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**Called by the Soul:  
Becoming a ‘Developer’ in Medan, Indonesia**

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**ABSTRACT**

State-led community-driven development programs invite *orang biasa* (ordinary people) to become 'developers'. Located between society and the state, this positioning offers certain possibilities for being and becoming: possibilities that may have been unobtainable to many prior to their involvement. This paper examines processes of self-becoming among volunteers in one such program in Medan, Indonesia. Rather than turn to analytical devices that indicate the disciplining of development subjects, I draw upon volunteers' own understandings of personhood to reveal the program as a site for the enactment and realisation of a possible self. Volunteers are 'called by the soul' (*terpanggil jiwa*) to undertake this work. They respond to the affective and emotive signals of the heart (*hati*) that align the *diri* (self) with the *jiwa* (soul). In tracing their 'becoming' within the program, I hint at the implications for new forms of urban sociality in Medan at a time of shifting state-society relations in Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

The first time we met Pak Anto<sup>1</sup> was in Medan in April 2013 at a ceremony to mark the successful completion of a social welfare project. Pak Anto is the coordinator of the local Badan Keswadayaan Masyarakat (BKM—Board for Community Self-reliance): the implementing body at the local level for the Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Mandiri—Perkotaan (National Program for Community Empowerment Self-Reliant—urban). Pak Anto was wearing the blue shirt of the BKM uniform, embroidered with the logo of the local BKM, as well as that of the national program. He was an unassuming figure at the ceremony, standing to the side of the government officials who were giving the speeches, prompting the local residents to come forward to receive their gifts, and encouraging guests to fill their plates from the spread of food laid out at the conclusion of the ceremony. After the guests had left, Pak Anto was visibly buzzing, chatting excitedly with us about the program, and the other activities of the BKM in the area.

Pak Anto is one of a new kind of ‘developer’ in Indonesia. He is from a modest socio-economic background, yet he also devotes much of his time to ‘developing’ his locality. He has been a recipient of government welfare in the past, but as coordinator he now leads the implementation of local development projects. These activities have great personal significance. Pak Anto says that from the responsibility of being coordinator: “my life has a meaning...If a human’s life has no meaning, we are an imperfect human. [The program] means that I am someone, to myself, family and others” (March 2014).<sup>2</sup> Throughout his life he has sought opportunities to work on behalf of others: efforts that have been frustrated due to his class and education status. It was not until the PNPM that this ambition was realised to his satisfaction. The significance of his comment lies not only in identifying a pathway to becoming a better person, but in becoming a socially recognised person for his own satisfaction and before others.

In this paper, I explore the ‘processes-of-self’, or the ways that people such as Pak Anto *become* in spaces of development. My contribution to the literature is three fold. First, I build upon research in the anthropology of development that recognises the ‘primacy of the personal’ (Fechter 2012): the ways developers’ values, perspectives, motivations and relationships shape development practices. The focus of extant research has mostly been the perspective of ‘aid workers’ from the Global North (Fechter et al 2012; Malkki 2015), or middle-class developers from the Global South (Pigg 1992 and Heaton-Shrestha 2006 are notable exceptions). Turning our attention to lower-class volunteers who come from and live within the ‘communities’ that are the target of development interventions offers additional insights into how the personal affects not only development practice, but also urban sociality and politics. I further argue for a focus on possibilities for self-formation within the ‘development arena’<sup>3</sup> as a critical intervention to understand the everyday realities of development contexts.<sup>4</sup> In this paper I explore how becoming a ‘developer’ provokes new self-imaginaries, and the ways volunteers find within this positioning a site for the enactment and affirmation of self.

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<sup>1</sup> All the names in this paper are pseudonyms, for the most part, selected by the respondents. Pak is the polite term used before the name of men, and Ibu is used for women. I have therefore not stated in each case whether a respondent is a man or woman.

<sup>2</sup> The translations in this paper are the author’s own, drawing upon Aida Harahap’s initial translations and returning to the original Indonesian transcripts and recordings to capture, as best I can, the intended meaning of the respondents.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow from Hilhorst and Jansen’s (2010) conceptualisation of the humanitarian arena: a space in which actors negotiate, contest meanings, and strategize in ways that shape aid and humanitarian outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> By ‘development contexts’, I am referring to the locales thick with the discourses, practices, institutions and encounters of intentional development, rather than referring to a perceived lack or deficiency.

Attention to the ways volunteers describe these processes of becoming also contributes to understandings of personhood in Indonesia. Explanations of volunteers' motivations and satisfactions indicate how they grapple with the "dilemma of reconciling a sense of personal freedom with an equally strong sense of being conditioned and contingent" (Jackson 2014: 39). Bringing indigenous theories of self into conversation with anthropological perspectives (and here I take my cue from Retsikas 2010) reveals the importance of experimentation, location, identification and reaffirmation for the processes of self-formation in Medan. Interrogation of the indigenous concepts of soul (*jiwa*) that is separate from a conscious self (*diri*), and a heart (*hati*) that affectively aligns action with the calling of the soul, provide different answers to the perennial questions as to the extent humans are constituted through symbolic systems and social relations, and how much is a response to pre-social desires or other directives such as fate or destiny (Jackson 2014; Moore 2007; Ortner 2006). I underline the religious foundations of theories of personhood in Medan, North Sumatera, to interpret volunteers' processes of 'self-becoming' as not only a reconciliation between self and society, but more importantly a process of locating, enacting and reaffirming one's self.

I argue that these indigenous theories of self are in themselves productive of particular forms of agency, and social change (Moore 2011: 15). Understanding the self as composed of a *jiwa* and *hati* enables experimentations in becoming; attentiveness to how one is affected by actions and interactions gestures to the individual when they have found alignment with particular ways of being. In agreement with Chandra and Majumder (2013) and Pandian and Ali (2011) I argue that these processes of self-formation and the emergence of alternative 'selves' are in relation to, and therefore both indicative and productive of, social transformation. A final contribution to the literature is therefore to examine the influence of processes of self within sites of local development for new forms of urban sociality in Medan. The above mentioned indigenous theories of personhood are incompatible with existing scholarship that emphasizes the self-governing aspects of subjectification and the constitution of citizen-subjects (Hoffman 2014; Chatterjee 2004). I am not in disagreement with this literature, but aim to provide an alternative reading of state-led efforts at producing subjects amenable to development. Empirical attention to the forms of personhood made possible through such efforts, as well as the emergent selves that actually arise within them, reveals that volunteers do not discipline themselves to externally imposed norms, as much as the development arena is amenable to their ways of being.

