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# Watery Incursions: The Securitisation of Everyday “Flood Cultures” in Metro Manila and Coastal Jakarta

Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa, Irene Sondang Fitritinia, Johannes Herbeck

## Abstract

This article explores the normalisation of urban flooding through two distinct sets of securitised practices in two Southeast Asian megacities – localised disaster management surveillance regimes and the policing of informal settlements in Metro Manila and northern Jakarta, respectively. As a point of departure, we problematise the question of how the incidence of recurring floods (and flooding) is diversely interpreted as both event and as an experiential reality, insofar as the manifestation of the floods never entirely occupies a state of either normalcy or exception. It is this fluid state of inbetweenness in which these diverse securitisation trajectories are explored. The first entails the recent emergence of Metro Manila’s disaster Command Centres, marking a break from conventional ways of responding to flood risks. The second case study engages with Jakarta City’s coercive use of its municipal police unit – the Satpol P.P. – in relocating urban informal settlers who have otherwise actively learned to reshape their familiarity to flooding as a non-issue in order to avoid being evicted. While the paper reflects on the formal structures of flood cultures, we illustrate how vernacular interpretations around security entrenched in notions of “living with floods” lead to broader questions of ontological normalisation regarding watery incursions – as both spectacular as well as mundane, routinised events.

**Keywords:** Urban flooding, Disaster Risk Reduction, surveillance, Metro Manila, Jakarta

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“How do you convince a fisher that he needs to fear water?”

(Disaster Risk Reduction Officer, Metro Manila)

Since the early 1950s, emergency and adaptive measures of state- and donor-driven disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies have conventionally adopted the mantle of humanitarian intervention, often characterised by the intersecting roles played by a host of governmental, INGO, faith-based and other civil society institutions. However, over the past two decades or more, diverse national, regional and international military entities – whether as state, auxiliary, corporate-funded mercenary or under the aegis of transnational blocs (e.g. the African Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization) – have been gaining greater visibility as first responders particularly with regard to disaster relief action. This shift is evidenced in a multiplicity of contexts such as the USA’s Hurricane Katrina or the Gorkha earthquake of Nepal (cf. Platt 1999, Bajc / De Lint 2011). While the contemporary securitisation (and at times, militarisation) of natural disaster aid and the concomitant processes of *political* legitimisation have been widely researched (Platt 1999, Tierney / Beve 2007, Martin et al. 2016), there has been little emphasis placed on the intersections between socio-ecological change, DRR-oriented technoscience, and their modes of material and symbolic meaning-making. In particular, this lacuna appears to be seemingly more evident when considering the broader communal meanings and practices around in/security that are iteratively shaped through a host of less discernible slowly creeping socio-ecological transformations such as relative sea level change, land subsidence and groundwater salinisation, as opposed to the degree of emphasis placed on more “spectacular” hazard-related events, such as storm surges, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, cyclones, tsunamis and more.

By drawing inspiration from the political ecology of natural disasters, we explore how the securitised cultural-institutional production of particular floodscapes<sup>1</sup> – in our case the dynamics witnessed in the two coastal megacities of Jakarta and Manila – serves to create a *normed* state of exception through everyday meanings, metaphors and practices of securitised or militarised “flood cultures” and their consequent lived materialities. In particular, our discussion centres upon how contemporary localised meanings of normal-

1 For conceptual clarity, we borrow Balzacq et al.’s (2016: 495) definition of securitisation (in this context taking anticipatory meanings of flooding) as a process that creates its own “articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.), are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a concrete network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor’s reasons for choices and actions [...]”. At first glance, this definition takes the concept of securitisation beyond mere speech acts by incorporating both vivid and unseen materialities, including multi-sensory dynamics of the embodied, emotive and the affective.

cy and the “normed” are being produced, enacted and contested against the backdrop of urban flooding and state planning structures. By finding inspiration from these two urban contexts we put these island capitals into conversation with each other, particularly through their socio-environmental and post-colonial trajectories of urban development through the lens of their distinct “cultures” of flooding.

As a point of departure, we draw on diverse schools of securitisation and security studies and their relevance to these urban coastal dynamics, all connected through their concomitant blind spots. While critiquing the efficacy of studying states of “exceptionalism” and normed order as analytical dualisms, the second section of the paper discusses how the incidence of flooding has been regarded ambivalently by coastal communities, particularly by informal settlers who eke out a living from the sea or have been living relatively “amphibiously” and see both danger as well as opportunity, both exigency and continuity in the face of these watery incursions. Yet at the same time we argue that the securitised discursive practices and territorialised spaces produced by these distinct yet similar flood-related realities suggest a reading tangential to the seemingly contradictory ways in which diverse urban coastal and hinterland communities have evolved, adapted and continue to live with diverse forms of water. Moreover, we draw attention to the need for further exploratory work to trace discursive tipping points that re-frame flooding and flood-prone spaces as states of exception to “normed exceptions”, combined with newly emergent narratives and practices that underpin how watery riskscape are not only potentially securitised, but also imaginatively interpreted, sustained and lived in.

