Outside Interior: Traversed boundaries in a Jakarta urban neighbourhood

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an idea of the traversed boundaries of inside and outside, by examining various mechanisms of how the inside and the outside could traverse each other within the context of everyday life in an urban neighbourhood in Jakarta, Indonesia. It argues on the (in)significance of interior entities in defining the interiority of an urban context, especially in an urban setting where the cultural and climatic context encourages more outdoor events and activities. An inquiry into everyday life in an urban neighbourhood was performed in order to reveal various possibilities for mechanisms in which the inside and outside could be extended and exchanged. The making of interior is not merely defined by the presence of interior entities contained within the physical boundaries. Various mechanisms of traversing the inside and outside could further define the nature of the urban interior of everyday life, where the interior could become independent from its physical boundaries. These mechanisms suggest the possibility of alternative types of urban interior that might emerge due to the occupation of space (whether inside or outside) by the events that take place alongside the everyday habitual routines. The emergence of outside interior is made possible by the porosity of the boundaries, which allow for the exchange of atmospheric condition, the exchange of programs and actions, and the movement of objects across the boundaries of inside and outside.

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE BECOME OUTSIDE INTERIOR

Inside and outside are difficult to either differentiate or separate. A dialectic between inside and outside illustrates how inside and outside cannot be perceived and experienced as separated entities; instead 'outside and inside are both intimate – they are always ready to be reversed.'[1] Inside and outside are two entities that are complementary to one another. Inside and outside can also be considered merely as a matter of viewpoint, depending on the position from where one experiences and perceives; one can be outside of something while at the same time be inside something else,[2] therefore being inside and being outside can be interchangeable.

Considering inside and outside as complementary to one another requires further understanding of the nature of inside-outside interaction, as well as the nature of boundaries between inside and outside. Several characteristics have been suggested to illustrate the nature of such interaction: as interweaving relationship,[3] contiguous,[4] porous[5] and interpenetrating.[6] If such characteristics

could be found in the interaction between inside and outside, then the nature of the boundary between inside and outside becomes neither fixed nor limiting; rather inside and outside become entities that can be traversed.[7] This traversing between the inside and the outside is the main issue addressed in this paper.

The mechanism of how the inside and the outside could be traversed is determined by the nature of the boundaries between the inside and outside. By taking the human body as a metaphor of interior, interior entities could be considered as the organs contained within the body, while the physical boundaries enclosing the interior perform as the skin of the body. The skin becomes the boundary 'through which the potential to span outward from the interior may be realised.'[8] The nature of the skin as the boundary of the body is open to various forms of leakage,[9] allowing the inside to be extended or expanded outside. The boundary also plays a further role beyond the physical means of separation. The porosity of the boundaries suggests the possibility of the inside to be connected to the outside, while the boundaries play a role not merely as a physical means of separating but more as a means of control, to regulate the relationship between the inside and the outside.[10]

The possibility of traversing between the inside and the outside, as well as the porous characteristics of the boundaries, challenges the nature of the interior, which is no longer defined by the physical boundaries of architectural structure.[11] Interior is no longer associated with containment or the inside. The interior could be extended to the outside, and at the same time the outside space could have the characteristics of interior. The emergence of 'outside interior' could occur as a result of such traversing of the interior entities.

The understanding of inside and outside as complementary entities, as well as the nature of the inside-outside boundary, becomes complicated within the context of the urban environment where the scale of environment might vary from intimate urban enclosure to open public space. Various degrees of inside-ness and outside-ness appear in everyday urban spatial settings, occurring in various degrees of porosity or permeability of the boundaries between spatialities and various forms of traversing the boundaries.

This paper attempts to examine to what extent different forms of traversing of the boundaries may define our understanding of interior and urban. Such examination of urban interior is conducted within the context of the urban environment in Jakarta, Indonesia, where the climate conditions and cultural background of the society trigger the emergence of 'outside interior'. In particular we would like to question: How does the traversing between the inside and the outside occur in everyday living? If the inside and the outside could be easily shifted, then what is the significance (or insignificance) of interior entities in relation to the physical boundary? Could interior become independent of its boundary? And what kind of alternative types of urban interior could emerge from the traversing of inside-outside?

THE CONTEXT: 'OUTSIDE INTERIOR'

'Outside interior' refers to the phenomenon in which the traversing of the boundaries between inside and outside results in the emergence of outside space which possesses the characteristics of interior. The emergence of 'outside interior' in the urban neighbourhood in Jakarta is triggered largely by two factors: the climate and the culture. Being in the tropical climate zone, Jakarta has plenty of sunlight throughout the year, allowing people to perform various activities outside as a part of their everyday life. A distinctive characteristic of the tropical climate is humidity, which tends to define different atmospheric conditions of inside and outside from those experienced in a cold climate. The outside condition of the tropical climate, with a humid, warm and airy atmosphere could become a reverse of the inside that tends to be air-conditioned, enclosed and bounded. The humidity and warmth of the outside could present an alternative atmospheric condition that is more intimate and comfortable than the inside. Being outside could become an alternative to avoid the limitation created by the boundaries of the inside. Thus it is possible 'to be outside and experience interiority.'[12] In the everyday life of urban neighbourhoods in Jakarta, the outside becomes a significant setting of activities at all times.

In many situations, the emergence of 'outside interior' is also enhanced by spatial necessity. In the context of urban neighbourhood living, many people are forced to live inside very limited dwelling space. As part of their strategy to comply with the necessities of their everyday activities, the limited dwelling space has to be extended. This creates a form of 'leaking' of the activities that are normally performed inside to the outside. Hence the domestic boundaries of inside-outside are continually shifted due to various everyday necessities. The outside offers an alternative space to the tightness, darkness and staleness of the interior space and thus provides space that is more open, light and airy. These characteristics could represent the interiority of the outside space. Hence the emergence of 'outside interior' could be attributed to the liberating characteristics of the outside space in contrast to the limitation of the inside.

'Outside interior' also tends to emerge due to the collective culture that forms many urban communities, where the tendency for space sharing is evident. In such collective culture, certain individual spaces are shared by other people in the neighbourhood and transformed into public space. For example, during their spare time people often gather within the private territory of someone's house. This can trigger the emergence of blurring boundaries between public and private. Such blurring boundaries challenge the dichotomy of public-private and collective-individual in a modern city.[13] Very often the spaces of a modern city are differentiated based on the degree of publicness and privateness, which is usually corresponding to the degree of spatial openness and enclosure; the more open, the more public. However, in urban *kampung* in Jakarta, it is not always the case that the inside is associated with the private or limited to a certain group of people and the outside is associated with the public, or everybody. The public-private distinction becomes blurred due to the way people treat their individual space and collective space.

Within this environmental and cultural context, the shifting of inside-outside is intensely embedded in everyday living, and this changes the way we consider our understanding of interior in this particular urban context.

THE INSIDE-OUTSIDE IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF AN URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD

This study concerns the forms of traversing between the inside and outside as they occur in the everyday life of an urban neighbourhood. The analysis was performed based on the observation of spatial practices performed by the inhabitants of the Cikini urban *kampung* neighbourhood, located in the central part of Jakarta. This neighbourhood is characterised by vibrant everyday life, with a strong collective culture and social ties among the inhabitants. The sample narratives described in this study explore these spatial practices and the occurrence of permeability and contiguous relations between inside and outside spaces.

