



The John Turner Archive:

Yayasan Sosial Soegiyapranata (YSS), Semarang. New homes and improved lives for Indonesian scavengers.

Building Community: a third world case book, Ed. Bertha Turner, Building Community Books, London, 1988

New homes and improved lives for Indonesian scavengers

Documentation:
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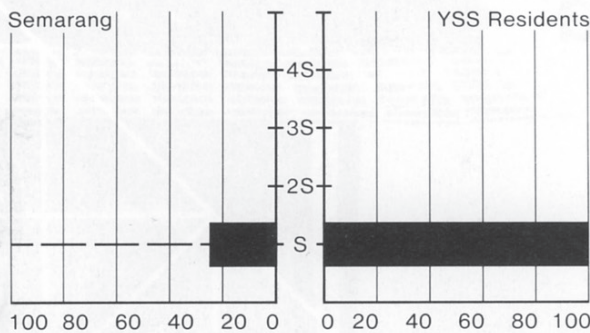
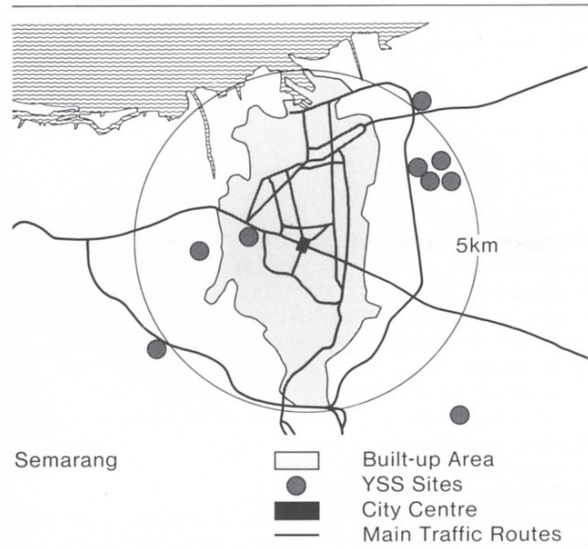
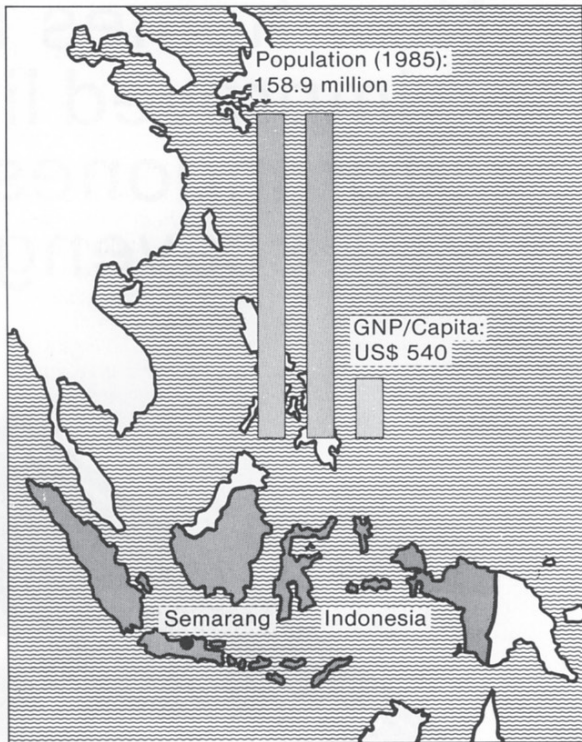
Yayasan Sosial Soegiyapranata

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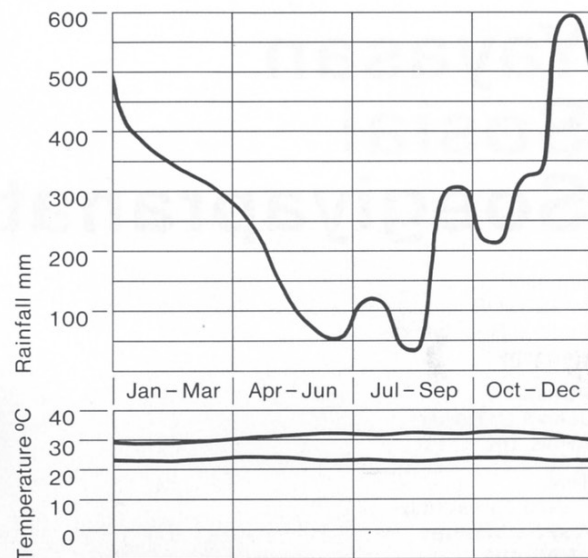
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Percentage Distributions of Population by Income Level
S=when 85% of household income must be spent on food



Climate Graph Semarang



Population Indonesia (1985): 158.9 million
Population Semarang (1984): 1.1 million

Yayasan Sosial Soegiyapranata (YSS) is a housing and relocation scheme serving the poorest of the city of Semarang in Indonesia. About one quarter of the urban population are known as 'scavengers'. These are the people who scratch a precarious living from gathering the waste products of industrial society. In Indonesia, they are considered outcasts. YSS views itself frankly as a 'rescue operation'. By providing improved living conditions and social acceptance for the 'scavengers', it hopes to give them better access to employment, education, and services in the city. It is hoped that this will enable them to enter fully into the urban economy.