The third and fourth sections of the paper delve into the two case studies featuring urban flood-related contexts, which differ in terms of their hydrological and geomorphological conditions, the actor constellations and the thematic domains of DRR work, as well as in their discursive framings and practices of flood management and mitigation in the broadest sense. The first empirical context engages with the institutionalisation and popularisation of Manila’s estuarine flood-related DRR Command Centres and training facilities among Local Government Units (LGUs), while tracing their discursive development and materialisation as a one-stop social emergency cum environmental surveillance arm, inspired by contemporary American institutions such as the National Guard and the 911 crisis response platform. As a case in point, we draw on Metro Manila’s Pasig City LGU and its very well financed DRR Command Centre coordinated by the Mayoral Office at its City Hall.

The second case study draws on the establishment and legitimation of Jakarta’s Satpol P.P. – a special municipal police authorised to implement the clearance of informal “squatter” settlements, particularly along the megacity’s densely populated flood-prone northern coastline. We trace the state-led polit-

icisation and conflation of informal and semi-formal neighbourhood *kampung*s<sup>2</sup> with urban flooding and look at the intrinsic ambivalences and contradictions undergirding official top-down securitised discourses and practices that guide integrated action against (and in response to) rainwater flooding and coastal saltwater incursions. This is contrasted with the more vernacular interpretations of what it is like to live with diverse kinds of flooding. Thus while the Manila context considers highly formalised and expert-led discursive meanings and practices in response to a particular interpretation of its localised “flood culture” (at the local city/municipal level), our insights from Jakarta draw attention to vernacular articulations, embodied knowledges and their readings of a similar hazard-bound flood-related reality in which state-led and communal responses come to be relatively more differentiated.

Yet it is worth noting that we steer away from drawing clear-cut scalar differences between the LGU/municipal level and Manila and Jakarta’s neighbourhood-based *barangay*<sup>3</sup> and *kampung* levels by focusing primarily on the everyday life with and meaning-making processes around floods that go beyond their singularised interpretations as contemporary sources of risk. While the making of floodscapes is particularly salient to both contexts, we place equal emphasis on the generative and productive qualities of flooding (i.e. the lived materialities of diverse kinds of water and their circulations), as well as the social meanings and practices they configure.

Methodologically, the study draws upon qualitative ethnographic research conducted in northern Jakarta and in Metro Manila between February and June 2017, together with a return visit to Jakarta in May 2018 in order to reflect upon policy changes put in place since the election of a new mayor. In Indonesia, the site selected for comparison was Kampung Aquarium in Jakarta Utara, which bore witness to the forced relocation of informal settlements due to the construction of coastal defence infrastructure in order to redress recurrent flooding as a result of stormwater run-off, land subsidence and seaward storm surges. Three in-depth group interviews were conducted with former settlers largely comprising fishers, together with RUJAK – a pro-poor activist network with which many of the formerly displaced residents partnered. In contrast, the insights gleaned from Metro Manila were shaped through three consecutive visits to the Pasig City Council’s Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) office, which hosted the megacity’s first “Command Centre” in place: a bureaucratic institution inspired by traditional military practices. The visits were further supplemented by four in-depth interviews with Pasig City’s Chief DRR Officer within its Command Centre, together with the coordinators of its training unit. The findings were further complemented with 10 semi-struct-

2 A neighbourhood enclosure, smaller than a hamlet; usually associated (although not exclusively) with rural and peri-urban settlements across the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

3 The smallest administrative unit.

tured interviews at local *barangay* level, primarily with informal settlers who were mainly factory workers or fished for a living.

The qualitative interviews were designed to understand how routinised state-bureaucratic processes of securitising spaces in response to and in anticipation of recurrent flooding came to be legitimised by local authorities, while at the same time being socially normed and/or contested by the very communities they intended to safeguard. Particular attention was paid to how municipal and community-level discourses constructed flooding as both an emergency and aberration in daily life, and also as a political narrative in shaping processes of state surveillance and land clearance, and in justifying the displacement of informal settlers, with little or no tenurial security. Thus we adopt a reading of securitisation that comprises more than simply the melding of the discursive and the material. The ethnographic research aimed to explore the underpinning dynamics of how processes of re/de-politicisation assume an iterative quality in normatively framing what socially accepted modes of responding to and dwelling with the incidence of recurring flooding ought to be, privileging whose perspectives and why.

## 1. Flood cultures: between normalcy and exceptionalism

When exploring the nexus evidenced in the everyday politics of urban planning, state surveillance and flood protection, two distinct scholarly traditions that have conventionally remained distinct can be traced: securitisation discourses and those related to critical interpretations of socio-environmental risk and vulnerability. The first entails the largely Anglo-European body of literature stemming from a number of disciplinary traditions (e.g. International Relations, Political Science, Political Sociology and Legal Studies) which themselves embody a number of conceptual and empirical tensions. Tellingly, one of these has been the deepening and broadening of the very notion “security” and “securitisation” – as event, process and as a set of discursive practices replete with their own material technologies and discursive speech acts as seen in the Copenhagen School (cf. Baldwin 1997, Buzan et al. 1998, Floyd 2007, Diskaya 2013). In critiquing the survivalist, neo-utilitarian framing of former approaches, the neo-Marxian and Frankfurt Critical Theory-inspired Welsh/Aberystwyth School (Booth 1991, Wyn Jones 1995) paid closer attention to the everyday routinisation (or normalisation) of securitisation structures and practices by tracing their underpinning knowledges, rationalities and distinct ways of forming subjects and objects.