In understanding the urban interior of the Cikini urban *kampung* neighbourhood, particularly in examining the relationship between the inside and outside, we focus on events, exhibits or happenings[14] that together construct the interior, rather than defining the interior by physical containment. In examining how interior architectural boundaries become porous or permeable, our inquiry focuses on the traversing of inside/outside through which the events are constructed, rather than just the porosity or the permeable characteristics of the physical boundaries. In this way, the nature of the interior as events rather than as physical materials is foregrounded.

Our findings in the Cikini urban *kampung* neighbourhood indicate that there are two primary mechanisms in which the shifting of inside-outside occurs. The first is through the leaking or the extending of events from inside to outside and/or from outside to inside by the actions performed by the inhabitants. The second brings the interior entities to the outside. These two mechanisms

suggest the possibility of the traversing of inside-outside through the re-emergence of events, spatial elements and spatial features that were commonly restricted to the interior. These mechanisms can particularly reveal the possibilities of what is likely to happen between the inside and the outside, and how this could define an urban interior.

THE LEAKING OR EXTENDING OF EVENTS: INSIDE-OUT *OR* OUTSIDE-IN

The traversing of inside-outside occurs through the leaking or extending of events through physical boundaries of interior, either in a one-way direction (inside-out *or* outside-in) or a two-way direction (inside-out *and* outside-in). The directionality of the inside-outside traversing is defined by the performance of actions as well as the necessities that trigger such actions.

The inside-out direction of traversing is illustrated through the following narrative of a dance practice performed by a group of children as they prepare for the Independence Day celebration.

> *Han and Ela walked to Fari's house, which was located nearby. There were four girls in Fari's living room practising Bollywood dance. After about ten minutes, as more friends arrived, there were too many people inside this living room, so they decided to move to an empty lot nearby and brought a cellphone to play the music there. They practised about two sets of dance movements. They have memorised all the movements, so they were practising to synchronise their movements as a group. They took a rest after fifteen minutes and bought sweet cakes from a nearby stall.* (Field note, Cikini neighbourhood, 2014)

The narrative suggests the characteristic of inside space that became too crowded after the children were there for some time, thus triggering them to find the outside space as a more accommodating alternative for their activities. This form of traversing suggests the girls' intention to escape from the limits imposed by the interior boundaries or containment. Especially when the number of children increased, the interior space became insufficient to contain the activities. Meanwhile, the openness of the outside space offered a more preferable alternative as a more spacious setting for activities. Here the boundaries become porous or permeable. The traversing of the inside to the outside occurred through the shifting of events performed by the girls out of the necessity to find more sufficient space. This event suggests the extendibility of the inside events beyond their boundaries.

The opposite direction of traversing, outside-inside, is illustrated through an event that occurred at the weekend in one of the houses in the neighbourhood.

> *Every Saturday night Mr Sap's living room was usually full of neighbours, coming to his house for chatting and watching television together. After dusk the males and females from the nearby houses came there and stayed until 8 or 9 pm. Many children came in and out of the house, some of them came to look for the parents who were hanging out there, or sometimes they just called their parents from outside the house. A boy named Koko, a seventh grader, came into Mr Sap's house and after chatting for a while he went out to see his friends. Then Fabi, a sixth grader, came inside and talked with Mr Sap, and soon he also left the house. After a while Mrs Elli went in looking for Mrs Sap, but since she was not in the living room, Mrs Elli went out again. Fabi then went out of the house to catch up with his friends playing around. Next came Teri, a two year old, brought by Noni, Mr Sap's daughter. Teri often came to this house and performed her dance movements in front of the people there.* (Field note, Cikini neighbourhood, 2013)

This event illustrates the transformation of a living room owned by a family as their private space into a space for communal use by the neighbours. The transformation occurred with a mix of people coming in and out of the space and performing activities simultaneously. This event was a form of traversing from outside to inside that was triggered by the habitual routine of togetherness. The owner of the house opens up his living room and invites the neighbours to become a part of the inside
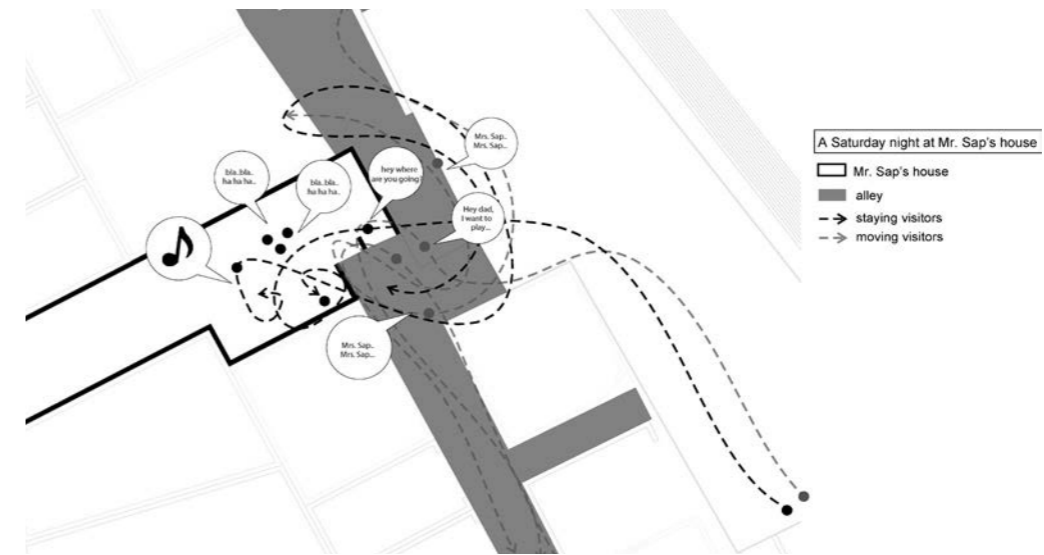
space of the family. This event traverses not only the physical boundary of the interior but also transforms the level of privacy of the living room as the interior space. It brings the public gathering that is normally performed outside into the intimacy of the inside of the private dwelling.

The two cases above illustrate the examples of one-way traversing, from inside to outside or from outside to inside, that might happen due to necessity as well as habit. The existence of inside space was redefined not as an independent entity but in relation to the outside space nearby. When the inside space has exhausted its capability to contain the events, the outside space provides the possibility for extension. On the other hand, the inside space can also provide the possibility to contain communal events from the outside, and in this way change the intimate character of the interior space. Both cases indicate the permeability of the boundary between the inside and outside that could be easily traversed by the movement of people and events.

THE LEAKING OR EXTENDING OF EVENTS: INSIDE-OUT *AND* OUTSIDE-IN

Another narrative, also occurring in the same house, illustrates the two-way direction of traversing of inside-outside. This event occurred when the owner of the house performed his duty of giving private extra lessons for the children around the neighbourhood as a weekly routine activity in the evening.

