2.3.2 *The Australia neighbourhood gate at Green Lake City, Tangerang*. 2026, Google Earth.

Equestrian statues and arches in a simplified neoclassical register mark the entrance to the themed residential enclave within a large-scale planned township, adjacent to its shophouse strips.



Fig. 2.3.3 *Neighbourhood gate at Alam Sutera, Tangerang*, 2026, Google Earth.

Logan and Molotch argue, such development is ordinarily driven by a coalition of capital and the state, both pursuing the exchange-value of land over the use-value it holds for the public.[17] While the gated residents gain utility from this arrangement (i.e. security and dedicated commercial proximity), this conflates private privilege with public utility. The sacrifice is the use-value of the city as a shared, walkable, accessible urban space.

Within this structure, the shophouse is present, yet its relationship with the community has been fundamentally reversed. Historically, the shophouse organized community life at the threshold between the household and the street, allowing dwelling and commerce to be visible to one another and to the neighborhood at once. The new town, by setting a gate between the two, strips the type of this porosity; for the residents it serves, the shophouse becomes merely a destination to drive to and leave again.

Moreover, along older shophouse streets, formal shops and informal vendors often coexisted within the same system: carts, stalls, deliveries, hawkers shared shade and curb space, however unequal that ecosystem might have been.[18] In contemporary developments, such mixing becomes structurally impossible, as the frontage is given over to monitored parking bays and pedestrian occupation is subordinated into vehicle movement.[19]

The severing is vertical as much as horizontal. Within the new-town shophouses, floors are often leased separately: the ground floor could serve a restaurant while the floors above could be a tattoo studio or a language school, so that the section is partitioned floor by floor rather than connected through it. The airwell that once made vertical dwelling possible without mechanical cooling is sealed over or never built, and with it goes the relationship between floors that gave the type its name.[20] A commercial floor with no dwelling above is a shop, and a stack of separately tenanted floors behind one continuous facade is a row of shops in the outline of a shophouse.

The form persists for a reason that is financial, and the reason returns to the same alliance that produced the estate the strips were built to serve. A shophouse can be sold as individual strata-title units, often at launch and before a single unit is occupied, so that the developer takes its return at the point of sale and passes the operational risk to the buyer. The narrow, repeatable width maximizes the number of separately titled lots along a stretch of frontage, and since master-planned developments are required to provide commercial zones beside residential ones, the strip is the path of least resistance for meeting that requirement.

17 Logan, John R. & Molotch, Harvey L. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. University of California Press, 1987: 35-42.

18 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese,* 59.

19 Gibbings, Sheri L. *Unseen Powers: Transparency and Conspiracy in a Street Vendor Relocation in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.* University of Toronto, 2011.

20 Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese,* 56-57.

Within the same emergence of these suburban shophouse strips, the shopping mall ascended as a true, centralized heart of this new environment. The mall assumed functions once associated with the shophouse, but on entirely different spatial terms. For many middle-class Chinese-Indonesians after 1998, the mall became a place of everyday life, social encounter, and relative safety. Shopping, consumption, and domestic routine restored the cadence of ordinary time, and the mall, capable of sustaining this repetition, became a spatial instrument of stabilization.[21] Brands and commodities offered a socially acceptable vocabulary through which anxiety and aspiration could be expressed without overt political confrontation.[22] This shift was already underway in the 1980s and 1990s, as Jakarta's mall boom coincided with the rise of economic push and urban middle class whose routines were increasingly organized around consumption, leisure, and interiorized comfort.[23] After the riots, confidence in the street as a negotiable social field weakened, and malls offered a setting in which daily life could resume under conditions that felt more controlled: regulated circulation, air-conditioning, visible security, and the absence of the historical associations and informal social pressures embedded in older commercial streets.[24]

Even when malls hosted concerts, religious celebrations, or cultural exhibitions (and after 2000, Lunar New Year festivities and lion dances began reappearing in mall atriums across Jakarta), these events unfolded within curated and commercially managed atmospheres that minimized disruption and maximized footfall.[25] As Tjahjono documents, shopping malls across major Indonesian cities began competing during the Lunar New Year to attract consumers by decorating their space with Chinese elements, a strategy that, as he notes, indicated how "things Chinese have become useful for promotional purposes." Cultural expression was welcomed on the condition that it remained entertaining, consumable, and contained. The mall replaced the street as a site of cultural gathering as well, offering Chinese-Indonesian communities a space to be visibly Chinese without the political risk that visibility had historically carried. As Tsai argues, this inclusion was conditional: Chinese cultural expression was acceptable when it appeared folkloric and symbolically contained, but not when it risked reorganizing public space and political relations.[26] The mall was the spatial form that enforced that condition structurally, and this is the spatial logic that Pantjoran PIK would later formalize and aestheticize: Chineseness as an attraction, a program, and an event – permitted and even celebrated, so long as it remained within the parameter.

21 Kenichiro, Arai. "Only Yesterday in Jakarta: Property Boom and Consumptive Trends in the Late New Order Metropolitan City." *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2001: 481.

22 Leeuwen, Lizzy van. *Lost in Mall: An Ethnography of Middle-Class Jakarta in the 1990s.* KITLV Press, 2011.

23 Erdiono et al. *Studi Pengamatan Terjadinya Pola Pergeseran*, 52.

24 *Ibid.*

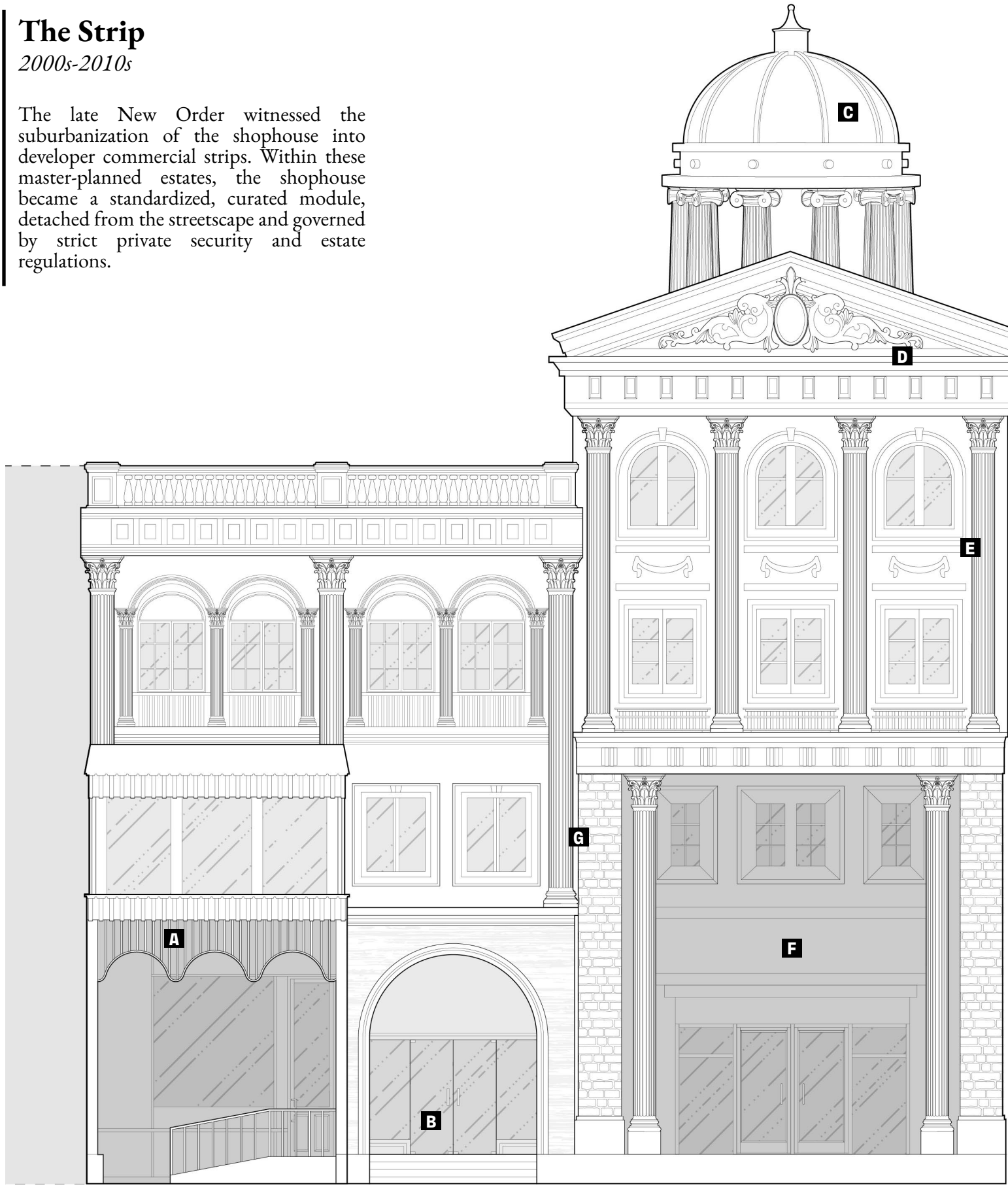
25 Lamb, Kate. "Inside the bubble: the air-conditioned alternate reality of Jakarta's megamalls. "The Guardian, 2016.

26 Tsai Yen-Ling. "Spaces of Exclusion, Walls of Intimacy: Rethinking 'Chinese Exclusivity' in Indonesia." *Indonesia*, No. 92, 2011, p. 136.

The Strip

2000s-2010s

The late New Order witnessed the suburbanization of the shophouse into developer commercial strips. Within these master-planned estates, the shophouse became a standardized, curated module, detached from the streetscape and governed by strict private security and estate regulations.