Subsequently the post-structuralist Foucaultian-inspired Paris School complemented these framings by placing equal emphasis on practice-led method-

ologies, questioning how the very materialisations of securitisation infrastructures and enactments (within their broader scope as *dispositifs*) continued to shape historic and contemporary relations of power, while firmly entrenching their work in the everyday dynamics of immigration politics and border crossing (cf. Skinner 2002, Bigo / Guild 2005). Yet the post-positive leanings of these schools of thought (particularly evident in the older Copenhagen School) continue to raise further questions regarding how the politics of the normal (as a state of perceiving and being-in-the-world) could be studied, without succumbing to binary-laden interpretations of normalcy and exceptionalism. Therefore, while these more recent conceptualisations allow for the fact that normality itself could be interpreted as a historically, geographically and socio-politically contingent construct, the ontological dimensions of security analyses – particularly in terms of how iteratively processes of politicisation and depoliticisation of a certain issue unfold – remain an embattled discussion.

The second strand of scholarship emerges from a general focus of the more traditional hazard literature rooted in how societies can be protected against the effects of catastrophic, hazardous events. Flooding has conventionally been discussed as a material event for redress, for which distinct forms of expertise, political steps and infrastructural adjustments are becoming necessary.<sup>4</sup> Disaster events themselves were seen as states of exception, as “departures from ‘normal’ social functioning” (Wisner et al. 2004: 10), whereas societal recovery was perceived as a return to the “normal”. With the introduction of the concept of vulnerability into hazard research in the 1970s and 1980s, the shift to analysing the societal disposition towards hazard events was refined, and the depiction of hazards as merely being shaped by natural factors progressively came to be rejected.

In particular, critical geography introduced ideas from emerging political ecology debates to hazard research, also borrowing from postcolonial and critical Development Studies perspectives (e.g. Wisner et al. 2004, Windmüller 2012, Ranganathan 2015). This wide-ranging corpus engages with the social construction of hazards and the broader social contexts in creating these very risks. For example, the introduction of more interpretive and constructivist approaches included diverse social perceptions of risks (e.g. Slovic 1987, Wildavsky / Dake 1990) and the idea that risks and hazards were not only socially constructed, but were an integral part of everyday practices and the very process of meaning-making with regards to the natural and social processes

4 Starting with the seminal works of Gilbert White (White 1974, White / Haas 1975), hazard research in the second half of the 20th century saw a gradual shift away from viewing disaster events in isolation, increasingly turning towards the manifold interactions between “natural” events and the territorialised social riskscape determining the impacts of such events on individuals or groups. A utilitarian thrust remained, determining the kind of research that was carried out with regards to flooding and other hazards, very much targeted towards identifying measures that balance societal losses and expenditures to minimise those losses (Pohl 2008).

that amalgamate in hazard situations. These readings also took into account the fact that culturally contingent interpretations and practices play important roles in the construction of risks and influence the extent to which certain risks are seen as significant threats to societies, their expected scale of losses, as well as suitable adaptation strategies.

In both strands of research – spanning critical security and hazard research related to the politics of socio-environmental change – relatively less emphasis is placed on the social production of “normalcy” within and beyond the guise of exceptionalism, particularly in terms of its nested qualities and the spaces in between states of routinisation and exigency, emergency and the routine. While contemporary theorisations on security and vulnerability have certainly progressed beyond these timeworn polarisations – i.e. normalcy versus exceptionality, emergency versus *doxa* – conceptual advances on the study of securitisation as being perpetually and fundamentally incomplete in its amorphousness remain a core concern throughout this paper.

While the in/visibility of urban contexts as “silent security dilemmas” (Hansen 2000) in further exacerbating structures of inequality and marginality have been explored, their particularity has been analysed through more macro-oriented terms such as “emergencies” (Loh 2016), particularly in relevance to their competing politics of urban modernity and socio-environmental change.<sup>5</sup> As Greg Bankoff (2001) argues, expert-led and everyday discourses on how hazard-related vulnerabilities are presented bear historical roots insofar that they often reflect socio-cultural values pertaining to how certain world regions and micro sites are often imaged. As with the sense of tropicality and otherness that was once the aegis of a modernist “conceptual geography of western medicine” that rendered certain parts of the world unsafe, the mantra of natural disasters themselves could be traced as a distinct cultural discourse that legitimised vulnerability as a pathological state of being, requiring intervention (Bankoff 2001: 21).

More recent scholarship on the phenomenology of flooding draws attention to their lived ambivalence, as such events present not only uncertainty and a deviation from normal routines, but also offer opportunities for creative income generation which have often been overlooked in conventional adaptation research in urban contexts (Simarmata 2018: 124). This is not to romanticise the incidence of flooding, but to draw attention to what we term the “enculturation of flooding” – entrenched in the idea of “living with floods” from marine and coastal phenomenological perspectives (cf. Ehlert 2012, McEwen et al. 2014, Siriwardane-de Zoysa / Hornidge 2016). This notion

5 Here the framing of emergencies is used to integrate two related concepts – that of crisis-as-emergency and change (emergence) in which particular historic contexts have determined how and why certain issues have been framed and prioritised over others, and what kind of change was envisioned, and how (Loh 2016: 685).



gives way to broader questions of ontological normalisation. Flood cultures present both spectacle as well as management (as a normed order), continually working to reinforce one another, for without a repeated “event” such response actions could not be as cogently legitimated and routinised into daily practices.

