

11 Surviving Existence through a Built Form

The Advent of the *Daseng Sario*

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Abstract

This chapter explores how an excluded group of fishermen employs a built form as a tactic to deliver their actions of resistance and survive against the oppressive presence of the Boulevard Commercial Project (BCP) in Manado, Indonesia. Employing the rhetoric of 'delivering Jakarta lifestyle to Manado', a consortium of six private investors built the BCP on 70 hectares of land reclamation along the coast of Manado with the support of the local government. Despite its 'success', the BCP has transformed Manado into a stage for discontent. The remaining Sario fishing community suffers from marginalization caused by the city's denial of their existence and rights to the lands and sea, their social fragmentation from their former neighbours who have accepted the BCP, and the transformation of their neighbourhoods. All of these are the results of aggressive physical expansion by the BCP. With the backdrop of the physical built environment of the BCP, the visual contrast among the dominant wealthy image of the BCP, the deteriorating settlement of the remaining Sario fishermen and the physical improvements in the settlement of their (ex-)fisherman neighbours looks very prominent. This chapter explores the acceptance, resistance, and meaning of the BCP from the local perspective through interviews and questionnaires distributed among the nearby residents, both groups of (ex-)fishermen, investors, and the key persons in local government during our ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2009 to 2012. It reveals how the marginalized community has built their own spaces to defend their existence in urban space. It also shows that there is still a place where the marginalized group could reverse their power relationship with the oppressive development project, since the

people have the capacity and tactics to deal with the situation. Physical development and built forms can mirror the tension and counter-reactions among the oppositional stakeholders in the urban space. However, built forms can also serve as a medium through which to express and manifest protests in the material world. For these struggling fishermen, the physical space of their built forms, their permanency and visibility contribute to underscoring their resistance, establishing their presence in the urban space, and defending their rights to the space.

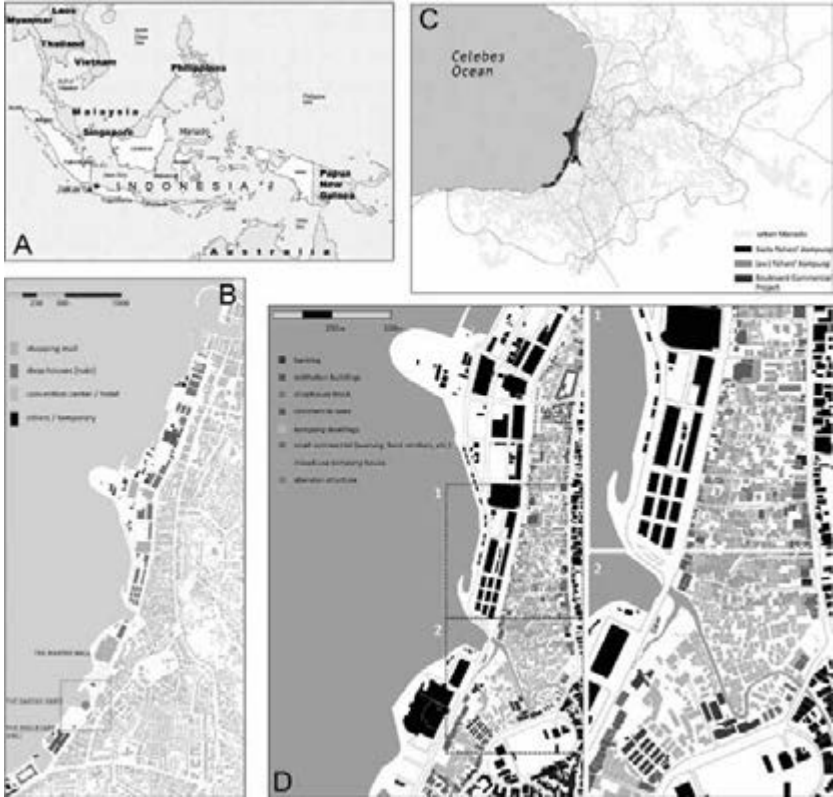
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1 The *Daseng Sario* Phenomenon: A Brief Introduction

Indonesia's new decentralization policy, which began in 2001, granted each of its 480 local cities the right to manage their own fiscal and development policies (Miller 2013, 838; Patunru, McCulloch, and von Luebke 2009, 6; Sondakh and Jones 2003, 296). Among other things, this new policy targeted the acceleration of urban development in eastern Indonesia to overcome the long-standing retardation of physical, economic, and social developments that the region had suffered under the unequal 'developmental' version of the New Order regime (Silver, Azis, and Schroeder 2001; URDI 2005; Vickers 2005). Many city governments, including that of Manado, have begun to aggressively promote their city's image, inspired by Jakarta's model of a Central Business District (CBD) and mixed-use commercial developments. Jakarta itself carries the proud label of a 'service city for the global economy'. The local Indonesian version of mega-scale commercial projects are the most favourable means of becoming a new centre in the inter-urban competition at both the national and regional levels, thereby encouraging cities to become more entrepreneurial in their approach to development, representation, and consumption (Miller 2013; Salim and Kombaitan 2009).

This trend of commercial mega-project development coincides with coastal Indonesian cities' increasing interest in expanding their lands toward the sea through land reclamation. Although land conversion practices in the coastal area are not a new phenomenon in postcolonial urban Indonesia, the coastal development of Indonesian cities has only recently been described as a feature of capitalist values (Kusno 2013, 99). Indonesian developers see beaches and coastal areas as an opportunity for privatized

Figure 11.1 Maps of (a) Indonesia, (b) the location of the BCP along the coast of Manado, (c) the location of the (ex-)fishermen-influenced areas, (d) contrast conditions between Wenang and Sario areas: Map 1 (above right): the Wenang (ex-)fishermen’s dwellings with direct access to neighbourhood streets, Map 2 (below right): the Sario fishermen’s dwellings with lack of direct access to neighbourhood streets



Source: Ariel Shepherd (a), author (b, c, d), Kumurur 2012 (image map 2)

physical development¹ due to the potential for extending land territory, creating tourist recreation spaces (Firman 1997), and showing national and local globalization efforts since the late-New Order regime (Kusno 2013). The application of capitalist values to Indonesian coastal areas exposes

1 As recorded by Firman and Kusno, the exploration of coastal reclamation development projects by private developers was already taking place during the New Order regime along the northern coast of Jakarta despite numerous environmental protests against their realization (Firman 1997, 1038; Kusno 2013, 100).

traditional agricultural and coastal lifestyles to large (foreign) capital and uneven distributions of power, resulting in the sudden and massive physical transformation of these areas into urban space.