A. FACADE MODIFICATION STILL POSSIBLE WITHIN STORE BRANDING THAT IS CURATED AND APPROVED BY DEVELOPER OR ESTATE

B. USE OF STOREFRONT DOOR TYPE, STANDARDIZED AND FITTED TO EVERY UNIT ALIKE AND INTERCHANGEABLE

C. ORNAMENTAL DOME, A DECORATIVE CROWN CARRYING NO STRUCTURAL OR FUNCTIONAL ROLE

D. ADOPTION OF GLOBAL, FORMALIZED FACADES TO SIGNAL MODERNITY AND COMMERCIAL STANDING THAT READS AS PRESTIGE, DETACHED FROM ANY LOCAL OR CHINESE SPECIFICITY

E. ENGAGED COLUMNS AND PILASTERS, TYPICALLY BEARING NO LOAD

F. THE COVERED WALKWAY AT GROUND LEVEL RETAINS THE SPATIAL POSITION OF THE FIVE-FEET WAY BUT OPERATES UNDER ESTATE MANAGEMENT INSTEAD OF INFORMAL OCCUPATION

G. THE PARTY WALLS BETWEEN UNITS PERSIST AS STRUCTURE. HOWEVER, THE FACADE PRESENTS THE STRIP AS A SINGLE MONUMENTAL BUILDING IN A GLOBAL PALATIAL REGISTER. THE HOUSEHOLD SCALE IS NO LONGER LEGIBLE FROM THE STREET

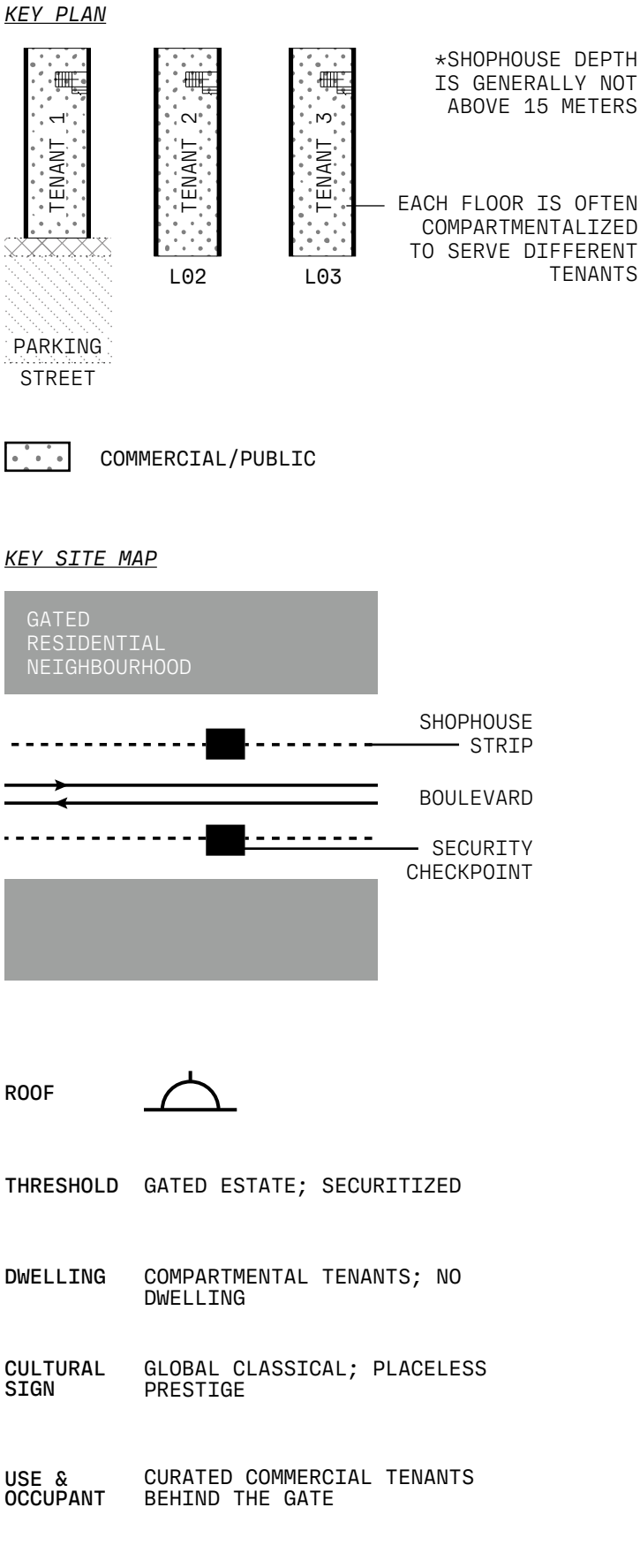


Fig. 2.3.4 *Shophouse strip analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

It is important to note that malls were not untouched by the violence of May 1998. Major shopping centers such as Yogya Plaza and Supermal Karawaci witnessed some of the most severe cases of looting, arson, and devastating loss of life.[27] Despite this shared exposure, malls and shophouses were not read, remembered, or rebuilt in the same way. Many shophouses were targeted as sites of Chinese ownership; places where family life and commercial activity were spatially intertwined, and where destruction reached directly into the domestic sphere. The old shophouse's porosity made violence immediate and proximate, because the boundary between street and household was thin. Malls operated at different spatial scales; attacked as concentrated symbols of consumer capitalism and visible wealth.[28]

Early-generation mall complexes such as Glodok Plaza and Mangga Dua, locally embedded centers specializing in electronics, repair services, and small tenant networks, occupied a transitional position between street-based economy and fully corporatized retail. Chinese-Indonesian participation in these spaces extended beyond consumption into ownership, repair work, and relational commerce.[29] After the riots, many families continued to trade in these contained interiors, managing exposure though enclosure rather than eliminating small-scale exchange entirely – not where they lived, and not open to the street, but recognizably continuous with the commercial space the shophouse had sustained.[30]

What these spaces shared with the luxury mall, however, was the capacity the shophouse did not have: they could be secured. As Leeuwen documents in his analysis of Lippo Supermal, one of the sites most severely affected during the riots, post-riot reconstruction involved explicit coordination between private developers and state forces, with military presence framing the mall as a site requiring institutional protection.[31] The riots had functioned as a form of design pressure, transforming safety into a spatial mandate enforced through architecture, surveillance, and controlled access. The mall, as a spatial form, could translate fear into architectural solutions: retrofitted entrances, private security, and systematic defense of the parameter. The shophouse could not be made "safe" without fundamentally altering its relationship to the street, and without closing the very threshold that defined the typology.

This reorganization contained the tensions that fueled the 1998 violence, redirecting Chinese-Indonesian commercial and social life into privatized, managed environments. In these spaces, community presence became solely legible through consumption; absent from the streets, and gathered in environments that prioritize safety over political

27 Erlangga, Ardyan M. "The May 98 Riots Claimed 200 Lives in a Single Fire. Here's What They Left Behind." Vice, 2017.

28 Iryana, W. & Mustofa, M. B. "May 1998 Mass Riots in Jakarta: A Holistic and Contextual Analysis of Critical Political Communication." *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2023: 202.

29 Titulanita & W. Endang. *Kerusuhan Pasar Glodok,* 14.

30 Nugraha et al. "Peninjauan Faktor-Faktor Penentu Rumah-Toko di Surabaya dari Sudut Pandang Pengembang dan Pengguna." *Dimensi Teknik Sipil*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2000): 112.

31 Leeuwen, Lizzy van. *Lost in Mall : An Ethnography of Middle-Class Jakarta in the 1990s*. KITLV Press (2011): 163.

reckoning. It is from within this spatial condition that the appetite for a visible, celebratory, and public Chinese-Indonesian culture eventually came to be, and that the Disneyfied shophouse found its market.

The Afterlife of the Strip

In the suburban periphery of Jakarta, the master-planned boulevard often betrays its own promise. These expansive, meticulously designed axes were conceived as the beating hearts of new towns, designed to anchor the commercial lives of the gated estates that surround them. Yet, traversing these strips today, one encounters a profound stillness. Many of these units stand substantially vacant, their upper floors dormant and their ground-floor frontage shielded by the ubiquitous *dijual* (for sale) and *disewakan* (for rent) banners.[32]

Over the past decade, the commercial landscape of Jakarta has undergone a significant transformation. The mall-centric retail model that dominated the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has begun to fracture, while the traditional shophouse corridor is increasingly destabilized by broader economic shifts.[33] The rapid expansion of e-commerce has eroded many of the economic foundations that sustained these forms of retail, intensified by the following COVID-19.[34] Lockdowns emptied out these commercial spaces, leading to some tenants closing down permanently, and journalists questioning the long-term viability of certain retail formats.[35]

The shophouse was a typology designed for a pre-digital, proximity-based economy: its logic rests on walk-in customers, street visibility, and neighborhood-scale circulation. E-commerce has destabilized this logic, as platforms such as *Tokopedia*, *Shopee*, and *Lazada*, alongside logistics systems built through *Gojek* and *Grab*, have redefined what "location" means.[36] Businesses can operate from warehouses, industrial estates, or cheaper peripheral towns, while centrally located shophouse units lose their advantage.[37] Nationally, Indonesia's e-commerce market is now the largest in Southeast Asia and projected to grow through 2030, signaling a long-term structural shift away from small street-front retail as the dominant mode of trade.[38]

Beyond the disruptions of the digital economy, the shophouse strip's obsolescence is structurally compounded by a chronic oversupply born of speculative finance.[39] Across the Jabodetabek[40] region, developers have produced commercial frontage in volumes that local demand and population density never warranted, utilizing the shophouse primarily as a portable investment vehicle rather than functional infrastructure.[41] Because developers realize their revenue at the point of sale, vacancy does not always signal market failure from the developer's perspective. Instead, owners may deliberately keep units empty as a rational holding strategy, prioritizing long-term capital appreciation over immediate

32 Brilian, Almadinah P. "Kantor-Ruko di Jakarta Kosong dan Banyak Dijual, Kenapa?" DetikFinance (2023).

33 Suri, Helena. "The Fall of Shopping Centers in Indonesia: Part 1." Snapcart (2025).

34 Putri, N. et al. "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Online Shopping Behavior" in *Proceedings of the 3rd Tarumanegara International Conference on the Applications of Social Sciences and Humanities.* Atlantis Press, Vol. 655 (2022).