Yet the notion of normalisation requires further empirical elucidation. Normalisation may not merely imply how particular securitised discourses and surveillance regimes begin to meld and ultimately disappear into the mainstream mundanity of urban life. While the lived nature of floods prompts us to step beyond the compass of dramatised news discourses (i.e. the narrativisation and signification of flooding), floodscapes may not only legitimate acts such as surveillance as a given, but take on more generative or productive qualities of their own. Thus it may be recalcitrance and non-compliance that are deemed as states of exception in the face of anticipated normalised flooding. Similarly, diverse technologies from the most basic CCTV cameras to donor-funded early warning systems may not act as panopticons themselves without the refashioning of flooding as what Platt (1999) and others have called “a moral hazard”. High-modernist discourses on urban flood control have often privileged certain circuits of blame, while prioritising the disciplining of particular social groups.

As the two case studies differentially reveal, the layered complexities brought about by urban sprawl and agglomeration, compounded by inadequate drainage, sanitation, solid waste disposal and excessive groundwater extraction leading to land subsidence, create an unequal matrix of spatio-temporal risk that has often been intrinsically linked with the presence of informal settlements, unregulated squatting and “slum” housing – as witnessed, for example, along coastal dumpsites, riverine fringes and the edges of railway lines. In this context, urban flooding is not merely *lived* as an event that in turn patterns a raft of urban uncertainties; flooding – as a multi-sensory experiential process – comes to be imbued with distinct cultural identities and modes of action. It may seem intuitive that the incidence of flooding is never experienced homogenously within a given society, yet the underlying meanings of safety and peril, of threat and opportunity, determine how particular flood-prone spaces and communities are diversely securitised – taking into account both expert- and state-led discourses alongside “lay” meanings of watery incursions. It is at this point that the more recent “vernacular turn” within critical and ontological security studies can be cross-fertilised with contemporary socio-environmental research (cf. Croft / Vaughan-Williams 2016, George 2017, Innes 2017), by enlivening the notion of both distinct and interrelated flood cultures. For example, in urban and peri-urban Indonesian

contexts such as Jakarta and Semarang, the term *nerimo*<sup>6</sup> bears a strong religious connotation, embodying sensibilities such as surrender, augmented with meanings of *tahan* (i.e. to keep strong in the face of hardship), while the concept of *aman*<sup>7</sup> captures more collective, holistic understandings of normed order, safety and wellbeing that transcend more universalised place- and event-based notions of security.

Lastly, while there has been a broad appeal in calling for pluralising conceptual readings of “security” as a static, unidimensional and linear concept, “ordinary” people further provoke several epistemological challenges, one of which entails normative readings of social action combined with the negation of power interests and relationships (Jarvis 2018: 16). It is this ambivalence that our study also sets out to understand, for their concomitant processes of securitisation, however top-down or bottom-up, elude being normatively labelled or dualistically read as either being positive or inherently negative. Yet what this study aims to reveal are the socio-material implications, precursors and aftermaths seen in enculturating flooding primarily as a mode of normed securitisation that encompasses one way of responding to watery flows.

## 2. Umpiring flood cultures: Manila’s Disaster Command Centres

Metro Manila has often been referenced as one of the world’s “disaster capitals”. As Bankoff writes in his seminal text *Cultures of Disaster* (2003), the epistemological lens with which Western social sciences frame risk and vulnerability proves inadequate; for Filipinos, hazards and disasters translate as frequent life events in which the “normalisation of threat” goes beyond shared structures of routinised coping (ibid: 265). This normalisation and the experience of varied socio-environmental phenomena (earthquakes and tremors, monsoonal flooding, storm surges, etc.) can be similarly contested in light of increases in the frequency of cyclonic movements and their heightened intensity – taking for example the case of the super-typhoon Haiyan / Yolanda (2009), swiftly followed by Bopha / Pablo a year later and Rammasun / Glenda in 2014.

Metro Manila is one of Southeast Asia’s most complex postcolonial megacities, comprising 17 administrative cities run by local government units (LGUs) through the decentralisation of state power in the 1990s. These “cities” remain connected through the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), tasked with the management of solid waste disposal and traffic regu-

6 To be passive or acquiescent to one’s fate.

7 To be secure.

lation, while overseeing hinterland and coastal flood control operations (Porio 2012: 8). The politics of metropolitan flood control were a salient governance issue also under Spanish and later American colonial administration, given Manila's location on an alluvial flood plain between the Pasig and Marikina rivers, crosscut by tectonic fault lines.

Due to the city's low-lying lands and recurrent silting during periods of colonial urbanisation, an intricate system of embankments and *esteros* (canals) was put in place to channel storm water flooding. During the Marcos dictatorship, particularly in the 1980s, the response to catastrophic flooding events with populist relief efforts derived political purchase through large-scale infrastructural projects such as dykes and the networked installation of pumps, water gates, storm signal systems and more (Loh / Pante 2015). Today, the discourses of anticipatory, pre-emptive action still serve to legitimate the popularity of mayors and LGU administrative executives. As our interviews reveal, the discursive shift from flood-led response to anticipatory action has prominently featured the establishment of disaster-related "Command Centres", with the first being instigated in 2010 in the relatively more affluent corporate-driven Pasig City following the wake of the super-typhoon Haiyan.