Living below the subsistence line

Before the YSS programme, the 'scavengers' squatted on public open spaces, beside railway lines or on the garbage dumps where they worked.

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dumps where they worked. With no sanitation, their settlements represented a permanent hazard to family health and safety. They built their houses from plastic and cardboard and whatever other material they could find. They worked as waste collectors, market porters, stall owners, bicycle-taxi (becak) drivers, and other unstable and unskilled occupations. Their incomes were on or below the subsistence line. Because they had no legal, fixed address, they could not hold a Citizenship card and their children could not go to school. The children were often ill through lack of proper and sufficient food.



PHOTOS: BROTHER SERVATIUS, YSS, INDONESIA

YSS



YSS builds 1,604 houses for urban poor

Since the first project of 78 houses was carried out at Gunung Berintik in 1965, YSS have developed over 18 hectares of land in 11 locations of Semarang with 1,604 houses built and occupied. They have invested Rs149,490,000 (US\$149,490). More than 2,000 families have been resettled in other islands of Indonesia, in co-operation with the local authorities. Two homes for the elderly have been built, accomodating 56 men and women. Three health centres have been established. With funds from the local authority, YSS also relocated 259 families from areas designated for government public works in 1981/82, at the request and expense of the local authority.

Some win, others lose

Yet YSS itself recognizes that its programme has not been all success. Some families have managed to use their improved status to obtain better jobs, increase their incomes and improve their houses. Others, with less motivation or ability, continued in the same subsistence occupations and were unable to improve their houses.

Housing schemes have follow-up

By evaluating these factors, YSS saw that further help in improving family life and future prospects was needed. They now offer training in vocational skills and lend money for starting small businesses. Related YSS activities also

include health services, job creation, homes for the elderly, small-scale production, nutrition improvement, family planning, care of abandoned children, information and motivation services.

Going where the government does not tread

Rural migration swells city population

Semarang is the capital city of central Java. In 1930, it was inhabited by 188,172 people. By 1984, it had a population of 1,086,198. Although nearly half the area within the city's administrative boundaries was considered as land for agriculture or fishing, three-quarters of employment was provided in commerce, industry, services and public administration. As in other big cities, population growth since World War II has been due not only to natural increase but also to the migration of rural people, looking for jobs and a better standard of living.

Migrants enter the informal sector

Most migrants found jobs only in the informal sector, low in pay, skills and status. In 1978, 24.7 per cent of urban households in Semarang were earning less than US\$15 a month, considered as a minimum subsistence level. Twenty-nine per cent earned around US\$15 and 22 per cent between US\$22 and US\$30.

A recently completed settlement of basic dwellings built through mutual self-help.





Two-thirds of Semarang is 'kampung'

Most people in Semarang build their own houses in illegal settlements called 'kampungs'. Drawing exact meanings from Semarang's housing surveys is difficult: unauthorized, dilapidated dwellings of the poorest people are often not recorded as dwelling units and therefore do not appear in the statistics. But a 1977 survey of the physical quality of houses revealed that: 20.23 per cent were permanent dwellings; 17.51 per cent were semi-permanent and 62.26 per cent were classed as temporary. This indicated that at least 60 per cent of the residential area of Semarang was kampung.

Squatters and pavement dwellers

The poorest amongst the poor are the 'scavengers', stigmatized in Indonesia as society's outcasts. They settle on any available land. Most build houses from salvaged materials, but some do not have any sort of roof over their heads and live on the pavement. By 1965, there were 36 'scavenger' settlements in Semarang where some 2,182 families lived.

