


ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Postcolonial Pessimisms and Alternative Spatial Practices: Critical Interpretation of the concept of the Third Space through the Case of Fatahillah Square, Indonesia

Junyoung Park 

Seoul National University, Republic of Korea  
Email: [disciple0411@snu.ac.kr](mailto:disciple0411@snu.ac.kr)

(Received 13 March 2023; revised 17 June 2023; accepted 19 August 2023)

## Abstract

Spatial practice is at the core of postcolonial geography's response to the geography of colonialism. However, the methodology of postcolonial spatial practice is linked to pessimisms within the postcolonial debate. This study aims to overcome pessimisms of postcolonialism by analysing a case of postcolonial spatial practice through literature review, expert interview, and field study. The case under investigation is Fatahillah Square in Jakarta, which has been transformed through postcolonial spatial practices from a space that symbolised the tragedy of colonialism into one of culture and art. Here, the characteristics of Homi K. Bhabha's "third space" are apparent, but this case may also be interpreted as an extension of the concept. Through the hybrid and emancipatory plurality of its spatial practice, it refutes the pessimisms of postcolonialism and calls for further postcolonial practice and analysis.

**Keywords:** Fatahillah Square; Indonesia; Postcolonialism; Spatial practice; Third space

## Introductions

There is a distinct geographic dimension on colonialism. The colonialist desire was a desire for a new geography, and this desire was finally realised through geographic expansion (Sharp 2008). Colonial powers also changed the colonial landscape and simplified the colonial maps for effective colonial rule (Anderson 2006; Scott 2008; Sharp 2008). Thus, the spatial practice of postcolonialism has the main goal of geographic recovery (Creswell 2012; Pile 2000). Postcolonialism research also requires a geographical approach, and geographical words such as territory, boundaries, centre, and periphery are a major subject of this field (Sharp 2008). Thus, a geographic approach such as postcolonial spatial practice can be understood as essential in postcolonial case studies. Furthermore, various controversies have arisen in postcolonial studies over interpretation of colonialism and postcolonial practices (Moore-gilbert 1997). A representative debate among them that over the 'post' prefix, influenced by post-structuralism (Lee 2011; Lee 2021). In the justification of conflicting positions, such controversies within postcolonial studies generate pessimism within the field (Lee 2021). This study interprets the spatial practices of the chosen case through the lenses of these postcolonial debates.

Kota Tua district located in the northern part of Jakarta connected to the Java Sea, is a representative cultural space (Robertson et al. 2014). Surrounded by various cultural, artistic and historical buildings and institutions, including the Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square is geographically, historically and culturally central to Kota Tua (Nugteren 2020). It is a space where Jakarta citizens and visitors enjoy leisure, but also symbolises the tragedy of Indonesia's colonial history (Robertson et al. 2014). This study analyses the postcolonial changes in this space, specifically Homi K. Bhabha's 'third space'.

This incorporates practices of pursuing the postcolonial recovery of colonial geography, resisting the neo-colonial order, and furthermore, generating a creative culture in the postcolonial space. This study

explains the process by which a space symbolising the tragedy of colonialism has been transformed into a space of culture and art through postcolonial spatial practice. Recent geographical studies of postcolonialism have focused on describing the geographical consequences of colonialism or on the concept and theoretical approach of postcolonial spatial practice (Cash and Kinnvall 2017; Datta 2019; Goddeeris 2015; Griffiths 2017; Hart 2018; Pugh 2017; Roy 2016). This study, presenting an alternative methodology of postcolonial spatial practice through a specific case, can be understood to expand the scope of such research.

The purpose of this study is to propose a spatial practice that reconcile the conflicts within existing postcolonial discourse by examining the case of Fatahillah Square. Since the 1970s, this space has been transformed into a cultural and artistic space through an urban regeneration project led by the Indonesian central and local government. In the process, the postcolonial perceptions and intentions of spatial actors have been materialised. This study analyses the interactions between such actors and the spatial changes. Fatahillah Square is a space where the colonial order is spatially imprinted; the façade of this landscape is still well preserved for visitors to discover it. Therefore, it is a valuable space for research in that the spatial traces of colonial rule and contemporary postcolonial spatial practices are simultaneously apparent. In addition, this space is a representative tourist destination in Jakarta actively promoted by the Indonesian central and local government. Therefore, this space can be evaluated as a suitable case to realize the purpose of this study.

The methodology of this study involved in-depth interviews targeting spatial practitioners at the space. Specifically, the interviewees consisted of public officials who planned and managed the postcolonial change of Fatahillah Square and experts who could explain their professional opinions on it. Interviews were conducted with a total of nineteen practitioners, face-to-face, virtually or in writing, depending on the circumstances and preferences of the interviewee. Each interview lasted about an hour and additional interviews were conducted if additional explanations are needed for previous interview answers. To supplement the interview results, a literature review was conducted, referring to related prior studies, reports, and media articles, and field studies were undertaken jointly by the researcher and the local research institute.