The marrying of coastal land reclamation and commercial mega project development in Indonesian cities is done by maintaining exclusive relationships with particular business parties while ignoring the broader community (McCulloch, Patunru, and von Luebke 2009; Patunru, McCulloch, and von Luebke 2009). This reality reveals an important side effect of decentralization: local city administrations have suddenly received unprecedented control over their own administrative, fiscal, and political powers, placing them in the liberating position to manage their own power in governance (Firman 2009; Miller 2013). However, these city governments may not have the capacity to exercise accountable and responsible administration, in addition to Indonesia's lack of experience with democratic governance due to its former control by a centralized authoritarian regime (Miller 2013). As a result, local governments have frequently been criticized for their insensitivity to poverty and marginal communities and for their ignorance in incorporating bottom-up needs and initiatives required by their communities and citizens (Firman 2009).

Moreover, cities' marked preference for commercial mega projects triggers the over-exploitation and abuse of the natural landscape. In the past, Indonesian cities were frequently described as well-embedded and coexisting within or alongside nature (De Meulder and Shannon 2010). Before the advent of the Boulevard Commercial Project (BCP), descriptions of Manado were always framed by its harmonious coexistence with the natural beauty of its surrounding landscape (Leirissa 1995; Makkelo 2010; Mawikere 2005; Nas 1995). However, the reclamation of Manado's beach area by the BCP and the massive construction work on the reclaimed land are considered disruptive of the splendid orchestration between the picturesque natural landscape and the city. For this reason, both local non-governmental organization (NGO) activists and local academics have consistently voiced concerns about the BCP's endangerment of Manado's aquatic biodiversity. They raise question on the sustainable quality of the BCP, while questioning the impact of this project on the local society and to the future environment of Manado in general.

Indonesian cities' commercial mega development projects regularly exclude certain groups of people (Firman 1997; Leaf 1994; Kusno 2000, 2010, and 2013), including the project in Manado. Manado is well known for the frequent legalization of oppressive acts meant to further diminish poor neighbourhoods and their various types of informal economy (Niessen

1999).² The top priority of Manado's development campaign, repeatedly followed by every mayoral administration and proudly maintained by the current mayor of Manado, is that 'Manado must be the role model of an orderly, clean, and pleasant city' (Lalenoh 2014).³ As a result, the image of poverty presented by poor neighbourhoods and economic informality has frequently been regarded as a threat to the progress and development of Manado—or the existence of poverty has simply been ignored. The arrival of the BCP has only strengthened this tendency.

Although many groups, communities, and individuals welcome the BCP by appropriating its spaces for their own public spaces, the BCP has also caused discontent in its immediate (ex-)fishermen neighbourhoods (Figure 1). Despite the generally euphoric acceptance of the BCP as the new centre of Manadonese urban activities, a resistance against the spectacular collective space of the BCP has also emerged. The Sario fishermen are one community who suffer from the denial of their access and rights to the land and sea, divisions with their fellow (ex-)fishermen, transformation of their neighbourhoods, and the oppressive physical expansion of the BCP. Their marginalization exemplifies the city's ignorance of the existing poor community while providing priority rights to the BCP. Veronica Kumurur (2010) provocatively describes the obvious contradiction between their exclusion and the vibrant 'public' activities along the BCP: 'Along the coast of Manado today, only a few traditional boats of fishermen with their catches can be found. Loud and soft music of Clayderman and Usher from the outdoor cafes along the Boulevard now replaces them. Manado's modernization has tossed aside its local fishermen'.

Nevertheless, the Sario community continues to use spontaneous responses and resistance efforts to deal with the physical pressures of the BCP's profit-oriented development (Block 2001; Polanyi 2001). This article aims to describe the manifold responses of these (ex-)fishermen survivors to the consequences of living right across from the BCP.

2 Niessen describes an example of oppressive action by the Manado local authorities during the New Order regime: an old *kampung* in the city centre, namely kampung Texas, was burnt down to create a gardening beautification project. In the end, the site was handed over to a private developer for a more profitable re-development. Similarly, Maody Gerungan, the North Sulawesi branch director of Walhi, has highlighted the repeated forceful approaches taken by the local government during E.E. Mangindaan's and A.J. Sondakh's administrations when relocating fishermen settlements from the Strand Boulevard for the BCP (Luhukay 2001).

3 Mayor Vicky Lumentut used this argument during the *razia pedagang kaki lima* ('raiding operation of street vendors in Manado') (Lalenoh 2014).

A mere 40 metres of unreclaimed beach located between the Mantos and Boulevard Malls of the BCP was designated for the remaining traditional fishing activities—and only after a long negotiation process between the Sario fishing community, the Manado local authorities, and the developer of the Mantos Mall, PT Gerbang Nusa Perkasa (GNP). To secure their right to this open space, the Sario community constructed the *Daseng Sario* in October 2010. Due to the limited financial capacity of the fishermen, this humble shelter was built from cheap local materials such as bamboo, recycled waste timber, and dried leaves. The result is the traditional, ‘ordinary’ image of the *Daseng Sario*, which stands in stark contrast to the glamorous appearance of the BCP buildings. The backdrop of the physical built environments—the BCP, the improved settlements of the ex-fishing neighbourhoods, and the deteriorated slum settlement of the remaining Sario fishermen—has played a significant role in the escalation of these conflicts.