I suggest that the PNPM—a development program with the explicit aim of instilling values and practices in citizens—is an ideal site to consider the processes of self-formation of volunteers. After an overview of the program and the methods deployed to capture (fragments of) personhood, I present the empirical material in three stages of 'becoming': the decision to become a 'developer'; the moment at which one occupies the position; and acquiring the 'will to improve' (Li 2007). The three stages reflect the ways volunteers' self-formation is shaped by their own understandings of personhood which identifies an 'innate being', but also the importance of the practices and norms of the program for shaping the emergent self. The dialogic nature of self-becoming in which the self is not merely a response to the rationalities of the state, but also a desire for a particular modality of being, disrupts easy readings of how development enables or disables certain forms of personhood. Hence by establishing new possibilities for self, development initiatives such as the PNPM also contribute to urban sociality: a potential explored in the conclusion.

## A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The PNPM was launched in 2007 as the Government of Indonesia's flagship poverty alleviation program. At the time, the PNPM reached all villages (*perdesaan*—rural) and wards (*perkotaan*—urban) in Indonesia, making it the largest 'Community-Driven Development' (CDD) program in the world. The

aims of the PNPM are ‘fostering community participation, improving local governance, and delivering basic needs at the community level’ (World Bank, 2013: vi). At the urban level, the PNPM-Perkotaan was a continuation of the Program Penanggulangan Kemiskinan di Perkotaan (Urban Poverty Alleviation Program), or P2KP. The vision of P2KP was the “realization of civil society (*masyarakat mandani*) which is progressive, independent and prosperous in healthy, productive and sustainable neighbourhoods” ([www.p2kp.org](http://www.p2kp.org)).<sup>5</sup> Both the PNPM and P2KP were built around the model of development first designed as part of the Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) by the World Bank Social Development unit in Jakarta, which supported development planned and implemented by ‘communities’.

These programs were based on the premise that the people know best how to solve their problems, at the same time that communities were undergoing a period of moral crisis (Effendy 2015; Li 2006). In order to overcome urban poverty, ‘communities’ needed to be morally strengthened, given the resources and capabilities to undertake their own development.<sup>6</sup> The program thereby reflects the shift in thinking about the relation between citizens and the state, with new expectations on citizens to become active agents in development (a global trend, see Rudnycky and Schwittay 2014). An explicit objective of the PNPM is to impart certain values that are conducive to good governance (Effendy 2015; Marcus and Asmorowati 2006), or in other words, to teach citizens to engage with the state in new ways, or to inculcate new ways of being among its citizenry.

Critical to these objectives in the city of Medan is the establishment of agencies that are the implementing agents at the local level—the aforementioned BKM. There is one BKM comprising between 7 and 12 members for each Kelurahan: an urban administrative unit with a population between 10,000 and 30,000 residents. As implementing agents of the PNPM, they are responsible for developing a Community Development Plan and implementing projects in three areas: infrastructure (building of roads and drains etc.); economic (rotating funds and small enterprise development) and: social (small gifts of welfare and training). The people I spoke to were the members and coordinators of the most active and successful BKMs at the time, and it should be noted that this paper examines exceptional, rather than average experiences. BKM members are volunteers from the locality, elected by the local people every three years. BKM members describe themselves as *berbasis masyarakat*, emphasising that their basis is with the local ‘community’.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the BKM were established by facilitators employed by the state. The central and city level governments have supported the BKMs to develop the capacities, dispositions and organisational forms required by the program.

I argue that this dual location as being a part of the state, as well as having a basis in the *masyarakat*, makes BKMs an ideal site to explore the possibilities for self that arise within the development arena. BKMs exemplify what Ben Read describes as a ‘straddler’: an organization that sits not wholly within ‘civil society’, but are not state organizations per se. Rather, straddlers span

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<sup>5</sup> Author’s translation

<sup>6</sup> The Jokowi government has signaled its intention to cease funding the PNPM-Perkotaan in order to focus on rural development. On my last visit to Medan in April 2015, BKM members facilitators and the city level government were preparing BKMs to access alternative funds through ‘channelling’. As this research for the most part predates this change in government policy, it has not affected the data.

<sup>7</sup> *Masyarakat* only loosely translates to ‘community’, and is best understood as meaning the ‘people’, or ‘society’ in most contexts, but community when used in ‘development speak’.

“the state-society divide. These are groups that have extensive presence at the grassroots and that engage in widespread participation, yet are institutionally linked to the state rather than independent of it (2009, 1).

Read argues that straddlers are not like “large swathes of the grassroots [that]...grow in unchecked profusion like a wild prairie, but rather are cultivated and tended, more like a garden. Here the governments actively shape their citizens’ associational energies” (1). By considering the BKM as straddlers, we locate their role within state-led efforts to shape the form that local level political and associational life takes. I argue that this tending and cultivation of the grassroots also entails the fostering of certain modes of being at the individual level.

The ambitions of inculcating new norms and modes of behaviour conducive to the state’s conception of associational life, has opened the PNPM and its forerunner the KDP to criticism. Carroll (2009, 450) argues that the KDP’s “delivery devices and political technologies” such as participation and competitive funding attempt “to recraft state and society along neoliberal lines and the liberal pursuit of poverty reduction”. Carroll repeats many of the (much more careful) criticisms of Tania Li (2006, 3), who earlier noted that the KDP exemplified ‘government’ in the Foucauldian sense, that operates by “educating desires, and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs”. The KDP sought “not only to alleviate poverty but to inculcate habits of transparency, accountability, efficiency and the rule of law” (Li 2006, 15). Practices such as complaints management procedure, open bidding of projects, public meetings to account for public spending, and so on, were the means through which villagers were to acquire the habits to govern themselves. The production of citizen-subjects conducive to state objectives is an extensively researched effect of development, and a well-rehearsed argument (Chatterjee 2004; Hoffman 2014). Analysis of the mechanisms and practices within the PNPM that are mandatory for BKMs would similarly reveal such possibilities, if not effects.