35 Putra, Hendyansyah. "Opinion Paper: Shopping Centre Longevity Post-COVID-19 in Jakarta, Indonesia." *Journal of Social Research*, Vol. 4, No. 12, 2025.

36 Lestari, A. et al. "E-Commerce in Indonesia's Economic Transformation and Its Influence on Global Trade." *International Journal of Computer in Law & Political Science,* Vol. 4 (2024).

37 Ariani, Karinta. "Apakah Tren Sewa Ruko di Era Digital Masih Relevan?" Pinhome Blog, 2025.

38 "A Comprehensive Look at Indonesia's E-Commerce Market." Payments & Commerce Market Intelligence, 2024.

39 Urwasi, Kadek W. "Insurgent planning versus discretionary urbanism in Jakarta." New Mandala, 2025.

40 Short for *Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang-Bekasi*.

41 "Potensi Bisnis dan Investasi Ruko (Rukan) Tahun 2022." RayWhite, 2022.

operational revenue. Intensified by weak zoning enforcement and master-planned optimism,[42] this decoupling of form from use has left stretches of arterial roads characterized by "ghost districts:" hollowed-out monuments that reveal a profound mismatch between speculative cycles of land-value inflation and the actual commercial realities of contemporary Jakarta.

42 Urwasi, Kadek W. "Insurgent planning versus discretionary urbanism in Jakarta." New Mandala, 2025.

The Vacant

2000s - Present

In the decades following 1998, many of the shophouse strips built during the New Order and after fell into vacancy. Without any specific communities anchoring them, and outcompeted by enclosed malls and new themed developments, some of these buildings remain standing but commercially dormant.



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B. "DIJUAL"/"DISEWAKA
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OWN VACANCY.

D. THE STRIP MAY BE C
INDEPENDENT FROM A
HOUSING ESTATE BUT
THRESHOLD IS STILL
CONTROLLED. PARKIN
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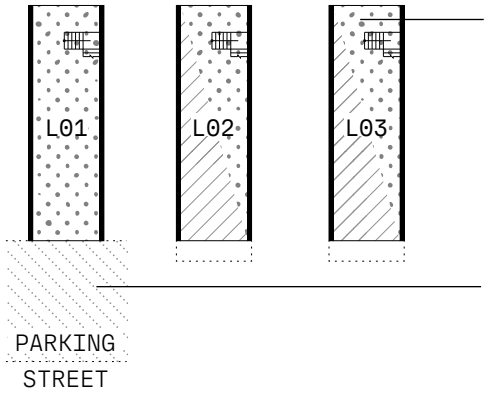
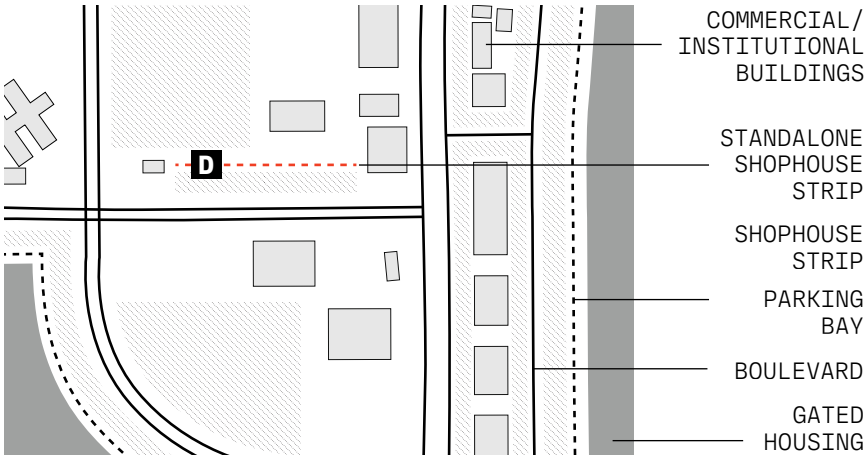
BUILDING FROM THE
FORECLOSE INFORMAL

KEY PLAN



KEY SITE MAP



ROOF	
THRESHOLD	SHUT, GLAZED, BLANK; ONE OF A ROW
DWELLING	NONE; COMMERCE DORMANT
CULTURAL SIGN	NONE; BARE ENVELOPE
USE & OCCUPANT	VACANT; HELD AS ASSET

Fig. 2.3.5 *For sale/rent shophouse analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

3 / REINVENTING THE SHOPHOUSE

Chineseness as Amenity

There is a gate at the entrance of Pantjoran PIK which reads 潘佐蘭廣場 (Pantjoran Plaza), stylized with a pagoda roof in red and gold, framed by ornamental Chinese fret-pattern brackets. Street poles by the sidewalk hang banners advertising a variety of cuisine, from Chinese-Indonesian to Korean food, dissolving the distinction between these cultures into a single, pan-Asian consumable register. Whether this registers as irony depends entirely on what you came expecting, though most visitors do not expect anything specific.

To enter Pantjoran PIK from Pantai Indah Utara Street is to cross a threshold that has been carefully managed. The development's plan organizes around four plazas, named after Chinese deities, around a central pedestrian spine, anchored by a pagoda tower rising roughly thirty meters above the ground plane. The shophouse facades line both sides of the spine in two-story rows, their proportions consistent and their color palette coordinated across cream, terracotta, and deep red. The five-foot way is inconsistent but clean and evenly paved. Overhead, red lanterns hang at intervals in a zig zag pattern across the pedestrian plaza, setting a perfect scene for a photo.

Pantjoran PIK is celebrated as a return of Chinese-Indonesian heritage to public view. It sits on land that has no Chinese past, reclaimed from Jakarta Bay, and its forms were assembled from references that were never local or historically produced.[1] In this light, the creation of Pantjoran PIK serves as a definitive case study in the commodification of identity. By positioning Chineseness as a built-in development asset, the project sidesteps the historically burdened process of community spatial production. Yet, as this thesis has demonstrated, capital's attempt to manufacture authenticity on empty land remains fundamentally incomplete. The morphological analysis performed here lies in exposing this hollowness: it reveals that by bypassing the organic stage of history, we merely produce a shell, erasing the very conditions that gave the shophouse its meaning.

1 Perdana, A. P. & Kartidjo, W. M.T. "Place Attachment Study in Chinatown (Case Study: Pancoran Glodok Chinatown and PantjoranPIK Chinatown)." *ITB Graduate School Conference*, No. 2 (2022): 226.



Fig. 3.1 *Entrance gate of Pantjoran PIK under renovation*, 2026, image by Author.



Fig. 3.2 *Storefronts at Pantjoran PIK, North Jakarta*, 2026, image by Author.

From Suppression to Spectacle

The commodification of Chineseness is the continuation of New Order suppression by other means rather than its reversal. To see why Pantjoran PIK became viable when it did, the place to begin is what the suppression left behind.

Removing Chinese cultural practice from public space produced a paradox that took years to surface. Practice that continued privately, inside homes and family temples, stayed ordinary to the people who kept it.[2] To those who had mostly seen it as something prohibited, the same practice became strange and desirable. By the time reformasi arrived, Chinese culture in Indonesia held two positions at once: intimate to insiders and fascinating to others, and that asymmetry was the commercial opening Pantjoran PIK was built to fill.

Three conditions made the shophouse well-positioned for that opening. The first was a suppression dividend: three decades of prohibition had interrupted cultural transmission for a generation of Chinese-Indonesians who, lacking the experiential ties their forebears held, came to articulate their inheritance through what Herbert Gans calls 'symbolic ethnicity,' an identity carried in abstracted symbols rather than lived practice.[3] The longer these cultural practices were withheld, the more they built up as latent demand; consequently, when the restrictions were lifted, that accumulated longing was rapidly converted into a commercial opportunity. The second condition follows from the first: visual legibility. The shophouse facade, narrow plots, and the morphological memory form characteristics so firmly attached to Chinese commercial culture that it works exactly as the kind of symbol Gans describes, which is a cultural element "abstracted" from the older culture and "pulled out of its original moorings, so to speak, to become [a] stand-in for it."[4] A symbol detached from its practice can be reproduced by anyone, which is why developers could rebuild the shophouse facade at any scale without involving members of the community. The third was aspirational association: in the post-*reformasi* imagination, Chinese-Indonesian commercial success, in firms like Lippo Group, Sinar Mas, and Agung Sedayu themselves, had come to stand for economic modernity and urban sophistication;[5] and proximity to that association carried value for a middle-class audience.

2 Hoon, Chang-Yau. "More than a Cultural Celebration: The Politics of Chinese New Year in Post-Soeharto Indonesia." *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 3 (2009): 91.

3 Gans, Herbert J. "Symbolic Ethnicity: the Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, No. 1 (1979: 1.

4 *Ibid*, pp. 9.

5 Leaf, Michael. "Exporting Indonesian Urbanism: Ciputra and the Developmental Vision of Market Modernism." *South East Asia Research* Vol. 23, No. 2 (2015): 169-186.



Fig. 3.3 *View of Pantjoran PIK from the Gold Island Boulevard*, 2026, image by Author.