In Manadonese, *daseng* refers to an ordinary shelter surrounded by an open space where fishermen keep their traditional boats and prepare for fishing activities. The role of the *Daseng Sario* is extended beyond this traditional function, since it plays the additional role of a communal space for the Sario fishermen and their wider group members. Since physical space and its usage can be instrumental in conveying symbolic meaning and creating a medium for displaying group identity and emotions (Colombijn and Erdentug 2002, 240), the Sario fishermen community employs the spatial and instrumental potentiality of this *Daseng* to emphasize its protest against the BCP’s land expansion. This act produces a different form of collective space, one representing a community’s claim to urban space.

This article unravels the production of the *Daseng Sario*: a collective space that expresses protest, resistance, and defensive actions against the BCP. By focussing on the physical and lived spaces of the *Daseng Sario*, this article examines the role of a built environment in representing the existence of contradictions and discontent in the urban space near the BCP, and analyses the influence of this space of protest on the BCP’s collective space. Interviews were conducted and questionnaires distributed among nearby residents, both groups of (ex-)fishermen and key persons of the local government, in order to assess locals’ perspectives on this contradiction.

The first part of this chapter presents the history of the *Daseng Sario*, the process of displacement, and the resistance movement of the Sario fishermen. The second section addresses the condition and roles of the *Daseng Sario* today. It unravels the structure’s symbolic meaning, its role as a space of defence, its activities and social role, and its influence in broadcasting the protests of the Sario fishermen community to a wider

public. The final section describes the contradicting views about the BCP and the *Daseng Sario* that are circulating among various sections of Manado's urban population.

2 **Situating the Context: The Establishment of the *Daseng Sario***

2.1 **The Displacement of the Fishermen: Adaptation, appropriation, and marginalization**

With its total coastline of 18.7 km, coastal fishing activities and fishing communities have historically formed half of Manado and the North Sulawesi region in general, hand-in-hand and co-present with the inland agricultural societies and the farmers from the mountainous Minahasa region (Scheffold 1995, 1). Influenced by Manado's role as a port city since the colonial era, traditional fishing communities and coastal trade activities have been equally important to the formation of Manado and its daily life (Makkelo 2010; Mawikere 2005; Nas 1995; Parengkuan et al. 1986). Fishery makes a substantial contribution to the economy of North Sulawesi and Manado; these regions are well-known for the production of seafood, particularly as the country's main exporters of tuna. Moreover, the seafood-based cuisine of Manado has been regarded as one of the tourist attractions of the region.

However, the absence of a comprehensive urban vision (particularly in reference to the BCP) has interrupted this long-standing balance and raised the question of a potential fragmentation of Manado's social and material fabrics. The statistical data demonstrates that the coastal communities, most particularly the fishermen communities, have constituted the very poor (10%), poor (28%), and almost poor (62%) communities of Manado.⁴ This reality shows that the substantial economic production of these fishermen communities remains unable to guarantee their economic and social position in the urban space of Manado. On the contrary, the tendency to sacrifice the existence of local fishermen communities for the sake of development is only getting stronger.

The success of the BCP in transforming the coastal landscape of Manado into a modern, pulsating urban centre has resulted in the forced relocation of fishing settlements from the area (Patunru, McCulloch, and von Luebke 2009, 26). Few (ex-)fishermen neighbourhoods from the BCP area remain,

4 BPS Manado, *Statistik Kota Manado*, Provinsi Sulawesi Utara, Manado, 2012.

because the project's occupation of the beach has already mostly destroyed the fishing environment and shrunk the availability of the open space needed for daily fishing preparation activities. Therefore, the construction of the *Daseng Sario* is closely linked to that of the BCP and its impacts on the transformation of the remaining neighbourhoods.

After the advent of the BCP, a strong sense of image gap appears between the 'semi-village' image of Manado's urban landscape and the 'modern' appearance of the BCP.⁵ The physical format and modern image of the BCP reinforces the urban 'city' image of Manado; however, a drastic change in the traditional lifestyle along the area adjacent to the BCP was an inevitable by-product of this development. The increasing mobility of capital and new lifestyle patterns of a commercial urban environment have replaced the remaining (ex-)fishermen neighbourhoods and their distinct atmosphere. Adjusting from the traditional pattern of communal living to the individual urban one, and to a new occupation, are the major challenges facing the (ex-)fishermen. All these processes affect the degree of their acceptance of the BCP.

Spatial changes along this reclaimed coast have created new class-identity divisions and reconfigurations of urban space, and these are reflected in the contradictory responses from two different groups of (ex-)fishermen: the (ex-)fishermen of the Wenang neighbourhoods accept the BCP and have adjusted to the ongoing transformation of their living area; those living along the Sario dike, on the other hand, reject the BCP altogether. The social tension between these two groups and the drastic decline of fishing space along the BCP area have increased the marginalization of the Sario group and decreased its right to urban space.

The first group, which accepts the BCP, consists of former fishermen who have given up their traditional profession and the remaining active fishermen from the Wenang neighbourhoods, which have built a beneficial relationship with the BCP. This first group initially rejected any offers and propaganda on the good life launched by the BCP, including rejecting an

5 According to Evers and Korff (2005, 25–27), Indonesian (coastal) cities other than the capital have a weak base of urban tradition due in part to the absence of a cultural concept of 'city' before the arrival of Dutch colonialism. Although the colonial administration established Indonesia's coastal cities, including Manado, the urban lifestyle and its physical form were not accompanied by profound structural changes or drastic physical development (Evers and Korff 2005, 31). Consequently, the physical development of most Indonesian cities moved forward at a slow pace, much behind the capital city. Unequal development of Javanese and other islands' cities during the thirty-two years of the centralized New Order regime only emphasized this developmental gap.

unfair offer of compensation. After being pushed further by the hard life caused by declining fishing catches and changes in their living environment, however, this group were able to find alternative income sources as they adapted to their new living environment. Aware of the economic potential of their new living environment, a number of ex-fishermen started to provide accommodations and services for the BCP business environment. The rising commercial value of their settlements and the arrival of new migrant workers for the BCP have created new income sources that provide income higher than their previous income from fishing. Economic improvement from providing services like renting out rooms and opening cost-effective eating stalls and kiosks has supported their capacity to maintain and adjust the physical quality of their settlements. For these families, the BCP produces a positive memory. An interview with Ventje—a former fishermen leader who had previously rejected the establishment of the BCP but now supports it—and his wife reflects the view of the families that now accept the BCP:

