

RESEARCH REPORT

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A Study on the Tactics Adopted by
Jatinegara's Waste Collectors amid
Urban Poverty

Abdul Ghofur

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PREFACE

This research report is part of the researcher's graduate thesis undertaken at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Indonesia and was completed in July 2008.* Through this study, the researcher would like to offer a theoretical contribution amidst the failure of poverty reduction efforts in Indonesia. It is necessary to acknowledge that up until now, it has merely been a claim of the government and "activists" that they place the poor at the forefront of all poverty reduction efforts. In fact, they listen to the voice of the poor only from a very limited number of sources, such as statements made in interviews or group discussions. They disregard the meaning and everyday practices of the poor as subjects. In other words, the poor are led to only present the superficial reality of poverty in order to be provided with solutions, whereas, in fact, the conclusions drawn are "fictitious" or perhaps even manipulated. This study aims to give a broader picture of poverty from the perspective of the actors themselves: the poor, and to some extent through the culture of poverty and structural poverty approaches, which all need to be carefully considered during the formulation of poverty reduction programs.

The researcher is fully aware that he may become the target of accusations from advocates of structural poverty for romanticizing the poor. With all humility, the researcher merely intends to fill in the gaps in the knowledge of poverty and anthropology, particularly in relation to the position of the poor who always move in a dialectical process. The researcher also feels that the process and analysis of this study are not without flaws. Therefore, the researcher is very much open to criticisms and inputs from the readers. The researcher hopes that this study would be placed proportionally in the overall effort to understand poverty, especially in the context of the *manusia gerobak* phenomenon that may become a future trend in urban lifestyle.

For the completion of this study, the researcher would like to express his gratitude to Prof. Dr. Achmad Fedyani Saifuddin as his adviser. The researcher also feels indebted to Dr. Asep Suryahadi, Sri Kusumastuti Rahayu, Dr. Sudarno Sumarto, Widjajanti Isdijoso, and other researchers from The SMERU Research Institute for their inputs. With all due respect, the researcher can only express his gratitude and apologies for all shortcomings, including the late completion of this research report. The researcher would also like to thank SMERU for funding this research.

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Abdul Ghofur

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ABSTRACT

***Manusia Gerobak:* A Study on the Tactics Adopted by Jatinegara's Waste Collectors amid Urban Poverty**

Abdul Ghofur[†]

This research report focuses on the everyday life of *manusia gerobak* in Jatinegara. This subject matter arose due to the fact that the ways poverty was interpreted, mainly its causes, were dominated by two theoretical approaches, they being the culture of poverty and structural poverty. Both approaches greatly influence the government's view, as well as various other elements of society, in their efforts to reduce poverty in Indonesia. Both approaches work under the structural paradigm of functionalism which places the poor as objects portraying them as static, lazy, and helpless people. Therefore, they are considered to have distinctive cultural boundaries that are different from those of people who are not poor. This poses the question: what is the position of the poor, such as *manusia gerobak*, as social actors who are both active and creative? Through this study, the researcher shows that *manusia gerobak*, as part of the poor, are active subjects and have developed tactics that are both creative and manipulative in order to survive. The characteristics of these active subjects is shown in their creation of explanations, their sets of knowledge as a basis for their daily practices, their exploitation of social networks, and their appearance (style) as vagrants. Based on these findings, the theoretical assumptions of the culture of poverty and the structural poverty approaches, which gives the poor a distinct culture, turns out to be difficult to prove as *manusia gerobak* have associations with a broad range of actors.

Keywords: poverty, waste collectors, vagrants, tactics

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
I. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Conceptual Framework	1
1.3 Research Questions	7
1.4 Research Objectives	8
1.5 Research Methodology	8
II. A PORTRAIT OF <i>MANUSIA GEROBAK</i>	12
2.1 The Story of Becoming a <i>Manusia Gerobak</i>	12
2.2 Dwelling Places	15
2.3 Work Locations	17
2.4 Work Categories	18
2.5 Daily Activities	19
2.6 Poverty Attributes	22
III. THE TACTICS OF <i>MANUSIA GEROBAK</i>	30
3.1 Building Social Relations	31
3.2 Picking the Time for Collecting Waste	39
3.3 Choosing and Controlling Locations	42
3.4 Vagrancy as a Lifestyle	46
IV. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS	50
4.1 Conclusion	50
4.2 Policy Implications	52
LIST OF REFERENCES	54
APPENDIX 1. Map of the Research Locations	58