> *While waiting for the lesson to begin, the kids interact, chat and play with others around Mr Sap's house. Some of them gathered around Jay's stall to buy dinner. At 7 pm, when the lessons*

Above

Figure 2: The leaking of an event from outside to inside. Diagram: authors.

began, the children came into Mr Sap's living room to study there. Mr Sap set up his living room to have enough lighting for study and also provided a whiteboard. The children were divided in two groups according to their school levels. While Mr Sap taught the kids inside the house, Mrs Sap decided to get out of the house and hang out around Jay's stall with neighbours. This was what she usually did every time there was a lesson. Nova, her daughter, also joined her sitting outside. After a while, Mrs Sap's sister, who just came for a visit, joined them sitting there too. Then when her eldest daughter came back home from work, she also joined them. The younger children finished the lesson earlier, while the older children worked until around 8.20 pm. (Field note, Cikini neighbourhood, 2013)

This narrative illustrates how the exchange of inside and outside occurred. When the living room as the inside space was occupied by the children taking the extra lessons taught by the husband, the wife and the daughter decided to move to the outside space of the terrace. During the lessons, the living room performed as a social space that accommodated other people, yet forcing the other occupants of the house to move outside to gain more space for sitting and chatting.
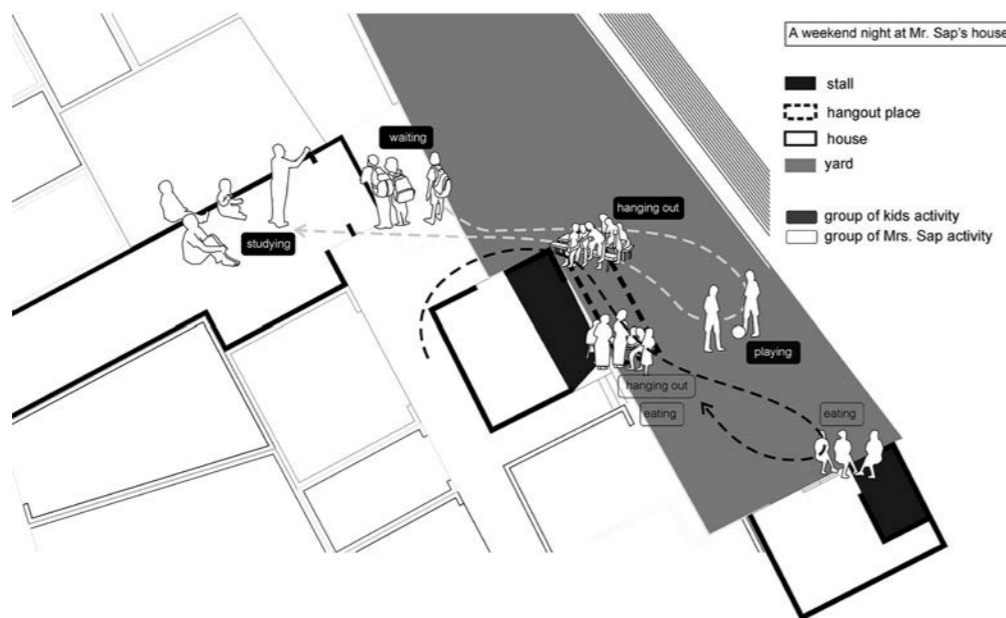

For the wife and the daughter, the outside space suggested the quality of warmth and enclosure of the interior space[15] that substituted for the living room that was now occupied by the children from the neighbourhood. This form of traversing happened through the exchange of movements: outside-in (the children entering the living room) and inside-out (the wife and the daughter moving out of the living room). They happened as two simultaneous events affecting each other. The form

of traversing became a form of negotiation between the inside and the outside. The negotiation occurred between the groups of people – those moving inside and those moving outside – in order to achieve different purposes.

A slightly different event is illustrated by a narrative that occurred in an outdoor area in front of a stall, where the mothers in the neighbourhood regularly come to hang out together.

Mrs Sap felt the day was very hot and decided to relax in the outdoor area in front of Mrs Nana's stall near her house. There was a long bench with a backrest there. When Mrs Sap arrived, there were already another mother and three kids sitting there. After a while, Mrs Nana, the owner of the stall, arrived. In the middle of their chat, Mrs Sap decided to get back to her house to bring some food for snacking together. Then several other mothers and children joined them, snacking together and chatting about everyday topics. Mrs Sap went back to her house again to get some raw dumplings, which were then fried in the stall and eaten together by everybody there. Suddenly, Mrs Nana's little daughter decided to take the cooking toy from inside the house and bring it outside to play with the other little children. After a while they got bored and climbed on the long bench. One of the children asked for the music to be played from the mobile phone and they danced together on the bench. The mothers watched them dancing, while laughing and singing together following the music. After dancing the children lay down on the bench, while still listening to the music. Some of the mothers bought drinks from the nearby stall. (Field note, Cikini neighbourhood, 2013)
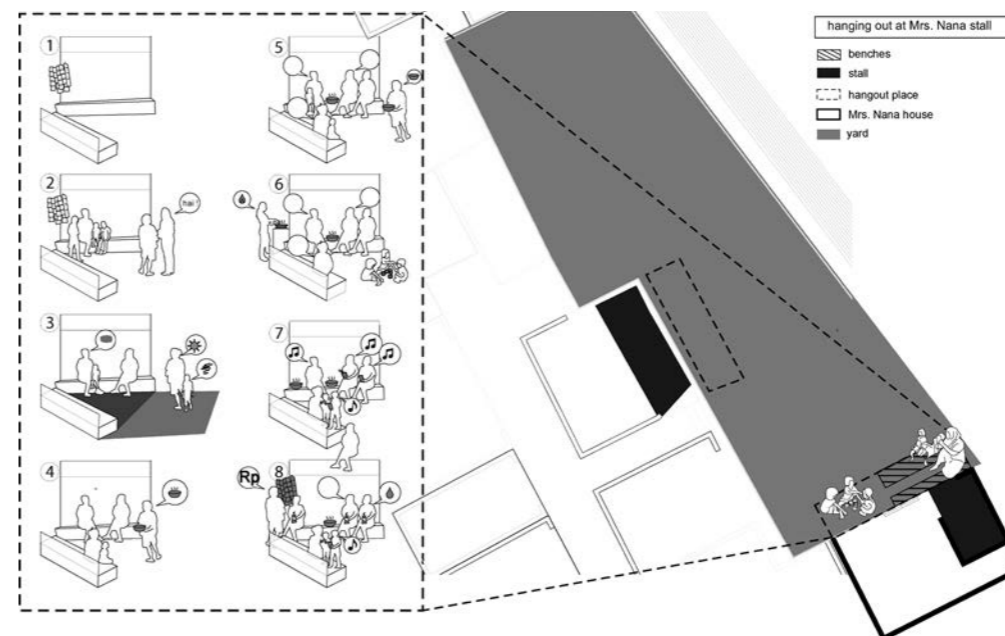
Opposite
Figure 3: The exchange of inside and outside. Diagram: authors.

Above
Figure 4: Extended space where the domestic and the communal merge. Diagram: authors.

In this event, the space outside the house becomes an extension of indoor space, which was used as a hangout area for the mothers and the children living nearby. The gathering was triggered by the necessity to get fresh air during a hot day. One of the mothers decided to bring the food from inside her house and initiated cooking and eating activities shared with the other mothers, extending further into other events. This space was where the inside and outside met. The domestic food-preparation activity merged with the occupation of space by the neighbours and together these activities enhanced the performativity of the event enjoyed by everybody. Compared to the previous event where the traversing took place as the exchange of inside and outside, in this event traversing occurred when the inside and the outside met and merged. The characteristics of the inside domestic activity were both enhancing and enhanced by the communal gathering of the neighbours.