Before the theoretical framework of this study is introduced and the postcolonial spatial practice of Fatahillah Square are analysed through the theoretical framework, the following section describes the case space and its relevant history.

### History of Indonesian (Post)colonialism and Fatahillah Square

The colonial history of Indonesia is generally understood to begin in 1602, when the Dutch founded the East India Company (the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, or VOC). Having already effectively colonised Indonesia through the VOC, the Dutch formally established settlements from 1824. After more than three centuries of Dutch colonialism, a major change occurred in 1942, when Japan invaded Indonesia while expanding its power into the Pacific region during World War II. Japan occupied Indonesia for about three and a half years before its defeat in 1945. Indonesia declared independence on August 17 1945, after the withdrawal of Japanese troops. For the next four years, the *Revolusi Nasional Indonesia* waged war against the Dutch trying to reoccupy the country and the Republic of Indonesia was established in 1949. Indonesia's colonial history can therefore be viewed as a period of over 340 years from the establishment of the Dutch VOC in 1602 to complete independence in 1949. This study focuses on the space constructed and developed during the Dutch period of Indonesian colonial history.

The VOC entered Indonesia through the northwest of Java Island, where Jakarta, the nation's capital, is located. At that time, this area was the main trading port of the Kingdom of Sunda (Sunda Kelapa). The name of this area, known until then as Jayakarta, was changed to Batavia after the arrival of the VOC. Batavia grew into a central area representing the Dutch colonial period, because the Dutch trading companies and their related facilities, and administrative organizations for colonial rule were located at Batavia (Hidayat *et al.* 2019). The Dutch who settled in Batavia tried to reproduce the landscape and living environment of their homeland as closely as possible through canal construction, architecture style, and urban planning (Kehoe 2015). As a result, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Batavia was referred to as the 'Dutch tropics'.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Dutch further developed Batavia, fortifying it against aggression by rival countries. As the city grew, the borders of Batavia gradually extended into the southern regions. This centre of Dutch colonial rule gradually declined after 1942 when the Japanese overthrew the Dutch and occupied Indonesia. Japan expanded the borders of Batavia to designate a capital and returned the region's name to a version of its original and its present-day moniker, Jakarta. However, during the occupation, Japan concentrated on the war and neglected to utilise the city's administrative buildings. After Indonesia's independence, these buildings owned by the Japanese government were nationalised, but some continued to be neglected, being used as illegal warehouses, for example. In this way, the landscape of the colonial period is identifiable in the area, and became a space for practicing postcolonialism after Indonesia's independence.

Batavia is now commonly referred to as Kota Tua or Old City, officially designated in 2007 when the urban space regeneration project began in earnest after the Governor's Decree of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta No. 127. Kota Tua is an area of about 334 hectares in northern Jakarta, spanning two administrative districts: West Jakarta encompassing Tamansari and Tambora localities and North Jakarta's Penjaringan. Of this area, colonial Batavia covers about 134 hectares. Kota Tua is one of Indonesia's representative cultural and historical sites, and although its social, cultural, and economic potential has been highly valued, it has been neglected for a long time without proper management. In addition, flooding, pollution, traffic jams, low accessibility, littering and crime prolonged and deepened the deterioration of this area (Robertson et al. 2014). The case space of this study, Fatahillah Square, exemplifies the contemporary role of Kota Tua in postcolonial Indonesian society.

The spatial practices of space users along with the changes brought by the urban space regeneration project led by the central and local government have shaped the contemporary characteristics of the space. Governmental intentions and users' practices both harmonise and collide to transform Fatahillah Square from symbol of colonialism to a postcolonial space. Within the long history of this space, this study focuses on the period from the beginning of the regeneration project in the late 2000s to the present (before the lockdown in Jakarta due to the spread of COVID-19). The government promoted the Kota Tua regeneration project with the specific goal of it being designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As a result, Fatahillah Square began to be recognised as a representative cultural and artistic space in Jakarta.