Indeed, the operation of Disaster Risk Reduction units or taskforces across the different cities is an older feature, in which a DRR officer and team would be tasked with the role of coordinating preventive, response and recovery efforts in the event of any hazard-related occurrence. The setting up of the first Command Centre in the Pasig LGU, financed by the City Hall and embedded within the Pasig City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PC-DRRMO), was established under the direct supervision of the Mayor Bobby C. Eusebio. In its formative stages it served as an early crisis response warning facility modelled along the lines of the United States's 911 helpline service. Subsequently it came as little surprise that the American National Guard – mobilised in the wake of Hurricane Katrina almost half a decade earlier – was called upon for the first round of training of LGU emergency response personnel. While the trajectory of its establishment goes beyond the purview of this paper, it is worth noting that the first Command Centre, along which others were subsequently modelled and which its chief once referred to as "the first and last line of defence", changed the face of governing Metro Manila's flood culture(s) (interview with DDR departmental head, May 2017, Manila).

While conventional hydrological devices and instruments have historically supported Manila's flood control regimes, the PC-DRRMO operates through the deployment of over 200 CCTV cameras interspersed across 80 per cent of the city, as confirmed by the DRR chief during our fieldwork. The aerial images that line its walls are monitored by staff on a roster basis at all times

night and day – including public holidays. The Command Centre also acts as first port of call for the deployment of medical and rescue personnel, serving, in the words of one systems operator, as a “one-stop shop for immediate information on what is happening, and where”. Furthermore the activities of the PC-DRRMO’s Command Centre are complemented by the Rescue Emergency and Disaster Training Centre (RED), which – as stated in its training brochure – provides “civilian and professional responders the opportunity to learn, practice, and integrate medical, theoretical, technical, and leadership skills”. The motto “*accipio, instruo et servo*” (“Learn, Prepare and Serve”) festoons its entrance. What is interesting about its current suite of programmes is that it integrates very little flood-related response and management – while focusing almost entirely on search and rescue skills, fire-related and other emergencies characteristic of high-rise urban living. It is this feature that the training facilities often market, in attracting state-sponsored military and civil defence trainees primarily from South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka), together with private security personnel from the United States, the United Kingdom and the Asian Development Bank Headquarters in Manila.

At first glance the establishment of Manila’s disaster Command Centres – now being replicated in less affluent cities such as coastal Navotas (characterised by more informal settlements, fisheries and harbour infrastructure) – may appear unremarkable against the backdrop of its flood control measures. Yet arguably the shift in importance now rendered to the use of civilian surveillance as a monitoring device, as opposed to the conventional hydrological infrastructural means that were adopted previously, imbues cities like Pasig with a distinct flood culture – one characterised not just by immediacy but also by the performative nature of anticipatory action. Pasig’s use of social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook) acts as more than a platform to disseminate knowledge. As R. Aseron, a Pasig resident recently remarked on the Facebook page of the PC-DRRMO (accessed 1 February 2018): “Whenever I hear [a] mobile with sirens passing along our vicinity, instantaneously, I will check this page for any update, on which it will always show real time updates”. It is a sense of immediacy that does not stop at a given temporal order, but arguably percolates down to the very smallest administrative unit of an LGU *barangay*-neighbourhood, in which *barangay* captains were formerly tasked with the role of providing evacuation orders as the first line of community action.

Moreover the swift mobilisation, deployment and movement of resources across the LGU was often described with the vocabulary of military efficiency, in which the “civilian guards” appointed were no longer simply agents of neighbourhood watch teams. They were also trained in basic self-defence as in the case of simple search and rescue tasks, which in the words of one DRR officer was necessary to circumvent and to contain threats presented by both

natural hazards as well as potential criminal activity during the advent of disaster. What the example of Manila's highly popular self-replicating Command Centres points towards is the securitisation of a bureaucratic arm that was formerly entrenched within its conventional order of administrative governance. Arguably then, the models of action inspired by militarised routines seem to present a simulacrum of a normatively securitised flood culture – in which communicative lines of command and action barely veer away from a scripted order for response. As a Pasig City DRR officer remarked during an interview:

[...] most people do not adequately prepare themselves for a full day, after being evacuated for whatever reason – typhoon, flood, earthquake [...] Disasters bring out the worst in people, and it is our task to ensure that proper conduct is maintained. This is why our skills and training integrate many aspects beyond natural hazards including road accidents, bomb diffusion, the handling of hazardous material [...] (interview with a Pasig City DRR officer, Pasig City, May 2017).

It must also be borne in mind that the Pasig Command Centre has not, until this date, been put to the test with a challenging disaster situation warranting the swift deployment of hundreds of professional and civilian volunteer personnel. Thus the powerful image of “waiting for the siren(s)” conveys the anticipatory immediacy of a particular urban flood culture that is increasingly being simulated – both materially through training, and imaginatively through collective discourses.