In both narratives as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, the inside spaces of the house lost their characteristics as physical containment, due to the exchange and merging of events from the inside-out and from the outside-in. The traversing of inside and outside becomes manifested through the movement of events away from where they were usually contained. The physical boundaries of the spaces were traversed for comfort, activity and interaction purposes.

In both cases, the movement of events also seemed to be influenced by the position of the inside space in relation to the outside space. Both the living room in Figure 3 and the terrace in Figure 4 became the space of exchange, where the events from the space inside the house and the events from outside the house triggered or influenced one another. Again, just like the first two cases, the existence of the inside space could not be separated from the outside space that surrounds it (highlighted in grey in the figures). In the examples in Figures 3 and 4, the events of the inside and the events of the outside were interacting and exchanging.

TRAVERSING OF INTERIOR ENTITIES

The second mechanism occurs through the setting up of the interior entities in outside space, resulting in the emergence of an outside interior. Different from the first mechanism of leaking or extending of events inside-out, this mechanism is mainly characterised not by the necessity to escape from limitations but by the purposeful setting up of interior entities. Very often objects in our space are understood as belonging to a certain place and not another. There is 'the sense of the proper'[16] that decides that certain objects should normally be in inside or outside space. In the following cases, the interior entities that normally reside inside, including objects and furniture, are positioned outside as the events are generated.

The first narrative to illustrate this mechanism is taken from the regular activity of *gotong royong* (a cultural term meaning togetherness) in cleaning up the neighbourhood river environment.

On Sunday the young males and females gathered around the river to perform gotong royong. *During the occasion of* gotong royong *performed mainly by young males, the young females usually set up the tables with food and drink for refreshments after working, while the children gathered around to watch and play. The food and drink were prepared on a table located on the terrace of one of the houses near the river. After the cleaning was done, the males washed their hands and feet and began enjoying the food and drink. They had a rest and ate while talking and standing. (Field note in Cikini neighbourhood, 2013)*

The setting up of an interior in the form of a table with food and drinks on the outside terrace was considered in terms of the proximity to the cleaning work area. The traversing of interior entities was triggered by the immediacy between the cleaning work, that tended to be collective and public, and the food preparation that was mainly domestic. The emergence of outside interior was generated not due to the force from the inside but from another outside, proximate event.

Another example illustrating the emergence of outside interior is the event of *syukuran* (a kind of Thanksgiving Day) to celebrate Independence Day. This is an annual event involving everybody in the neighbourhood.

To celebrate Independence Day, the people held the syukuran (thanksgiving) after Isya prayer, at 8 pm. Syukuran was held on a street which connected the flower market and the motorcycle parking area. They blocked the street temporarily by putting a long bench on the street so they could use it for the event. They provided some mats on the ground for the people to sit. The event began with praying together. After the prayers finished, some women and men distributed cups of mineral water for all the people who attended. And there was also a lot of food served, like fried rice, fried noodles, yellow rice, bread, cakes, and even buckets of snacks for the little kids. The people sat in several small circles and ate together. This became an occasion for them to have a chat and to get to know their neighbours. (Field note, Cikini neighbourhood, 2014)

The emergence of 'outside interior' was created by the temporal occupation of the street with interior entities: mat for sitting, food and drink. The event became the occasion for gathering and eating together outside. The setting up of the long benches to block the street became the act of marking the new boundary of interior territory, within which the other entities were set up. The street became the potential outside space for occupation by interior entities.

The final narrative to illustrate the emergence of outside interior is the special occasion of a wedding reception, which (again) occupied certain parts of the street. Similar to the previous narrative, the interior was created by the setting up of a portable tent, chairs, tables, stage, sound system, food and drink; everything was complete to transform the street into a kind of reception hall.

The tent was erected along the street, from the front of the coffee stall to the teenagers' centre building. A stage was built at one end of the tent, and chairs were arranged on both sides of the area. The teenagers' centre building was transformed into the changing room for the bride. Food and drink was prepared on a long table. The wedding ceremony began at 11 am, when the bride and groom arrived and walked to the stage. Family members gathered around the stage, and other guests sat a bit further back. Males sat on one side, while females and children sat on the other side. There were fewer guests sitting in front of the teenagers' centre, since this space was not sheltered by the tent. After the formal ceremony, the guests moved to the food table to have dinner. The wedding party continued until later in the afternoon, accompanied by dangdut music.

The emergence of a new interior was marked by the setting up of the portable tent as an enclosure to the space. The tent as the new enclosure injects a new quality of space – from an outside, exposed street space into an enclosed, shaded space for the reception.[17] The street again performed as a potential outside space that could be transformed into the interior by the presence of interior entities. The presence of various objects marked the space as a setting for the wedding reception. It was no longer a street, but also a reception hall, thus the traversing of interior entities transformed the identity of the interior space.

The three narratives above illustrate the emergence of interior beyond 'the traditional notion of interiors as enclosed and separate from outside' which produces the understanding of interior as something hidden and private.[18] The interior emerges in the outside domain which is open and public, through the mechanism of traversing interior entities. This mechanism indicates the potential of interior entities for 'relocation or displacement'.[19] The interior entities might traverse the physical boundaries that normally divide the outside space and the inside space; and their presence outside creates a new interior. By setting up the entities in such a way as to conform to the emergence of events, it is possible to generate the quality of interior without a sense of containment.

THE POSSIBILITY OF ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF URBAN INTERIOR

The above mechanisms suggest the emergence of urban interior through the traversing of the interior events and entities. The presence of interior entities could be independent from the boundaries; however, their emergence beyond the physical