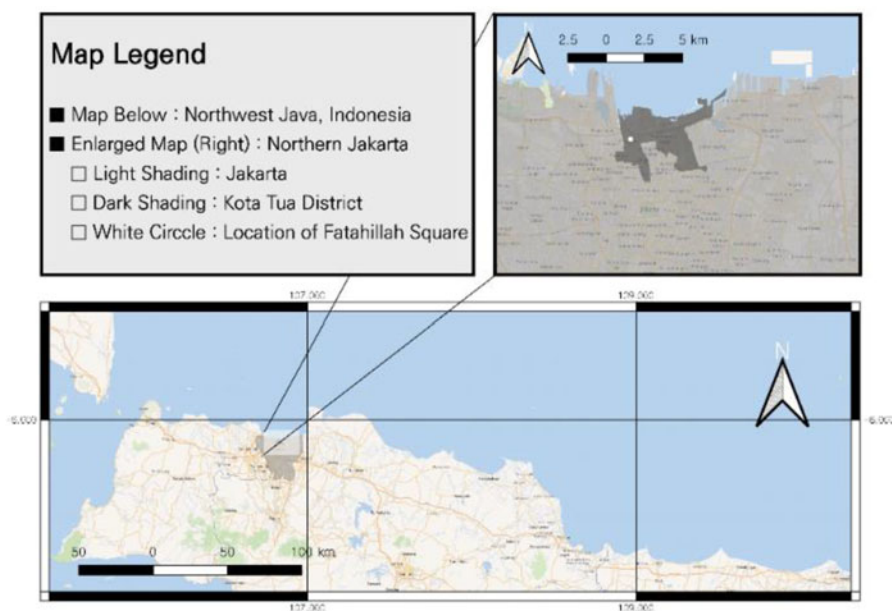


Figure 1. Location of Kota Tua and Fatahillah Square Created by the author using open api map data

The postcolonial elements of this space can be identified in its name and functions. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Batavia City Hall (stadhuis) was built on the south side of the square. The square's name was Stadhuysplein, simply meaning 'town hall square' in Dutch, but after independence it was renamed after General Fatahillah of the combined forces of the Demak and Cirebon tribes, who contributed to fending off a Portuguese invasion in 1527 at the port of Batavia (Sunda Kelapa). A military and administrative centre during the Dutch colonial period in Kota Tua, the major buildings surrounding Fatahillah Square were mainly used as city halls, courts, military institutions, and other sites of colonial administration. Fatahillah Square has now been transformed into a cultural and artistic space, its building converted into museums, art galleries, and restaurants.

Representative examples of use changes in Fatahillah Square and the surrounding buildings during the urban space regeneration project are as follows. Firstly, the Jakarta History Museum (Museum Sejarah Jakarta), was first built on this site as the city hall of Batavia in 1627. After several renovations, the building took on the same appearance as the present building in 1710. It was used as a city hall until 1913 and as a military institution after independence in 1945. Afterwards, through a regeneration project in 1974, the building became the Jakarta History Museum, which exhibits permanent and special exhibitions about Jakarta city and modern and contemporary Indonesian history. Mainly visited by students and foreign tourists for history education, museum is currently the flagship building of Fatahillah Square, crowded with many visitors. The exterior of the Jakarta History Museum is maintained as it was [Figure 2] when it was used as the Batavia City Hall in the past. Therefore, the building serves as both site and object of the museum.

Located opposite the Jakarta History Museum, the two-story Cafe Batavia was built in the 1830s as the offices of Dutch governors. Since then, the building has changed owners frequently and has been used for various purposes, such as offices of trading companies or art galleries. Much of the space used as the governor's office has been preserved, and in the 1990s when the space regeneration project was in progress, the building was renovated and has been used as a restaurant until now. Cafe Batavia is a spacious restaurant with about 50 tables and 200 seats, but it serves so many people that there are no empty seats on weekend afternoons. The ground floor is a space where visitors can watch music performances, drink and smoke, and the upper floor is a bright space with a more orderly atmosphere, mainly for tea or light meals. As such, Cafe Batavia is visited by many users because it allows a variety of more active cultural activities compared to other spaces in Fatahillah Square.

The Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics (Museum Seni Rupa dan Keramik), located on the east side of Fatahillah Square, was completed in the 1870s and used as a court of justice. After independence, it was the office of the mayor of West Jakarta, and turned into a museum in 1976. Then, in 2011, with the assistance of the Dutch government, the museum was reconstructed to its present form. In addition, around Fatahillah Square, there is the Museum Bank Indonesia, which was used as a Dutch Indies gulden (central bank) now exhibits the history of currency and trade, alignment with its original purpose.

Finally, the Wayang Museum [Figure 3] is a site where Wayang traditional puppets that originated in Java from various regions are now on display, and puppet shows are also held. The Wayang Museum was built as a church in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt in a new style in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century after the



**Figure 2.** Fatahillah Square and surroundings Batavia City Hall between 1875 and 1885 (Left) Jakarta History Museum in 2016 (Middle) Panoramic view of Fatahillah Square in 2023 (Right)

Source: Tropenmuseum, Asosiasi Korea Indonesian & Korean Culture Study



**Figure 3.** Changes of Wayang Museum building (From left) The church in the 17th century; the reconstructed building in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the current Wayang Museum; a scale model of the first building inside current museum  
Source: Tropenmuseum, Asosiasi Korea Indonesian & Korean Culture Study



**Figure 4.** Fatahillah Square as a (post)colonial space Public execution as held in the colonial past (Left); Stones used to bind prisoners, now used to prohibit vehicle entry (Right)  
Source: Tropenmuseum, Asosiasi Korea Indonesian & Korean Culture Study

building collapsed in an earthquake. The façade of the new building remains to this day. It continued to be used as a church and then as a warehouse for a trading company. In 1939, when the Dutch colonial period was almost over, it was used to exhibit the history of the city of Batavia. After independence, the building opened as the Wayang Museum in 1975.