Since the BCP, we have a better life. Our younger generations can work in those malls. Our families have a more relaxed life compared to the previous times when we were fishermen, because we now find a better way to earn money. We can rent out our rooms to the migrant workers. My wife earns an additional income by opening a food stall. We can support our daughters to study in a good university in Java. It would not have been possible for us to have this quality of life had we remained fishermen. Of course, we also rejected the Boulevard at the beginning because we were afraid of our future. But now, we see it differently. (interview by Cynthia Susilo, 12 April 2012, Manado)⁶

The remaining active fishermen from the Wenang area who accept the BCP have also gained an increased income due to the creative combining of their in-group daily fishing jobs with other activities. They nurture creative efforts, such as assertively and initiatively requesting and negotiating a claim of use on acquisition of a small vacant space from the BCP to establish a restaurant or food stall for visitors, or supplying the restaurants and food

6 The authors selected this conversation with Ventje to show how the immediate residents affected by the presence of the BCP chose to adapt. As reflected in Ventje's opinion, he, who previously was one of the strong opponents of the BCP, gradually changed his view on this project after seeing the new financial opportunities. His view represents the views of the majority of the Wenang neighbourhoods' residents.

vendors along the BCP area with fresh fish, to fully utilize the potential of their new living environment.

The second group, which rejects the BCP, is known as the Sario fishermen community. On the one hand, their rejection is conditioned by their limited ability to grab the new opportunities offered by the BCP's development wave. On the other hand, it is also motivated by their strong cultural identity: they want to conserve the fishing traditions and skill sets that they inherited from their ancestors. For the Sario fishermen community, the entire BCP area symbolizes agony and uncertainty due in part to the incremental economic pressure that residents experience. A group interview with the members of the Sario fishermen community captured this feeling, represented by the statement of Yongky, a 53-year-old Sario fisherman:

The Boulevard is for us a place of misery. We were the native owners of this land, but others did not count our existence. Our government and those investors have forgotten what they promised us a long time ago, that is, our rights to this land. No matter how many events are organized in the BCP, those are not for us. We feel bitter. However, we don't want to leave this place. This is the land where we were born, and we grew up with many memories. Our life is tied to this place. (Yongky, interview by the author, 10 May 2012, Manado)

2.2 Fragmented (Ex-)Fishermen Neighbourhoods

A new construction mechanism planned by architects and developers as the agents of change was introduced to Manado through the establishment of the BCP. Following the pattern of development in Jakarta (Firman 1997; Kusno 2013), huge capital-city developers have established a dominant role in converting and re-purposing communal lands into private and individual commodities (Patunru, McCulloch, and von Luebke 2009, 17). This new mode of development interrupts the common acceptance of informal urban patterns and has escalated the growing dichotomy of formal and informal settlements in Manado. Before the arrival of the BCP, unclear plot divisions, unclear legitimate property deeds, and communal mechanisms that regulate relationships between citizens were widely recognized by the city as the norm for local life. Organically patterned settlements, self-built mechanisms, and *kalakeran* ('communal land ownership') in 'informal' settlements have all been commonplace in Manado. Extra-legal tenure recognition from the city secured the existence of these settlements within

the urban space, including the fishermen's informal settlements along the Sario and Wenang areas.

After the BCP's development, however, the local authority of Manado has started to consider this informality embarrassing. The image of 'modern' (attached to 'formal') settlement emerged as the desirable model, designating the 'informal' settlements as less desirable (Kusno 2000, 122, 124). As a result, these 'informal' settlements have faced the threat of losing their extra-legal tenure—confirming Kim Dovey and Wiryono Raharjo's (2010, 83) description of the perception of informal settlements in Indonesian cities as 'negative symbolic capital, signifiers of failure and lack of state control', and socially unwanted urban systems.

A residential division has sprung from the economic and physical improvements to the neighbourhoods that have accepted the BCP, on the one hand, and the deteriorating economic and physical conditions of the neighbourhoods of the Sario fishing community on the other. This division carries the potential of creating unequal access to and provision of development (Colombijn and Erdentug 2002). Although these groups live next to each other, barriers to social interaction have developed from the visual contrast between the conditions of the two settlements. Each neighbourhood, the Wenang and Sario, treats its own quality of settlement differently from its counterpart. As Bruno De Meulder and Hilde Heynen (2006, 159–60) have maintained, some spatial environments lend themselves to the formation of exclusion within urban space much more than others. These factors include: location; morphology features typifying spaces of exclusion; the mode of development, such as settlements' regulation deficit; transformation mode supporting de-development and/or lack of maintenance capacity and/or accessibility; and quality of typology.

Incremental physical changes are taking place in Wenang where the groups that accept the BCP live. More permanent houses and buildings are replacing the previously predominant shacks and temporary structures. Two-way streets run along these neighbourhoods, giving them direct access to both the BCP and the previous main street of Manado. This wide accessibility has also attracted local businesses to take over some plots and invest in these neighbourhoods. Since the local residents have become aware of the increasing economic potential of their neighbourhoods, they have come to co-exist with businesses, and together they bring about area transformations. These neighbourhoods are transforming from predominantly residential areas for families into a mixed-use area of low-price accommodations supporting the BCP environment (inexpensive food vendors called *warung*, rental rooms, etc.,) and small- and medium-sized commercial facilities

(e.g., small cafés, restaurants, and hotels). Furthermore, a new pattern of heterogeneous social interactions is replacing the previously homogeneous interactions of fishing *kampung*s, following changes in the demographic profiles of these residents and the system of land ownership (namely, from communal to individual land).