wedding reception at Cilosari street
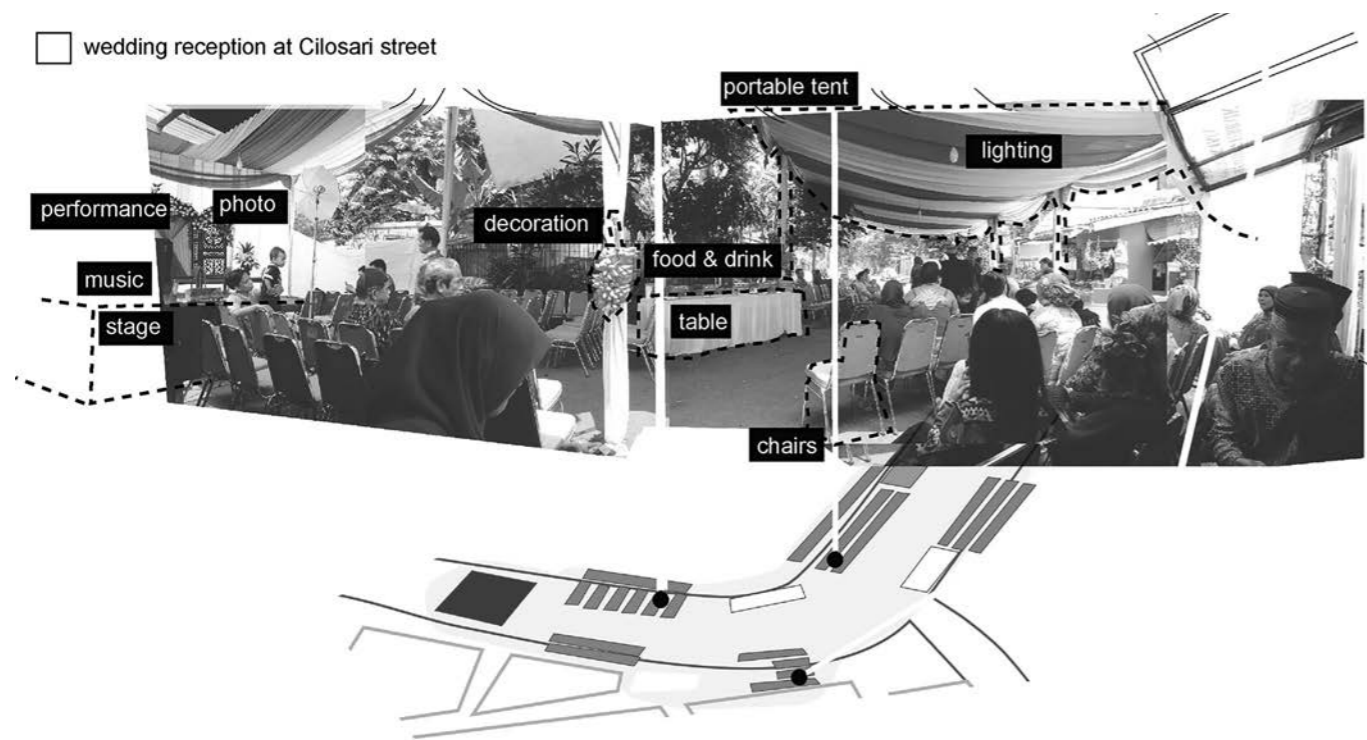
boundary could still define the interior. The narratives of outside interior in an urban *kampung* neighbourhood illustrate that the porosity of the boundaries between the inside and outside allows for several forms of traversing. It allows the exchange of atmospheric condition of inside and outside, both physically (such as temperature, humidity, sound and smell) and psychologically (such as the feeling of crowdedness and intimacy). It also allows the exchange or the shift of programs and actions. Finally, it allows for the movement of objects from where they normally belong. Such characteristic of porosity of the boundaries is what makes the outside interior possible.

The mechanisms of traversing between inside and outside as illustrated in the narratives and diagrams in this study indicate that some alternative types of urban interior could emerge. Several alternative types and characteristics of urban interior could be depicted from these narratives. First, the urban interior could be defined by the traversing of interior events and entities between the inside and outside. The traversing occurs both ways – inside-out and outside-in. The possibilities of the traversing result in the urban interior where the inside and the outside are continually shifted, affecting and defining one another.

Second, in the process of shifting inside-outside, it should also be understood that the shifting occurs due to the existing or emerging relationship between the inside and the outside. The existence of the inside space could not be separated from the outside space that surrounds it and vice versa. The traversing of inside and outside may result in the urban interior that incorporates different degrees of insidedness and outsidedness of space. In fact, the position of certain space inside or outside the physical boundaries becomes less important than its role as

the space where the exchange of interior events and entities occurs. In this way, the urban interior emerges as the exchange of inside and outside where the movement of events and entities occurs.

Third, the urban interior emerges due to the occupation of space (whether inside or outside) by the events that take place alongside the everyday habitual routines. Some of the triggers might be due to everyday necessity, such as the need to find certain quality of space: more sufficient, more appropriate or more comfortable. Other triggers might be more social; the needs of the people to have more interaction or social exchange with others, which in turn results in the exchange of space, including the exchange of inside and outside space. This characteristic is particularly relevant to the context of this study in an urban *kampung* neighbourhood in Jakarta, where the urban interior is defined by the context of the social culture and way of living as well as the climatic conditions of the tropical environment. The outside offers alternatives to some limitations of the inside, while the inside also offers more intimate exchange than the outside. The liberation of interior entities from their physical boundaries is essentially the search for better quality of space – in terms of social, cultural and physiological. The narratives in this study have illustrated that the emergence of urban interior cannot be separated from the social-cultural context of its occupation, as represented by the everyday habitual living of people continuously shifting between the inside and the outside.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NOTES

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Opposite
Figure 5: The emergence of interior by the setting up of interior entities outside.
Image: authors.

Inside Out: When objects inhabit the streets

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ABSTRACT

This essay will explore the contemporary intersection of art and interior design on the level of social practice, surveying two projects that deal with pubic participation from a critical art perspective and Jacques Rancière's 'art as dissensus'. These 'design activations' offer urban inhabitants a phenomenological exchange that occurs with shifts between art and design, interior and exterior, and the subjective and intersubjective awareness of the city. A manual sewing machine and manual typewriter offer a different representation and experience of the Tenderloin District in San Francisco, the Berlin Wall and San Francisco parks.

INTRODUCTION

Walking in the city often brings surprises that undermine the regulatory structures of urban environments (work, transport, consumption and entertainment). On any given day we might participate in a public art project by rearranging Ikea furniture; sit down in a parking space repurposed into a 'park' with tables, chairs and a cup of tea; watch a man mend clothes for the homeless; play a piano that has been placed for public use; or dictate a letter, to a typist using a manual typewriter. These kinds of spontaneous events are part of an increasing trend in urban cultures where cities are turned into laboratories for creative experimentation and civic action. Through subtle interventions, interactive performances and participatory artworks, many artists are reordering the use of urban public space, inviting the public to experience their urban habitat differently, and for philosopher Michel de Certeau, contribute to the stories, myths, dreams, experiences, and histories that connect people to a particular place.[1] These encounters create relationships and provide a connection to a city that is embodied through urban experiences, a revitalised collective imagining of urban life, inspiring a sense of awkwardness, unfamiliarity, conviviality, and even perhaps a sense of agency.

Inside Out considers how a participatory art project transforms into an urban activation – an object and experience that stimulates a site, socially, politically, or economically. I consider the agency imbued in these two objects – a manual sewing machine and a manual typewriter – as they pass from their domestic or work environments to unexpected sites in the urban environment. They cross the threshold between interior/exterior, entry/exit, and as such take on different significance. Their meaning as designed objects transforms in the urban landscape and becomes a mode of experiencing the city itself, a phenomenological encounter, and engenders agency in

the participating subject. This crossing might offer a change of behaviour, conduct, or experience. By following these two objects outside, we witness how their material trace reimagines what can happen or be felt in public spaces in San Francisco or Berlin. What ties my two examples together is the way in which often-obsolescent interior object(s) infiltrate the urban environment for a specific duration, and allow people to interact differently with these once-familiar objects that have been displaced into the urban landscape. These objects become a focal point around which social and political awareness and proximity increase, and as a consequence reposition individuals and newly formed publics.