Yet the “normalisation of threat” remains encoded in an arguably more passive set of social practices in the case of top-down disaster risk planning. Under-researched vernacular communal geographies across diverse informal settler *barangays* along the northern reaches of Manila Bay are seen at times to encompass divergent narratives that go beyond exigencies to survive – embodied in the Tagalog notion of *diskarté*, evolving from its Spanish root (meaning “ways and means of how to be”, also entailing resourcefulness). Living with watery incursions therefore requires the creative adaptation and transformation of living patterns, often evidenced in the ways in which low-impact informal settler households securely fasten their homes to one another in order to prevent abodes from being washed away – a form of high-density living often perceived a primary source of fire-related hazards by state authorities.

Thus anticipatory perceptions of flooding – particularly from tidal surges in coastal spaces – can, at first glance, be seen to sit in juxtaposition with official state narratives. Meanings and practices of preparedness, response and adaptation may differ vastly, given the livelihood-based attachment to place that the coastal poor often articulate. Yet arguably, sensibilities of normalisation to flood realities bear close parallels in ways that their social practices do not entirely rupture modes of everyday life. At both levels – communal and

state-led – processes of “norming” have led to ways in which formal DRR and semi/informal “solutions” have encompassed broader agendas that go beyond concerns for mere survival. Therefore the enculturing of flooding, particularly via its discourses, plays an integral role in not only shaping a totalising surveillance regime at the city/municipal level, but also serves to justify (or to challenge) a sense of legitimate presence, against official perceptions towards informal land use and “squatting”. The next case context, in Jakarta, further illustrates vernacular meanings of “owning” and enculturing floods, given the pertinent differences from Manila, particularly given the overt militarisation of DRR mitigation action within the informal *kampung* settlements of Northern Jakarta.

### 3. Enculturing floods amid displacement: Jakarta’s Satpol P.P.

As in the case of Manila, northern Jakarta’s urban coastalscapes offer not only dynamic vibrant life and livelihood options, but also carry the double, if not triple burden of socio-environmental pressures connected to in-migration, extreme weather events and climate variability. As Simone (2014) argues, the socio-economic promises of Jakartan urban life can quickly become a mirage in the everyday struggles to survive, especially for low- and middle-income dwellers who particularly face precarious livelihood situations and challenging environmental conditions. Faced with what Padawangi and Douglass (2015) have called an “era of chronic flooding”, low-income households in Jakarta’s coastal areas have, over the past decades, developed diverse strategies to adapt and at the same time to self-mitigate. Due to the geomorphological and hydrological conditions of urban coastal Jakarta, considerable areas face regular tidal flooding, locally referred to as *banjir rob*.

In recent years, “sources of flooding have become ever more complex through combinations of global climate change and human transformations of the urban landscape” (Padawangi / Douglass 2015: 517), and it is projected that heavy rain events will become more frequent with the impact of climate change (Abidin et al. 2008). Apart from stormwater flooding and surface runoff, northern Jakarta, which is flanked on one side by the Java Sea, also experiences diverse circulations of water due to freshwater salinisation, backflow and land subsidence as low-lying infrastructures sink deeper due to heavy groundwater extraction, while low-income neighbourhoods find themselves being constantly inundated with pools of stagnant algal water.

Unlike polarised neighbourhoods in Metro Manila that distinguish the affluent from the informal, low-income enclaves in coastal Jakarta lie interspersed with newly built recreational sites and higher-end housing estates.

More traditional settlements are often referred to as *kampung*s, characterised by their specific forms of communal housing and open spaces (Zhu / Simarmata 2014). But they are increasingly becoming associated with poverty and marginality, often combined with dense living conditions and the lack of basic services such as sanitation and running water, electricity and solid waste management (Winayanti / Lang 2004: 42). Typically, as in the case of Manila, *kampung*s have also been clustered along flood-prone riverbanks, the fringes of reservoirs, along state-owned shorelines and interspersed between industrial blocs. Yet it must be borne in mind that *kampung*s have always remained a characteristic feature, embryonic of most Indonesian cities alongside rapid processes of urbanisation. Thus as Simarmata (2018) posits, the city and the *kampung* can never be conceptually nor empirically separated given their mutual embeddedness and interdependence, as spaces of informality have often serviced everyday urban life. Within these *kampung*s, the heterogeneity of resident groups can be distinguished between differing states of illegality or semi-legality with respect to their tenurial security.

While low-income dwellers continue to look for housing opportunities on unused state and private land irrespective of existing titles, their sites of “squatting” and encroachment are often perceived outside the vernacular frame of public order (*ketertiban umum*). This is a narrative often used as a legitimating discourse in regulating where citizens can stay or move, particularly with regard to the occupancy of state urban and provincial land. To facilitate the policing of settlement boundaries, Jakarta’s government founded the Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja (abbreviated as the Satpol P.P.) or the “Public Order Enforcers”, an auxiliary security unit tasked with performing municipal duties. The unit itself is relatively old, having been formed in the 1950s during Dutch colonisation, and also operated outside Java in spaces like Madura. The later modernisation of Satpol P.P. was governed by a regulatory act (the Pemerintah PP Number 6) in 2010, which reorganised its enforcement authority and mandated role within the aegis of regulating domestic settlement patterns, including the supervision of legal business activities. In contemporary life, these units also encompass a visible ethnic Muslim Batawi identity, given their links with the Forum Batawi at *kampung* level, drawing their support base largely from local uniformed youth and using the *parang*<sup>8</sup> symbol as their logo.