The main buildings around Fatahillah Square described above can be understood as maintaining the appearance the Dutch colonial period while filling the interior with traditional and contemporary Indonesian cultural, artistic, and historical elements. In addition to these colonial traces, is worth noting that Fatahillah Square was the site of brutal acts such as public executions and collective reforms during the colonial period, recollected by a prison at the Jakarta History Museum, or the sphere-shaped stone with a diameter of about one meter currently used as a bollard to block vehicle traffic that was tied to prisoners to prevent them from escaping. As such, it is significant that Fatahillah Square, where direct and indirect colonial violence remains materialised in the forms of the buildings and spaces, is currently transformed into a cultural and artistic centre where activities from busking performances and flash mobs to cycling and, souvenir sales are practiced.

### Postcolonial Spatial Practices

Colonial powers realised their colonialist desires through geographic expansion. They also changed the landscape and simplified the map for colonial rule. The logic of colonialism was reproduced in the colonial space, with buildings overpowering the colonised as a metaphor of colonial power (Sharp 2008). This was a geographical practice designed to relieve the anxiety experienced in an unfamiliar geography. Such consequences of colonialism reveal the necessity of struggles over geography and particularly, the impetus to reconstruct alternative geographies in postcolonial practices (Pile 2000; Radcliffe 2011). The geography of postcolonialism aims to expose the colonial oppression in the centre and restore the voice and space of



the colonised subjects who have been silenced (Creswell 2012). The importance of geography in postcolonial theory and practice is evidenced by the fact that keywords such as space, centre, perimeter and boundary have become central themes of postcolonial theory (Sharp 2008).

Drawing on this foundation, the present study analysed the case of Fatahillah Square as a set of postcolonial spatial practices. The concept of postcolonial spatial practices can be found from the discussion of postcolonialism (Lee 2011; Moore-Gilbert 1997). One of the most controversial discussions in postcolonial studies arises around interpretation of the 'post' prefix. Firstly, 'post' can be interpreted as referring to 'after colonialism' in a chronological sense. In this interpretation, temporal connection or disconnection with colonialism is emphasised. On the other hand, 'post' may also be interpreted as 'beyond colonialism' in an epistemological sense, related to the intervention of poststructuralism in postcolonialism (Gandhi 2019; Moore-gilbert 1997). Mainly in chronological postcolonialism, historical and material resistance is emphasised by rejecting or criticising the influence of poststructuralism, whereas in epistemological postcolonialism, hybrid resistance based on the ambivalent relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is emphasised by actively accepting the poststructuralist approach.

In this debate, both sides take a pessimistic perspective on the other (Lee 2021). From the viewpoint of epistemological postcolonialism, although chronological postcolonialism seeks a temporal disconnection with colonial past, this resistance is criticised as trapping the colonised within a victim-perpetrator dichotomy. Consequently, chronological postcolonialism cannot discuss truly liberating discourse and practices. On the other hand, chronological postcolonialism raises the issue that epistemological postcolonialism is too vague and abstract to lead to practices. Additionally, epistemological postcolonialism influenced by poststructuralism is criticised for ignoring previous historical and material resistance to colonialism. Such criticisms have been deployed exhaustively by theorists and researchers primarily concerned with criticising opposing arguments and defending their own, generating pessimism in the field and truncating its advancement.

In this study, the spatial practices of the chosen case are critically analysed using Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the 'third space', an epistemological postcolonial concept of practices spatial practice. Importantly, the study pays attention to the point where the practices of the case space exceed the characteristics of the third space, actively exploring the possibility of overcoming the wasteful pessimism within the postcolonial debate.

### Hybridity and the Third Space

Poststructuralist postcolonialism criticizes the essentialist binary oppositional relationship (structure) internalized by the colonial power in the colony (Gandhi 2019; Moore-Gilbert 1997). In some postcolonial practice, a postcolonial strategy based on essential nationalism is applied, which poststructuralist postcolonialism critiques (Gandhi 2019; Lee 2011). According to poststructuralist postcolonialism, postcolonial practice should include a process of overcoming essentialism.

