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Urban Inter-Referencing Within and Beyond a Decentralized Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen a burgeoning of critical trans-disciplinary research on urban policy mobilities or travels. In contrast, to a large body of work within political science and international relations, this new generation of 'critical policy studies' is more concerned with the *politics* of policy mobilities, the power relations and ideological alignments in which they are embedded, and the manner in which policies mutate in the processes through which they are mobilised. However, much of this current interest in urban policy mobilities found, for example, in the geography literature remains narrow in its purview. It has concentrated to large extent on elaborating instances of the neoliberalisation of urban policy and retains a geographical focus that remains almost exclusively trans-Atlantic. In this paper we wish to break the bounds of this existing focus in much of the literature to explore the potential for the mobility of apparently progressive urban policies within the global south. Here we take up the challenge of trying to understand the 'worldliness' of the many ordinary cities beyond a rostrum of world cities defined in terms stocks and flows of financial and producer service activity ostensibly in the global north (Robinson, 2006), and, specifically, the increasing inter-referencing among cities of the global south with regard to all matters urban (Ong, 2011; Roy, 2009, 2011). While there is little doubt regarding the vigor of contemporary neoliberal urban policy exchange among national and local governments across the Atlantic, it is worth remembering that, in contrast to the present day, the historic high-point of Atlantic-centred policy exchange in the late 1880s to early 1900s was distinctly progressive (Rodgers, 2000, Saunier, 2001, 2002). It is in regard of this *history*, not the contemporary period of neoliberal policy exchange, that the Atlantic-focused literature may be an important analytical foil to questions of urban policy exchange in the global south today

As much as 70% of the world's cities participate in some form of transnational municipal networking (UCLG, 2010 cited in Bontenbal and van Lindert, 2011: 447) and the enormous appetite for policy exchange implied in such a figure is in no small measure a product of a deficit of local government capacity and trends towards governmental decentralization that are quite widespread across countries of the global south. Indonesia is a prime case in point. In this paper we consider the available evidence regarding the inter-referencing of urban policy across this vast archipelago of a nation state which has been undergoing perhaps the world's largest experiment in governmental decentralization. The diplomacy of national governments, the aid of donor agencies and technical assistance of NGOs have long represented important *external* influences on national and local policy making in Indonesia. However, the country has also been the subject of an unusual intensity of *local* policy development, experimentation and copying as a result of far-reaching decentralization of powers and competencies following radical legislation in 1999 onwards after the fall of the highly centralized Suharto regime. Indonesia presents a large and diverse 'laboratory' or internal 'market' for experimentation in terms of urban policy formulation and exchange among an increasing number of local governments. In the next section of the paper we situate an understanding of questions of policy exchange in Indonesia in their broader context of the potential distinctiveness of policy exchange in across the global south and the Asia-Pacific region more particularly. In the subsequent section we discuss some of the formidable methodological challenges to adequate scholarly analysis of policy mobility and some of the limits of the evidence we have been able to gather on policy development and exchange in Indonesia. We then pass on to the empirical sections of the paper where we look for evidence of instances of distinctive local urban policy development and their travels *within* Indonesia. Here we draw in particular upon a single prominent case study of policy development and exchange centred on the city of Solo. The Solo case also allows us to capture just a

glimpse of the wider projection of urban policies *beyond* Indonesia, though here our concluding thoughts necessarily turn toward the speculative.

A WORLD OF URBAN POLICY MOBILITY AND INTER-REFERENCING: BEYOND NEOLIBERAL AND ATLANTIC BOUNDS

Over little more than a decade the academic interest in urban policy mobilities or travels has soared. The diverse strands of this critical trans-disciplinary work share a common orientation in that they move beyond the longstanding literature on policy transfer and learning (Peck and Theodore, 2010). The narrowest of such work, particularly in political science, has largely been founded upon presumptions of rational choice among policy 'consumer-emulators' and assumes that 'good policies drive out bad'. Broader interpretations from an international relations perspective highlight a number of different mechanisms – modelling, reciprocity, coercion, learning etc. – through which policy and regulatory activity becomes internationalized (Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000) and in the process of which regulatory norms and principles are re-shaped to local circumstances (Acharya, 2004). For its part, the new generation of 'critical policy studies' is attentive to the *politics* of policy mobilities. Nevertheless, this literature remains perhaps rather narrowly focused upon neoliberal policy reforms and upon an Atlantic axis of policy exchange. Here we argue for a broader view of urban policy mobility and inter-referencing .

Urban Policy Mobility and Inter-Referencing: The Limits of Current Preoccupations

A new generation of 'critical policy studies' much of it within the geography discipline has blossomed in the last decade becoming more attentive to the *politics* of policy mobilities. The chief concerns within this literature include, inter-alia: the power relations and ideological alignments in which policies are embedded; the manner in which the mobility of policy is embodied in and associated with a parallel mobility of key individuals and strata of workforces (Larner and Laurie, 2010); the speed of 'fast' policy transfer (Peck and Tickell, 2002) and its connection to new mediums of ICT-based communication, dissemination, monitoring and global 'scanning' (Temenos and McCann, 2012); the near continuous mutation of policies that are never simply exported wholesale (e.g. Gonzalez, 2010; Peck, 2011). Perhaps as a result of some of these complexities a distinct emphasis found across these strands in the literature has been upon the formidable methodological difficulties of adequately tracing policies in motion (Peck and Theodore, 2010) to which we return to later when describing the methods used in this research.

Yet the vast majority of this research has been focused ostensibly on the hegemony of neoliberal policy imaginaries and on Atlantic-centred patterns of policy exchange. The former emphasis seems appropriate given the hegemony of neoliberal policy reforms taking place internationally for the past several decades. In this respect this new work also informs studies that pertain to the global south, including Indonesia where the landscape of decentralized governance reflects wider national and international trends towards the neoliberalization of policy impinging upon the urban. In Indonesia, for example, the conjunction in less than a decade of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, post-Suharto political crisis and a 'big bang' of decentralization from 1999 and the reconstruction of Aceh after the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 and a Peace Accord signed shortly after (Miller, 2009; Miller, 2012) offered an extended moment for a weight of external, ostensibly neoliberal, policy influences from international organizations (such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), donor organizations (such as USAID and AUSAID) and NGOs to bear down on the Indonesian polity.

At the same time, however, it is important not to reduce policy networks to an all-encompassing 'late-neoliberalism'. What appear ostensibly as neoliberal policy outcomes may in fact be the product of a diversity of policy-making processes and influences (Robinson and Parnell, 2011). In their work on Toronto and Mexico City, Mahon and MacDonald (2010: 215) have argued that these cities 'are becoming important sites for experimentation not only with neoliberal solutions but also the development of alternative anti-poverty projects that challenge the dominant paradigm'. In general, the Pacific Asia region is one where neoliberalism continues to be something of the policy exception rather than the rule when set against state developmentalism (Ong, 2006). The Indonesian case with which we are concerned in this paper is also one where policy reform is also infused with imaginaries that, to an extent, exceed those of neoliberalism (Phelps, Bunnell and Miller, 2011) and in some instances can appear as distinctly local and progressive in character.