The Sario fishermen community settlement, on the other hand, is trapped in a squatter-and-slum environment along the Sario dike. The conversion of communal lands into individual ones in the adjacent Wenang neighbourhoods has diminished the permeability and accessibility of the Sario fishermen neighbourhoods and trapped them at the back side of the Wenang area. Lack of direct access to either the BCP or the streets has made their neighbourhood an unattractive, peripheral pocket guarded against the incoming waves of economic opportunity. Higher economic pressures, lack of access to proper public and infrastructural services, and restriction restricted participation in decision-making all serve to keep the fishermen community at a disadvantage—a scenario comparable to what other vulnerable groups in poor urban communities suffer (Madanipour 2003, 2010a). Moreover, the occupation of the beach area by BCP developers has significantly contributed to decreasing catches and, consequently, to their dire financial state. Economic difficulties have further degraded their settlements' physical quality due, in part, to their limited economic ability to maintain adequate living quarters.

Class divisions have emerged out of growing differences and increasing tension between the Wenang (ex-)fishermen and the Sario fishermen. This class division contributes to the formation of residential fragmentation in this ethnically integrated society (Colombijn and Erdentug 2002, 227). Although living next to each other, different social groups may form and communication difficulties arise due to different modes of income, consumption preferences, languages, and frameworks of life (Madanipour 2010a). Moreover, the favouritism shown by the local authorities to the wealthier groups and the BCP leaves the Sario fishermen with feelings of oppression and exclusion from the ongoing development of the city. All this has led the Sario fishermen community to regard the BCP as a symbol of oppressive power.

3 The Resistance Movement

Land reclamation carries complex and contradictory land tenure change. It lies on the margin of transition and ambiguity concerning the land's

uses, claims, and identity (Desfor and Laidley 2011, 8). The small parcel of remaining beach where the *Daseng Sario* now stands represents the states of ambiguity and transition that characterize liminal spaces, reflected in the area's contested claims of use from fishermen as authentic users, and from the developers and local authorities. For the Sario fishermen, this parcel of beach is a place of survival and for maintaining their lifeways, as well as a nostalgic place tied to their identity as fishermen. For the local authorities, however, it is a marginal and underused piece of land, a space whose image of poverty is undesirable: an unprocessed image in need of development.⁷ For this reason, the BCP developers regard this space as a potential source of additional profit. When an urban space belonging to a marginal group offers the potential for profit, it frequently attracts a battle over claims to land ownership (Madanipour 2010b).

The lack of a comprehensive urban vision during the planning and development stages of the BCP caused the exclusion of less-powerful groups from the competition over this limited space. From the Sario fishermen's perspective, the BCP's land reclamation constitutes the destruction of their living space. However, prior to the BCP's construction, the local authorities of Manado and the BCP developers signed an agreement obliging the developers to accommodate the activities of the remaining fishermen and their fishing environment. This agreement states that some of the remaining open beach areas should be conserved for the fishermen, and any expansion of the reclaimed land should be approved by both the local authorities and the affected fishermen community.⁸ In reality though, the developers and the local authorities have frequently and secretly determined land reclamation expansions between themselves, and then intimidated the fishing community into accepting their already fixed decisions.

The frequent oppression experienced by the Sario fishermen pushed the National Human Rights Commission (*Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia/Komnas HAM*) to take over the mediation process between the Sario fishermen community, the Manado local authorities, and the GNP (owner of the BCP's Mantos Mall) in 2009, after receiving a number of intense complaints from Antra, the local NGO supporting the Sario community. Finally, an agreement was made to secure the 200 metre parcel of beach for fishing activities; however, the GNP constantly trespassed on this secured open

7 Ronny Kumurur, Deputy of the Manado Planning Authority Office, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 1 June 2012, Manado.

8 Vicky Lopulalang, Secretary of the Manado Planning Authority Office, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 15 May 2012, Manado.

Figure 11.2 The Sario fishermen's protest against the BCP expansion



Source: Hartanto for ANTRA 2012

space in attempts to expand its land claims, an act noticed by the city authorities. By 2010, only 40 out of the 200 metres of secured open space remained to the Sario fishermen.

After more dialogues ended in deadlock, 500 group members protested against this agreement violation. Seeking a medium to enhance their protests, the Sario fishermen transformed land and sea into spaces of civic manifestation. Tikala Square, the civic square of the city hall, and the streets between Sario and the square were occupied and transformed into stages, through which protesters even carried their fishing boats in demonstration. By carrying out the protest with their fishing boats in hand, the sea next to the remaining beach was also transformed into an extraordinary space of civic action (Figure 11.2). These actions led the *Komnas HAM* to urge the GNP and local authorities to stop expanding the reclamation of the remaining land.

Since the GNP frequently threatened the survival of the Sario fishermen through construction aimed at reclaiming land, the fishermen used a similar tactic and constructed the *Daseng Sario* as a manifestation of their protests, aiming to secure the remaining open space. They built the *Daseng Sario* with self-funding. Although protests using spatial appropriation and physical forms are less direct than regular demonstrations, these protests enhance the visibility of a group's existence and resistance to a larger public (Low 2000). The establishment of this *Daseng* materializes the contradiction of the BCP area in a more obvious way.

3.1 Selection of the Site

Choosing the right place for public protests is important for the Sario fishermen. Protests need to attract the attention of the local authority, the developers, and the wider public, and the location itself is highly significant for guaranteeing that the message reaches its intended destination (Padawangi 2013; Smith and Low 2006). Tikala Square, Manado's main civic square since colonial times, has been a common space for the Sario fishermen's protests against the local authorities. However, protesting in Tikala Square is, by itself, not very effective for halting the developers' aggressive land expansion. In an interview, Djamalludin, the leader of the Sario fishermen, expressed the need for a different tactic to send messages of protest directly to the developers: 'We need to deliver our protest right in front of the GNP. They don't hear our voice, and they don't see us in Tikala. So a spot next to their project is the best place for launching our rejection' (Rignolda Djamalludin, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 25 May 2012, Manado).⁹

Choosing the right setting within an urban space holds another key to garnering effective support for a demonstration (Padawangi 2013), and in this case the fishermen chose one of the two *dasengs* in the Sario area. The first, located next to the fishermen's settlement area at the estuary of the Sario dike, is less visible and would not attract much public attention. Instead, the Sario fishermen placed the new *Daseng Sario* at the centre of the mega projects and their activities, between the two massive buildings of the Mantos and Boulevard Malls (Figure 11.3). This location is much more observable by the public, and it sets a scene that effectively enhances the contrasting images of the *Daseng* and the BCP. The background of the 'modern' built forms of the BCP effectively functions as a symbolic icon of the capitalistic power encircling the *Daseng Sario*. Placing the protest at the new *Daseng Sario* 'practically and symbolically imbricates with the ongoing conflicts' (Irazabal and Foley 2008, 164), extending the protest across urban space to include the BCP buildings. The contrast between the built forms of the *Daseng Sario* and the rest of the BCP highlights the sharp delineation between the wealth of the BCP and the poverty of the fishing community. The aim of the protest—to expose social inequalities and discontent resulting from the BCP—has found a dramatic medium for expression.

