A PARTNERSHIP THAT REVITALISED KOTA TUA JAKARTA

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Jakarta's historic city centre is undergoing a transformation. Overlooked for years, Kota Tua (Old Town) is once again a hub of vibrant activity. The key to success has been a partnership between the City of Jakarta and a consortium of private parties. The government triggered the revival process by pedestrianising the historic streets, creating new public spaces and cleaning up the canals. Meanwhile, a group of passionate like-minded individuals saw the potential in the properties, which date back to the Dutch colonial era. They started using empty spaces for pop-up galleries, shops and cafes to bring life back to the neighbourhood. Now established as Konsorsium Kota Tua Jakarta, this group helps owners of dilapidated properties to renovate and repurpose their buildings and to find suitable tenants. In just a few years they managed to do what no-one thought possible: make the old city more than a tick on your tourist itinerary, but a destination that you want to come back to. In fact, Kota Tua may one day become a UNESCO World Heritage town.

KEY PROBLEMS

- Lack of pedestrian areas. Sidewalks were damaged, misused by cars for parking or used by street vendors, making it difficult for people to walk along them.

- Lack of accessibility. Situated in North Jakarta, it is difficult to reach in the traffic-blocked city.

- About 85 buildings (out of a total of 134 colonial-era buildings in the area) are vacant, in bad shape and require renovation.

- Few residential lots. The neighbourhood mainly consists of museums and public buildings, restaurants and cafés; no living heritage.

- Old Kali Besar canal is not an asset. The water is polluted and new road infrastructure blocks the old connection with the sea, resulting in frequent flooding in some areas.

- Limited wayfinding and heritage interpretation in public spaces.

KEY INTERVENTIONS

Public Sector: City of Jakarta DKI - Regional Management Unit

- Enacting regulations to prohibit motorcycles and cars entering Kota Tua core zone.

- Connecting all streets to the square in a pedestrian-friendly manner to improve the overall accessibility of the area.

- Installing new bus stations in the vicinity of the historic square to improve accessibility. A transit-oriented development (TOD) approach will be conducted as the second phase of MRT Jakarta connecting the new city centre to the old is planned to be finished in 2024.

- Regulating street vendors (hawkers) and improving facilities in designated spaces in the Kota Tua area. Taman Kota Intan (a public park to the north of Fatahillah Square) was built in 2017 to accommodate 350+ street vendors with facilities such as a Musholla (mini mosque) and parking lots for

buses and cars. However, a lack of directory and accessibility meant that this space barely attracted any visitors.

- Cleaning up Kali Besar canal and improving the landscaping. The newly revitalised Kali Besar opened in 2017 as a new public 'Water Tourism Park'. To keep the river clean, the flow has been blocked, instead of looking for solutions to filter the water.

- Demolishing parts of the old fishing village, Pasar Ikan. It is currently under revitalisation; a new market is planned which will be connected through pedestrian pathways to Fatahillah Square.

Private sector - Konsorsium Kota Tua
A consortium of nine companies, among them property developers and the Railway Company managing an endowment fund of $5 million, took the following actions:

- Taking over and renovating 13 historic buildings [1] and keeping them economically and culturally vibrant under a Build Operate Transfer (BOT) model with 20-30 year leases.

- Promoting adaptive reuse: attracting new tenants that bring different audiences to the old city: restaurants, backpacker hostels, marketplaces, retail shops, co-working spaces, offices and also venue hires for photo and film shoots.

- Organising cultural events, exhibitions and performances such as the Kota Tua Creative Festival to stimulate attachment of place.

- Establishing a street vendors' cooperative.

- Connecting with users and local communities to organise recreational and educational activities and street clean-ups at different times to attract different target groups.

DO'S

- **Pick the right time to act!** After decades of deliberation, it was the UNESCO World Heritage candidacy that became key in creating the momentum for change.

- **Secure ownership of the historic buildings** and allocate a budget for renovating and maintaining the properties.

- Complex situations like these call for **strong management and cross-sector collaboration.**

DON'TS

- **The local government doesn't always have be the initiator of a new masterplan**. In this project, the public sector took the lead in creating a masterplan, and making the public space accessible and attractive.

- **Don't assess only the current use of a place.** When it comes to redesigning a space, it is key to understand its historic narrative, the memory of place and how people use the space. This approach allows for the community (including street vendors) to be involved and share their vision.

TIMELINE

- **1973:** Jakarta's City Governor Ali Sadikin issued a decree to protect the historic city centre

- **1975:** Kota Tua was made a 'restoration area' and historical buildings were turned into museums

- **2004:** JOTRC – Old Town Revitalisation Company – a collaboration of NGO's and property owners agreed to revitalise the old town

- **2006:** Pedestrian zone enacted around Taman Fatahillah square

- **2011:** Kota Tua designated a 'National Tourism Destination'

- **2014:** Kota Tua Master Plan established

- **2018:** Kota Tua designated as Candidate for UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List

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NOTES

[1] Komunitas Historia Indonesia, Ontel Batavia Bicycle Community, Batavian Ontel Batik Community, LWG Community, Barata Kecapi Community, Cultural Exploration Community, City Tram Community, Cakra Community Buana, IRPS Community, Old Town Guide, Browse Community, Old Town Ontel Community