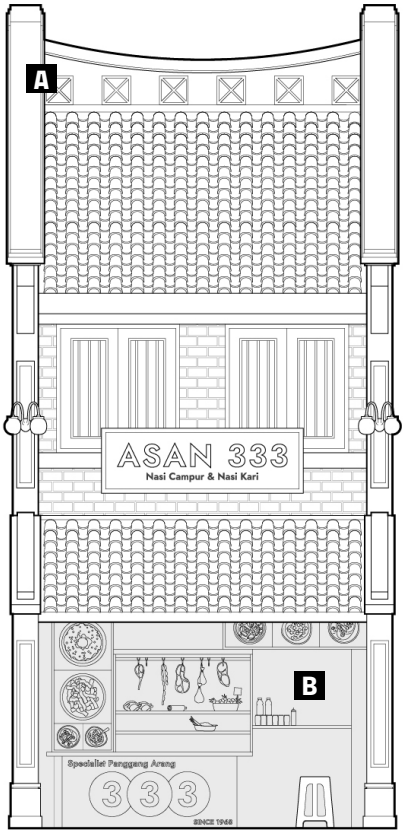
Fig. 3.4 *View of Pantjoran PIK under renovation from parking lot*, 2026, image by Author.

An interpretive panel explaining the Chinese zodiac stands in the foreground.

The Disneyfied

2020 - Present

In the post-2020 landscape, driven by nostalgia and the experience economy, developers deploy exaggerated, hyper-traditional shophouse aesthetics to create sanitized commercial enclaves, divorcing cultural heritage from its organic urban context.



A. THE HISTORICAL SOUTHERN CHINESE ROOF PROFILE IS RESURRECTED AS A STAGE-SET FASCIA, SERVING AS AN EASILY CONSUMABLE SIGNIFIER OF 'AUTHENTICITY' WITHIN A WHOLLY PRIVATIZED COMPOUND

B. THE INFORMAL STREET VENDING OF THE TRADITIONAL FIVE-FOOT WAY IS REPACKAGED INTO A REGULATED AND CONTROLLED STALL. THE PERFORMANCE OF COOKING AND DISPLAYING GOODS IS CURATED AS AN EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMER SPECTACLE, DEVOID OF TRUE STREET-LEVEL INFORMALITY

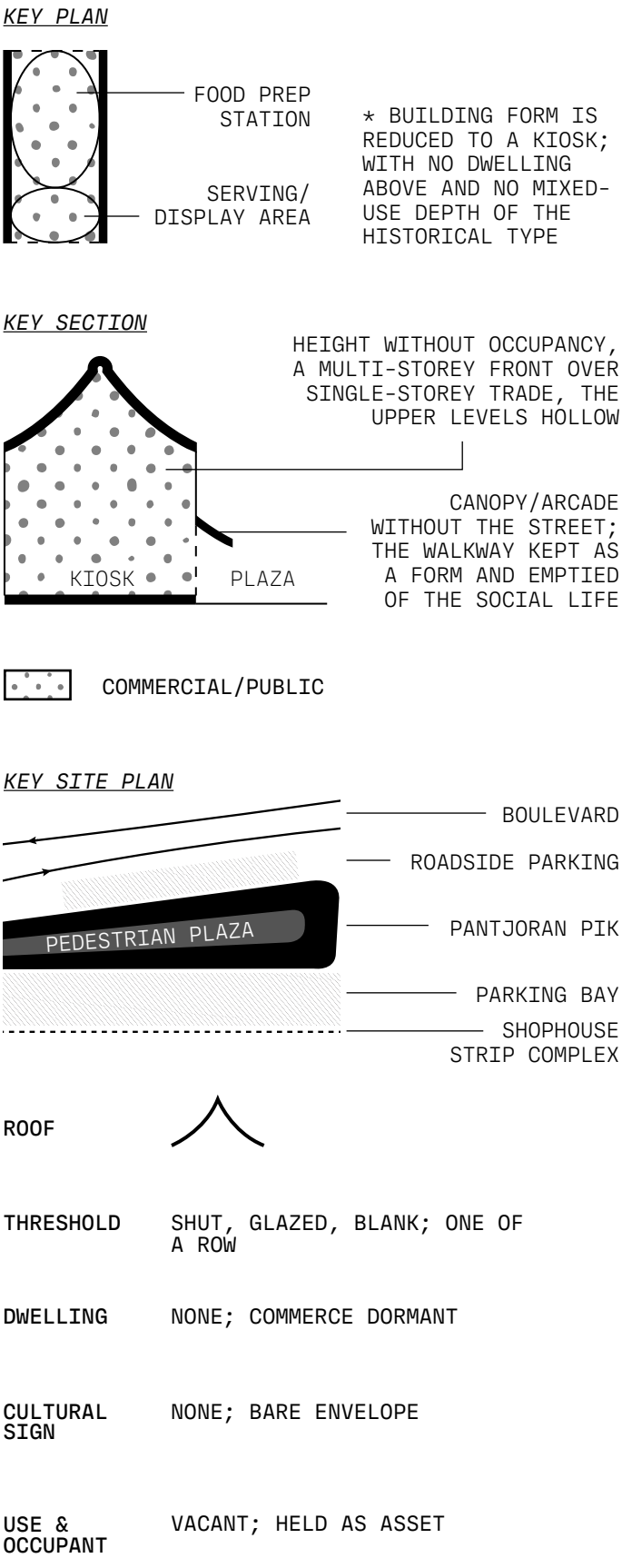


Fig. 3.5 *Disneyfied shophouse analysis*, 2026, image by Author.

What these environments answered was an aspiration towards status rather than to Chineseness; an aspiration to the cosmopolitan and premium look of a city that had arrived on the global stage. Chineseness was one way to signal that position, and a European theme was another, since both read as elsewhere, as the proximity to a global modernity the surrounding city did not supply. The consumer was buying the register as much as the culture, which is why a Chinese-inspired and a Dutch-inspired shophouse can function as interchangeable aspirational signals.

This pattern of thematic interchangeability is underscored by Agung Sedayu's development strategy across the Pantai Indah Kapuk district. The firm consistently employs the same facade template to host disparate cultural signifiers, manifesting in projects such as *Kota Belanda*, the Amsterdam-inspired *La Riviera* with its purpose-built canal, alongside European-themed commercial rows like Ruko Euroasia and Ruko Cordoba. The same operation continues across Jakarta's new-town belts, in the Mediterranean facades of Green Lake City and the Dutch rows of Ruko Plaza Amsterdam at the gate of Sentul City. The shophouse carries Chinese, Dutch, or Mediterranean facades with the same structural indifference. These developments were built by the same class of developers, often Chinese-Indonesian conglomerates, who deploy the same operation for the same aspirational middle-class market: the shophouse form evacuated of its morphological memory and re-skinned with a themed identity calibrated to a specific consumer fantasy. When Pantjoran's Chinese shophouse and Kota Belanda's Dutch-oriented



Fig. 3.6 *Kota Belanda ("Dutch Town") of Pantai Indah Kapuk*, 2026, image by Author.

The development replicates Dutch canal-town vernacular through stepped gable facades, ornamental brickwork, and a recreational waterway.

shophouses are products of a single developer's portfolio, the claim that the Chinese theming represents cultural recovery becomes difficult to sustain.

The format that made these environments commercially productive was the open-air walkable cluster. Developers had learned that shophouse precincts could function as privatized analogues of public streets, producing the street life atmosphere that enclosed malls had never quite managed. To move through a space like Pantjoran PIK is to temporarily step out of Jakarta into somewhere with gridded pavements and curated facades that construct a version of an elsewhere that the city does not provide. For a Chinese-Indonesian audience, this elsewhere carried an additional register, meeting a desire to recover a particular past with a generic substitute through Boym's 'restorative nostalgia,' which does not acknowledge the loss that makes longing possible, but instead stages a reconstruction, papering over the ruptures that made reconstruction necessary.[6]

Gans further shows how this absorption gets institutionalized. 'Symbolic ethnicity,' he argues, tend to be outsourced: when cultural transmission through daily practice breaks down, the group delegates the work of producing tradition into institutions, asking them to manufacture it while actual life continues to be governed by position in the social heirarchy.[7] For a cultural pattern to be useable in this way, it must be symbolized and readable to large numbers of people, felt without effort, and, above all, undemanding and requiring no disturbance to the rest of life.[8]

What this delegation produces, when it operates across the gap left by decades of suppression, is a cultural environment assembled from absence. The revival that followed *reformasi* could not draw on a living transmission of Chinese-Indonesian cultural forms because the New Order had broken it. Observing the first year of recovery in 2000, Tjahjono[9] describes the resulting cultural expressions as 'hyper-real forms,' illustrating the architectural condition Baudrillard defines as 'hyperreality,:' a simulation so attenuated from any lived original that it stands in for it entirely.[10]

Hence, the manufacturing of a hyper-reality identity (as well as its commodification) was a structural necessity of a contemporary capital. Its timing was driven by the post-*reformasi* period, which coincided with a reconstruction of the Indonesian capital, and property developers who were looking for investment narratives that could distinguish their projects in an increasingly competitive market.[11] With that, heritage and cultural theming had emerged globally as a development strategy

6 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books (2001): 66-68.

7 Gans, *Symbolic Ethnicity*, 9.

8 *Ibid*.

9 Tjahjono, Gunawan. "Tradition of Celebration: Redefining Selves and Reclaiming the Identity of Chinese Indonesians in the Post-New Order Era." *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2006): 45–46.

10 Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra." *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (1994): 1-6.

11 Leaf, *Exporting Indonesian Urbanism*, 170-174.

in what David Harvey identifies as the shift from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism: the reorganization of urban governance around competing for investment, rather than managing services for existing residents.[12] Within that logic, hyper-real identity was the product capital required, its timing determined as much by investment opportunity as by any impulse towards cultural recovery.