Though authors have at times sought to move beyond a preoccupation with the Atlantic connections (e.g. McCann and Ward, 2010), this geographical focus is more problematic. It seems overly narrow and even a little irrelevant in light not only of the geography of contemporary urbanization in which cities of the global south are participating as leading centres of activity and innovation with regard to the construction of the built environment and also, by association, represent an the immense new 'market' for policy formulation and dissemination. There is a case for suggesting that neoliberal policy exchange across the Atlantic (and study of it) will be of marginal relevance to understanding let alone serving the enormous appetite that exists for *progressive* policy fomentation and exchange across the global south. In contrast, the appetite for neoliberal policy reforms among the Atlantic economies has been born out of protracted economic crisis since the 1970s, where

> 'Crises lead to a frantic rummaging through the existing stock of policy notions ... it is this rapid movement of ready made ideas into the political center that warps the normal threads of time ... The policy ideas pressed into service ... are, as often as not, old, formulated in other circumstances to meet other conditions. *They are an eruption of the past into the present*' (Rodgers, 1998: 414 emphasis added).

That is, they are precisely *not* the sorts of urban policy that would emerge out of any genuine shared sense of purpose regarding the *future* that would be needed in a new era of progressive policy reforms in the global south or regions comprising it.

Beyond Neoliberal, Atlantic-centred Analysis

The present Atlantic neoliberal focus in the bulk of extant studies of policy mobility sits rather uncomfortably with a parallel strand of writing on the worldliness of cities of the global south. Instead, insights from the earlier progressive era of Atlantic policy exchange may be more relevant in helping to reflect upon patterns and processes of policy exchange in the global south.

To begin with, then, we can suggest that the observation that 'the existing bias in urban studies towards western cities and the relegation of cities in poor countries to residual categories ... Makes the irrelevance of urban theory a real possibility in light of global trends of urbanisation' (Robinson, 2006: 2) is likely to apply specifically to the field of urban policy mobility and inter-referencing. Though the difficulties of speaking of the origins of policies (Robinson, 2011) have been acknowledged, the argument here is that cities of the global south with their very different populations, income distributions, urban conditions, and even climates and natural environments are as much the origins of new urban policies as a limited number of world cities defined on the basis of the presence of financial and producer service industries. Thus 'instead of seeing only some cities as the originators of urbanism, in a world of ordinary cities, ways of being urban and ways of

making new kinds of urban futures are diverse and are the product of the inventiveness of people in cities everywhere.' (Robinson, 2006: 1).

On the one hand, it might be argued that many of the same specific concerns of waste and water management, municipal finance, health and the like, were precisely those around which the Atlantic 'golden age' of progressive urban policy exchange centred. In which case the question that emerges is what exactly might be new or different regarding the manner in which some of these and other challenges are being tackled across cities in the global south? Here it is important to recognise that the emerging worldliness of cities of the global south, just like those of the Atlantic a century or more earlier, is unlikely to exceed a universe of existing policy solutions (in this case ostensibly from the west) since it will fuse interlocking pasts, presents and futures (Roy, 2011).

On the other hand, scholars have begun to sketch out some of the distinctiveness not only of the urban policy challenges facing cities of the global south but also manifestations of the demand for policy exchange driving the sorts of intense inter-referencing among cities apparent today. It is important, as Ferguson (2006) reminds us with respect to Africa, for academic analysis to take seriously the aspirations among populations of the global south for many of the visible manifestations of Western modernity. Otherwise, our understanding of the modernity of countries and cities has a difficulty escaping the antimonies of, on the one hand, the failure to produce genuine policy originality and, on the other hand, the failure of not copying policy faithfully enough. In a recent edited volume Ong (2011: 5) has spoken of 'distinctive practices of urban modelling, inter-referencing, and the forming of new solidarities that collectively seem to raise an *inter*-Asian horizon of metropolitan and global aspirations' (Ong, 2011: 5). Progressive case studies of inter-referencing within urban Asia are illustrated, for example, through the work of Söderström and Geertman (2012) and Douglass (2008) in relation to the reconfiguration of public space in Hanoi and by Lee and Hwang (2012) through their study of the Seoul government's innovations in facilitating the travel of creative cities programs, albeit with mixed results. Miller et al (2012) also examine the *inter* and *intra* Asian horizons of urban aspirations in their study of Asia's transborder urban networks.

Urban modelling and inter-referencing are at once distinctly Asian but also distinctly superficial as a form of policy exchange. As Ong (2011) elaborates, inter-referencing as a form of policy exchange across Asia reaches its most extreme as a Chinese idiom of simple emulation. There are echoes of the past of the progressive Atlantic era of urban policy exchange here in that 'It had always been a hazard of the Atlantic progressive connection that the mechanism of travel emphasised a kind of visual politics. Drawing its participants to its finished products, it diminished the economic and social processes that had been essential to their creation' (Rodgers, 1998: 400). It is in this light that we might view the seductive power of the visible elements of key city reference points within the Asia Pacific such as Kuala Lumpur and Singapore's modernity to much of the rest of Asia (see, for example, Bunnell and Das, 2010; Lee and Hwang, 2012). The distinctiveness of policy exchange across the global south is for the time being doubtless fast, as fast as will be found anywhere, but also ambiguous in its substance.[1]

We could also suggest that contemporary differences among and inequalities within and between cities of the global south are greater than those apparent historically or at present across the Atlantic. If modernity is always aspired to and produced relationally (King, 2004: 73), such difference may be highly productive of modernity across cities of the global south and even regions such as the

[1] This observation is limited to English language scholarship, which may depart from the literature on policy exchange in local and official languages of countries in the global south.

Asia-Pacific. One inescapable ingredient at the heart of the difference and inequalities apparent within and across cities of the global south is 'informality' which is unlikely to be planned away any time soon and represents a potentially vast resource along multiple dimensions. As Roy (2009) identifies, how national and local states choose to define what constitutes informality and mobilise it as a resource will be a defining feature of urbanisation and indeed urban policy mobility and inter-referencing across the global south.

The issue of new solidarities is an important one since as studies of the progressive Atlantic era remind us,

> 'For social policies to be borrowable across political boundaries, there must be not only a foundation of common economic and social experience but also a recognition of kinship. The policies in question must be seen to face similar needs and problems, to move within shared historic frames, and to strive toward *a commonly imagined future*' (Rodgers, 2009: 33 emphasis added).