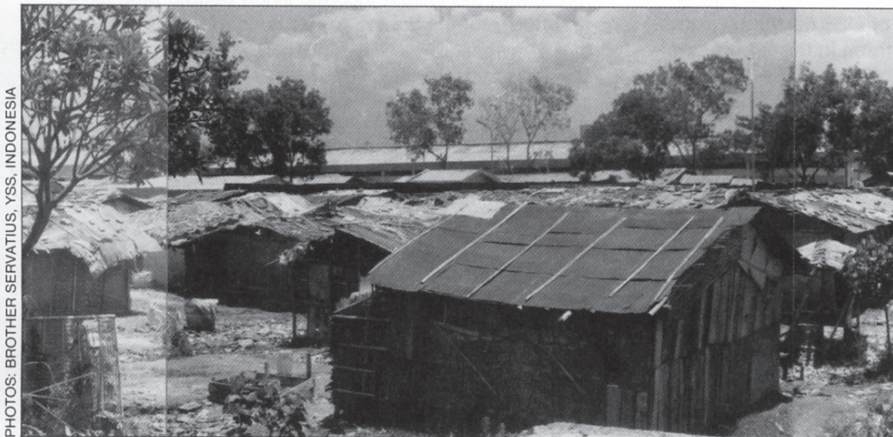
Government housing does not serve the poor

Government housing policy in Indonesia has favoured the construction of low-cost housing units by both public and private developers for low-income families. At the same time, different financial mechanisms have been tried to subsidize both developers and buyers of low-cost housing.

Even so, the cheapest price of a low-cost dwelling was US\$2,500. To buy such a house, a family would be obliged to spend 20 per cent of their income for 15 years to pay off the mortgage. At that rate, they would have to be earning at least US\$125 a month. In 1978, only 7 per cent of Semarang's families were in this income category. The 'scavengers' had no access to these housing schemes, not only because of the cost, but also because of not having Citizenship status.

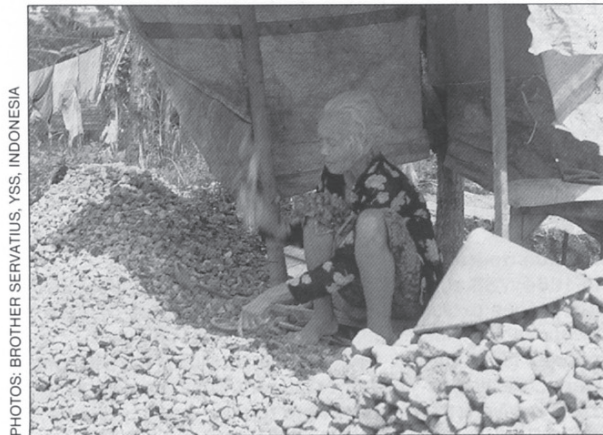
Rescue operation for the disadvantaged

In 1964, YSS conceived its housing programme, intending it to rescue excluded and disadvantaged people. Thirty-six locations were identified, where most of Semarang's poorest families lived. Of the 2,182 families, 18.5 per cent were classified as 'koelies' or labourers; 10 per cent as 'becak' drivers; 10 per cent were running small business stalls; 22 per cent were waste collectors and the rest were in other informal activities. One per cent were prostitutes and one per cent were beggars. The idea was that once settled in legal settlements by YSS, they could then hold Citizen cards which gave them a recognized social status, and, hopefully, gain access to better jobs.



PHOTOS: BROTHER SERVATIUS, YSS, INDONESIA

Unauthorized, dilapidated dwellings of the poorest people are often not recorded as dwelling units and therefore do not appear in the statistics.



PHOTOS: BROTHER SERVATIUS, YSS, INDONESIA

The average income for the people served by YSS is between (the equivalent of) fifty and seventy-five US cents.



Even if incomes do not rise homes improve.

YSS

YSS serves the poorest 24 per cent

The average incomes for the people served by YSS is between Rs500 to 750 per day or US\$.50 to .75 cents: barely enough for food, placing them in the 24 per cent who earn under Rs15,000 a month.

Twenty years of YSS: starting from a ten-dollar donation

The first project in 1965 resettled 78 families who formerly lived under the bridges, on the garbage dump, and along the sidewalk in front of the YSS office. It started with donated seed capital of US\$10 or Rs10,000. By 1986, the average monthly working capital of YSS amounted to Rs7,500,000 (US\$7,500). Though most contributors prefer to remain anonymous, the major funding source is the Catholic Church societies, through the Bishopric of Semarang, individual anonymous donors, and some from the local authority.

Finding the people in greatest need

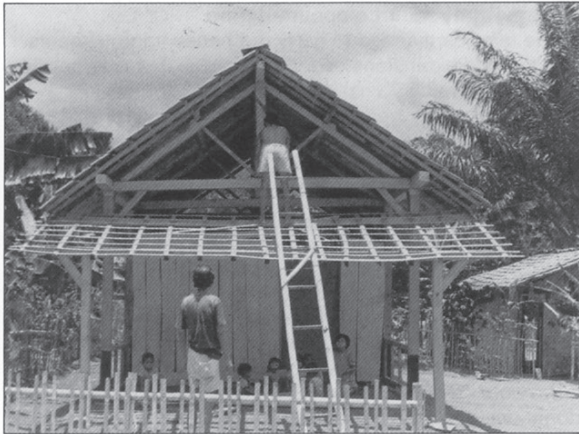
YSS employs about 25 permanent staff and 55 field workers. Every day new housing applicants approach YSS, having heard about it from friends and relatives who are in the YSS programme. Fieldworkers interview them to be sure that they really are the people in greatest housing need, with the lowest income, since people tend to dramatize their situation to get housed.