Ultimately, the harmony projected by this imaginary project is a fiction sustained by a deliberate omission. Glodok was never a heritage district shared cordially by all of Jakarta's communities, but a living quarter Chinese-Indonesians were forced into by decades of discriminatory spatial and legal regimes. The shophouse row that Pantjoran PIK simulates was, in reality, the architectural model that confinement produced: form born of necessity, density, and survival. True heritage is not found in the pristine reproduction of a facade, but in the generative persistence of a type that has been forced to adapt and survive. By deploying the shophouse as a static, reproducible model, the development treats the building as a consumable stage set that masks its own internal void. The violence of the operation strips the shophouse of its spatial depth, severs its critical relationship to its historical conditions, and replaces a living, historically burdened type with a hollow image. In doing so, it does not preserve the shophouse form; rather, it continues the erasure, deepening the silence around the struggles that define the form's enduring presence and offering the city a sterilized substitute in their place.

12 Harvey, David. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* Vol. 71, No. 1 (1989): 9.



Fig. 3.7 *A "shophouse" kiosk under renovation*, 2026, image by Author.

The upper floor of most of the kiosks, which in a working shophouse holds the household running the ground-floor business, is at Pantjoran PIK a facade. The fenestration is reminiscent and the proportions are mostly maintained, but behind the windows there is no domestic space nor a second floor. From the plaza, the buildings present themselves as two-storey live-work structures while housing single-level commercial operations. Even though the elevation is retained, the section has been hollowed, and the upper floor is reduced to a costume.



Fig. 3.8 *Two mailboxes at Pantjoran PIK*, 2026, image by Author.

A pair of mailboxes can be seen next to the entrance of a five-foot way, suggesting a domestic address; and these buildings show signs of inhabitation while being structurally incapable of receiving the domestic life those signs imply.



Fig. 3.9 *Arcade at Pantjoran PIK*, 2026, image by Author.

In its historical form, the five-foot way was maintained because of its ambiguity; the boundary between commercial and pedestrian space perpetually negotiated as vendors set up within it and goods spilled out from the shops. At Pantjoran PIK, it may not even be five-feet wide, and it stands as a formal element with the ambiguity of it managed out, clean and commercially controlled.

Recognition Without Reckoning

The violence the form performs answers a political need. After 1998, the Indonesian state faced a contradiction it could not easily resolve: how to declare Chinese culture welcomed without reckoning with the conditions and the violence that had made it unwelcomed. The themed Chinatown is a spatial solution to that problem; built through a developer whose capital and concessions were themselves products of the racial bargain described in the previous section.

What Pantjoran PIK offers Chinese-Indonesian communities is nonetheless real, and the thesis would be dishonest to treat it as nothing more than extractive. After decades in which Chinese culture could not lawfully appear in public space, visibility and normalization carry weight. For a generation who grew up without this, being publicly Chinese in a post-reformasi city is not a small thing. Visibility, however, doesn't necessarily mean recognition, and at Pantjoran PIK the two come apart. Recognition, in Nancy Fraser's understanding, affirms the distinctness of a group's culture and acknowledges its specific history, internal differences, and claims on the political order that misrecognized it.[13] Fraser also separates two kinds: affirmative recognition revalues a group's existing identity while leaving in place the structure that subordinated it, whereas transformative recognition alters that structure.[14]

What Pantjoran PIK offers is affirmative, and the post-*reformasi* inclusion it belongs to shows the pattern. Media narratives have urged Chinese-Indonesians to "come out from behind the walls" and rejoin the nation in plain sight, treating their earlier withdrawal as a preference rather than a survival strategy shaped by decades of discrimination and violence.[15] Reading Tempo's 2004 Independence Day issue, Tsai shows how ambivalent that invitation was.[16] The magazine condemned segregation and praised cultural openness while leaving intact the racial assumption that had made separation seem necessary, holding "Chinese" steady as a fixed and separate category to be reintroduced. That is affirmative recognition in Fraser's sense: a way of celebrating identity while leaving the unfair systems that keep the group marginalized in place, and was offered on terms the community never set.

A spatial form of redistribution is also at stake. Pantjoran PIK withholds this because Chinese culture is concentrated, curated, and zoned, held inside a developer-managed precinct on reclaimed land in North Jakarta. In contrast, Chinese-Indonesian culture already lives in Jakarta as a dispersed, embedded presence, threaded through the ordinary fabric of

13 Fraser, *From Redistribution to Recognition*, 68-74.

14 *Ibid*., 82-91.

15 *Change and the Ethnic Chinese.* Tempo, 2004.

16 Tsai Yen-Ling. "Spaces of Exclusion, Walls of Intimacy: Rethinking 'Chinese Exclusivity' in Indonesia." in *Indonesia*, No. 92 (2011): 133.

the city. Pantjoran PIK adds a curated, managed version of that culture, spectacularized and legible, drawing visitors, investment, and attention. The model it offers runs against the grain of how the culture lives, effectively cornering it. It becomes a destination instead of a condition; a managed attraction instead of a way of inhabiting Jakarta. Glodok's attachment is practiced through daily worship in temples and churches, businesses inherited across generations, the repetition of language, and the material memory laid down by long occupation. Crucially, its Chineseness cannot be separated from histories of insecurity and state surveillance, embodied and spatialized in the shophouse form itself, where interiors hold stories that many residents still will not tell.

What this reorganization removes is community authorship: the capacity of the people whose culture is being deployed to determine what is represented, how it is framed, which aspects of their history are made visible, and which are suppressed. When my generation encounters an empty or fortified shophouse in Glodok, we do so as partial outsiders to the conditions that produced it. Our attraction to the new shophouse clusters suggests that the mall never fully satisfied a desire for texture, street life, and urbanity. We seek the urban experience the shophouse street can provide, and we seek it in a version stripped of its historical danger.

4 / CONCLUSION

Guy Debord described the spectacle as a social relation mediated by images; a condition in which lived experience is steadily displaced by its representation, so that life ceases to be something practiced and becomes something witnessed.[1] The spectacle does not falsify reality but substitutes for it, occupying the space that practice would have filled with a version of the world more coherent and more pleasurable than the burdened one it replaces. Tjahjono, closing his study of post-2000 cultural recovery with a reference to Debord, observes that under these conditions the search for self in Indonesia remains a struggle.[2] At Pantjoran PIK, that search remains a struggle because the spectacle resolves it without the work resolution would require. It offers an identity already authored, settled in an agenda of consumption, and an identity authored by a developer for a market. What the spectacle foreclosed is the capacity to read the shophouse as heritage built under conditions that demand examination, instead of just heritage simply recovered. Boym locates the danger of restorative nostalgia in the presentation of a manufactured past as the recovery people were seeking, which makes the world as it was lived harder to see.[3] Memory separated from the conditions that produce it is not historical consciousness, but nostalgia – and nostalgia cannot answer a search for self that is, at bottom, a search for a history one is permitted to claim.

The historical shophouse is, before it is anything to celebrate, a material record of what was done to the community that inhabited it, serving as that community's archive because the official archive refused the events. In Halbwach's account, collective memory is held within the social and spatial frameworks of group life: it lives in use, and it depends on a setting that continues to be inhabited.[4] Such a setting is not permanent, as families sell and move away, as buildings empty or are shuttered behind grilles, and as the generation that lives through confinement and violent ages without the next taking up what it knows, the shophouse slowly stops working as a site of memory. If the building stops holding the events while no one is left to read what it holds, it stops being a record. A harm that has been forgotten cannot be reckoned with, and a community cannot ask for the recognition of something it can no longer show was done to it. The erasure of the violence began is in this way completed by time, and the version of the past that remains legible is the one that was manufactured to be enjoyed.

The question of conservation sits awkwardly on Pantjoran PIK, even as the development produces conservation's visual outcomes. It generates heritage and cultural visibility, as well as a built environment that reads as Chinese urban fabric, while operating through none of conservation's mechanisms. Conservation, at its most rigorous, safeguards both the physical integrity of a building and its accumulated social significance;

1 Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Éditions Buchet-Chastel (1967): 2.

2 Tjahjono, *Tradition of Celebration*, 45–46.

3 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.

4 Halbwachs, Maurice & Coser, Lewis. *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press (1992): 38.

the Urban Redevelopment Authority's principle of maximum retention and careful repair, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is the most developed institutional expression of that aim within the Southeast Asian region.

To conserve the shophouse in a deep sense is to maintain access to the counter-archive: to keep the building in use, the community, and the relationship between form and history legible for those who come after. Disneyfication severs this relationship because it discards the substance that gave the type its meaning, and in doing so removes the material anchor through which a community without a public reckoning has transmitted its own past. The shophouse is a spatial medium through which a community organizes its care for itself, its ancestors, and its continuity, and it is this everyday work of maintenance, habitation, and worship that has kept the counter-archive legible without institutional support. Resistance to Disneyfication, in this light, is a practice of attention: an attending to what the building already holds instead of a manufacturing of what it ought to display.

The divide between 'manufactured pasts' and 'lived histories' is not merely a difference in outcome, but also a difference in intent. This distinction, which separates the authorship of a developer from the continued habitation of community, can be framed as a conflict between two practices: place-making and place-keeping. Place-making is the deliberate production of legible meaning through design, programming, and curatorial selection.[5] It is the governing logic of developments like Pantjoran PIK, where a Chinese identity is authored by a developer and manufactured for consumption. Because place-making assumes a site is identity-less unless it is reimagined, it often serves as a veneer for gentrification, producing renewal by severing a site from its previous occupants.[6] Place-keeping, by contrast, names the ongoing maintenance of the relationship between a community and the built environment it has already produced.[7] It is grounded not in design intervention, but in spatial justice: the active care of cultural memory by those who live and work there. Where place-making produces a place, place-keeping continues one.