The question is whether such shared imagined futures are discernible across the global south or any of the regions that comprise it? To what extent do communities of concerned politicians, architects planners and technocrats and activists see themselves, as in the progressive Atlantic era, as being '... washed over by a common, contemporaneous sea of change and disruption' (Rodgers, 1998: 43-44)? For Roy (2009) such solidarities present themselves in rather different practical political concerns and associated intellectual traditions emanating from a number of more or less coherent 'areas' of the global south. Here then, Latin America emerges as an arena where a politics of *dependencia* also finds an urban expression in terms of rights to the city. South Asia emerges as a region where problems of dispossession and erasures of certain segments of city populations have been memorialised through post-colonial theory and its emphasis on subjectivity of urban life and experience. Arbitrage is the signature of an emerging sense of citizenship across East Asia where rapid integration into the international economy have been felt sharply in transactional economic terms. The point is that 'when the "area studies" framework is itself complicated as "process geographies", then it is possible to think about a dis-located urban theory that far exceeds its geographic origins' (Roy, 2009: 822). This of course raises interesting questions about the relevant region – Southeast Asia, Asia Pacific - within which to view our Indonesian case material and what the basis of solidarities across this region might be?

Valuable though these insights are we soon run up against the sheer paucity of research on policy exchange and inter-referencing across cities of the global south specifically. In this regard, Saunier (2002) suggests that the thinness of the available research evidence follows, at least partly, from a tendency to rather despise the history of 'small countries'. We are back, then, to the limits of preoccupations of much of the extant literature on patterns and processes of Atlantic-centred neoliberal policy exchange which may inadvertently reinforce the sense of a 'hierarchy of "good subjects"' for the study of urban policy formation and mobility (Saunier, 2002: 514) which Robinson (2006) has been so at pains to move beyond.

We can end this section therefore with a speculation - for that is all it can be. Arguably, if there is a value in looking to the Atlantic for insights relevant to understanding the present in the global south, and Asia-Pacific in particular, it lies not in the burgeoning contemporary literature on neoliberal policy exchange but in the history of an earlier progressive era. This earlier era of trans-Atlantic policy fomentation and dialogue was distinctly progressive and orchestrated by local governments, their associations and sponsored by foundations some of which remain influential today (Clarke, 2012; Rodgers, 2000, Saunier, 2001). For us, this raises the questions of how putative alternative or progressive models might travel in the Asia Pacific and beyond, and through what kinds of policy

networks? Our concern in this paper is with the actual and potential travels of Indonesian cities as models, in ways which are bound up with, but not reducible to, neoliberalism. The weighty speculation perched on top of such an admittedly slim empirical pedestal is, then, whether the sorts of processes of policy formation and mobility emerging across the Asia-Pacific region, and into which Indonesian local governments presently are increasingly woven, may eventually compare in their own way with those of this earlier, progressive Atlantic-centred era. It is at once a call to empirical study and a hope for a progressive future of cities – a hope not just for the global south but for the rest of the world.

RESEARCH METHODS

As we have noted at the outset, the methodological problems of tracing the origins, travels and mutations of policies are sufficiently formidable to have occupied a significant part of the contemporary critical policy studies literature. By turns authors have noted and called for the study of embodied expertise (Larner and Laurie, 2010) and the adoption of approaches building upon anthropological work on multi-sited or global ethnography (Cochrane and Ward, 2012; McCann and Ward, 2012; Peck and Theodore, 2012) but there remains a significant gap between methodological prescription and practice

In this paper we draw upon interview and documentary research conducted over the period 2007 to the present to first discuss the evidence regarding some of the generalities of urban policy mobility in Indonesia before focusing on the single case study of Solo. In all we have conducted over one hundred interviews that cover a diversity of local instances of good practice at the district, city and provincial scale as well interviews with central government ministries and nation-wide organizations to gain an overview of the national picture.

There are several ways in which cities and districts in decentralized Indonesia might travel as models. One such method by which policies effectively gain purchase at a distance is through various rankings of local government performance that have proliferated in Indonesia as elsewhere. There is a wide variety of these rankings with different methodological bases. The most organized and methodologically rigorous or else potentially most significant in terms of their forcing a degree of convergence are those compiled by international donor agencies such as the World Bank's *Doing Business* index which is perhaps the single most influential international index comparing the cost of doing business at national level. The methodology has also been extended to the local government scale twice in Indonesia in 2010 and 2012, though the detailed methodology and sample of local governments covered changed making comparison invalid. Doubtless the World Bank speaks to the potential effects of many such benchmarking and ranking exercises when it argues that 'Benchmarking exercises like *Doing Business* inspire governments to improve business regulations. They uncover potential challenges and identify where policy makers can look for good practice' (World Bank, 2012: 4).However, other less formal or methodologically involved and empirically robust rankings include the list of the top ten mayors and regents produced by *Tempo* Magazine and the listing of the most recommended cities for business produced by *SWA* Magazine in 2010, 2011 and 2012. However, there are also rankings that examine performance in more than merely business terms, including wider issues of governance, environmental initiatives, community participation in the planning process and even pro-poor policy.

A second means through which policies and ideas travel which we have referred to is the widespread practice of study tours (*studi banding* or *kunjungan kerja* – 'kunker') organized by governments at all tiers. It should be noted that study tours have often been (in many cases accurately) cast in the media as amounting to little more than shopping trips or sightseeing tours, with the likes of Batam

figuring prominently as a destination for study tours due to its proximity to Singapore.[2] Heightened media attention in the context of democratized Indonesia means that study tours are increasingly subjected to public scrutiny and calls for transparency in local budget expenditure. Even Joko Widodo, recipient of a national anti-corruption award in 2010, was forced to explain the rationale for a Solo city government study tour to Montana, Bulgaria in 2006 during his time as Mayor.[3] In the face of such zealous media monitoring, blatant cases of the misuse of public funds for vacations and shopping trips are now much less common than when regional autonomy was first introduced. Nonetheless, there remains a pervasive perception that such trips result in few tangible positive outcomes. Many of our own informants have been vague or evasive in elaborating the outcomes of study tours in which they have participated, and some have even explicitly stated that they are not sure about the benefits derived from them.[4] This reaffirms the need for caution in vaunting study tours as straightforward mechanisms for the transfer of good practice. However, the progressive *potential* of learning from success stories is undeniable.

A third and logically separate mechanism through which policies may travel is through formal local government-to-local government agreements in the form of joint ventures or memorandums of understanding. These most likely have evolved from the study tours described above but imply both a deeper level of policy exchange and a longer tern relationship between local governments.

A fourth potentially important means through which urban policies may travel, and one that overlaps with both of the above to an extent, is the collection and dissemination of good practice by national and international local government associations. For example, APEKSI (*Asosiasi Pemerintah Kota Seluruh Indonesia*) the association of city governments in Indonesia has periodically surveyed city governments and collated information into best practice guides distributed to members and published in.

A fifth mechanism revolves around the activities of donors, foundations and NGOs in selectively driving the process of policy exchange not least through the financing of programmes explicitly designed to promulgate principles underlying, and even the 'replication' of, particular policies. The weight of such agencies on policy development in Indonesia over many years cannot be doubted though it is extremely hard to gauge not least because these different influences cannot be reduced to a single overarching doctrine even something apparently as hegemonic and mutating, for example, as neoliberalism.