The art discourse that includes 'social practice' and socially engaged artworks has gained visibility in public and institutional spaces. Over the past decade such urban interventions have proliferated, and many of them are outlined in the context of the city and globalisation in *Re-imagining the City: Art, globalisation and urban spaces* (2013) where the editors highlight diverse practices ranging from public art to the built environment.[2] Many public projects have now been absorbed into larger arts structures, most notably *Spontaneous Interventions*, first presented for the U.S. pavilion at the 13th (2012) Venice Architecture Biennale. It catalogues an ongoing phenomenon: the interventionist urbanism of architects, designers, artists and citizens responding to signifiicant events like the Global Financial Crisis. Examples of scale and ambition range, and include Fritz Haeg's *Edible Estates* (2005-2013) and Ghana Think Tank's *Developing the First World* (ongoing). The expanded field of public art has also been used in the urban development and marketing of cities for political-economic benefit, which counters its social and aesthetic values.

An interior design perspective acts as a confluence with other fields of enquiry and practice – sociology, urbanism and anthropology – and in this context, public art practice. This intersection of ideas cultivates social exchange and highlights the ways in which art, design and urbanism can contribute to 'increasing societal awareness, and motivating and enabling political action'.[3] The socio-cultural relationships engendered pivot around traditional design objects. Further, for design academic Mick Douglas, 'how a public art practice might animate and amplify these processes – and perhaps provoke a critical awareness of the role of the arts in the rhythms of uneven urban development.'[4] In this context I describe the design activation as a potentially transformative aesthetic experience, which I will argue offers an alternative to the purely instrumental functions of art.

I will describe each briefly in the context of its significance to public participatory art and interior design. It is the 'inside out' element of these projects that I find compelling and that speaks to the provocation of this journal issue on 'urban + interior'. I will first outline the frameworks in which I place these objects: curator and academic Suzie Attiwill's framework for urban interiors, and the theorists who have outlined how we conceive of our cities and subsequently resist the spatial constructions offered to us.[5] To consider the possible effects of these urban encounters, I use French philosopher Jacques Rancière's 'art as dissensus' and 'distribution of the sensible' as a framework for analysis.[6]

THE CITY AND URBAN INTERIORS

Philosopher Henri Lefebvre, de Certeau and The Situationist International are instrumental in considering the backdrop of cities to inform the transformative possibilities of interventionist activations. For example, the Situationists developed work that appealed to a collective and community model of creative practice, and which dissented from the dominant modes offered by consumer capitalism and the institutionalisation of art. 'Techniques such as the dérive and détournement were used to identify and construct situations from existing forms to produce momentary ambiances that were provisional and lived.' [7] This led artists to make work that existed beyond traditional artistic contexts so as to facilitate the infiltration into other aspects of life.

Lefebvre's influential works on cities offers another lens to consider the role of participatory art practices. In *The Production of Space* (1974) Lefebvre focuses on the processes of spatial production; the multiplicity of spaces that are socially produced and made productive through social practices.[8] He sees space as a complex social construction based on the social production of meanings, which affects how we live in and perceive the city. Lefebvre claims that the organisation of the urban time and space to fit the lived experience of its citizens and residents could become the focus for a renewal of direct democratic relationships in modern society. Lefebvre also described the 'right to the city' as an assertion of assembly, access and movement, but also as right to imagine the city as something different than a place sanctioned or controlled by the State, and 'the highly designed and managed environment. He states, 'Among these rights in the making features the *right to the city*, not to the ancient city, but to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places, etc.' [9]

Geographer David Harvey describes how Lefebvre's 'right' has seen a revival, which 'has everything to do with many people seeking some kind of response to a brutally neoliberalizing international capitalism that has been intensifying its assault on the qualities of daily life since the early 1990s.' [10] Along with Harvey, the contributors to *Cities for People, Not Profit* investigate Lefebvre's critical urban theory in the context of struggles for social justice.[11] The cry and demand that Harvey and others describe primarily comes from urban social movements and reflects a more overt activist approach to achieving this right. I would argue that the projects I describe function more subtly and much of that imagining remains the same: to respond to the impoverished condition of everyday life and to create an alternative urban life that has meaning and is playful. But, as Harvey describes, 'as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and dialectical, open to becoming, to encounters (both fearful and pleasurable), and to the perpetual pursuit of unknowable novelty.' [12]

While prescient in 1968 and 1974, Lefebvre could not have imagined the highly regulated, contained and surveilled cities of today; however, his call for the ability to imagine something different has been answered by many artists and designers. Theorists such as Alana Jelenik, Claire Bishop and Maria Lind contend that such interventions never actually dismantle institutionalised state power, and consequently, the conviviality of social art practices, how they merge with life, are embedded in the neoliberal structures that make them possible. While these critiques are well noted, it is my belief that the intersubjective encounters at the heart of these projects offer possibilities that are not quantifiable, their effects ultimately unknown, and that subtle activations are worthy of consideration.

The examples I have chosen link art, interior design (forms and materials) and urban spaces in ways not common to a traditional understanding of interior design. Many 'typical' interiors have moved outside, taking over space, and influencing the way we think about domestication, work and leisure. Practices and materials that are normally interiorised, when brought outside, create a sense of enclosure and proximity; people move closer to each other and these interiors or the materials displaced from interiors influence relationships and the spaces between people. Following Attiwill's provocation, the repurposed interior object 'invites other possibilities for thinking and designing interiors – and the practice of interior design – and brings the sensibility and techniques of interior design to the urban environment.' [13] In this context then, these design activations operate by introducing heterogeneous material objects and artefacts into the urban field of perception in order to draw attention to specific issues such as participatory democracy, and provide a neighborhood meeting place, ultimately to occupy space differently. Attiwill describes how 'temporal occupations' can be offered as 'a way of inviting different modes of occupying space than through built form; temporal occupations produce and work the urban fabric in different ways.' [14]

For designers considering their role and relationship to public or social practices, interior elements can be displaced to the street in order to revitalise the public's relationship to them, whether through nostalgia, necessity, or to produce a convivial space. I hope by contextualising these as interior design activations in urban spaces – the street, a square, an alley, a park and so on – to raise awareness and reimagine these as a part of 'distributing of urban space and time and constructing alternative ways for individuals to participate and take part in a "common" public environment.' [15]

SIT, TAP, SEW: ACTIVATING THE OBJECT

In 2004, in a project called *I Wish to Say*, then-resident of the San Francisco Bay Area artist Sheryl Oring decided to bring an 'office' outside to the streets. On a simple desk she placed a manual typewriter, clips and rubber stamps to mark cards as 'urgent' or 'incomplete'. Dressed as a 1950s-era secretary and armed with clerical skills, Oring sat in public spaces around San Francisco – a park and a flea market, for example – where she'd be able to draw the attention of people walking around. When they approached, perhaps curious about her and the typewriter, she offered to type a letter to the President of the United States, as a way of allowing the public to have a say about the state of the nation. Corey Dzenko, who performed as secretary alongside Oring for one of her *I Wish to Say* iterations, describes why the public interacted: 'There is a comfort in familiarity. Our beehives and flipped hairdos and outdated typewriters enticed older participants who remembered when they used this type of machine or wore garments similar to ours. Our appearances

and secretarial duties often reminded younger generations of their mothers or other female relatives. And, after some coaxing from adults, many of the child-participants approached us because they had never seen a typewriter before.' [16] Many people took up her offer and dictated their wishes to her, and these letters were then displayed in gallery and museum contexts: a catalogue of words and voices; a historical archive of American public opinion.