5 Wu, Wenying. "Fieldnotes: What is the Difference Between Placekeeping and Placemaking?" STEPS Public Art (2025).

6 Bedoya, Roberto. "Placemaking and the Politics of Belonging and Dis-belonging." *GIA Reader*, Vol. 24, No.1 (2013).

7 McCoy, Emily & Ladner, Conners. "Placekeeping: Setting a New Precedent for City Planners." Planetizen (2015).

The Cart and the Arcade

Two thresholds in Glodok stay open against the pressure of development. On *Gang Gloria*[8] (Gloria Alley), the wooden market stalls press so close against the narrow front of *Kopi Es Tak Kie* that the shop nearly disappears into the alley. Yet, the threshold remains active, and within the coffee shop, coffee is still passed outward across a sill that has not been redrawn since 1930 (see Fig. 4.1). A few hundred meters away, on Pantjoran Street, the five-foot way of *Gedung Chandra* (Chandra Building) carries motorbikes at the curb and a line of vendors hanging red pockets and dried fruit from a rusted iron gate, while behind them the managed commercial compound of *Petak Enam* plays a pop playlist beneath an elevated roof. One threshold belongs to a family that has held it for four generations (see Fig. 4.2). The other belongs, in the legal sense, to a developer who inserted a curated food hall into a former parking lot in 2021. Both sites are doing the same architectural work, a reality that only becomes visible when we set aside the questions they initially seem to pose.

That question, the one each site raises on its own, is where the line falls between Disneyfication and revitalization. It is the wrong question, or rather it is a question framed in terms that cannot answer it, because it asks about authenticity and cultural purity when what is at stake is something architecture can describe more precisely. A development is not extractive because it is commercial, and a shophouse is not preserved simply because it is old. The distinction this thesis has been encircling lies in the relationship between a building's form and the use that keeps the form in operation, and that relationship is better understood through the difference between a type and a model.

To clarify the divergence between our sites is best understood by returning to the historic shophouse as an architectural type – a generative idea first defined by Quatremère de Quincy, and which Rossi later developed as a permanence in the city, surviving momentary functions, and persisting through changes of use rather than remaining fixed to any singular role.[9] When we apply this distinction to our sites, the split becomes clear: Pantjoran PIK reproduces a model, distilling the shophouse form into a settled image repeated across a curated site. By contrast, shophouses in Glodok like *Kopi Es Tak Kie* and a commercial compound like *Petak Enam* inhabit a type, sustaining the building's generative form even as they navigate the pressures of modern use.

8 *Gang Gloria* is a historic alleyway in Glodok, Jakarta's Chinatown, best known for its dense concentration of informal street trade and multi-generational establishments. The alley serves as a vital pedestrian artery that is functionally and spatially integrated within the *Petak Sembilan* market, the broader historic market complex that anchors the district's commercia life.

9 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 40-41 and 59-60.



Fig. 4.1 *Interior of Kopi Es Tak Kie*, 2026, image by Author.

A *kopitiam* established in 1927 and continuously operating in a shophouse inside of Gang Gloria, Glodok.



Fig. 4.2 *Interior of Petak Enam by Jalan Pancoran, Glodok*, 2026, image by Author.

The food court organizes its tenants around an atrium decorated with red lanterns, ornamental stairs, and festival lighting. The curated Chinese identity assembled here draws on the same aesthetic language as Pantjroan PIK at a smaller scale.

Kopi Es Tak Kie tests whether the type can persist through time, and its answer runs the length of the modern Indonesian century. The shop did not begin as a building at all: in 1927, in the twilight of the Dutch colonial period, Liong Kwie Tjong sold iced coffee and mung bean soup from a mobile cart to the traders and labourers of the *Petak Sembilan* market,[10] a *kaki-lima* working the street edge of the *Pecinan* that the Dutch East India Company had designated for Chinese settlement after the 1740 massacre. By 1930 the cart had developed into the deep, narrow building on Gang Gloria that the business has held ever since.[11] The building did not replace the cart so much as house it; and the shophouse is what happens when the cart stops moving and the threshold stays open behind it.

10 Hidayah, et. al. "Representasi Budaya Tionghoa dalam Kedai Kopi Es Tak Kie (1927-1998)." *Periode: Jurnal Sejarah dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (2023).

11 *Ibid*.



Fig. 4.3 *Staff and family of Kopi Es Tak Kie posed before the shop-front*, 1950, Donny Fernando, National Geographic Indonesia.

The sign reads 德記茶室, with the Dutch-era orthography "KOPIE US 'TAK KIE'" below, flanked by 保生飲料 (health drinks) and 清涼甜品 (cold desserts). The "KOPIE" spelling preserves the colonial Dutch kopie as the word for coffee; the current "Kopi Es" rendering reflects the post-independence shift to standardized Indonesian.



Fig. 4.4 *The front opening of Kopi Es Tak Kie in Gang Gloria, Glodok*, 2015, Dok. Annisa Paramita, CNN Indonesia.

Vendors operating in the kaki-lima press against the shop's threshold; braised meat is prepared at a cart positioned in the covered arcade while service continues across the counter behind.

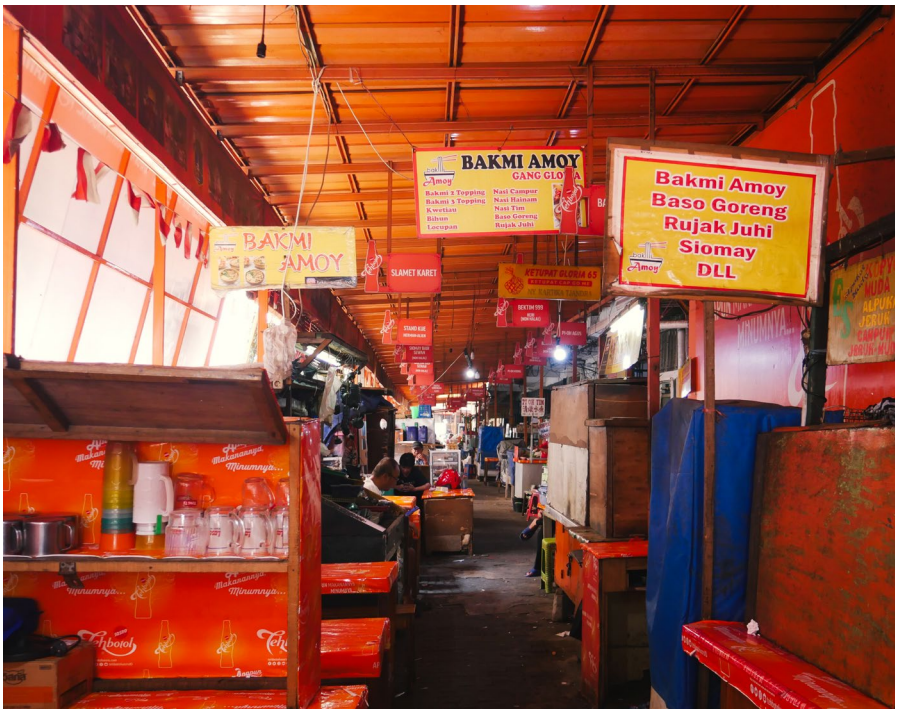


Fig. 4.5 *View into Gang Gloria market*, 2026, image by Author.

The covered alley organizes its food stalls along a single compressed corridor, with vendors operating under a shared roof and improvised overhead infrastructure.

What the building did next was hold its position while the society around it was rebuilt several times over.[12] Four generations have run the shop, from Liong Kwie Tjong through Willy and his siblings, and across that span the interior has been kept: the peeling linoleum, time-stained walls, rusty ceiling fans, and the Formica-topped tables and teak chairs are materials of a deliberate refusal.[13] In a city that has made hyper-modernization its governing taste, the decision not to renovate is a form of maintenance, a way of keeping the setting continuous with the one in which the shop's meaning was formed. The absence of air conditioning within the store, for example, belongs to the same intent, since the natural ventilation that the room and its open front provide is what sustains the smoking-and-drinking habits of the patrons, hence the building's environmental system is therefore also a social one. The shop opens at half past six and closes by two, a window inherited from its origins as a breakfast shop for market workers, so that even the hours the building keeps are a continuation of its history.

It is critical to recognize that Disneyfication was a community tool before it was a developer's strategy. After the 2000s, the Chinese-Indonesian community made a calculated bet: that becoming visibly and aggressively Chinese, and leveraging that visibility through economic capital, might offer a stronger hold on their spaces than their previous strategy of managed anonymity.[14] This shift represented a deliberate, tactical negotiation of cultural identity that the community undertook

12 Oktafarel, K. M. et al. "Indonesian Coffee Culture and Heritage: Demystifying the Heritage Value of Coffee Shops inside Historical Buildings in Jakarta and Bandung." *Local Wisdom*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2021).

13 Oktafarel, K. M. et al., I*ndonesian Coffee Culture and Heritage*, 55-56.

14 Redyantanu, Bramasta P. & Purbantina, Adiasri P. "Hyperreal heritage: simulating Chinese urban identity in Indonesian commercial design." *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* (2026): 1-4.

with awareness of its potential costs. This distinction is vital because community-led aestheticization functions differently from developer-driven Disneyfication, as the former keeps the threshold open and retains the counter-archive by ensuring the building remains in use and the context stays.

This nuance is essential when approaching *Petak Enam* as a site. Here, there is no unbroken family, no single use carried across generations, and no interior frozen in continuity. There is, instead, a developer's insertion, a curated culinary and commercial compound opened in 2021 under the creative direction of Rex Cokrowibowo, built into and around the historic *Gedung Chandra*[15] (Chandra Building) on a site that was formerly the building's parking lot.[16] The project was conceived to answer a perceived void in the neighbourhood: the lack of accessible places to sit and gather, and it grounds itself in local lineage by name, since *petak* refers to the partitioned houses that have long defined Glodok's vernacular urbanism, and the development claims the sixth of the plots whose ninth, *Petak Sembilan*, anchors the district's older commercial reputation.[17] *Petak Enam* shares the curated, Disneyfied visual language of Pantjoran PIK, and it is, in many ways, an aestheticized product of a developer – but it does not collapse into the same extractive model. For this reason, *Petak Enam* poses a harder challenge: can the type persist in the absence of a resident household, replaced by the authored design of a developer?