While these last three means of policy mobility can sometimes be regarded as mundane and even insubstantial, it is worth recalling that the enormously vibrant trans-Atlantic progressive policy exchange of the early 1900s was sustained to a large extent by precisely such means (Rodgers, 1998; Saunier, 2001, 2002). Study tours, conferences, memorandums of understanding remain important

[2] Pirma Marpaung (Investment Coordination Board, Batam City), interview by authors, tape recording, 8 September 2011. Examples of negative reports about study tours in Indonesia's print media include: 'TII: Studi Banding Berpotensi Korupsi' ['Study Tours have the Potential for Corruption'], *Waspada*, 17 September 2010; 'Kunker dan Studi Banding ke Luar Negeri Tidak Berguna' ['Study Tours Abroad are Useless'], *Tribunnews.com*, 7 May 2011; 'Studi Banding DPR: Wisata, Belanja, Umroh dan El Clasico' [Parliamentary Study Tours: Tourism, Shopping, Minor Pilgrimages and Football'], *Monitor Indonesia*, 29 April 2011.

[3] *Solo Pos*, 14 June 2006.

[4] Endah Angreni (Human Settlement and Spatial Planning Agency, East Java Provincial Government), interview by authors, tape recording, Surabaya, 9 August 2011.

in a world of electronic communications as a way of grounding or contextualizing policies and as a necessary prelude to their transfer and adaptation to different circumstances.

Finally, it should be remembered that private sector actors are some of the most important conduits for the exchange of all sorts of policies and regulatory practices (Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000) and we can speculate also aspects of urban policy. There is certainly some evidence of this with regard to narrowly defined aspects of the investment environment (Phelps, and Wood, 2006; Phelps and Wu, 2009) in Southeast Asia. Here, the long-standing relative lack of integration of Indonesia into the international economy seems likely to have resulted in some effect on the private sector's role in urban policy mobility and inter-referencing both within and beyond its national borders. The role of these private sector actors remains perhaps the most difficult to gain purchase on empirically and was outside the scope of this research.

Unsurprisingly across these various means certain cities and districts have emerged as success stories - as popular destinations for study tours among local governments in Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, internationally, and as focal points for the efforts for the work of NGOs, donor organisations and charitable foundations. In our research over the period 2007 to the present we have sifted through these various sources of information deriving from the different channels and sought to track prominent cases of local policy innovation and how those cases have been disseminated and consumed, and to what ends. It is the showcasing of certain cities in decentralized Indonesia as socially-progressive models in which we are particularly interested. The number of instances which have appeared at points in this process of sifting through the available reportage and which we have attempted to examine in follow-up research by way of more or less detailed case studies via interviews and documentary searches is actually quite large. It includes, for example: the cities of Surabaya, Solo, Yogyakarta and Banda Aceh; the districts of Jembrana, Sragen, and Sidoarjo; the province of Gorontalo and the special autonomous region of Aceh (Phelps, Bunnell and Miller, 2011). Perhaps the stand-out case among these is represented by the city of Solo, which if anything has assumed even greater significance in the Indonesian context as a result of former mayor Joko Widodo's election as the governor of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, and all that this implies regarding the likelihood embodied transfer of policy from one city to another.

URBAN INTER-REFERENCING WITHIN AND BEYOND A DECENTRALISED INDONESIA

Governmental decentralization in Indonesia occurred as something of a 'big bang' in which considerable autonomy was initially granted to the third tier of district (*kabupaten*) and city (*kota*) jurisdictions with the enactment of Laws 22/1999 and 25/1999 which came into effect from 2001 and Government regulation 129/2000. Law 22/1999 (subsequently amended by Law 32/2004) was concerned the provisions for the election of a local head of government and local government accountability. Law 25/1999 (amended by 33/2004) redefined the fiscal relationship between tiers of government. Finally, Government regulation 129/2000 set criteria for the creation of new districts and cities.

It is important to recognize that there remains a lot of 'noise' within the data on and evaluations of local government performance. There has been barely a decade for a process of institutional learning and political, administrative and fiscal development to take place since the implementation of decentralization legislation. The early part of this period was marked by considerable uncertainty and upheaval at the local district government level in particular. Democratic decentralization legislation unleashed a process of *pemekaran* or the proliferation of many new government jurisdictions. Using the definition of an autonomous province or district used by the Ministry of Finance as one that receives the DAU budget transfer in the beginning of any fiscal year, between

2001 and 2009, the number of districts in Indonesia (excluding six non-autonomous district level governments in Jakarta) grew from 336 in 2001 to 477 in 2009. For the Director of KPPOD, a donor-sponsored observatory on local government performance in Indonesia, this growth in the number of new regions was driven by local elites with the vast majority of new governments being poorly performing.[5] Certainly, increased political, administrative and economic local government autonomy increased the regulatory burden and uncertainty facing businesses and severely impacted on flows of foreign direct investment, since decentralization brought with it a perception of increased KKN (*korupsi, kolusi and nepotisme*) practices among greedy local elites that had previously been associated with the centralized Suharto regime and its cronies (Hadiz, 2004). Evidence suggests that patronage persists and may even be nurtured through the activities of international organizations, donors and NGOs in the era of decentralization, not least due to the very preoccupation with 'best practice advocacy' which can amount to a collective self deception (Booth and Golooba-Mtebi, 2011:2 cited in Blunt, Turner and Lindroth 2012: 66). Moreover, while the worst excesses of this period have subsided not least due to the subsequent revocation of many new local laws by the Ministry of Home Affairs, local governments continue to operate in a context in which there is considerable uncertainty regarding overlapping competencies among tiers of government, and continuing efforts to redefine the relationship among governmental tiers by central government.

The performance of local government remains inextricably associated with the political and bureaucratic leadership provided by mayors – who hold a position that, given the potential financial rewards associated, is hotly and expensively contested and who in any case are eligible to serve only two terms. Thus, almost all of our interviewees when asked to account for variations in the performance of local governments returned to the leadership role of the *bupati* or *walikota* rather than any institutionalized set of government practices. Thus for an interviewee from the Ministry of Home Affairs the pattern of local government performance was clear: 'Variable progress happens in local government and good performing local government and best practice always comes from the good political leaders. Unfortunately there are only a few of them. … When you elect a good person you will get a very good and efficient local government'.[6] Effective and responsive political leadership is typically cited as the most critical source of good government in Indonesia and other democratizing regimes, though it remains a subject of modest academic study in general (see, for example, Borraz and John, 2004). The question of 'mobile leadership', too, has become increasingly relevant as mayorships around the world are viewed as testing grounds for successful political leaders to ascend to larger scales (bigger administrative jurisdictions) along with their ideas (McNeill, 2001).