9 The authors quote three statements from Djamalludin in this paper due to his influential role of keeping the spirit of the Sario fishermen community alive, as well as leading the communications and negotiations of the group with the local authority, developers, and the public.

Figure 11.3 Location of the *Daseng Sario* between the Mantos Mall and the Boulevard Mall, and the image of *Daseng Sario*



Sources: Map image: author; *Daseng Sario* images: Harsono for Mongabay Indonesia 2013 (above); and Nugraha for Komunitas Pasir 2013 (below)

3.2. The *Daseng Sario* Today

a. Symbolic Meaning

Today, the Sario fishermen community regards the *Daseng Sario* as the symbol of their identity and struggle. The contrast between the glamorous image of the BCP's Mantos Mall and the ordinary, humble, and traditional qualities of the *Daseng* produce a strong symbolic visual for the identity of this group of fishermen. Overlapped with the Sario fishermen's memories of struggles in defence of their rights to this open space and to fund and construct the *Daseng*, its built form has begun to 'shape a representational world [for the Sario fishermen] stabilizing and authorizing certain forms of identity and place' (Dovey 2010, 39). As a result, today the Sario fishermen consider the *Daseng Sario* to be the physical image of their settlement. The statement of Noel, a 55-year-old member of the Sario fishermen community, represents the prevailing opinion of the group: 'Whenever we see this *Daseng*, we feel like we see our poor *kampung* settlement that is as poor as we are. Although this *Daseng* also looks poor like our houses, we are proud of building it ourselves. Even though the city forgets us, at least people will recognize

our existence through this *Daseng*' (interview by Cynthia Susilo, 13 May 2012, Manado).

b. Space of Defence

The key actors in physical development projects often regard the space and territory of marginal communities as an empty site (Dovey 2010, 97). BCP developers and local authorities' denial of the Sario fishermen's social, spatial, and economic practices in urban space demonstrates this attitude. The blindness of the developers and local authorities to the reality of these fishermen is expressed in the statements of both the developers' management and the management of the local authority: 'No one uses the open space between the Mantos Mall and the site of the ex-Boulevard Mall',¹⁰ or 'The site located between the Mantos Mall and the ex-Boulevard Mall is empty and underused'.¹¹

However, the construction of the *Daseng Sario* in the centre of the BCP has brought forth a strong wave of support in response to its visibility. Unlike most marginal communities, who prefer to be invisible in order to secure their existence in urban space (Dovey and Raharjo 2010), the Sario fishermen prefer to be visible, as they believe it will strengthen their efforts to gain acknowledgement from the city officials. As the leader of the Sario fishermen said, 'Without having a physical space, we will be staying invisible. The authority will keep denying their responsibility to us. Therefore, we must build this *daseng*.'¹² The *Daseng Sario* works as expected: that is, it helps invert the power relations of this marginal community in relation to the local authorities and BCP developers. Before the establishment of the *Daseng Sario*, negotiations about the future of the remaining fishing environment and the expansion of the BCP always took place in government offices or the offices of one of the developers. After the *Daseng Sario* was established, the Sario fishermen have been able to use it as an instrument for strengthening their bargaining power by requesting that further negotiation meetings be held there (Figure 11.4).

10 Susilo, General Manager of the Mantos Mall, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 5 March 2012, Manado.

11 Vicky Lopulalang, Secretary of the Manado Planning Authority, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 27 March 2011, Manado.

12 Rignolda Djamalludin, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 30 May 2012, Manado.

Nevertheless, a stand-alone built form has a limited capacity for defending a cause. Although a physical space is present, the absence of activities and users can weaken its existence. Threats on the *Daseng Sario* come in various forms. One night, Mantos Mall security cut all the ropes that tied the fishing boats in the open space of the *Daseng*. At other times, it has been damaged by vandals.¹³ On the other hand, the continuous presence of activities and users surrounding a built form strengthens the existence of the space. To prevent vandalism and maintain the existence of the *Daseng Sario*, the fishing community keeps members and their activities present in the *Daseng* day and night.

c. *Inserting Activities, Establishing Attachment, Defining Territory*

The establishment of the *Daseng Sario* reflects the construction of territory, with the physical built space of the *Daseng* at the centre. The placement of the fishing boats in the surrounding open space of the *Daseng* marks the boundary. But the daily fishing preparations and the bustle of social activities are the main factors that strengthen and stabilize its spatial definition as fishing territory. Through these activities, the influence of the fishing territory expands beyond the physical boundary of the *Daseng*.

The role of the *Daseng Sario* in sheltering the fishermen's social activities transforms the space into something exceptional. Like common *dasengs*, the main function of the *Daseng Sario* is as a place to tie fishing boats, keep fishing equipment, and prepare for fishing activities. More particularly, the space of the *Daseng Sario* increasingly plays a significant role as a stage and theatre where interactions, social activities, and processes of community empowerment take place. Setting up group activities within the physical space of a disadvantaged community can enhance a sense of community emancipation, help fight the negative stigmas of being 'poor' and 'marginalized', and foster the community's confidence and empowerment (Madanipour 2010a). Every late afternoon, philanthropists and volunteers regularly conduct learning activities for children and teenagers in this space. External supporters and outside institutions also participate by giving regular training sessions and workshops on skills improvement, human rights, and law. Furthermore,

13 On-site interviews conducted by the authors with fifteen members of the Sario fishermen. Interviews were held in Manado, 5-7 May 2012. These acts of vandalism took place several times in 2012, and no one claimed responsibility. However, members of the Sario fishing group believed that the vandals were people from the developers' party.