I suggest, however, that an attempt to understand processes of subjectification from a reading of the context in which it occurs provides an overly disciplinary interpretation. I argue instead that there is a need to consider empirically the forms of personhood made possible through such efforts of cultivation, as well as the emergent selves that actually arise. I follow Tania Li (2006), who examines the emergence of a particular form of government as an historical event through the KDP, rather than claim its efficacy as such. She critiques the design of the program, while noting the actual social transformations should be an object of empirical enquiry. I suggest that the PNPM is an appropriate site for examining these social transformations through the processes of self-becoming, with implications for similar development initiatives.<sup>8</sup> I focus on the BKM members: the individuals identified and cultivated by the program to become not only implementers of development, but moral leaders (Effendy 2015). I focus on their own narratives of how they *became* developers through processes of self-transformation and self-realisation. In doing so I seek to answer the extent to which the program is successful in creating model subjects for state-led development, and the implications for new forms of urban sociality.

This paper draws upon 10 months of ethnographic research in Medan, North Sumatera, between April 2013 and April 2015, assisted by two local academics: Yumasdaleni and Aida Harahap. We deployed a ‘double lens’ to study subjectivity, of in-depth case studies (profiles) and participant

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<sup>8</sup> NSF in Afghanistan, CDSs in Sri Lanka are but two examples of a development model which has become widespread, and promoted by the World Bank. By indicating the similarity of the PNPM with these programs, I am not suggesting that they produce similar ‘subjects’. On the contrary, the differences between the processes of self-formation in these different contexts I suggest would reveal the limited potential for these initiatives to produce self-disciplined subjects: a comparative project with much potential.

observation that “captures both individual experience and the social cultural structures in which it is embedded” (Simon 2014, 6). We co-constructed seventeen profiles with men and women, entailing at least four formal interviews and several informal discussions, examining people’s engagement with the state and state-led development in the context of their broader life-biographies. Of these, eight were BKM members, in which we explored experiences of becoming and being a volunteer, and what changes had occurred during the period of their involvement. Participant observation was conducted with three BKMs and included additional interviews with members and coordinators from other BKMs, facilitators, ‘beneficiaries’ and government officials.

Although we spoke to BKM members several times over a couple of years, I am less confident than Simon (2014) of my ability to present a complete and accurate representation of their personhood. Accounts of self are told through discourses and within ethical and moral frameworks that are external to and exist independently of us; as a result the self is not fully knowable (Butler 2005). Further, we invited people to occupy the subject positions related to our professed research interests, and to construct representations of self in these terms (Briggs 2007). The empirical material does not produce a “stable, authentic and secure representation of self” (Skinner 2012, 11), but rather is a momentary account produced through the narration itself. The objective of my research is therefore not to reveal a ‘true self’, or the interiority of individuals, but to enquire as to people’s multiple understandings and interpretations of their own becoming within a particular socio-historical context. Attention to how people gave an account of themselves using the discourses and experiences of the program helped to shed light on the possibilities and foreclosures for ‘self’ within the PNPM. It also helped to reveal similarities in respondents own theories of personhood: to which we turn now.

### **TERPANGGIL JIWA (CALLED BY THE SOUL)**

After I sat in this PNPM, I feel my life has more meaning. I only graduated from high school, stupid. The meaning of a principled life is when we can do something for family and other people, people who need our help, because this help cannot be measured by riches...And I came to PNPM, maybe this is a place I can become myself, what I have myself, that which I have dreamt about, I can devote all, and finally I can get happiness...(Pak Anto, March 2014).

Pak Anto was motivated to join the BKM by a desire to become the person he dreamt about: a moral person engaged in helping others. He became a member, and then a couple of years later coordinator, a life changing experience. Since joining the PNPM, he has achieved a satisfaction through virtuous action, as well as engaged in constant reflection as to what being a good person means within the context of the development program. The explanations as to why people joined the BKM were often, like Pak Anto’s, thick with the “the subjective work produced by agents to conduct themselves in accordance with their inquiry about what a good life is” (Fassin 2012, 7). BKM members are prompted to become members due to their belief that such action is ‘right’, will give life meaning, and enable them to cultivate themselves as ethical beings. They thereby reflect neatly Foucault’s formulation of ethics, as an “ascetic practice...an exercise of the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being” (Foucault 1994, 282). Ethical self-cultivation is a common theoretical referent in research about volunteers’ motivations and experiences, conceptualised as ‘moral selving’ by Allahyari (1996, 36) “the process of striving through action and reflection to create oneself as a more moral, and often spiritual, person”.

Freedom is critical to Foucault’s practices of self, as people are “able to determine the right action by themselves” (Fassin 2012, 8). This is a freedom, but not a liberation. These practices are active, the self acts upon the self, but “these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual



himself. They are models that he finds in his culture, his society and his social group” (Foucault 1994, 291). In this way, processes of subject formation are linked to discourse and power in ways that leave space for contingency and freedom. Attention to the freedom to “attain a certain mode of being” (Foucault 1994, 282) within the broader socio-cultural and material environment (or “terrain of...moral cultivation” Pandian 2009, 3) helps unravel the question as to why “certain individuals occupy some subject positions rather than others” (Hall 2000, 23), or why some people subjugate themselves to prescribed modes of being while others do not. Failure to recognise the contingency and variation of processes of ‘moral selving’ can lead to over disciplinary interpretations. For example Hoffman (2014, 1584) argues that the choice and autonomy which Chinese citizens exercise in becoming volunteers are merely “techniques of governing that shape contemporary subject forms” (2014, 1584). Unanswered in such interpretations is why only such a small number of individuals respond to these techniques in such a way.