For Bhabha (2004), contrary to appearance, colonial power and the colonial situation are very unstable. Colonial power demands of the colonised a standardised and consistent behaviour. However, this demand is not perfectly reproduced in the perception and practice of the colonised people. Bhabha defines an "almost the same, but not quite" (mis)representation practice of mimicry (Bhabha 2004; 86). In Bhabha's colonial setting, mimicry includes not only intentional resistance but also unintentional practice. Repeated imitation creates a hybrid situation in the colony, which is expected to lead to the collapse of the colonial power's seemingly solid goal of perfect reproduction (Drichel 2008; Gandhi 2019; Mizutani 2013; Mythen 2012; Fronek and Chester 2016; Kraidy 2002).

The third space is proposed as the context in which Bhabha's postcolonial strategies of mimicry and hybridity are practiced. The third space is one where disparate cultural elements are fused, mixed and reconstructed (English 2004; Fronek and Chester 2016). It is the field of negotiation between cultures and cultural differences, where the temporalities of various cultures exist in a variety of ways, overlapping and colliding with one another (Kalua 2009; Mythen 2012). The third space has two functions in the postcolonial context. It is not only useful as an anti-colonial strategy, but also has the potential to function as a daily cultural space in a postcolonial situation, creating a new culture (Bhabha 2004).

The third space, where cultural hybridity and hybrid practice are emphasised, implies the possibility of postcolonial spatial practice (McFarlane-Alvarez 2007). In this unstable colonial space, the third space of

hybridity and ambivalence that shakes the stability pursued by the colonial ruling power threatens colonial order (Mythen 2012). At the same time, a creative tension is formed in the third space where actors of plurality engage in daily competition and negotiation as they encounter otherness, creating their own tension that weakens class categories and ontological fixation and gives rise to the politics of difference (Gabriel et al. 2012; Mythen 2012). The actors in different contexts of the third space create a transformative identity as a partial network by weaving accidental boundaries with one another (Bhabha, 2004).

Despite the alternative postcolonial performativity of the third space, there are also criticisms of the concept, mainly related to its ambiguity. It is difficult to understand whether the third space is a real space or an experience form and an existential form (Lee 2011), and for the third space to be composed of a responsible subject who will take the lead in creating it on a structural level (Chandra 2012; Mizutani 2013). The history of conflict and confrontation in the colonial situation is forgotten in the danger that the ambivalence of Bhabha's strategy of hybridity may be perceived as ambiguity. In this critique, the pessimism that exists within the discussion of postcolonialism described above is reproduced. The third space, a practical theory of epistemological poststructuralist postcolonialism, overcomes the dichotomous division and confrontation of colonial order, the pessimism of chronological postcolonialism, but this repeats the pessimism of epistemological postcolonialism that concrete resistance practice is not accompanied.

Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the concreteness and practicality of the third space. To this end, the ethics of hybridity, a non-violent and broad-based resistance method, can be a strategy to overcome criticism of epistemological postcolonialism (Drichel 2008; Gandhi 2019). Hybrid postcolonial practices are ethical in the sense that actors participating in the practice are not undermined of their own identity and are not forced to make any sacrifices in the process of practice. Hybrid practice encourages and acknowledges that of other pluralities. Through this, a wide range of practices can be expected, and even those that were not intended for resistance can be used as energy for it. This ethics of hybridity allow us to imagine concrete practices of plurality, overcoming the criticism that it is ambiguous and abstract.

The present study therefore analyses postcolonial spatial practices in the case space through the lens of the third space, where the ethics of hybridity are realised, and discusses the possibility of overcoming postcolonial pessimisms through the case of spatial practice that expands Bhabha's concept.

### Postcolonial Pessimisms and Spatial Practice

The postcolonial spatial practices of Fatahillah Square have the ambivalent relationships and hybrid elements suggested by Bhabha as characteristic of the third space. These may be categorised into three modes of hybridity: temporal, formal and socioeconomic.

Firstly, temporal hybridity is found in the exterior appearance and interior functionalities of the architectural elements of Fatahillah Square, with the surrounding buildings preserved similar to the original exteriors created by the VOC and the Dutch for colonial rule and the internal operation of the buildings modified to match the intentions of the urban space regeneration project. Cultural and artistic resources unrelated to Dutch colonial rule, such as traditional Indonesian cultural and artistic works and contemporary art are exhibited and performed here. The method of restoring interiors of Fatahillah Square buildings through the urban space regeneration project can be evaluated as serving the purpose of expressing local identity rather than reproducing colonial uses, as detailed by interview participants 11, 12 and 14. For example:

The decision to 'celebrate' the Fatahillah name was quite helpful to put aside the tragic history... Currently, people take selfies in front of a state house that used to be a place to hang people. This behaviour might be seen as an act of ignorance or from another perspective, a peace made with the past. (Participant 8, Fatahillah Square manager, 19 January 2021)

Such responses demonstrate how the discrepancy between the exteriors and interiors of Fatahillah Square, a result of postcolonial spatial practice, is harmonised in the perception and practice of the space users. Current postcolonial actors in Fatahillah Square set aside the past, rather than remaining victims of struggle. In this way, they themselves break away from the dichotomous colonial relationship and

move toward ambivalence, joining and harmonising the historical separation between the exteriors and interiors. As such, Fatahillah Square and its buildings have a temporal hybrid relationship between preservation and transformation through postcolonial spatial practices. From the hybridity between exterior and interior space, a temporal hybridity between past and present appears in Fatahillah Square.