Oring reworked this project for the city of Berlin, Germany. With *Maueramt* (2014) she set up a desk, chair and typewriter along the former East-West border. *Mauer* translates as 'wall,' *amt* refers to 'office', 'agency', 'bureau' and 'department'. She sat in locations along the former Wall. Behind her foldout desk was a mid-century roll-top cabinet. In it she stored signs, paper and other office supplies, which gave the street installation a direct simulation of an office environment. Oring's persona as a 1950s secretary doubled this effect. She asked questions such as: 'What do you think about when you think about the Berlin Wall?' or 'What would you like the world to remember about the Berlin Wall?'. Similar to *I Wish to Say*, she typed the answers on a manual typewriter. These were then recontextualised into an art exhibit at the Museum of the Kennedys.

Maueramt offered a context for Berliners to have their say about the Wall. The typing became a direct channel to history and contemporary issues on the streets of Berlin. What is interesting is that it not only taps into the historical memory of Berliners, and the difficulty of navigating such painful terrain, but also how such a project can subvert the political economy of the Berlin Wall. In his chapter *Art and Culture: the Global Turn*, cultural theorist Malcolm Miles describes how pieces of the Wall are now objects of consumer culture that have been sold at auction and placed adjacent to institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art.[17]

Using tools of journalism, in this context the 'focal point of the typewriter, Oring's work examines critical social issues through projects that incorporate old and new media. She tells stories, examines public opinion and fosters open exchange with those that encounter her work. The typewriter, aside from being functional, acts as a visual reminder of a time passed, a once-ubiquitous office object, now all but vanished from our sites. As we know, technology has displaced the humble typewriter, but not all it signifies, or symbolised in Oring's work. The typewriter became an 'urban' icebreaker; people were curious about her intentions. It invited conversation, let them open up and voice issues of concern. The act could arguably be nostalgic, and remind people of a time when democracy worked (if it ever did), when there were more perceived 'safe' spaces in which to express opinions. During her exchange she focused her attention, did not multitask, but simply listened and typed. For those who engaged in *Maueramt*, it encouraged Berliners to be self-determined in their memory of the Wall.

Oring's work functions in many ways: it invites a space for exchange for the passerby, it gives voice, it reveals a past, and imagines a slower world not lost to the dictates of fast-paced urban life. It may alter a sense that one has no voice by turning that feeling into one of agency, engendering new

conditions for urban experiences. Oring's typewriter in the context of public spaces also initiates what architect and activist Leslie Weisman sees as reclaiming a feminist domestic sphere in public space.[18] Oring's performance presence, as a female office worker spilled into the street, helps to reclaim this visibility of office and domestic labour, and to highlight how much office work remains gendered. The performance, interaction and then installation shows Oring's ability to exploit the stereotypes of office workers through the use of costume and props, specifically the typewriter, and to conflate a time period's iconography with contemporary social issues.

I Wish to Say and *Maueramt* present a 'trace' of a tenuous issue for its target public.[19] The artefacts presented, perhaps more so than the typewriter itself, represent a design trace in this context. By exchanging stories and then dictating them to a woman dressed as a 1950s office worker, there is inherent power, much like the traditional relationship between the boss/secretary that curator and educator Ellen Lupton outlines: the advent of typewriters and their associated histories of typing pools in office environments signifying uneven gender relations and the feminisation of industrial objects.[20] The trace of the Wall is formed through the stories and the letters, and then repositioned in an art context. Oring's positioning is twofold. On one hand, she reinforces the power dynamic of boss/secretary in these contexts. When people are dictating to her, she is dutiful, she doesn't interpret, but transcribes, reproducing this power dynamic as a performance. However, seen in an art context, I believe this becomes an ironic subversion since the outcomes indicate her power through her visibility on the street, her use of the typewriter, and ultimately of representing the dictated letters. This proposes new subjects and publics; pivoting around an experience and exchange with a typewriter, allowing new forms of perception for those willing to participate. This method of tracing helps to reveal and expose some of the underlying structures of gendered labor, post-Berlin Wall, and the erosion of democracy, by addressing memory and capital at one and the same time.

It is not very often that people sew in public – perhaps on the streets of Delhi or Shanghai, but rarely are tailors exposed in public view in developed countries. Clothes are made in factories elsewhere, holes are mended in tailor shops or dry cleaners, and sewing rooms are fast disappearing from domestic interiors. Artist Michael Swaine's public art project started out as *Reap What you Sew* (2004), although it now goes by *The Free Mending Library*. Swaine repurposed an ice cream cart, mounted it with a treadle-operated sewing machine and placed it near Cohen Alley in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco on the 15th of each month from 12-6pm. Swaine mends holes, darns socks and shares stories with those who come to visit him. He had pushed this cart around other areas of the city as part of a 'social sculpture' – a way of fabricating experiences instead of objects – but found that the folks in the Tenderloin district engaged more, so he stayed there.

In a world where everything is thrown away, many people want to keep things and mend or fix them instead. Swaine and many residents of this neighborhood resist being a part of the throwaway culture, and instead give things a second life. Over the years he has changed his work to be more of a mending library by setting up several sewing machines so neighborhood residents could learn to sew and mend their own clothes. Swaine's aesthetic and public practice not only challenges the conditions of urban experience, but pivots around an outdated and displaced sewing machine. And for him, in an underserved community in San Francisco this enables a means of expression, conviviality and service to an overlooked social group.

This poorest of San Francisco's neighbourhoods rests uneasily between the wealth of Nob Hill and the commercial zone of Union Square; stigmatised as a ghetto, it is underserved in the areas most needed – social services – with its funding cut during Reagan's tenure as Governor of California. The Tenderloin hosts the largest percentage of immigrant families in the city, many of whom fled the violence of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the 1970s, and many of whom remain marginalised because of race, sexuality and gender. This neighbourhood fought off developers who targeted the area for redevelopment in the 1980s (after

the city had 'transformed' the Western Addition and South of Market areas).

Close to popular Union Square, though dirty and unappealing to tourists, the Tenderloin district remains vulnerable to city policy shifts and funding cuts. It has been ignored and neglected: 'It's a neighbourhood without the institutions and sense of cohesion that allow a community to define itself.'[21] All possible lived experiences are flattened out in the service of a singular representation that continues to re-inscribe power over residents. Writers Rob Waters and Wade Hudson explain how this neighbourhood, with the help of residents as well as 'external' activists, now has a stronger sense of community. Swaine's ongoing project is just one way this continues. For sociologist Fran Tonkiss, this type of engagement in urban space 'provides sites for political action and are themselves politicized in contests over access, control and representation.'[22] Swaine draws attention to difference and intervenes with these prescribed visual codes by giving a very misrepresented or underserved community visibility through an artist's project – a voice made audible through his social practice of sewing on the sidewalks.