The explanations for motivations—why some individuals become involved in the program while the majority of the population do not—can, I suggest, reveal culturally specific theories of personhood. In the case of BKM members, they were choosing not only to engage in a set of practices, but more significantly in most cases, to pursue a path of becoming. As noted by Jackson (2014), it is not only anthropologists and social theorists who grapple with questions of personhood, with the culturally specific ways of understanding self productive of forms of agency (Moore 2011). Such preoccupations are reflective of the inability to have “complete knowledge of themselves or others” (Moore 2011, 18), and hence the desire to unravel the enigmatic nature of the self (Butler 2005). Attempts to provide a coherent and intelligible account of the self for both internal consumption and in response to external queries, require a grappling with the question of what makes ‘me’ this way. The answer was often implicit in BKM members’ responses.

Ibu Rosa is a BKM coordinator, and in front of a captive audience of her fellow members, she explained how she became involved in the program:

I only used to sell *nasi goreng* [fried rice]. Indeed just purely a housewife and a member of the *masyarakat* [people]. If I can say like this, I received a *panggilan jiwa* [call of the soul]. If in my language, I should use my hands to serve this *masyarakat*. Maybe because indeed I have a characteristic of compassion in my *hati* [heart]...after coming to know this program, I could not sleep. I looked around the locality. Apparently there were people who did not eat, could not buy medicines. I got a headache and I could not sleep (November 2014).

Being called by the soul to do social work was a common explanation for taking on work that was often difficult, and had no material reward or benefit. Ibu Hanum likewise explained: “There is no benefit to volunteering. If personally, then it is satisfaction only. The term is like a calling of the soul [*panggilan jiwa*]”. Pak Adnan notes “I do not have any hopes/expectations from the BKM, I do not want reward, why? Indeed my soul [*jiwa*] is like this...my *jiwa*, I like to help people”.<sup>9</sup> BKM members’ use of *jiwa*, and in particular the phrasing to be called by the soul, suggests that their decision to join was not an outcome of reflection or conscious thought as to how to lead a virtuous life, but rather is described as a compulsion.

A social soul (*berjiwa sosial*) is essential according to many BKM members to enable them to gain satisfaction from their work and thereby continue as members. Other members lacking *berjiwa sosial* were unable to continue the hard work that receives no material benefit as this exchange suggests.

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<sup>9</sup> The missing section is due to an inaudible section of the recording.

Pak Buana: I feel that I was called, called by the *hati* [literally liver, but translates as heart] (laughs). Called by the *hati* because we only work freelance, we do not work everyday, like that...

Pak Wibawa: Called by the *jiwa*. Because like this, through the BKM we never receive any reward. S/he<sup>10</sup> is not given honour, not given anything else. So it is volunteer work. If s/he is not called by his/her *jiwa*, called, ah s/he does not care for the *masyarakat*, then they will be less able to do this work.

The BKM members note that a 'calling' or a particular soul/*jiwa* is required to undertake the hard, yet unrewarded work of the BKM. Without a social soul, one would feel the burden of the work too greatly.

As seen, members also stated that they were responding to *terpanggil hati*, or a calling of the heart. In Indonesia *hati* is the seat of emotions, the "site of interventions toward personal transformation" (Richard and Rudnycky 2009, 70). Although seemingly inter-changeable, careful attention to the interview scripts reveals important differences between *jiwa* and *hati*. To return to Ibu Rosa, she notes that she had the characteristic of compassion in her heart, and that it was this which moved her so much that she could not sleep. Likewise other BKM members referred to the *hati* as that which affected them, that moved them when they saw poverty, and also that they sought to satisfy with their good work. Ibu Muslima explained her commitment to her friends as such:

My friend said, "why every day do you want to go to BKM, every Monday you have meeting until night, why?" It is not [pause] it is my heart, my heart which makes us happy...Why we want to do it? I am also amazed, why I want to do it, but I have to. It seems like an action [interrupted]

Ibu Utari (BKM member): The heart is feeling happy, right!

Whereas the *jiwa* represents one's calling, the *hati* aligns the individual to this calling by ensuring that they are affected in appropriate ways. This enables them to persist with the hard work, even if it has no other benefit. The heart needs satisfying ("I have to"), and the heart also brings happiness to acts that are aligned with the *jiwa*. In this way, to be called by the heart, or be responsive to it, enables one to respond to the calling of the soul. The way the heart affects the individual also helps to explain why they choose to follow this path.

In this way, the self that is evoked by the terms *jiwa* and *hati* is seemingly the mysterious self, which cannot be understood through conscious thought. I argue that the *jiwa* is not an object of reflection and improvement, but rather is understood as a 'pre-given' self, to which the conscious self aligns. These ways of understanding self seemingly reflect Islamic concepts of the self *nafs*, *qalb* and *rūh* as examined by Munsoor (2015).<sup>11</sup> The conscious self is captured through *nafs*: the location of the intellect and synonymous with the self in the Western context. Although Munsoor states that *rūh* and *qalb* are used interchangeably, he goes on to differentiate between them. The *rūh* (soul) is related to the spirit, and is the knowledge of the self from God. The *qalb* (heart) is halfway between *nafs* and *rūh*, and includes "the subconscious and superconscious faculties of perception, memories and complexes" (Munsoor 2015, 108). The *rūh* transmits signals to the *qalb*, and also the *nafs* through the

<sup>10</sup> Pronouns are not gendered in Bahasa Indonesian

<sup>11</sup> Munsoor (2015) explores several Islamic interpretations. I found his discussion of Al-Attas most compelling and that which resonated most with my data.

intellect. In responding to these signals, one is responding to the spiritual self, which is also the command of God.

I understand the concept of *rūh* to be reflected in the Indonesian term *jiwa*, and *qalb* as *hati*. Here then we understand *jiwa* as the spiritual self, one's calling, that then defines what it is to lead a virtuous life (a life as ordained by God). There is no single ethical way of being; the self is not the same for everyone. For example Boellstorff (2005) found that Muslim gay men in Indonesia excused their homosexuality (which is forbidden in Islam) on account that it was in accordance with their *jiwa*.

Why do I think it's not a sin? Because it is God who creates us as gay . . . if for instance we have a gay soul [*jiwa gay*], and we try to be like a hetero man, it's transgressing God's will for us (conversation in Boellstorff 2005, 580).