15 To understand what it means that P*etak Enam* is attached to, rather than constructed independently of, *Gedung Chandra*, it helps to understand what *Gedung Chandra* already was: one of the surviving commercial anchors of the Glodok district, sitting on Pancoran Street adjacent to Pancoran Chinatown Point, in a district that has functioned as Jakarta's historic center of Chinese community economic activity since the colonial era.

16 Perdana, Agam Putra & Kartidjo, Woerjantari. "Place Attachment Study in Chinatown: Case Study Pancoran Glodok Chinatown and Pantjoran PIK Chinatown." *ITB Graduate School Conference Proceedings*, 2022, 222–223.

17 Khairunnisa, S. "Bersantai di Gedung Bersejarah Glodok, Petak Enam di Chandra." *Kompas.com*, 2021.



Fig. 4.6 *Kaki-lima along Jalan Pancoran, Glodok*, 2026, image by Author.

Petak Enam sign is visible at mid-distance. The iron grilles, overhead cable infrastructure, and weathered facades register the street's unmanaged condition. The *Petak Enam* signage marks the point where the development begins.



Fig. 4.7 *Ground and upper floor facade of Petak Enam*, 2026, image by Author.

The commercial compound inserts upturned eave brackets and decorative fretwork panels onto the building's elevation, applying a Chinese architectural language. Tenants on the ground floor include a Singapore *laksa* franchise and *siomay* vendor; and a contemporary tea cafe occupies the upper level. The architectural register is curated, and the tenant mix is commercially heterogenous.

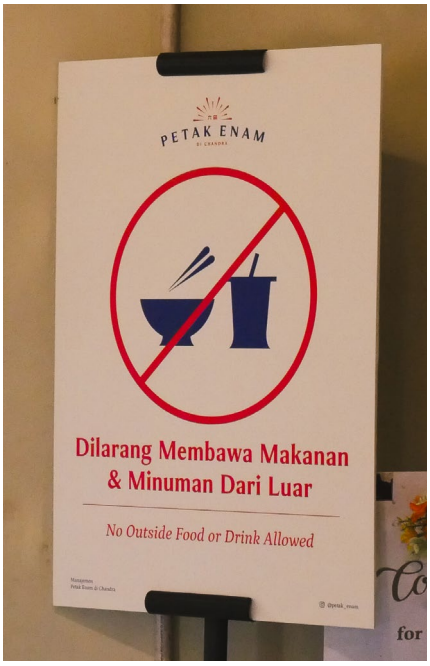


Fig. 4.8 *"No Outside Food or Drink Allowed,"* 2026, image by Author.

The sign marks the boundary the development draws between its managed interior and the surrounding street.

The pressures pulling against the type are visible in the plan: the compound turns inward around a central plaza, and that plaza imperfectly echoes the internal lightwell of the shophouse, the semi-private gathering space that once organized the household. The echo is loose because the shophouse is an outward-facing type and a central plaza inverts its logic, drawing circulation inward rather than opening it toward the city. In this respect, *Petak Enam* shares something with Pantjoran PIK, since both simulate pedestrian life within an enclosure, though Petak Enam does so at smaller scale and with looser control. The managed food hall introduces the pressure the shophouse historically avoided, because a fixed kiosk carries rent, overhead, and operating rules that a mobile cart does not carry. The clearest spatial index of that shift is a sign prohibiting outside food, a rule that can only exist inside a managed enclosure and that draws the boundary the arcade was built to refuse. All of this is place-making; the authored production of a legible, programmed interior.

Yet the threshold persists, and it does so on terms that the development has failed to fully interiorize. The original five-foot way of Gedung Chandra continues to operate at the perimeter of the compound, occupied by informal vendors whose trade in utilitarian household goods and seasonal ephemera (from kitchenware to red envelopes) remains anchored to the makeshift tables and the rusted iron gate of the site's previous incarnation. This edge, where the motorbikes, the humidity, and the tangled overhead infrastructure of ordinary Glodok press against the clean, contemporary branding of *Petak Enam*, is where the type remains in operation. The compound resists a binary classification of 'authentic' versus 'extractive' through its commercial heterogeneity; while the ground floor still accommodates localized Chinatown businesses, the upper level, though structurally hollowed of its domestic function, functions as a multi-tenant food court rather than performing the theatrical version of habitation seen at Pantjoran PIK. To object that the absence of domestic life signifies the death of the type is to misread how the shophouse stores its memory. This critique conflates program with memory, which is defined by a persistent formal logic rather than any singular use. Because the shophouse's generative organization functions independently of its program, it can survive the loss of domesticity without collapsing into the static model. When the formal logic of the threshold persists, the shophouse retains its capacity to store memory regardless of whether that memory is being made is a private home or a public market. This durability is what the Disneyfied model attempts to bypass; by substituting the persistent spatial logic of the type with a programmed, fixed aesthetic, the model renders the building's history inaccessible.

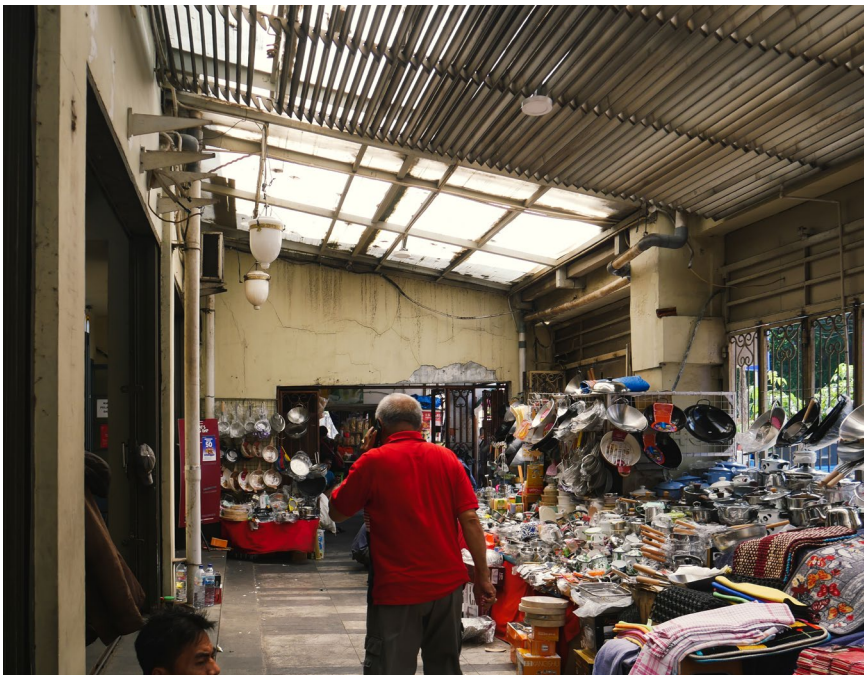


Fig. 4.9 *Informal kitchenware vendor occupying the kaki-lima outside of Petak Enam*, 2026, image by Author.

Placed together, the two cases stop being rival examples of one claim and become two proofs of a single argument from opposite directions: Kopi Es Tak Kie keeps the type through continuity, while Petak Enam keeps the type through discontinuity. One is family-owned and unbroken, the other developer-driven, yet in both, the generative type is actively worked on through the ongoing negotiation between the state, capital, and the people. What separates them from Pantjoran PIK is not the ownership or commercial pressure, but whether the threshold remains a genuine site of negotiation or has been reproduced as an image of one.

This negotiation within *Petak Enam*, however, is fragile; the compound survives within an uneven truce among vendors, a developer setting terms of viability, and a state exercising power largely through its absence. A shift in any of these factors could close the threshold, leaving the compound as extractive as the PIK iteration. Ultimately, this demonstrates that the type's instability is its condition; that it has never been secured by anything more durable than continued use. The shophouse retains its integrity only as long as it remains actively connected to the street and serves a functional role in the community. The question is no longer whether the shophouse is authentic or manufactured, but how a city returns to the type rather than reproducing its model – and the answer two thresholds offer is that the return is a practice of keeping rather than an act of design.

Institutionalizing place-keeping requires the state, capital, and people, whose competition defined the heritage field to participate on terms that make the community's claim legible instead of just subordinate. Planning frameworks that treat the community as a party to the decision rather than an object of it approach this standard by recasting the management of shared space as a collective process: they build, alongside the decision itself, the community's capacity to understand how decisions are made, to act with others across shared interests, and to exert influence beyond the boundaries of its immediate neighbourhood. Instruments that structure the negotiation as an explicit and enforceable trade go further, since goodwill is not a durable foundation for preservation: e.g. the owner of a protected building retains occupancy of the historic fabric, the city acquires a binding preservation restriction, and the developer receives a density entitlement that makes non-demolition economically viable.[18] What the mechanism produces is a settlement in which the community keeps what it occupies, the city enforces what it values, and capital receives what the market would otherwise have extracted from the site. This equilibrium is worth naming as a standard against which the actual management of Jakarta's Chinatown can be measured.

18 Costonis, John J. "The Chicago Plan: Incentive Zoning and the Preservation of Urban Landmarks." *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (1972): 574-634.

The question of why this standard remains unmet is not technical, as each mechanism described above presupposes a prior condition that no instrument itself can supply: that the community whose heritage is at stake holds recognized standing as a party with claims the state is obligated to consider. In Indonesia, that standing has not been established, and its absence is produced by the same history the shophouses carry. The shophouses that were attacked in 1998 were rebuilt behind iron grilles at the community's own cost, without a state directive to restore them or a public commitment to protect them; and a community that has repaired its own buildings, without institutional acknowledgement of why repair was necessary, cannot negotiate with the state as an equal party to a heritage settlement.