Figure 11.4 The *Daseng Sario* with and without activities. Upper: the *Daseng Sario* when there was no activity. Below left: the *Daseng*-held negotiation among Komnas HAM, Sario fishermen, the local government, and the developer. Below right: daily educational activities for children at the *Daseng*



Source: Mamahit 2013 (above), Doaly for Mongabay Indonesia, 2013 (below left), Nugraha for Komunitas Pasir, 2012 (below right)

discussions and negotiations with other stakeholders of the BCP have begun to frequently take place in the *Daseng Sario*, helping to materialize and visualize the community's existence and pride (Figure 11.4).

The *Daseng Sario* has developed into a collective place of and for the Sario fishermen on the 'public' land designated for this community. It is a collective space that was self-created out of the feeling of being excluded from the BCP space. Community members move various activities and important events from the neighbourhood to this *Daseng*, including: a modest birthday party for the daughter of Noel, a 44-year-old fisherman; the weekly gathering of fishermen's wives; and the weekly activities of a local youth organization named *karang taruna*. These communal activities strengthen the collective memory of the community and construct a meaning of place attached to the *Daseng*. At the same time, the existence of this once-forgotten community becomes more visible to the public.

d. *Enlarging the Influence on the Public, Reaching beyond Territorial Boundaries*

A centre of urban activities generally becomes a centre of circulating networks and information, which places it as a centre of media attention (Padawangi 2013). As a new centre of Manado's urban activities, the BCP's frequent staging of the city's major events has led it to be the most popular place for local media coverage. The social inequality reflected in the setting of the *Daseng Sario* and its visible contrast with Mantos Mall and the rest of the BCP area creates an interesting frame for stories that especially attracts the local media. Previously, the public largely ignored the activities of these fishermen. After the *Daseng Sario* was built, however, the local media more frequently report the community's struggle. The media plays a significant role in spreading the movement and messages of social protests and disseminating the symbols and ideas that are cultivated and staged within urban spaces (Padawangi 2013). In this case, a 'megaphonic effect' (Padawangi 2013, 855) is created through the interactions between the built form of the *Daseng Sario*, its contained activities, the wider BCP environment, and the media coverage. The frequent coverage of the *Daseng Sario* and its activities facilitates public awareness. Prior to the existence of the *Daseng*, only one NGO had paid attention to the Sario fishermen; today, five NGOs consistently support their struggle.¹⁴ Some of the responses we received from supporters during our interviews are: 'We support the struggle of the Sario fishermen after reading the reports from *Tribun Manado*';¹⁵ 'I was touched to volunteer here after I read a story about these fishermen in *Berita Manado*';¹⁶ 'I knew about the story of the *Daseng Sario* and the fishermen from the website of ANTRA NGO'.¹⁷ Through these media and NGO networks, more parties have begun to give support and attention to the struggle of the fishing community, thereby enhancing and broadcasting their message.

14 Yessi Mekeng, member of the Sario fishermen community, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 1 May 2012, Manado.

15 Aditya Nugraha, counselling volunteer for the Sario fishermen community from Yayasan Kelola (one of the local environmental NGOs), interview by Cynthia Susilo, 21 April 2012, Manado.

16 Magdalena Pontoh, teaching volunteer in the *Daseng Sario*, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 26 May 2012, Manado.

17 Fernando Lomban, a local evangelist pastor, interview by Cynthia Susilo, 12 May 2012, Manado.

4 Contradicting Views on the BCP

The BCP also triggers several contrasting opinions among the citizens of Manado. While the marginalization of the Sario fishermen raises critiques about its existence, other people enthusiastically accept the new experiences it offers. This division cannot be simply categorized based on the dichotomies of upper and lower classes or rich and poor communities; much more complex and heterogeneous groups make up the contemporary urbanity of Manado.

Sixty out of 75 respondents¹⁸ from various social classes outside the Sario community expressed feelings of satisfaction with the BCP. For these respondents, the BCP's role went beyond that of a commercial place: it has become the popular destination for all kinds of social interaction. 'We like to have family lunch in Mantos Mall every Sunday after the church service', said Yurike, a 45-year-old housewife from another poor fishermen community, Tuminting, that is further away from the BCP. 'My family prefers to spend weekends relaxing in the Mega Mall rather than in the Pasar 45', said Abenedju, a 36-year-old porter in the Karombasan traditional market. 'I spend my free time during the school break at the Boulevard', said Jane, a 25-year-old university student. 'We now have a great public place for city events and public gatherings. Before the BCP, Manado did not have such place', said Tommy, a 50-year-old Department of Education officer. 'Before the BCP, outsiders were afraid to enter this area. These neighbourhoods were well known for their high criminality. Residents were unwelcoming to outsiders, and they closed this coastline off to them. After the BCP, everybody can enter this area freely, and the residents of these neighbourhoods have drastically changed to be very welcoming to outsiders', said Rizal, a 38-year-old taxi driver.

On the other hand, interviews with members of the Sario fishermen community captured the scepticism associated with the BCP, especially due to their marginalization from the newly transformed environment. For instance, a 55-year-old fisherman named Yudi said, 'We don't care whether other people like the BCP. We don't need that kind of space.' Another fisherman named Yeremia, aged 52 years, added, 'I strictly asked my wife and my children to never ever enter the BCP no matter how much they want to do it.' These expressions exemplify the unpleasant feelings surrounding the BCP from the viewpoint of this community.

¹⁸ Interviews were conducted with assistance from Merryana Korompis, Willy Lontoh and Valentino Kalalo from Sam Ratulangi University, Manado, from 1 April to 12 June 2012.