This particular striking example demonstrates how the *jiwa* provides an explanation to someone making sense of the way they feel that is out of alignment with social norms. Boellstorff (2005) does not talk about the *hati* as aligning the conscious self, but one can see how feeling a particular way could be interpreted as signalling to the individual one's nature. The self responds to God and the call of the soul, rather than merely conforming to social norms.

Although I suggest that the concept of self has been influenced by Islamic teachings, I am not suggesting that my respondents were expressing an Islamic understanding of personhood. Ibu Rosa who was *panggilan jiwa* [called by the soul] is a Christian Batak, as is another BKM member who likewise stated that she was called to undertake this work. The ways that these two Christian women and their Muslim colleagues used the terms *jiwa* and *hati* were seemingly very similar, although with such a small number of respondents, it is impossible to generalise. Muslim BKM members who comprise the majority of BKM members used the terms *jiwa* and *hati* without referring to God or Islam, even those members who elsewhere in their accounts tied their desire for virtuous actions very much in Islamic terms. I developed my understanding of *jiwa* and *hati* through the transcripts, prior to reading about Islamic conceptions of personhood. At the same time, the similarities between *jiwa* and *rūh* and *hati* and *qalb* allowed me to enquire deeper as to their significance, and perhaps indicates the genesis of theories of self in North Sumatra.

*Jiwa* and *hati* are useful as a means of self-understanding, and self-representation. As noted above, they can be considered a response to the "opacity of the subject" (Butler 2005, 20), an answer to the question of why am I like this? But it is also a means to more politely state one's motivations in ways that avoid being arrogant. Pak Adnan seemingly used it in this way when he said: "in this kind of work we must have a volunteer soul [*berjiwa sosial*]. This work fits with me. I am not proud of myself, not to be arrogant, I am sorry, Bu [friendly form of address]. I like to do social activity for the people". Talking about doing good work to satisfy one's own soul is therefore a way of talking about one's motivations and activities without being too proud or *sombong* (negatively perceived in Medan, see also Simon 2009). Big-noting oneself is seemingly connected to the *diri*—the self of conscious improvement—whereas the *jiwa* is just the way one is, and therefore not an object of praise or arrogance. *Jiwa* is therefore not only a theory of self, but also a strategy of self-representation.

Understood in relation to Foucault's 'care of self', I interpret the *jiwa* of BKM members as prompting a general disposition towards virtuous action and *hati* as producing "the quotidian pleasures of—and desires for—a virtuous life" (Pandian and Ali 2010, 2). It is the *diri*, or in Islamic terms used above the *nafs*, that makes sense of the social and environmental context in which this virtuous action takes shape. That is, one is prompted towards virtuous action, one gets a buzz out of doing so, but what is virtuous and how one can become such a person is the work of reflection, drawing upon the 'terrain of moral cultivation' (Pandian 2009). This also highlights the contingency and multiplicity of possible

selves. Individuals can realise the call to virtuous action through the opportunities that they encounter, but the actual nature of that action is not preordained.

The possibilities for self that exist through the BKM members' involvement in the PNPM suggest, however, that the 'care of self' is not in itself a sufficient means of understanding personhood in the Medan context. There are two ways that the PNPM facilitated the alignment of the *diri* (the self) to the *jiwa*. First, the program enabled people to actualise their pre-existing understanding of self, and to experience affectively the pleasure of virtuous action. Pak Anto's narrative reflects this journey, in which he had a long standing desire to do good, but was excluded due to his low class and education status (for the political economy of personhood see Jakimow *forthcoming*). The second way is reflected in Ibu Rosa's account, in which it was only when doing something was a possibility, that she could imagine herself within this identity, and her *hati* could move her to respond to those possibilities. Just like Jackson's (2014, 44) friend Noah, who saw the opportunity to become involved politically as "another way of seeing himself", the identity of BKM member is a potentiality not a necessity. There is no 'true [*benar*] self', against which all other modes of being would lack affective alignment, rather a set of possibilities which fit [*cocok*] the *jiwa*.

I interpret this theory of personhood as emphasizing not so much reflexive practice (as in Foucault's theory of ethics), but rather a search for a 'self' from the possibilities available. The self is responsive to the intellect, but more so to the heart, drawing attention to the importance of affect (which Moore 2011 argues is overlooked in Foucault's formulation). The journey of 'self' is therefore better conceived as: discovery (is this possibility for being right for me); experimentation (perhaps here I will find a way of being that fits), and; reaffirmation (this way of being fits, as I feel satisfied).

Understanding the self in this way provides a different orientation to personhood in this way. Jackson (2014, 39) draws attention to the "dilemma of reconciling a sense of personal freedom with an equally strong sense of being conditioned and contingent". Several studies have sought to examine this dilemma in Indonesia. Simon's (2014) careful ethnographic study of the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra draws attention to the *paribadi* (*pribadi* in Bahasa Indonesia), which he characterises as an exceptionally personal sphere distinct from the way people construct themselves in relation to others. The separation between the reflecting *paribadi* and the social self enables individuals to live aligned with social demands of propriety, at the same time as enabling a space for self-realization, including realisation as an autonomous person.

I argue that *jiwa* similarly offers a space for self-realization and agency, but in a different way. Rather than a personal sphere which is distinct from a social sphere, the *jiwa* enables individuals to pursue ways of being that are socially recognised, but not always *socially ideal for particular positioned individuals*. This is most apparent when women appeal to the need to satisfy their *jiwa* to overcome the objections of husbands who resent the (relative) neglect of domestic duties.<sup>12</sup> The cultural theory of personhood thereby opens a space for negotiation and agency. A second difference is the importance of affect (captured through the *hati*), and the way people respond to it, rather than engage in reflection. This further theoretically divorces the making of the 'self' from the 'social', as people respond to an other-worldly (God) or deeply personal *hati*. This is not an argument that the *hati* breaks the self from the social (as the cultural production of affect demonstrates—Richards and Rudnycky; Ahmed 2010)—but to note the importance of the theoretical possibility of doing so to people's understanding of self. In this way, the theories of self expressed in Medan share similarities, but are nonetheless distinct from those found in West Sumatera.

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<sup>12</sup> The role of the *jiwa* in women's agency and empowerment is the focus of a forthcoming publication, in draft stage.