Nevertheless, despite the negative press that has attended the process of decentralization a number of districts, cities and provinces have at one time or another emerged as exemplars of best practices of one sort or another. The combined processes of political, administrative and economic decentralization have created local instances of policy development and exchange that might not otherwise have emerged: 'Although in general people see decentralization as having so many problems, there have been a number of cases or practices of innovation that would not have happened if it had not been for decentralised government'.[7] Moreover, despite being critical of progress at local government level in Indonesia, the Director of KPPOD questioned whether policy innovation could be expected to come from central government which has itself been keen to

[5] Interview, Director, KPPOD, 18 August 2010

[6] Interview, Directorate of Regional Autonomy, Ministry of Home Affairs, 18 August 2010

[7] Interview: Executive Director, Kemitraan, 19 August 2010

identify and elevate viable local examples of best practice in governance to national policy.[8] Here, again, there are historic parallels with the Atlantic experience of the late 1800s and early 1900s where the realm of municipal government was one of valuable experimentation for the wider adoption of rules, policies and practices by national states still in the process of consolidation (Saunier, 2002: 515-516).

The World Bank's *Doing Business* rankings of the subnational business environment in Indonesia have been produced twice with the methodology and coverage of local governments in 2010 extended in 2012. It makes little sense then to reproduce precise rankings of cities and districts. What the World Bank itself claims from these two studies is that 'consistent performers stay at the top' and that 'all fourteen cities measured for a second time show improvements' (World Bank, 2012: 1 and 2 respectively). To some extent the picture of consistency of performance at local level painted by the World Bank is confirmed in *SWA* Magazine's 'Most recommended cities for business' rankings produced for 2010 and 2012. The rankings are produced from surveys of a panel of leading business executives. However, more precisely they are rankings of 'the best cities/kabupaten for doing business among the twenty largest by GDP, excluding Jakarta'. This of course represents a rather limited and static sample of the hundreds of jurisdictions within Indonesia. Across the two survey years, five cities and districts (Bekasi, Bogor, Sidoarjo Surabaya and Tangerang) consistently appear somewhere in the top ten. These consistent performers are more clearly identified as cities specialised as industrial centres. Some of the 'usual suspects' such as the capital Jakarta and popular historic and tourist city destination Yogyakarta as well as some of the districts and cities performing well in terms of regulatory efficiency (in reports produced by the likes of the World Bank and KPPOD) have appeared in this list. However, in general, informal comparison highlights the potential disconnect between the two measurements within Indonesia.

Figure 1 presents three separate 'stories' of policy travel in Indonesia garnered from individual interviewees. We believe the individual interviewees to be among the best informed within Indonesia, however, the stories should be treated with some caution as the origin points in particular are almost impossible to trace definitively. Nevertheless several observations can be made from the information in figure 1. First, these three stories do indeed involve policies that are closely connected to the dominant neoliberal policy orthodoxy. City marketing of course has a long history. However, arguably, it has taken on a new intensity and ubiquity as part of neoliberal inter-locality competition. Yogyakarta has been at the forefront of place promotion in Indonesia creating a brand 'Yogya: never ending Asia' in 2002. It continues to benefit from assistance provided by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation and the efforts of its provincial and city governments have stimulated a degree of emulation. The story recounted was one in which the capital city Jakarta emulated this provincial city (a point to which we return in the case of Solo). In Indonesia, as elsewhere in the global south, one-stop-shop arrangements for business and other licenses have also been sponsored by donors such as the World Bank. Social security identification cards are less unequivocally pigeon-holed as neoliberal since they have been intimately connected to a desire to offer a minimal level of health service to poor populations within some of the more progressive platforms of local politicians across Indonesia. Here, then, other local governments seemingly having

[8] Interviews, Director, KPPOD, 11 December 2007; Directorate of Regional Autonomy, Ministry of Home Affairs, 18 August 2010

developed similar social security card systems but not appearing in figure 1 have also been regarded as success stories.[9]

Figure 1: Three Stories of Policy Travels within Indonesia

Social Security Identity Card (a)	Licensing 'One Stop Shop' (b)	Place Branding (c)
SINGAPORE	Gianyar (kab, Bali)	Yogyakarta (prov)
Batam (kab, Riau)	Sidoarjo (kab, E. Java)	Jakarta (prov)
Balikpapan (kota, E. Kalimantan)	Pare Pare (kota, S. Sulawesi)	Semarang (kab, C. Java)
Palembang (kota, S. Sumatra)	Sragen (kab, C. Java)	Solo (kota, C. Java)
	Blitar (kab, E. Java)	
	Cimahi (kota, W. Java)	

Sources:
(a) Interview, Director of Programme Development and Advocacy APEKSI, 20 August 2010
(b) Interview: Director, KPPOD, 18 August 2010
(c) Interview: Regional Investment Promotion Consultant, International Finance Corporation 19 August 2010

[9] This would be the case with Jembrana district in Bali which had been cited as an example of a well-performing local government. Here the social security card system introduced is likely as much a reflection of fears over security associated with migration from East Java (Interview: Director, KKPOD 11 December 2007) as it was of the popular progressive programme of former Mayor Wisana (Interview: former Mayor, Kabupaten Jembrana, 5 April 2012).

Second, it is clear that a measure of urban policy development in Indonesia is likely to be imported from neighbouring nation states as in the case of the social security identity card which appears to have emerged as a product of the somewhat atypical position of Batam in relation to Singapore. Being just 40 minutes ferry ride from Singapore, Batam was developed as a central government project designed to exploit the spillovers from private sector growth in Singapore by the 1980s. Despite desires on the part of central government for the Batam experience to be replicated and despite the very many study tours to the island indicating the desire of many local governments far and wide across Indonesia to do so, big questions remain over how replicable any policy imported and adapted here would be (see also Phelps, 2004).

Third, figure 1 highlights the case of business licensing 'one-stop-shops': the gathering together of relevant business permitting into a single office in order to speed up the process of obtaining a license and in some instances reducing and simplifying the paper work involved. It is perhaps *the* urban policy initiative which has garnered the most attention in Indonesia as a result of the sponsorship of such offices by donors and NGOs, a Ministerial Decree in 2007 ordering the establishment of these one-stop-shop offices or PTSPs and, as we described above, as a result of the potential impact on the World Bank's *Doing Business* rankings. However, the creation and performance of these one-stop-shops presents a very mixed picture. By 2007 only around 40% of local governments had such PTSPs, though some were performing at international standard (OECD, 2010: 95 and 94 respectively). It is apparent, despite the World Bank's claims reported above, that the record of the one-stop-shops of individual districts and cities can vary over time, with the performance of some innovators declining markedly. Some of this sense of enduring instability to institutional reform at the local level is also reflected in conflicting reports published recently. In the report, Indonesia's record as a whole has improved markedly even to the point of comparing favourably with the likes of Germany (Independent Budget Partnership, 2013) yet this is countered by a stinging critique made of patronage persisting in Indonesia (Blunt et al, 2012) and the suspicion that such one-stop-shops in many countries are a presentational sleight of hand; in reality being 'one shop but many windows' with the underlying regulatory burden on businesses and citizens having improved little over time (World Bank, 2009).