The second hybridity that can be found in Fatahillah Square is that which arises from differences in the expectations of formality and acceptance of informality of the spatial practitioners. Informality here refers to methods of spatial practice in Fatahillah Square that are different from the intention of the government for the urban space regeneration project. The final governmental goal of the Kota Tua regeneration project was to create a world-class tourist destination, according to interview participants 9, 10 and 17. This intention can be confirmed through the government's application for a UNESCO World Heritage Listing of Kota Tua after the regeneration project. However, this goal for the regeneration project was not fully realised, and the lack of an integrated and efficient management system was pointed out as the main reason for this by interview participants 8, 9, 15 and 17.

Yet, it is the loose management system for urban space regeneration that has created the spatial character of informality. The main informality found in Fatahillah Square is in commerce, including street vendors and performing artists such as the human statue (*manusia perak*), magicians, and buskers. Informal commercial activities take place in the centre of the square and on the way into the it. This road used to be driven by cars until the late 1990s, but now serves as the main entrance to Fatahillah Square after a pedestrian area was created. Those who engage in informal commercial activities are divided into two unions, the Fatahillah Square Traders Cooperative and the Society of Kota Tua Warrior Traders, and it is estimated that there are more than 450 operators (Robertson et al. 2014). The local government perceives that those informal commercial activities in the square harm the spatial landscape, so they prohibit such activities in the square and have prepared a place for commercial activities outside the square, but this have not been properly controlled, explain interview participants 11 and 12.

Space managers have different opinions on the site's degree of formality. Some (interview participants 8, 13, and 16) recognise it as a cultural asset of the space and are of opinion that it should be properly rearranged and revitalised, while others (interview participants 6 and 10) believe that informal commercial activities harm the landscape of the space and interfere with user's spatial practices. Therefore, they argue they should be strictly regulated. The main cause of the conflicting evaluation of informal commercial activities is the difference in preference for informal commercial activities by economic class. People in the relatively low economic class perceive and consume informal commercial activities in Fatahillah Square positively, but those in the relatively high economic class do not like or support them and feel uncomfortable (interview participants 8 and 17). Confirming that informal commercial activities are being practiced and consumed by at least some space users, it can be understood that the informal commercial activity of Fatahillah Square symbolises the hybridity of intention and acceptance between the main actors surrounding the space regeneration project. This hybridity of formality in Fatahillah Square reveals that the actors' intentions and meanings for spatial practices are constantly competing and negotiating, a major characteristic of the third space.

Lastly, hybridity of socioeconomic class is found in Fatahillah Square. There is a lack of easily accessible public leisure spaces in Jakarta, according to interview participants 5, 7, 8, 15 and 16. Therefore, participants 5 and 17 explained, the creation of a pedestrian-friendly public space with the purpose of creating a world-class tourist destination induced people from various backgrounds to visit. As detailed by participant 9, an urban planning expert:

I would say that to some extent, [social interactions] might work. Before COVID-19, the square was quite full especially during the weekends. Many local attractions and artists are gathering in this area and many people visit this area as one of the tourism spots in Jakarta. [...] I think it is a good phenomenon. As a place for the public, I believe it is open to talking to each other, for different reasons ... Of course, we can meet and interact with other groups (by accident)." (Interview Participant 9, Urban Planning Expert, 26 January 2021)

Interview participants 9, 15, 16 and 18 concur that in Fatahillah Square, space users from different backgrounds identify with one another's existence and interact through accidental encounters, even if



they do not visit the space for this purpose. For participants 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17, Fatahillah Square was created for the purpose of being open to anyone without discrimination. First of all, the cultural and artistic institutions of Fatahillah Square are public institutions, so admission and usage fees are relatively low. It is also more well-equipped than other public cultural and artistic spaces in Jakarta, as explained by interview participants 10, 13, and 18. This can be understood as a space people of various socioeconomic classes can use together. Next, Fatahillah Square is composed of cultural and artistic buildings on all sides. As a result, space users naturally cross the square when moving between buildings. The square is not an empty space, but one where various cultural practice take place. Therefore, people often stay and spend time there. Due to these two main factors, people of various socioeconomic classes naturally meet, confirm each other's existence, and often interact.