Respondents' own theories of personhood require a different orientation to the question of how 'subjects are come into being'. Rather than consider how a development program produces subjects amenable to (neoliberal) development, I ask how does the program enable discovery, experimentation and affirmations in self? I will be considering this question and its implications for understanding the consequences of development in the next two empirical sections of the paper.

## BECOMING A DEVELOPER

The theory of personhood elaborated above has implications for the way we read the dialogic processes of 'self-becoming' within the context of the PNPM. I see this context as a setting for self-becoming, comprising of the discourses, affective experiences, intersubjective encounters that interpellate and discursively constitute the subject, but which also provides possibilities for discovery, experimentation and affirmation of self. As noted above, an explicit objective of the program was to produce a new citizenry, inculcated with the values of 'good governance'. Many of the BKM members professed allegiance to these values and their accompanying practices. A reading of the ways BKM members 'became developers' (processes as opposed to motivations) suggests that it is not a case of being disciplined through the technologies of the state. Rather members also desired a particular modality of being available through the program.

While many BKM members explained *why* they became involved by invoking *jiwa*, it was the election that most commonly started the discussion as to *how* they became involved. Ibu Rosa relayed the scene:

At the [local] level, at that time we were truly democratic. I was surprised; there were no candidates, no campaign like that. Frankly we were confused as to what this means, how we should make an election ... Actually we were volunteers...I cannot be a candidate [*calon*]...So in this room in my mother's garage, we used a noodle packet. The paper was torn to pieces...and they invited residents to select the person according to who is good. Without any candidates, many names appeared, who knows who these people are...But by the time of the election, it was indeed apparently democracy without candidates. My name was drawn, and we formed the group...(Nov 2013)

The excitement and animation of the narrative gets lost through it being recounted and translated on the page: an excitement that was evident with many BKM members. The election was a public recognition that the people considered them a person of good conduct, in a way calling them as a complement to the calling of the soul.

The affective properties of the election contribute to the mobilizing of subjects that are commensurable with the norms and values of the program. Rather than a demand arising from the *masyarakat*: "it is *wajib* [compulsory] that we hold an election for the BKM. The concept comes from the government" (Pak Maritim). The elections were not ringing endorsements; attendance was poor, and the vast majority of residents that we spoke to, including the recipients of BKM loans and benefits, were unaware that they even took place. They were nonetheless significant for individuals, who saw it as an essential process to legitimately hold the position of BKM member. The excitement generated by the elections and the thrill of being selected affected the BKM members (perhaps touched their heart), orienting them towards certain action. Understood within an 'economies of affect' "affect is mobilized to produce subjects" for community-driven development (Richard and Rudnyckj 2009, 57).

The types of subjects 'produced' through these affective experiences is shaped by the strict guidelines of the election. As Pak Adnan explains:

The election is important because people express their aspirations in this meeting, and it is like a democratic process. But it is not really like an election, in that we are not candidates who campaign for people to vote for us. Rather in this process people chose us because of our background (June 2013).

PNPM guidelines make campaigning or having candidates strictly prohibited in order to give "the villagers a freedom to select the best...virtuous persons among themselves" (Effendy 2015, 14). The most important of moral virtues is that BKM members are *ikhlas* (meaning sincere), and therefore working for the benefit of others rather than self interest. Campaigning is seen as counter to these virtues, resulting in "[e]lite domination accompanied by their vested interests...[rather than] collective leadership whose membership signifies moral virtues" (Effendy 2015, 14). The discourses of community-driven development influence how individuals become BKM members, interpellating them as subjects with particular values and virtues.

The election can therefore be considered a technology and affective transaction that establishes the continuity between the self and the state (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009). The experience prompts individuals to act in a 'civilised manner', conducive to civil society understood in its modernist sense (Whitehead 2015). This is associational life as a polite sphere, or to use Harriss' (2007) terms, an example of 'new politics': politics located in 'civil society' "forged in communities rather than workplaces" (2717) and tied to ideals of good governance. 'New politics' is in contrast to 'dirty politics', or 'old politics' in the Indian context, of "political parties and their mass movements" (2717). Harriss (2007), drawing upon Chatterjee's (2004) distinction between political and civil society, argues that people's inclusion into governance through 'new politics' has required them to act in particular ways, to become disciplined to less unruly engagement. As a consequence, the urban middle-classes who feel comfortable with these modes of engagement dominate the new spaces opened to citizen participation, excluding the poor. Understood in this way, the prescribing of a certain space for associational life also prescribes a certain way of understanding self and one's actions in relation to the virtues of the program. The formation of urban subjects is thus the consequence of state-led cultivation of associational life.

While a plausible interpretation, I would like to disrupt this reading of the PNPM in two ways: first, by rejecting the notion that 'new politics' excludes the poor in the Indonesian context, and; second, and more importantly, by arguing that subjects are not formed in these spaces, rather they draw upon the resources for their realisation of self. A central critique of Chatterjee's formulation is the starkness of his distinction between political and civil society that leaves little space for the consideration of how different classed 'selves' share aspirations and orientations (Chandra and Majumder 2013). The disposition towards more polite and civil modalities of social action, as well as the desire to achieve positions through processes that reaffirm one's sincerity, is not contained to the middle classes. Pak Anto, who has dipped below the poverty line on several occasions, expresses a distaste for the messy *demokrasi* (democracy) of party politics. Asked if he would become involved in party politics, he did not discount doing so in the future, but found the modality of operation with parliamentarians screaming at each other, and a morality of corruption and waste unsuited to his ways of being. He said that party politics is unsuitable for Indonesia, a "fruit that is forced to ripen", while still maintaining that people's participation is critical for development. In Pak Anto's perspective, the PNPM creates a model of preferable development, based on democratic ideals, but not messy democracy.