Fig. 4.10 *Shophouses on Hayam Wuruk Street, Glodok*, 2026, image by Author.

Jakarta MRT construction can be seen in the foreground. The MRT marks the infrastructure project that will alter the district's street-level conditions and pedestrian access. The image shows Glodok as a site under active and uncoordinated transformation, where pressures of infrastructure investment and deferred maintenance are operating on the same block.

The return to the type (i.e. the shift from reproducing a model to inhabiting the type) is a vital strategy for survival. We return to the type because it is the only form in which the community's history remains stored, active, and legible – and to engage the shophouse as a type is to engage it as a record of adaptation. Far from static, the shophouse is a mutating creature: it is a living form that has evolved in response to its inhabitants, from the cart that became a coffee shop to the parking lot that became a courtyard. Because its generative logic functions independently of its program, it can survive the loss of domesticity without collapsing into the Disneyfied model. By keeping the five-foot way open, by allowing the kaki lima to persist, and by maintaining the porous edge between the interior and the street, these shophouses act as the city's negotiation table. The shophouse does not need to be 'saved' in a museum sense; it needs to be kept in a functional sense. Until a political reckoning allows for a formal claim to this history, these buildings serve a crucial, defensive purpose: they hold the account of what happened open, refusing to let the spectacle settle until the community is recognized as the author of its own built environment.

The search for self is not a return to a pure, original state, but an ongoing authorship of a fragmented, locally-made identity. To position myself within this history is to realize that the choice between the spectacle of Pantjoran PIK and the continuity of Glodok is not a choice between two equal goods, and that it is a false binary of a different kind. Both answer the same history of confinement and erasure, one through the programmed pleasure of the present and the other through the stubborn, living memory of the past, and the desire behind each is real. My own identity, much like the shophouse itself, is not defined by choosing one site over the other, but is instead held in the scattered, mundane fragments I carry forward: the annual celebration of the Lunar New Year, exchanges of red pockets during special occasions, and sitting at a round-table dinner with my friends and family, over some steamed fish with soy and ginger, congee, and vegetable stir-fry. If the built environment of the shophouse is a record of adaptation, then my Chineseness is equally a record of practice: a continuous, authored navigation between these pressures. The search for a self is not about locating a final, stable history, but about the generative work of authoring one's own belonging.

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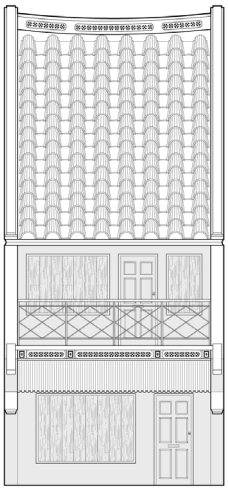
/ APPENDIX

The elevation drawings throughout the thesis do not depict specific buildings selected as legible examples of broader typological tendencies. They are not intended to be representative of every shophouse produced within a given period or regulatory context. Individual buildings across the archipelago deviate from these examples in ways shaped by local building cultures, patron circumstances, and site conditions. The drawings are best understood as anchors for the morphological argument developed within the research, illustrating characteristisc that recurd across the historical record instead of defining a singular norm.



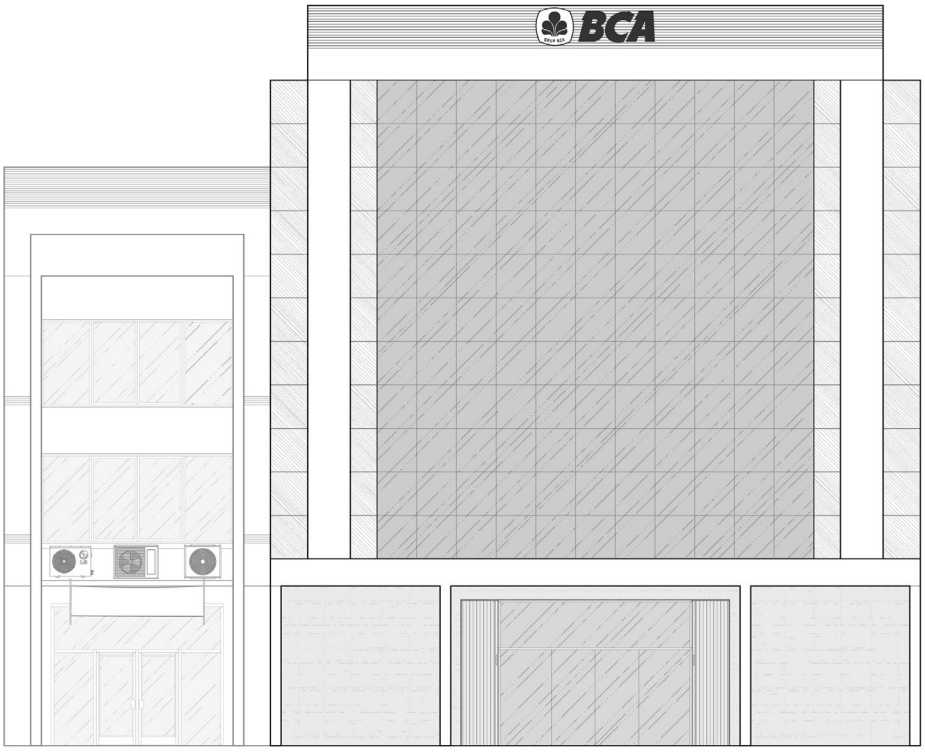
Typical Colonial Shophouse



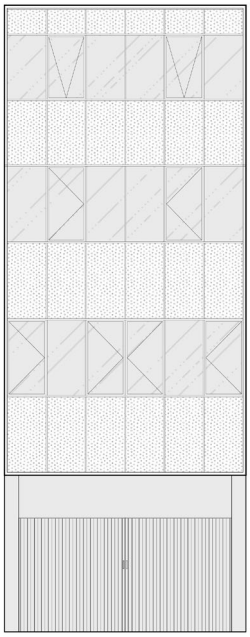
Assimilated Shophouse



Billboarded Shophouse



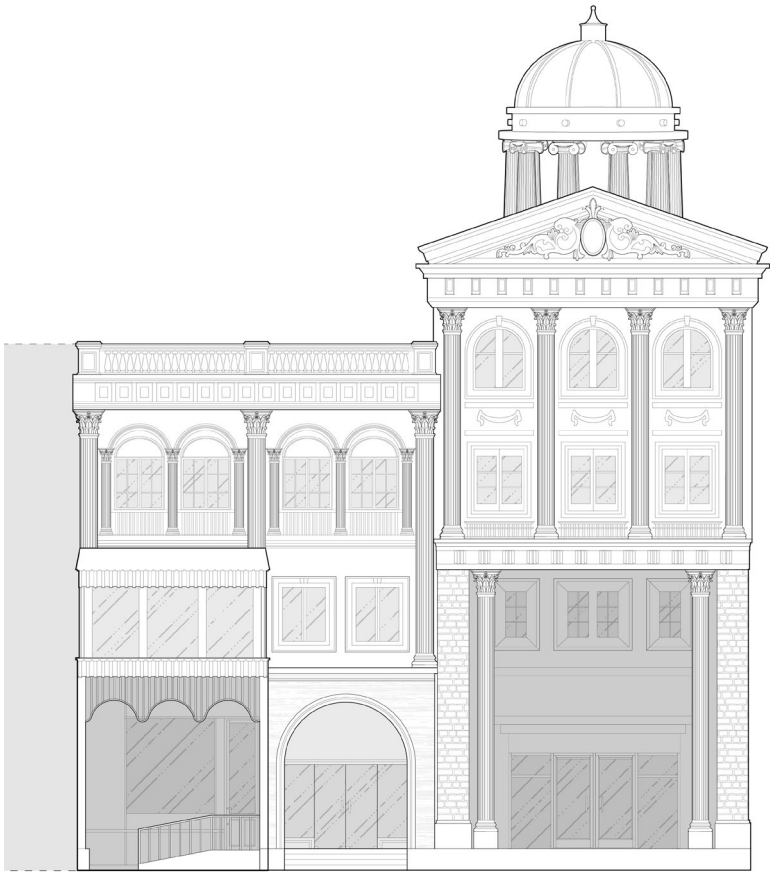
Corporate Shophouse



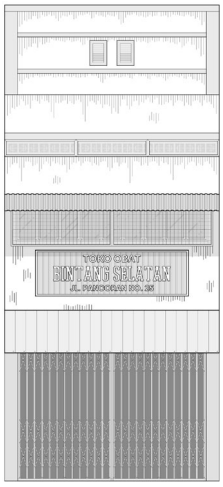
Generic Commodity Shophouse



Castle-Themed Shophouse Complex



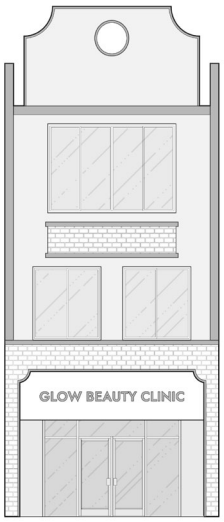
Neoclassical Shophouse Strip



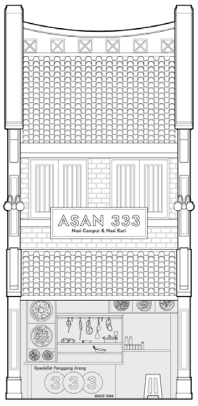
Fortified Shophouse



Minimalistic Shophouse Strip



Dutch House-Inspired Shophouse



Chinese-Inspired Shophouse