Among its duties, Satpol P.P. is seen as a unit that has been instrumental in assisting the local government of Jakarta in operationalising flood mitigation measures through the clearance (or “sweeping”) of significant watershed spaces. Moreover it can be argued that in the past years, the mandate of Satpol P.P. has been continuously reworked: starting as a product of national legislation,

8 A type of machete or cleaver used in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

the unit today is very much adjusted to the regulative needs of the city and its sub-district level, acting as a boundary object between state authorities and citizenry when it concerns public eviction orders. Over the course of a decade, the Satpol P.P. has been mobilised a number of times in civil society – from the guarding of vital anti-flood infrastructure such as *kampung* “pump houses” during times of tidal floods in Muara Bahru, to demolition activities along embankments in Kampung Aquarium and Luar Batang, resulting at times in violent clashes with citizens as they hurled stones, Molotov cocktails and chanted shalawat.

One of the most publicised cases that connects the securitisation of flood mitigation with Satpol P.P. involved the largest reservoir in Jakarta, Waduk Pluit, to the west of which lies a highly regulated luxury housing market that faces rows of stilted squatter settlements on the reservoir’s eastern bank. In efforts to increase the reservoir’s retention capacity after stormwater flooding in the early 2010s, the municipal government implemented measures to clean and dredge the reservoir of floating debris – a process that took over a year. What naturally followed was forced eviction (Thamrin 2009), as in Kampung Aquarium.

How may a *kampung* resident’s particular enculturation of flooding experiences differ from the securitised perceptions of state authorities which view flooding as what Simarmata (2018: 47) calls a “preventable disaster”? When tracing the narratives of displaced fisherfolk from Kampung Aquarium, insights to these questions take us back to the lived experiences of flooding and the recurrent sensing of flooding in association with being a member of the urban poor. Put differently, living with floods – more than merely coping with them – was often seen as a form of enskillment with respect to urban coastal dwelling. Flooding did not make people inherently insecure; it was the securitisation of flooding trajectories – from their circuits of blame to the ascription of victimhood – which further legitimised eviction orders and forcible displacement that rendered the coastal urban poor insecure.

The securitising logic culminating in evictions all along the coast in North Jakarta has to some extent changed since the gubernatorial elections in Jakarta and the assumption of office by Anies Baswedan in October 2017. Besides a clear anti-reclamation position, Baswedan’s campaign argued for considering the fisherfolk’s perspectives when planning developments along the coast and for stopping forced evictions along the waterways and shorelines (cf. Budiari 2017). After his election, works at the reclamation areas along the coast were temporarily suspended and no further eviction campaigns have taken place in North Jakarta. “We do see a shift of policies after the governor has changed”, as a member of the RUJAK Centre for Urban Studies in Jakarta explained, adding that *kampung* improvement and social housing initiatives have increased, new regulatory bodies have been formed and money has been allocat-



ed for community action planning (interview with a RUJAK representative, Jakarta, May 2018). In Kampung Aquarium, signs of a cautious optimism seem to confirm this assessment: after a forceful cleaning of the settlement and the relocation of households by Satpol P.P. in 2016, the few inhabitants that still live in the *kampung* have recently elaborated a community action plan facilitated by RUJAK and the NGO Urban Poor Coalition (UPC). In this plan, the location of the *kampung* on the coast has been made the central asset of a “maritime *kampung*” to be constructed on the site of the former settlement (interview with UPC/RUJAK activists). “Whether or not families will be willing to come back remains to be seen” was the dominant narrative on the future prospects of *kampung* re-development. What seem to have changed are the perceptions of an increasing livelihood and the security and safety of living conditions. Recently, Satpol P.P. has been employed to seal off constructions on reclaimed islands that have been erected without building permits rather than in further eviction campaigns along the coast (cf. Jakarta Post 2018).

Furthermore vernacularised meanings of security often play out in very material senses – of modes of being and dwelling amidst coastal change. One such example can be found in the perceived precarity of contemporary stilted *rumah panggung* homes. While their amphibious design enables them to withstand the wear and tear of recurrent tidal floods, a group of forcibly evicted Bugis, Sundanese and Batawi fishermen and boatmen wholeheartedly dismissed the value of maintaining *panggung* homes. Many of these former residents had continually evolving social ties across spaces like Sulawesi and Sumatra – some traveling frequently between Jakarta and the spaces their parents and grandparents left behind. They saw the disadvantages of a home on stilts to be many: at first they felt that these lacked the aesthetic appeal of cemented homes, which they asserted were neater and more “orderly”. Upon further discussion, a more cogent trope of modernity and modernisation arguably emerges. As one emphatically stated: “when you are in Jakarta, you must change” (interview with an evicted *kampung* dweller, Jakarta, February 2017). Yet there was another undercurrent that became visible – the fact that cemented homes were more “fixed” and “sturdier”.

Upon a closer look at these narratives, the fixities articulated were not simply architectural. They symbolised a form of emplacement, of belonging to a space that they steadfastly called home because they either grew up in Aquarium or raised families there who were invariably Jakartians. Yet to take it further, more than just a symbol of belonging and fixity to the land (i.e. land in which they held no formal certificates of residence to) – the conversion to cemented homes which happened en masse during the early and mid-1990s almost seemed to cement their own meanings of security through the material enculturing of lived flooding, which often ran counter to narratives of flood-prone precariousness and risk.