There are two ways of interpreting the general disdain for ‘dirty politics’ in Medan among the urban poor. The first is that unlike in India, party politics has not been the arena through which poorer groups are able to pursue their interests, but is perceived as a domain through which Indonesia’s oligarchy have been able to advance ‘economic society’ (Mietzner 2013). This may entail a reverse situation, in which people outside of the middle classes see ‘civil society’ as a more amenable space to advance their interests. Without rejecting this possibility, a second interpretation more important for this paper and that resonates with BKM members’ narratives, is that the modalities of this ‘new politics’ is more aligned with their *jiwa*, and hence a space in which they feel they can pursue social action. Pak Adnan described how he was disposed to a more ‘civil’ mode of being involved in the *masyarakat*, rather than ‘politics’ which creates bad relations: “I do not like to sit in coffee shops, talking nonsense, stories about nothing”. He refuses to join politics, explaining “Why? If I am invited by some people, it is better to avoid, better to succumb than be confrontational. In politics, politics is *keras* [hard, but also crass, uncivilised]”.

The ways Pak Anto, Pak Adnan among other BKM members speak of their agreement with the specifications of PNPM elections does not suggest a form of self-governance, or being disciplined to the political technologies of the state. They have seemingly not found within the PNPM a set of moral virtues that act as a model for self that frames their conduct, but rather processes imbued with meaning that are aligned to who they feel they are, or would like to become (or aligned with the *jiwa*). The ‘affective transactions’ of the program such as those involved in the elections, can be seen as facilitating transformations of subjects into an army of community developers, or as being aligned to the *hati*, one’s internal predispositions to be affected in a particular way. One is not ‘constituted within the program in any straightforward way, but rather finds within the program a modality of being that fits with their soul.

I suggest that as much as trying to shape civil society through the production of amenable citizens, the PNPM has also provided an arena in which certain selves feel that they can act. The PNPM is aligned to their *pre-existing* way of being; pre-existing not necessarily in the sense of this is who they are, but in the sense of an innate potentiality. Concomitant pedagogical practices (Effendy 2015) do not entail the disciplining of citizen-subjects as per Chatterjee (2004), but I suggest enable BKM members to acquire the capabilities that enables them to act in a sphere that suits their modality of being. As Hage (2014) argues, (elaborating Bourdieu’s distinction), capabilities and dispositions may not necessarily be aligned, even though they are related in that new capabilities will influence people’s dispositions. I suggest that the capabilities that BKM members learn—such as proposal writing, developing agendas, drawing up budgets, communicating with officials and so on—enable people erstwhile excluded from ‘polite civil society’ to become capable actors in this sphere, while also developing new dispositions that make such modalities more aligned to self. I offer this as an alternative interpretation that aims to soften accounts that point to the disciplining effects of state-led development (cf. Carroll 2009; Hoffman 2014).

## DEVELOPING THE WILL TO IMPROVE

The election may be the moment when individuals acquire the status of BKM member, but it is through subsequent experiences that they develop the dispositions and moral sensibilities of the ‘developer’. Tania Li (2007) describes developers in the Indonesian context as motivated by a ‘will to improve’, to enhance the capacities of others working towards a better world. Li (2007) leaves unanswered, however, how this will comes into being. The distinction between the status of developer and having the ‘will to improve’ can be understood through the process of becoming an ethical subject, which does not merely entail occupying a status by taking on normative roles, but rather through the accompanying values and ideals lived by the subject (Robbins 2012). Rather than

take the 'will to improve' as an inseparable characteristic of 'developers', I examine how BKM members acquire it. In doing so, I inquire as to the location of intentionality of the 'will', and hence further explore the nature of processes of self within the PNPM.

While occupying the status of BKM member does not in itself entail acquiring the 'will to improve', the process of the election is critical for how people understand themselves within that position. The election reaffirmed (and bolstered claims) that the BKM was *berbasis masyarakat*, further grounding the 'developer' within the locality. Pak Wahyu said that following the election: "we are proud that we are trusted people". His fellow BKM member interrupts to say "but we are still a part of the *masyarakat*", to which Pak Wahyu responds "if we were big people, then we would not be trusted by the 'small' *masyarakat*. But we are small people (*orang kecil*) and the *masyarakat* trusts us". The position they occupy is therefore exceptional within the *masyarakat* (virtuous leaders), at the same time that their similar position (as *orang kecil*) is critical to their acceptability. The small distance between exceptionality and sameness structures particular ways of doing and being in relation to others.

Pak Alrasyid describes the changes that occurred after he was elected as BKM member, and coordinator:

before I was involved in the BKM, it was clear that I was free in the *masyarakat*, I never thought that I should be concerned with the *masyarakat*...But after joining the BKM, it is one necessity that we must do, because we are given more responsibility. So inevitably we have to think about the *masyarakat*...

Pak Alrasyid notes that he was "given more responsibility" by becoming a BKM member, but responsibility must be felt in order for it to structure action. The affects of the election and occupying the status of BKM member therefore shifted his understanding of self significantly, provoking him to become one of the most active BKM members in Medan. He continues: "Before I became a BKM member, I never used to *blusukan*, for example I never went around the neighbourhood, did not know the situation. Now it is a must...". Pak Alrasyid uses the term *blusukan*, popularised by (now President) Joko Widodo during his presidential campaign. *Blusukan* means entering places that people, especially elites, do not like to go, or in Jokowi's terms "go to the ground to look the people [sic]".<sup>13</sup> Jokowi used it in part to refer to his non-elite roots, his 'kampung face' (Chen 2014), a description which also matches the BKM members who are *orang kecil*. In using *blusukan*, Pak Alrasyid is also evoking his position as occupying the small space between exceptional and sameness with the *rakyat* (people). This positioning was not a part of his self-imaginary prior to the affective experience of responsibility in the *masyarakat*.