As described above, various hybridities can be found in the postcolonial spatial practices of Fatahillah Square and their results. This characteristic of spatial practice was formed by adding the voluntary participation of space users to the government-led urban space regeneration project. While space users generally accept the governmental intentions for the square's spatial practices, conflicting practices are also found. This creates tension in the space that is converted into creative energy. Such ambivalent hybridity, and the creative tension that arises from it is characteristic of the third space and a major decolonisation strategy. In this spatial practice, the ambivalent understanding of the (post)colonial relationship and the hybridity that arises from it resist the neo-colonial order that persists in the dichotomous structure, a resistance that maximises the anxiety of colonial power. For this reason, the postcolonial spatial practice of Fatahillah Square can be interpreted as an epistemological postcolonial spatial practice that overcomes the pessimism of chronological postcolonialism through a liberating spatiality that escapes colonial relations.

The spatial practices of Fatahillah Square, interpreted as epistemological postcolonial spatial practice, still has the task of overcoming the pessimism of epistemological postcolonialism. The spatial practice of Fatahillah Square goes beyond the explanatory scope of typical epistemological postcolonialism and can be summarised as voluntary and unintentional practices. Space users of Fatahillah Square visit voluntarily, mainly for leisure. In addition, they unconsciously and unintentionally engage in postcolonial spatial practices. As such, the ethics of hybridity is realised by enabling non-violent and wide participation. In turn, the plural spatial practices of Fatahillah Square have concrete and visible characteristics, exemplifying spatial practice characteristics not heretofore conceptualised by epistemological postcolonialism. Therefore, the spatial practices of Fatahillah Square represent a form that simultaneously overcomes chronological and epistemological postcolonial pessimism. The interview below describes the voluntary and unintentional postcolonial spatial practice of space users that refutes the pessimisms of postcolonialism.

For Indonesia, Kota Tua District and Fatahillah Square are the proofs of past historical records that Indonesia was once controlled by Dutch colonialists for several centuries. For the citizens of Jakarta, this place is a communal space [...] a space to hang out, gather, and express themselves in a reliable price. And it welcomes all people from various backgrounds. (Interview participant 14, Fatahillah Square manager, 15 February 2021)

[...] Fatahillah Square is focused on social cultural interaction; [visitors] use it for social-cultural interactions. Because we don't have many public squares, not enough for the population of Jakarta, they can spend time on cultural activities [in Fatahillah square] [...] Before, it was a little bit scary at night; now the elements in Fatahillah Square [make it] an artistic square. They changed it to a lively and inclusive area ... Activities and events born 'from the bottom' create everything. I think this has become an advantage of a space [attracting people]. [...] That is good, I think. Because they know what people need. (Interview participant 16; urban planning expert, 03 March 2021)

As explained above, the postcolonial spatial practices of Fatahillah Square exceed the prior scope of explanation of the third space concept, inducing more people to (un)intentionally practice postcoloniality, thereby resisting the neo-colonial order and creating a creative culture. Therefore, it is suggested that Fatahillah Square is an example of spatial practice that overcomes the pessimisms of the postcolonialism debate by realising liberatory practice, materially and politically.

## Conclusions

This study analysed postcolonial spatial practice according to the necessity of the geographical approach of postcolonialism in the case space of Fatahillah Square in Jakarta, Indonesia. This space has been transformed from one that symbolises the tragedy of past colonialism to a postcolonial space through the layering of voluntary practices of space users and governmental urban regeneration. The spatial practices of this case were analysed using the epistemological, poststructural postcolonial notion of the third space.

It is found that postcolonial spatial practice in Fatahillah Square is a hybrid practice that assumes an ambivalent relationship to colonialism, with representative characteristics of the third space. Analysed as a zone of epistemological postcolonial spatial practice, Fatahillah Square is emancipatory in its relation to colonial structural, overcoming the pessimism of chronological postcolonialism. Furthermore, the voluntary and unintentional characteristics of Fatahillah Square's spatial practices exemplify the practicality that existing epistemological postcolonialism does not address, demonstrating the potential to overcome the pessimism of epistemological postcolonialism.

This study, with the above conclusions, expands the scope of postcolonial research in its geographical analysis of spatial practices. This study utilises the pessimism within the postcolonial debate as a criterion for discussing alternative spatial practice methodologies rather than exhaustively reducing them. Accordingly, the study reveals that postcolonial spatial practice can overcome both chronological and epistemological postcolonial pessimism advocating for further plural practice and analysis of postcolonial space.

These conclusions are drawn from deep analysis of the practices of a specific case space. As such, while it is suggestive of postcolonial spatial practice more broadly, there is a limit to applying the practices of this space case to others. Therefore, in the spirit of the practices discussed here, it is necessary to continue to expand the investigation of the third space in practice to a plurality of space case.