Buying the land

Sites are selected so that they fit in with the city's master plan, are close to public transportation, and have access to clean water. They must also be free from the threat of flooding. YSS buys land mainly through the conventional market, gaining ownership. Some land was also acquired through institutions such as the railway. Prices varied between Rs1,000 and 1,500 per square metre (US\$1-1.5) in 1983.

Houses allocated by lottery

Design layout is carried out by YSS, with local authority assistance. Plots are of 80 to 100 square metres, in conventional urban subdivision layouts, side by side along a vehicular road. They are assigned to people by lottery.



Houses and subsequent improvements and additions are self-built.

People participate

The people clear the site and build the houses themselves. Houses are of simple construction and basic: 4 by 6 square metres, detached or semi-detached, with bamboo walls supported by a wooden frame, with tile roof and earth floors. They do not have ceilings or glass windows.

Residents develop their own infrastructure

Infrastructure development was left to the residents. Often, YSS provide communal pit latrines where some families can connect their toilets, or communal water standpipes, in co-operation with outside agencies such as OXFAM.

Tenancy agreements regulate use of houses

The housing agreement between YSS and the residents includes the following rules:

Official YSS permission is required to live in the settlement, in the form of a written allocation letter.

Guests may stay for 24 hours, with permission of the chairman of the neighbourhood association; more than 24 hours requires permission from YSS.

Houses cannot be exchanged between residents

except by YSS permission, occupancy rights are not transferrable to another person. Only one house per family. Houses empty for over one month are withdrawn and allocated to someone else.

Houses may not be sold or used to guarantee loans. Gambling, alcoholic drinks or intoxicating substances are not allowed.

All dwellers must obey the rules in the letter of agreement. Defaulters will be punished by cancelling their housing rights.

Houses ten times cheaper than market cost

A YSS house and the plot cost about Rs275,000 (US\$25) per unit in 1982, rising over the years due to inflation and the scarcity of suitable land for low-cost housing development. This cost is ten times cheaper than the cheapest low standard house produced in 1978 by subsidized developers.

Repayment generates responsibility

Families were supposed to pay for their houses at a rate of US\$1.5 a month (10 per cent of the lowest incomes) over a period of 14 years. This repayment was intended to generate a sense of responsibility towards their dwellings and environment rather than as a method of cost recovery. In practice, although the instalments proved very difficult to collect, most residents did maintain their houses and surroundings as well as possible, given their very limited resources.

Infrastructure development is left to the residents.



YSS



Recognizing the benefits and limitations

A charity approach

YSS itself describes the limitations of their own programme as follows: "a typical charity approach, operating on the basis of love and the myth of a nice neighbourhood, seeing their target group as helpless objects."

People's development is their responsibility

Once housing is provided by YSS, people's personal development is left to them. A YSS survey revealed that those who made improvements in their life style were a self-selected, predetermined group. Only those who were already highly motivated made efforts to acquire better skills and took part in productive business to improve their lives. The others accepted the housing as a lucky accident or as a gift. This raised their aspirations for more consumer goods. But, without the means to buy them, their frustrations increased. The survey prompted YSS to extend their programme into improving the skills and capabilities of residents.

Incremental resource accumulation

Some families manage to carry out house improvements and to build extensions over time, and as finances permit, to achieve what YSS calls 'incremental resource accumulation'. However, other families never move above the subsistence line and their dwellings never improve at all. YSS also admits that their dwellings are not designed with future extensions in mind, since the initial house provided would first have to be demolished to make way for a bigger house.

From the 'haves' to the 'have-nots'

YSS are fully aware that their programme is based on conventional charity principles requiring endless donations of resources from the 'haves' to be redistributed to the 'have-nots'. The viability of YSS is dependent on continued donations of funds, the availability of cheap land near to job opportunities and the self-motivation of YSS residents. While it allows YSS to consolidate their property holdings, repayment and revolving funds are not considered to be important in YSS schemes.

Programme replicable only if participation increased

YSS feel the programme would not be replicable unless there was increased participation by residents at an early stage. They state that countries with widespread land speculation could not adopt the YSS approach unless major political changes were taking place to support it.



Training and credit is provided for setting up small businesses.

YSS

PHOTO : BROTHER SERVATIUS, YSS, INDONESIA