The narrative of looking at familiar scenes differently after becoming a BKM member was also common. As noted above, Ibu Rosa stated that after knowing about the PNPM "I looked around the locality...I got a headache and I could not sleep". The transformation in how she is moved, or affected, occurred after having the opportunity to do something. These transformations are most significant when people describe the process of *becoming* a BKM member. Pak Anto said that they are now affected by everyday scenes: "In the past we had less concern, less care (*peduli*) in the deep meaning of the word, in our context we were not in the direction of taking care, only limited to what we feel and see. Now it is a must"! (March 2014). Pak Anto describes a fundamental shift in how he is moved by what he sees, and how this affect prompts virtuous action, most notably care (*peduli*) and a 'will' to do something. The same scenes seen as an *orang biasa* (ordinary person) now seen as a BKM member

<sup>13</sup> <http://en.tempco.co/read/news/2014/10/13/055613977/Zuckerberg-to-Jokowi-What-is-Blusukan>



contains a more profound affect that structures conduct not in a prescribed way, but suggestive of certain actions (Richard and Rudnycky 2009). The process of becoming a BKM thereby also seemingly includes an affective pedagogy (Highmore 2010) in which members learn to be affected in particular ways. The *hati* is not stable, but in a process of transformation, being affected in new ways through different experiences, resulting in new desires and satisfactions which (re)align the *diri* with the *jiwa*.

The way Pak Anto is affected is seemingly inscribed in the practices of the PNPM. *Peduli* is part of the slogan of the PNPM-Perkotaan; *kita peduli* (we care) is emblazoned on Pak Anto's BKM uniform. Care is one way in which BKM members are distinct from other local level development actors, namely the Lurah (government appointed head of the Kelurahan), and the Kepling (the head of the Lingkungan—sub-unit of Kelurahan). In contrast to being elected by the *masyarakat*, the Lurah and Kepling are appointed by the government. They are not volunteers, but rather receive a salary and small honorarium respectively, in addition to any informal payments or bribes. As they do not work with *ikhlas* (sincerity and lack of self-interest), they do not require a *berjiwa sosial* (social soul). This means that even though the Lurah also has a responsibility to develop the area, they may not be moved in the same way, as Pak Anto speculates:

Maybe the Lurah does not think how to rise [kelurahan name] to become prosperous, independent. If I think about how to bring forward the people, I am sad if I go around the neighbourhood and find people who do not have food to eat, sometimes only eat once in two days. Maybe the Lurah does not think about it (March 2014).

There are two ways to interpret the different ways Pak Anto is affected compared to the Lurah. The first points to the role of the *hati* in affectively aligning the *jiwa* to the *diri*. An individual who does not have a soul oriented towards social activity and sincere action for others would not be moved in the same way. Hence the difference lies with the individual self.

The second interpretation pays more attention to how external conditions found in the PNPM (the discourses, experiences and practices) are part of an economies of affect (Richard and Rudnycky 2009) that creates subjects commensurable with the development model of the state. These subjects are aligned with neoliberal norms, as the PNPM promotes values of self-help, entrepreneurship, and good governance. I do not, however, want to reduce the complex set of values and relations to neoliberalism. Just as necessary in the context of urban Medan is the creation of subjects who are alternative agents to the local level state. These are 'developers' whose meaning of self is found in their virtuous actions, whose position is still within and working for the *masyarakat*, but who can link the energies at the grassroots to state-led development to achieve national objectives. Although 'care' may be used cynically by the architects of the program, city level officials and particularly BKM members saw this as their working modality, in direct contrast to the local level state, which was often presented as uncaring. If the state has provided a discursive context and affective transactions that inspire in BKM members the *will* to improve, the actual meaning of that improvement, and hence development, is far from singular.

## CONCLUSION

Taking seriously volunteers' own theories of self allows a reading that goes beyond seeing how the PNPM creates subjects amenable to state visions of 'civil society' and community driven development, to reveal the ways individuals draw upon the program in their enactment and realisation of a possible self. People formally excluded from social welfare activities on account of their class status find new opportunities to care for others. By providing a space for social activities, the PNPM enables the *jiwa* to call the individual, and provides experiences through which the *hati* can move them in ways that

aligns the conscious self to the soul. BKM members do not find their 'true selves' in the PNPM, but rather new possibilities for self. In this interpretation, the PNPM does not create subjects, but rather enables experiences for the discovery, experimentation and affirmation of possible selves. The difference is crucial, in that it leaves open the possibility that modernist visions of civil society may be compatible with the pre-existing or nascent dispositions of individuals, rather than shaping individuals to fit with technologies of government (cf. Hoffman 2014). This is not to suggest that all people find within the constructed sites of associational life a way of being that is commensurate with their *jiwa*, but to provide an explanation as to why some people respond to such technologies by becoming suitable 'subjects', while other individuals do not.

The new self-imaginaries that becoming a BKM member provokes, and the ways individuals realise and enact themselves within this position, are of course not immune to the effects of the PNPM's discursive practices. For example the election is a requirement of the program which invites an understanding of self in relation to the *masyarakat* and the state. It is a false line of inquiry to determine whether subsequent feelings of responsibility are an outcome of the 'economies of affect' (Richard and Rudnyckj 2009) that structures action, or whether BKM members are responding to a *hati* that is aligning the self with the *jiwa*. Disentangling factors in processes of self betrays the complexity of human subjectivity. Admittedly, distilling the accounts of self into a coherent narrative of becoming also does a violence to this complexity, and the diversity of responses of BKM members. Nonetheless, as the processes of self made possible within sites of development are critical to understanding analytically how development works in practice and in a normative sense (Fechter 2012), I argue that there is value in finding commonalities in how people give an account of these processes.

The processes of self-becoming of BKM members in the positioning between the 'grassroots' and the state are suggestive of new forms of urban sociality. As *orang biasa* (ordinary people) are invited to become developers, they distinguish themselves from other agents of development, particularly local level government officials. They pursue a different modality, one of care and closeness. Rather than being distinct from the state, however, they are attuned with the shift in paradigm of the central and city level government, which often seems at odds with the practices of local level officials. The potential implications of this raise critical questions left unanswered in this paper. How does the establishment of new entities operating between the state and society (straddlers) lead to new hierarchies, modes of governance and new modalities of development? As BKM members have the opportunity for self-realisation through the program, how does the necessity for people's involvement as 'grateful beneficiaries' in the program disturb easy readings of social hierarchies? And critically, how do the differential possibilities for self-becoming according to gender disturb, or reinforce, prevailing gendered tropes in Indonesian development (Robinson 2008; Suryakusuma 2011). I argue that to answer these questions, and other related to the changes occurring in urban society in Medan and elsewhere, requires attention to the processes of self-becoming, informed by people's own theories of personhood.

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