## References

- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
- Bhabha, Homi. K. 2004. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Cash, John, and Kinnvall, Catarina. 2017. "Postcolonial bordering and ontological insecurities." *Postcolonial studies* 20 (3): 267–274.
- Chandra, Pares. 2012. "Marxism, Homi Bhabha and the omissions of postcolonial theory." *Critique* 40 (2): 199–214.
- Cresswell, Tim. 2012. *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction*. England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Datta, Ayona. 2019. "Postcolonial urban futures: Imagining and governing India's smart urban age." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37(3): 393–410.
- Drichel, Simone. 2008. "The time of hybridity." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 34 (6): 587–615.
- English Leona, M. 2004. "Feminist identities: Negotiations in the third space." *Feminist Theology* 13 (1): 97–125.
- Fronek, Patricia, and Polly Chester. 2016. "Moral outrage: Social workers in the Third Space." *Ethics and Social Welfare* 10 (2): 163–176.
- Gabriel, Sharmani P, Gomez, Edmund T, and Rocha, Zarine. 2012. "Between policy and reality: Multiculturalism, the second generation, and the third space in Britain." *Asia Europe Journal* 10: 267–285.
- Gandhi, Leela. 2019. *Postcolonial Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Goddeeris, Idesbald. 2015. "Postcolonial Belgium: the memory of the Congo." *Interventions* 17 (3): 434–451.
- Griffiths, Mark. 2017. "From heterogeneous worlds: western privilege, class and positionality in the South." *Area* 49 (1): 2–8.
- Hart, Gillian. 2018. "Relational comparison revisited: Marxist postcolonial geographies in practice." *Progress in Human Geography* 42 (3): 371–394.
- Hidayat, Rakhmat, Ismariati, Rina, and Apriliandini, Yuanita. 2019. "Connecting Identity and Image of City Branding in Kota Tua (Old City) Jakarta." *IBIMA Business Review* 2019: 1–10.
- Kalua, Fetsen. 2009. "Homi Bhabha's third space and African identity." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 21 (1): 23–32.
- Kehoe, Marsely. L. 2015. "Dutch Batavia: Exposing the hierarchy of the Dutch colonial city." *Journal of Historians of the Netherlands*, Art 7 (10): 1–35.
- Kraidy, Marwan. M. 2002. "Hybridity in cultural globalization." *Communication Theory* 12 (3): 316–339.
- Lee, Kyungwon. 2011. 검은 역사, 하얀 이론 : 탈식민주의의 계보와 정체성 [Black History, White Theory : The Genealogy and Identity of Postcolonialism]. Paju: Hangil Librarium Novae Humanitatis.
- Lee, Yungjin. 2021. "제국의 곤경과 저항의 논리: 포스트식민주의 연구 리뷰 [Predicament of empire and logic of resistance: A review of post-colonial research]." *Journal of Social Science* 60 (1): 305–335.
- McFarlane-Alvarez, Susan L. 2007. "Trinidad and Tobago television advertising as third space: Hybridity as resistance in the Caribbean mediascape." *Howard Journal of Communications* 18 (1): 39–55.

- Mizutani, Satoshi.** 2013. "Hybridity and history: A critical reflection on Homi K. Bhabha's post-historical thoughts." *Ab Imperio* 2013 (4): 27–48.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart. J.** 1997. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso Books.
- Mythen, Gabe.** 2012. "Identities in the third space? Solidity, elasticity and resilience amongst young British Pakistani Muslims." *The British Journal of Sociology* 63 (3): 393–411.
- Nugteren, Bastiaan.** 2020. "Universal, colonial, or Indonesian heritage? A multi-scalar approach to the historical representations and management of colonial heritage in the Old Town of Jakarta (Kota Tua) during its bid for World Heritage nomination in 2015–2018." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 26(6): 840–853.
- Pile, Steve.** 2000. "The troubled spaces of Frantz Fanon." In *Thinking Space*, edited by Nigel Thrift and Mike Crang, 260–277. London: Routledge.
- Pugh, Jonathan.** 2017. "Postcolonial development,(non) sovereignty and affect: living on in the wake of Caribbean political independence." *Antipode* 49 (4): 867–882.
- Radcliffe, Sarah. A.** 2011. "Third space, abstract space and coloniality." In *Postcolonial Spaces*, edited by Teverson Andrew and Upstone Sara. 129–146. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Robertson, Ashley, Sutanudjaja, Elisa, Henderson, Andrew, and Kusalasari Maria I, eds.** 2014. "Analytical study of Kota Tua, Jakarta." UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
- Roy, Anaya.** 2016. "Who's afraid of postcolonial theory?." *International journal of urban and regional research* 40 (1): 200–209.
- Scott, James. C.** 2008. *Seeing like a State*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sharp, Joanne P.** 2008. *Geographies of Postcolonialism*. Los Angeles: Sage.