Some indication of the topical and geographical spread of 'best practices' among city governments in Indonesia can be gleaned from the periodic surveys of member cities conducted and published by APEKSI in eight annual *Kota-kota* best practice guides published to date from 2006. Once again the data should be treated with caution as they are based on surveys of member city governments for which interviewees admitted there was often a difficulty in eliciting responses.[10] We can speculate therefore that the following data reflect a measure of self-selection by particular city governments. Blitar may be a case in point, as it has rarely figured across the sources with which we are familiar but it alone accounted for 7 cases of best practice in these annual publications. To set against this the data may also be evidence of a desire on the part of APEKSI itself to present, to some extent, a showcase of best practice that is geographically representative of the whole of Indonesia.
In total then, there were 79 cases of best practice documented in the eight best practice volumes to date. Only 41 of 102 city members of APEKSI were cited in these publications which gives some indication of the extent to which policy innovation and development may be concentrated on relatively few local governments. Indeed instances of best practice that APEKSI was able to gather information for in its surveys were very concentrated on a limited number of cities which to some extent tallied with the cities reported in the likes of *SWA* and *Tempo* magazines and the World Bank's *Doing Business*. Six cities appearing four or more times (Blitar, Yogyakarta, Solo, Surabaya, Tarakan and Palembang) accounted for over 35%, while eleven cities appearing at least three times

[10] Interview: Director of Programme Development and Advocacy, APEKSI, 22 March 2011

accounted for over 54%, and the eighteen cities appearing at least twice for 72% of cases of best practice identified. The case of Tarakan is interesting as its prominence here and its selection as one of four Indonesian cities as part of DELGOSEA's work to replicate best practices across Southeast Asia provides an indication of the self-reinforcing processes that can take hold in as a result of urban policy mobility and inter-referencing (a point that also emerges in the case of Solo reported below). Commenting on Tarakan's inclusion, an interviewee at APEKSI described how 'We don't want to choose the city that is stuck on zero. We want to choose the city that already has good implementation'.[11]

The most frequent subjects of best practice were: economic development (15), waste collection and disposal (10), environment (9), relocation of vendors/squatters (7), IT systems (6), public participation and health (5), licenses, transport and highways, finance, (each 4) and miscellaneous others, 12. The emphasis on economic development may pose a question regarding the progressive credentials of policy development though in Indonesia these are rarely focused on the marketing initiatives depicted in figure 1, but rather on the support of micro and small scale industry clusters. The emphasis on waste collection and disposal and environmental issues is interesting in a context in which decentralization has led to many local governments operating below an efficient scale for the provision of important services creating pressures for coordination across local government boundaries - with perhaps *the* very best practice among only a few such examples coordination being Kartamantul (the joint secretariat dealing with water and waste disposal across the watershed composed of Yogyakarta, Sleman and Bantul in the special province of Yogyakarta.[12] The environmental initiatives are laudable though embody quite a mixture of activities and priorities. Participatory planning, street vendor relocation and health initiatives might be regarded as representing distinctly progressive agendas. Indeed, the fact that seven of the cases relate to the relocation of street vendors and squatter populations may be an indication of how the example set by Solo, which we report below, has shaped practices more widely in Indonesia.

THE CASE OF THE CITY OF SOLO

The city of Solo has emerged as a very prominent and celebrated case of policy innovation within Indonesia and we were alerted to it in our research by an article in Tempo magazine in 2008 (Majalah Tempo, 2008). Solo's success here has been in large measure associated with former mayor Joko Widodo or 'Jokowi' as he is popularly known. Jokowi was elected in 2005 and returned to office in Solo in 2010. Indeed, his achievements in Solo doubtless played a role in his subsequently successfully running for governor of Jakarta in 2012 (a point to which we later return).

Policy developments in Solo have benefited from what Von Luebke, McCulloch and Pantunru, 2009) term a 'heterodox reform symbiosis'. They have been broad based to the point that we are unable to trace the travels of all of the initiatives overseen by Jokowi during his time in office there. Solo has emerged as a success story in terms of the improvement that has taken place towards a more business-friendly local government environment. This has included local government bureaucratic reforms aimed at eliminating corruption and improving the regulatory burden on business through the initiation of a licensing one-stop-shop. Here Mayor Jokowi's inclusivity of approach and deployment of a wide constellation of business and civic interests – formal and informal businesses from different sectors and of different ethnic and religious complexions - in consultation within policy-making has been a notable feature. Some of these improvements have doubtless been

[11] Interview, Interview: Director of Programme Development and Advocacy APEKSI, 22 March 2011

[12] Interview, Regional Secretary, Kabupaten Sleman, 12 August 2010

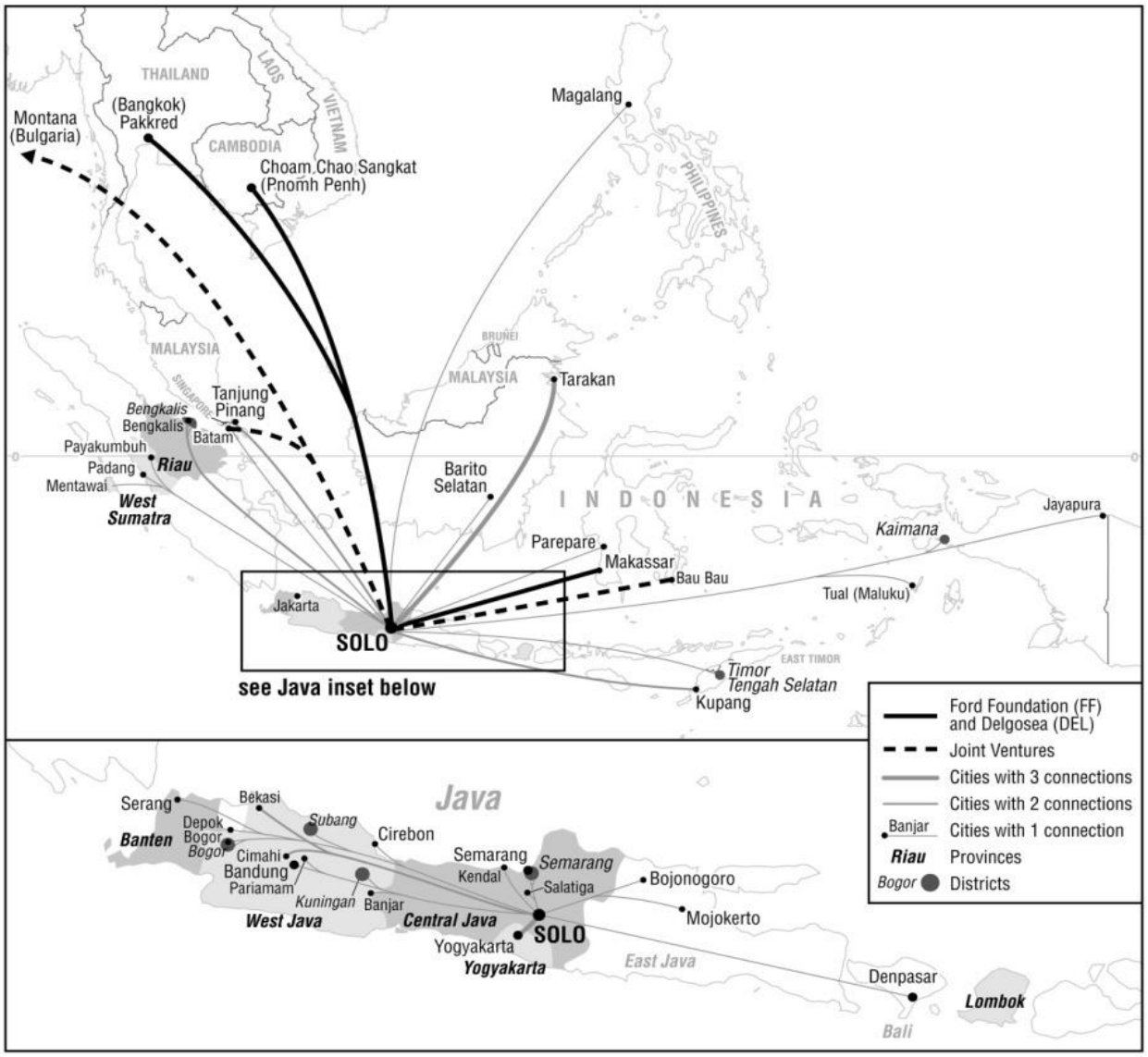
underscored in a regional context in which a competitive yardstick has been provided by several other well-performing districts (such as Sragen) and cities (such as Yogyakarta) in close proximity in what is a single and generally quite nationally and internationally accessible urban corridor (Von Luebke, McCulloch and Pantunru, 2009). We have reported on strategies to coordinate the likes of transportation planning and promote tourism and investment across Solo Raya (the city-region) elsewhere. While these continue as one of the few instances of inter-local government coordination at the city-region scale in Indonesia, they probably could not be regarded as best practice as was conceded at interviews.[13]