Swaine wanted to meet people and exchange life stories. Over the years this is what has happened, with a community growing around his event. Swaine considers the project a 'collaboration between himself and those whose clothes he patches, mends, hems and darns – an opportunity to create social interaction where there would otherwise be none.'[23] He found that despite the sewing machine's unlikely presence on the street, it was familiar to most people, and the chairs he put out also encouraged them to stop and stay for a chat, have a cup of chai from a nearby Indian restaurant or a sandwich prepared by one of the local residents. The extended duration of the project has allowed people to engage at their own pace, and as a consequence he has built up trust with the local community. In his words:

> There have been amazing moments because of the chairs and the sewing machine, which stops people, and the chairs invite them to stay. People with different life experiences sit down next to each other. It is rare for

[an] art patron or banker [who have often heard of Swaine's project] to actually sit next to someone who is down and out. Both are waiting for a service; two lines of people that don't meet. The service and the practicality of sewing add a point of cultural interest.[24]

The sidewalk where Swaine keeps his machine cultivates a social ritual for the residents of the Tenderloin which revolves around the machine and influences the tenor of the streets, offering a challenge to the media representation of this district. The coming together becomes a physical and psychological act performed at the same time and place each month, giving way to a sense of ownership and belonging of the space he creates and the provisional public that forms.

Above
Figure 4: Michael Swaine, The Free Mending Library, *2004-ongoing.*
Photograph: Daniel Gorrell.

Both Oring and Swaine take familiar but obsolescent items from the domestic and work spheres into different contexts with similar effects. These two projects contribute to an urban fabric that offers texture to the built environment and reorders the spatial exchange for participants. The artists wished to provide an opportunity for some kind of creative activity with the aim of promoting critical questions about urban life, but found instead people's willingness to form instant communities to work together on a shared goal and an interesting option for the expression of self-empowered human agency.

These projects I describe facilitate improvised and spontaneous public participation and provide a means by which people might interact with urban structures and other people in new and interesting ways. They also engender a localised spectacle and enlist an actively participating local public that 'makes' the art rather than serving as a passive consumer of product offered by the corporate entertainment industries. The artists reconfigure the social encounters in the city as Lefebvre might have imagined. I am not suggesting that a sewing machine or a typewriter can usher in democracy in communities with such uneven social and economic relations as the Tenderloin district in San Francisco, but it holds possibilities of social cohesion and the rituals of sidewalk culture. Much of the evidence of these projects' efficacy remains anecdotal, but looking at video documentation of each shows a willing and often emotional public, the quality of exchange, and an interest in the objects. As such, these operate in a manner that Douglas describes: 'There is an aesthetic practice in operation here, activating modes of enlivened inhabitation that de-territorialise the tendencies of accumulating essentialist local identity and authority of place.'[25]

Oring's and Swaine's work resists typical definitions of public art and subsequently typical notions of social and political engagement. These practices are collective in nature; that is, the context and outcomes are produced together with audiences or publics. The threshold between the interior and exterior world works through a phenomenological exchange: the experience does not transport the public away from the stuff of the world but reworks the stuff of the world – artefacts from interiors – albeit with different items. These objects then produce new combinations, new ways of bringing a memory of an older world 'into' the self, a new kind of subjectivity in relation to contemporary issues. These frameworks help elucidate how public space, democracy and participation interface with objects to advance an understanding of their potential as design interventions.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Displaced interior objects and structures attract and foster the creative instincts of urban populations by offering them an extraordinary/out of the ordinary experience. These urban activations bring to life interactive and creative modes of civic engagement, an encounter with objects (facilitated through performing subjects) set against the backdrop of the workings of city life. These projects use conceptual frameworks that take interior elements to the streets, creating performative displays that support and help expand the cultures of local communities in urban life.

These temporary occupations of space, conscious of objects and people and the relations they engender, 'situates us in an enunciative and performative relationship to the world (and to art), where meanings *take place*, in what the theorist and curator Irit Rogoff calls "the where of now", by making a form of location through inhabiting temporal duration.'[26] The interactions with the artists and their objects can help shape our perceptions and encourage psychological self-determination at a time when many people feel powerless in the face of the growing political injustice enacted upon individuals and communities globally.

Invoking philosopher Jacques Rancière helps to broaden the scope to reception; an approach that might provide a productive reordering of how we engage in these types of activations and their reception in urban contexts. Rancière outlines the 'distribution of the sensible' as how we perceive, and that which regulates that perception of our social roles and the subsequent affective response. Rancière expands upon philosopher Immanuel Kant's aesthetics, taking up the irresolvable relationship between the mind and the senses. The aesthetic requires a suspension of the rules that govern the ways people move through the world, 'a redistribution of the relations between the forms of sensory experience.'[27] The social in art cannot be separated from aesthetics, or from subjective experience. These categories bleed into one another every time any artwork reaches a public. This is further exacerbated by the displaced interior object, adding a layer of dissonance, another opportunity for a new intersubjective experience with an artist and their object in an urban context, producing a 'disruptive aesthetic'. Contextualised as a design activation through displaced interior artefacts, 'art as dissensus' then breaches 'the boundaries between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical.'[28] The dissonance or uncertainty acts on people's senses, perception, and subsequently their emotions and interpretations of their urban experience. They disrupt existing paradigms of shared meaning (the distribution of the sensible) and values, and then propose new ones. It is this aesthetic dimension, the intended effect of the designed artifacts, and their insertion into cultural processes that can contribute to a reimagining of urban life.

Such work may provide a sense of community between artists and an opportunity for collective meaning-making, yet these 'experiences' have potential to become another commodity or form of entertainment in the spectacular global city. We can critique the artists or sanctioning institutions when such engagements become superficial, unethical, or do not ameliorate the deeper alienation and disengagement from the social and political aspects of the urban and public sphere.[29] This is a complex and contradictory issue, and I do not believe that the design activations discussed in this essay operate superficially nor do they make claims for deeper structural changes.

Indeed their potential may rest in the symbolic realm, and can still have an affective response. The political potential of urban activation projects such as these remains in their capacity to engage the general public and to generate broader political and social transformations. Here, the

activations create disruptive aesthetics and opportunities that elude the regimentation of life and work promulgated by surveillance, containment, corporate capital and its instrumentalisation of human creativity. The works discussed demonstrate that urban space can have a multitude of functions and is indeed far more flexible and fluid than often conceived; and more, that it is a living and creative space that expands the possibilities of experience through the participatory practices of provisional publics.[30] Rancière describes this as 'establishing an element of interdeterminacy in the relationship between artistic production and political subjectivity.' [31]

This understanding of urban activations is represented by connections that are established with audiences and communities to promote a greater self-awareness about the role individuals can play in urban life. In this context the opportunity to explore new perceptions and conceptions can empower people in the belief that the city offers experiences that reach far beyond utilitarian dictates, and that there is the possibility of multiple creative modes of engagement in an urban sphere. In addition, these 'interventions' and 'disruptive aesthetics' in daily life might reflect a challenge to the 'distribution of the sensible' because the encounters with interior objects are unfamiliar, disorienting and unregulated. Ultimately, they aim to disrupt our sense of the contemporary world, our understanding of what can happen in public space, who and what can be highlighted in that space, and what can be said in that space. These types of activations — participatory and urban — forge the way towards these new cultural forms in a world that needs innovative ways to encourage people and communities to challenge the inequities presented to them, and experience something different.

What I hope emerges are urban activations, interior objects or otherwise, which contribute to a larger discourse of what the materials of interior design can do in public space. It may be difficult to measure the 'success' of these projects, or the social outcomes, if any, that they offer — it may be better to think in terms of the questions they raise regarding the ability to challenge the 'distribution of the sensible' and subsequently reimagine an urban life based on these encounters.

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