These contradictory perceptions about the BCP are evidence of the absence of a singular meaning of it. These differences mirror each group's needs for various models of space and place that can accommodate each expression of public interaction. These contradictory perceptions about the BCP also shows the limitation of collective space in facilitating space of expression in broader urban societies, as expressed by Rignolda Djamalludin:

The Boulevard perhaps attracts the majority of the Manadonese nowadays, to the extent that some consider it as the current 'everyone's place' of Manado. However, for us Sario fishermen, the BCP is obviously not our public space. This *Daseng Sario* is our real public space because here, we have the freedom to express our existence. Ironically, without the BCP, the *Daseng Sario* may have not existed as it is today. Perhaps it will be just a regular *daseng* later on. Perhaps we will not be tied to this *Daseng*. (interview by Cynthia Susilo, 30 May 2012, Manado)

5 Conclusion

The case of the BCP is a lesson on the significance of the contribution that a physically built form can make to an urban space. The spatial articulation of an urban-scale project can be the source of a force that can either create bridges between people or cause an urban space to fragment. A physical project can bring benefits or cause destruction to its existing environment, depending on the qualities of the project. A built space is not simply produced by societal processes; it is also a condition produced by the interaction between the material built environment, the existing environment, and the people who live with and within it.

The development trend that privileges profit-oriented commercial mega projects tends to have a negative impact on the existing urban context. Challenged by strong private and profit-oriented actors, local authorities often prioritize the realization of this type of project over others. As a result, ordinary citizens' rights to their city are increasingly taken away as the project proves the presence of 'development' in the city. The process of establishing such projects in Indonesian cities often marginalizes less powerful groups within urban space, and quickly and systematically generates social and economic exclusion.

The advent of the *Daseng Sario* reflects this state of affairs and expresses the complexity of Manado's contemporary urban transformation after the

construction of the BCP. The market-driven development exemplified by the BCP has led to competition over the urban spaces of Manado, influencing the nature and life of the neighbourhoods and the character of the city's urban (public) space. The lack of a comprehensive urban vision following the conception of the BCP has created new polarization and fragmentation, as shown by the fracture between the Wenang (ex-)fishermen and the Sario fishermen. In the micro-urbanism of Manado, the BCP has restructured its neighbouring urban space from homogeneous fishermen neighbourhoods into heterogeneous ones.

These changes have given rise to groups and individuals with different characteristics, interests, and responses to the BCP. Consequently, each group has different needs and asks for different settings of space to maintain each group's existence toward the BCP. For less powerful communities, the advent of mega commercial projects often causes substantial destruction to living and working resources. For this reason, marginalized groups find it harder to adapt to and reconcile with the new environment. The pressure of exclusion experienced by the marginalized group can produce an alternative worldview regarding their new living environment, which in turn produces an alternative space that is different from the mainstream one.

As exemplified by the case of the BCP, the built environment of the project can contribute to the production of different kinds of spaces for different groups. Since the materiality of built forms constitutes a capacity to establish boundaries, mark a physical territory, produce a contrast, and emphasize differences, the BCP actors—who recognize the capacity of built forms—have chosen to extend the physical territory of the BCP's built form to oppress the surrounding communities. As seen in the experience of the Sario fishermen, the BCP uses pressure, domination, and intimidation to exert control over this opposing marginalized group.

The marginalized group can, however, resist this condition by organizing themselves to generate alternative spaces to challenge the pressure of this developmental model. The community's employment of the *Daseng Sario* to express their struggle for rights also recognizes the capacity of built forms. The Sario fishermen, the community that feels excluded and out of sync within the new spaces of the BCP, has requested the right to produce their own civic community and collective space: the space where they can express themselves fully, such as seen in the *Daseng Sario*.

Protest needs a grounded medium as a platform. The physical space of built forms, their permanence and visibility, are employed by this fishing community to underscore their resistance. The *Daseng Sario* offers a

sophisticated strategy of social manifestation: the built form of the *Daseng* creates a new material symbol of identity, which is present, permanent, and real. Its capacity to shelter the activities of the community builds attachment between its members and the place. At the same time, its physical visibility makes it possible to establish an observable territorial boundary. As such, the visibility of the forgotten fishermen comes to the fore through the physicality of the *Daseng Sario* in the BCP area.

The *Daseng Sario* inserts a different spatial reality into the homogenized image of the BCP. Both the built forms of the BCP project and the *Daseng Sario* reflect the way in which built environments could mirror the tension and (counter)reaction among oppositional stakeholders in an urban space. While the groups of (ex-)fishermen from Wenang face the pressure of urban transformation by adapting to the new situation, the Sario fishermen have chosen the opposite response, challenging the BCP through the construction of their own symbolic and communal space. Both spontaneous and unplanned responses serve as mechanisms to create space for the survival of the group within the urban space. These opposing responses also reflect the complexity and multifaceted space of the BCP, demonstrating the nature of a city as an assemblage of differences. The *Daseng Sario* also challenges the capacity of the BCP area to accommodate differences and externalities.

The *Daseng Sario* is a story of the success of ordinary citizens in taking back an urban space from an abusive project. It does not show the real success of the project itself. On the contrary, it shows the many failures that a commercial megaproject can bring but have been redeemed by the adaptive capacity of the local people. The case of the *Daseng Sario* shows how a marginal group can find a way to defend their rights to an urban space. This group demonstrates their vitality to deal with the impacts of the advent of a commercial megaproject in their urban space. They have shown their productive capacity of moving independently beyond the narration of victimization and unjust development by (re)producing their own alternative spaces near the physical territory of the development project.

However, since the process of appropriation and localization is not an explicit battle but is carried out on the grassroots level, this process has not received consistent support from decision-making actors. The rights of the marginal remain unsecured in 'formal' decision-making process, and they continue to face the threat of exclusion from the project. To what extent this grassroots movement can maintain the victory of a marginalized community in its acts of protest remains uncertain. As Djamalludin said:

The *Daseng Sario* is just a symbol of our struggle. The spirit of this struggle itself resides in our hearts. Winning or losing our land is only a second priority. Raising the consciousness of our local government and the broader Manadonese society about our equal rights to this city and to its development is much more important. The city also belongs to the members of a weaker community like us. Constructing this *Daseng* is our interruption to their oblivion. Moreover, raising the consciousness of our members about our rights to this city is equally important. (interview by Cynthia Susilo, 30 May 2012, Manado)

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