However, beyond these initiatives or perhaps as a result of conjunction with them, Jokowi and Solo are famous for what could be regarded as a series of progressive policies and which include: the humane relocation of street vendors to formal covered market areas; the relocation of squatter populations to new land with property rights; restrictions on the development of supermarket franchises and shopping malls in close proximity to traditional markets and street vendor areas. Where in much of the rest of Indonesia, local political agendas have resulted in a growing exclusion of these populations from the informal economic opportunities and formal participation in governmental decision-making (Morrell, Tuerah and Sumarto, 2011: 50), Solo has emerged as one of, if not the, most prominent case of progressive local policy formulation and implementation.

Each of these policy developments is in its own way likely to travel within and to some extent beyond Indonesia and we have attempted to map as best we can some sense of the travels of these policy initiatives. From Bappeda (the regional body for planning and development) in the Solo city government we obtained a list of all formally organized study visits to the City during 2010. These undoubtedly do not represent all of the visits made to Solo as there were many unofficial tours that simply were not accounted for by the Solo city government. We also obtained a list of memorandums of understanding signed between Solo government and other city governments. Finally, we were also made aware of other formal and externally orchestrated channels of policy transfer at the time of our research: the Ford Foundation's desire to transfer the work of Solo Kota Kita and DELGOSEA's organized transfer of policies across South East Asia. Together these are mapped in Figure 2 to give an overall feel for the geographical reach of Solo's policy initiatives. In the case of the formal study visits the data here clearly represent just a snap-shot from a single year. Thus, Solo received 27 official study tours in 2010, mostly in relation to the resettlement of street vendors. Figure 2 also shows three memorandums of understanding signed between Solo city and Batam and Bau Bau domestically and with Montana in Bulgaria. Finally, figure 2 shows the connections between cities forged by International agencies such as DELGOSEA (The Partnership for Democratic Governance in Southeast Asia) and the Ford Foundation.

[13] Interviews: Mayor of Solo, 13 August 2010, Secretary BKAD, Solo, 18 March 2011

Figure 2 Map Showing Study Visits, MoUs and other Formalized Exchange of Policy Centred on Solo, as of 2010



The relocation of squatters notably from the banks of the Bengawan Solo River to self-built permanent new homes partly subsidized by the city government and complete with property rights was not, as is so often the case, a prelude to lucrative private sector development but instead oriented towards the creation of new civic spaces within the city. Solo's notoriety in this and the other regards is of course self-reinforcing. The city continues to garner favour among donor agencies and NGOs for follow-on activities. It was, for example, selected as one of three cities (the others being Banjarmasin and Pekalongan) by the Cities Alliance under its 'Making Urban Investment Planning Work' initiative and implemented by the UN-Habitat making use of the CDS (City Development Strategies) approach. The cities were selected to act as 'champions' within Indonesia, demonstrating how comprehensive strategies for urban development can be linked to public funding with local amenity investments (UN Habitat Indonesia Office, 2012: 1). In Solo's case the overarching medium to long-term vision centres on the city developing as an eco-cultural city.

The equitable and humane relocation of street vendors (*pedagang kaki lima*, PKL) into designated sheltered market places was a lengthy negotiated and, at its completion, a ceremonial process that was replicated several times within Solo itself. It is a policy that along with the related refurbishment of traditional local markets Jokowi appeared in an interview to concede may have been inspired from his visits to Singapore.[14] It is not without its critics including among some of the leaders of street vendor groups themselves for the loss of income suffered as a result of relocation and the diminishing resources involved with, and attention to detail paid to, successive relocations. [15] The criticism has some justification given that the incomes of street vendors are highly dependent on location. It is reported in one study how in Solo as many as half of the vendors relocated to one site withdrew to return to the streets while others have lost custom or have not been able to afford the fees to locate in designated markets (Morrell, Tuerah and Sumarto, 2011: 57). Nevertheless, it has been well-regarded across Indonesia, receiving a national award and being selected by DELGOSEA (funded by the European Commission and working through national and pan-national local government associations) with the explicit aim of 'replicating' Solo's humane street vendor relocation best practice in Pakkred municipality in Thailand and Choam Chao Sangkat, Cambodia.[16] The term replicate is used explicitly but is perhaps a little misleading as one interviewee from the Indonesian association of city governments involved with the initiative explained.

> 'We already pick up several best practices and we are now in the process of building the transfer concept – how the local governments in each cities adopt the practices. So they build a transfer concept in order to adjust the best practices to their local situation. We will not replicate 100% of the best practices because each city has their own plan and programmes. So this best practice is only to support what is already being implemented by the local governments'. [17]

There appears to have been a close fit between the experiences with street vendor relocation in Solo and the project to relocate street vendors into refurbished existing formal markets Choam Chao Sangkat in Cambodia. The Sangkat Task Force created to manage the process of relocation benefited from a study tour to Solo but also Maung Klang city in Thailand, though at the time of the final monitoring report had not been able to share its experiences with other municipalities directly.[18] In the case of Pakkred in Thailand, the idea to transfer experiences from Solo which began in 2011 and built upon the existing interest of the municipality in conserving and revitalising a traditional waterfront market. The replication exercise has in turn been disseminated to other local governments directly and indirectly via the national municipal league and the Ministry of Interior. The project itself falls under the heading of fiscal management and the use of the word replication seems less appropriate to describe a project which involved the establishment of Pakkred Old Waterfront Conservation and Management Group but which did not appear to involve the relocation of street vendors but rather a wider range of elements such as the decoration and

[14] Interview, Mayor of Solo, 13 August 2010

[15] Interview: Leader, Street Vendors Association PPSK Jebres, 19 March 2011

[16] Delgosea website: www.delgosea.eu/cms/Best-Practices/Thematic-Area-4-Fiscal-Management-and-Investment-Planning/14-Humane-Relocaton-and-Empowerment-of-Street-Vendors, last accessed 9 September 2011.