## 4. Conclusion

The high degree of subjectivity (of context) greatly matters here, for securitisation is multi-threaded, never linear nor sequential, leaving room for acknowledging more than merely the processual ways of the formation of practice. Rather than to disengage ourselves from the notion of “securitisation” we have argued for vernacular theorisations and ways of meaning-making through perceptions and trajectories of normalisation (of dis/order, social action, presence, legitimation, etc.) whether in the context of the seemingly unexceptional/mundane (e.g. a routine electricity outage), or as spectacle – such as an earthquake, hurricane or other natural disaster or a political event. Thus within this integrative notion of securitisation (and its limits), flooding could be superficially seen as a spectacular event, yet is also possesses an inherently routine characteristic as opposed to a relatively more spontaneous occurrence. Arguably it is this state of inbetweenness – of exigency and the slow “creep” of rising or incursive waters – that we have sought to problematise in terms of both narrative repertoires as well as lived materialities. Furthermore, the very normative identities that are imbued to flooding make its enculturation relevant, once it is experientially lived – rather than witnessed or avoided entirely. It is this sensibility that is captured in the opening quote of the paper by the DRR officer in the City of Navotas (Manila), reflecting on the very ontological dimensions of securitising flooding as a watery incursion, that is both ordinary as well as exceptional.

Yet it must be asked how salient the notion of “normalisation” is (as both event and also social process) in the contemporary study of securitised floodscapes. Moreover, what analytical framings of securitisation promise nuanced readings into contexts such as Metro Manila and Jakarta, in which state-defined everyday security concerns and DRR measures appear to be intertwined?

While the politics of flood control and management in these two cities adopt a distinctly expert-led and technocratic cast, it must be borne in mind that emergency-making discourses and localised action also encapsulate a broader politics of urban change and dwelling. Prescriptive policy solutions may often cohere with elite agendas of nation building, legitimating particular forms of democracy, citizenship and decision making, countering fears (such as the advent of communism) which in turn produce “crisis situations of their own making [...] both spontaneous and organized” (Loh 2006: 684). As Loh and Pante (2015) argue, the lived materialities, discourses and imaginaries of flooding may be readily taken as a microcosm in which the control of ecological nature and human nature (through the taming of both watery movements and human behaviour) presents a particular normed order in its own right. Flooding therefore can be seen not merely as an emergency or crisis

event. The very chains of culpability in which flooding has been officially interpreted (and narrated) bring to the fore meanings and visions of particular kinds of urban modernity and forms of dwelling/being-in-the-world in which securitising both the normal as well as the aberrant was a necessary feature. Both Jakarta and Metro Manila present similar ways in which old and new geographies of flooding have been traversed and negotiated; they also present distinct discursive meanings and nature-cultures of/around flooding – implying the invasive “social” just as much as ecologically-framed watery incursions.

Finally, how do diverse conceptual frames in the study of everyday flood cultures compare in terms of their analytical purchase? Firstly, the two case studies may present different interpretations with regard to what the normed securitisation of flooding realities actually means. In the case of the institutionalisation of disaster by the Command Centres in Metro Manila, states of normalcy and exigency arguably exist not as juxtapositions but as a seamless trajectory of action made possible through the visual surveillance technologies and communal warning mechanisms in which flood cultures are pre-empted and actualised in terms of their planned responses. Thus the “high securitisation” of Command Centres enables staff (and the volunteers deployed) to live with the prophylactic imagination of flooding in which simulation training and images produced on the wall by its many CCTV cameras offer possibilities of flattening multi-sensory perceptions of flooding into a gaze. In this light, critical security studies may offer the tools with which to trace visible assemblages of the securitisation process (actors, technologies, discourses, routinised practices, etc.), but may seem less valuable in offering insights into how normed realities are co-produced through meanings of anticipatory being and of creative emergence – whether in justifying coercive, adaptive or transformative practices.

In the case of northern Jakarta, the virulence with which forced evictions have taken place with the assistance of the Satpol P.P. points to the fact that flooding is not by any means “normalised” as a political discourse, with almost a zero-tolerance level. Flooding is thus seen as an anomaly to be remedied primarily through clearance activity – whether the cleaning of drainage systems, the removal of solid waste or the relocation of informal settlements. Vernacular meanings of public order with which the state justifies its actions stand as the very antithesis of perceiving flooding as a routine occurrence. Yet the narratives of local coastal communities that eke out a living from the shoreline or the sea perceive flooding as a normalised experience insofar as it constitutes part and parcel of life in informal settlements. It is this very experience of flooding as a discourse of non-affectedness that creates its ambivalence – as the presence of water facilitates both the propensity to occupy

marginal lands, while at the same time legitimating the (often violent) processes of relocation to dryer spaces.

Thus the vernacularisation of “security” as a lived concept bears importance in revealing ambivalent and contradictory meanings that occupy a sense of neither normalcy nor exceptionalism, safety nor peril. But to trace these meanings (and their historic evolutionary trajectories) requires an integration of broader theoretical currents calling for more interdisciplinary and fine-grained analyses into phenomenologies of risk and hazard-related “opportunities”, a nascent field of socio-ecological research. Therefore, arguably, the notion of “security” itself may not fully encompass the hybrid meanings of living with floodscapes, but may offer a vantage point from which to analyse their everyday realities.

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