[17] Interview, Interview: Director of Programme Development and Advocacy APEKSI, 22 March 2011

[18] DELGOSEA (2012) Institutional Governance: Rearrange Street Vendors, Sangkat Choam Chao Final Monitoring Report. Available at http://www.delgosea.eu/cms/Downloads/Pilot-City-Documents/Choam-Chao-Sangkat-Cambodia. Accessed 28 March 2013.

refurbishment of existing facilities and buildings, public relations exercises and community mapping and master planning exercises.[19]

Partly because of the conducive environment offered in Solo and the leadership of Jokowi, local NGO Solo Kota Kita has also emerged separately as something of an example of best practice with regards to participatory planning. Solo Kota Kita's work has centred on empowering citizens at the neighbourhood or *kelurahan* scale enabling them to decide on priorities within the annual participatory budgeting cycle. Citizens are involved in the production of mini-atlases containing basic data on neighbourhood conditions which in turn form the basis of informed discussion and decision-making. The Ford Foundation was prominent in the promulgation of ideas regarding municipal reform in the progressive era of trans-Atlantic policy exchange (Saunier, 2001) and it is interesting to note that it is active today in the Asia Pacific region. It has picked up Solo Kota Kita's work on participatory planning in Solo with a view to sponsoring its replication in, or transfer to, Makassar, South Sulawesi.

The relocations of street vendor groups formed part of Jokowi's broader vision of the 'peoples economy' in Solo in which traditional markets have been renovated, vendors moved to new strategic locations and restrictions placed on the precise location of new supermarkets and shopping malls in Solo in a bid to formalize and underpin the livelihoods of small and micro enterprises when set against larger corporate entities. It is a vision that seems likely to travel with Jokowi to Jakarta where he is now governor. The emergence and travel of Solo as a model city in this way is intriguing for several reasons. First, it will be interesting to observe whether policies to some extent proven in Solo will travel with Jokowi to Jakarta. The early indications are that a number of policy initiatives taken in solo – including relocations of river bank squatter populations and street vendors – are already also making an appearance in Jakarta (The Jakarta Globe, 2013; The Jakarta Post, 2013) though their full progressive credentials are less clear. Here there appears to be direct evidence of urban policy mobility embodied not so much in the travels of technocrats as in the ambitions of politicians. Second, the fact that it is also quite apparent that districts and cities have presented themselves as success stories is one that is worthy of further critical investigation within studies of urban policy mobility and inter-referencing. The presentation of cities and districts is bound up with political leaders' desires to project themselves beyond their local constituencies. Solo happens to be the most prominent case in point as Jokowi was clearly able to use Solo as a platform for his political ambitions as much as any intrinsic desire to 'improve' Solo. Third, although often referred to as a city Jakarta has tier two (provincial) status in Indonesia (see Bunnell and Miller, 2011), which immediately raises the very interesting possibility – reality, in fact – that policy innovation in a provincial city (Solo) is being rolled-out in the national urban centre (Jakarta) through Jokowi, reversing what one might imagine to be the conventional order of relationships, policy mobility and inter-referencing in many countries and in Indonesia, in particular.

CONCLUSION

Our rather partial tour through some of the available evidence reveals a great appetite for policy fomentation and exchange across cities and districts in Indonesia and only serves to highlight the need for more study of policy development and exchange across the Asia Pacific and the global south. It also begs the need to critically examine notions of the apparent shallowness of policy

[19] DELGOSEA (2012) *Fiscal Management, Pakkred Municipality: Final Monitoring Report.* Available at http://www.delgosea.eu/cms/Downloads/Pilot-City-Documents/Pakkret-Municipality-Thailand. Accessed 28 March 2013.

exchange across Asia since our evidence in the round and that on Solo as a case study can at present be made to point in different directions.

While the substance of study visits, conferences and workshops etc. and their role in policy mobility might be questioned in an era of electronic communication they remain a staple of policy exchange, including as we have seen in Indonesia presently. In this respect there seems little different to the present Asia Pacific patterns and processes of policy exchange when set against those of an earlier era of progressive policy exchange across the Atlantic. In Indonesia much of this staple of local government policy exchange has, in the early years of decentralization, amounted to little more than an excuse for being seen to desire local institutional reform. In a context of significant media scrutiny, the enormous appetite for information and ideas regarding suitable policies and institutional reforms appears to have evolved toward the sort of emulation and replication that are said to characterize urban inter-referencing in Asia (Ong, 2011). Yet, there is just enough in our research to suggest that the intentions and reflexivity of the agencies and actors involved in policy exchange amount to a conscious effort to adapt policies and practices to local contexts, rather than merely copy them.

That a provincial city like Solo can emerge powerfully over a relatively short period of time as a locus of multiple policy and institutional developments must surely underline Robinson's (2006) view that cities everywhere can potentially be the sources of policy development in a universe of cities that is distinctly more worldly than that of a number of commonly enumerated world cities alone. Given the vast appetite for policy fomentation and exchange within a decentralised Indonesia and given its projection beyond the national realm by local government associations, international organisations, NGOs and Foundations, the processes by which Solo has emerged as something of a model progressive city are self-reinforcing. While not quite on the lips internationally like a Curitiba, Solo may yet enter the Esperanto of international urban policy exchange.

The fact that a political leader like Joko Widodo can emerge so strongly and so rapidly to national pre-eminence from a base in *local* policy development and institutional reform is also intriguing. It certainly calls for more serious scholarly consideration of the possibilities for, and content of, successful political leadership as an important ingredient in its own right in the development of local government and in place-shaping in Indonesia. Does his emergence signal a huge unmet appetite for decent political leadership across Indonesia? Does it signal the profound absence of such decent leadership to choose from at the local level? Almost certainly the answer is yes to both of these questions. It would seem that scholarly research can play its part in recasting local political leadership from a problem into an opportunity for national legislation and policy to incentivize the emergence of a greater number of Solo's than has hitherto been apparent in the vast laboratory that is Indonesia.

The big and ultimately decisive question of whether a shared sense of a common urban future is emerging at this time across Southeast Asia, East Asia or the Asia-Pacific is beyond the modest vantage point of this paper. It is, though, a prospect to which serious scholarly attention can and should be turned.

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