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The phenomenon of the increasing number of *manusia gerobak* is the result of not only economic-related problems, but also sociocultural problems. Aside from this, the *manusia gerobak*'s desire to break loose from the domination of other parties also contributes to their increasing number in urban areas. This shows that *manusia gerobak* exist not only as the result of the culture of poverty which characterizes waste collecting as merely a fatalist action, but also the result of a structure which views waste collecting as a profession that is done not of one's own free will, for there is no other options left, as described in previous studies. In this study, the researcher shows that the existence of *manusia gerobak* is a manifestation of active and creative subjects that, with all the capacities in them, always struggle, respond to situations and changes, and choose a role that benefits them the most out of all the existing roles. At the next stage, *manusia gerobak*, as part of the poor group, play a role in making poverty attributes relative, and they use them as a medium to create survival tactics.

Based on their places of origin, there are two kinds of *manusia gerobak*: First, those who have previously lived in the city and, second, those who have come from the village. *Manusia gerobak* of the first kind generally have work experience, especially in the informal sector. They choose to become *manusia gerobak* because of unfavorable work experiences in the past due to a lack of income, business losses, or restrictions. Those belonging to the second kind choose to become *manusia gerobak* because of being tempted by information from their neighbors that they can easily get a high-income job in Jakarta. Nevertheless, there are some people in this category who had already intended from the very beginning to become *manusia gerobak* in Jakarta for the reasons that this job is easy to do and does not necessitate a certain educational level and that city dwellers have high levels of consumption.

Becoming *manusia gerobak* is a process: Previous experiences have a share in affecting the choices made by someone who deals with used goods. *Manusia gerobak* assess that their previous jobs, both formal and informal ones, did not give them sufficient economic benefits to fulfil their household needs. There are a number of arguments underlying the reasons why they choose waste collecting as their profession rather than the other professions in the informal sector. First, the market for used goods is growing. Second, city dwellers' high levels of consumption leave behind abundant amounts of garbage. Third, waste collecting does not require much capital. Fourth, waste collecting only has a small chance of loss. Fifth, people choose to become *manusia gerobak* primarily because of their desire to live their lives freely, not to work under pressure, and to escape the confines of authority of other people who give orders, supervise, and set targets as they wish.

The *gerobak* (cart) that *manusia gerobak* use is recognized as the most important item in their lives, as it is both a working tool and their home. As a working tool, it functions to support them in collecting used goods as well as storing and transporting these collected items. As their home, the *gerobak* provides them with a place to sleep, have sexual intercourse, care for their children, and keep their possessions, including food. At certain times, however, the *gerobak* is not used as a working tool due to various considerations. Upon making the decision to use a *karung* (sack) instead of their *gerobak* as their working tool, *manusia gerobak* are basically applying one of their waste collecting tactics. This tactic is especially effective when they have to pass through alleys, which are of course difficult to negotiate with a *gerobak*.

Living as a *manusia gerobak*, with a *gerobak* both as a means of production and home, requires them to have a certain set locations as their living quarters, although all these locations can only be temporary. Various places in the city provide them with a range of options of places where they can decide to stay. Using their experience, they identify a space and consider all potential situations, including opportunities (for waste collecting) and threats. *Manusia gerobak* will eventually pick a suitable and advantageous location for them. The location has to provide a space for parking their *gerobak* and spreading out their sleeping pad and be strategic for their waste collecting activities. This sort of location may be situated under a toll road, in front of a store or an office building, at a train station, in a city park, or at a market; it may also be a rented room. For *manusia gerobak*, their location is like a base, often parallel to a train or bus station. Wherever they wander, they will keep coming back to this dwelling location as long as it is still considered safe and advantageous.

Working as waste collectors, *manusia gerobak* must have considerable knowledge of the ideal time slots and prime locations to collect used goods. With this knowledge, the continuance of their life is decided. In terms of time, *manusia gerobak* must make decisions about when they have to wander and collect used goods and when they have to take a rest. The knowledge of time not only gives them many benefits assuring that they are able to collect sufficient used goods, but also it becomes a tactic to avoid the community's prejudice towards them. The same thing goes for their knowledge of space. Although used goods can be collected anywhere, there are certain places where resources are more abundant and better in quality than in other places. Based on the researcher's observation, these locations include streets; marketplaces; residential areas; assorted social facilities, such as hospitals, schools, and other similar facilities; and waste containers. Places that are believed to have abundant resources are dominated by certain *manusia gerobak* in order that they can insure their income for the next days. One of their tactics to dominate one of these places is by marking it, that is, by parking their *gerobak* close to the waste container. Such domination is sometimes done by paying an amount of money to certain parties such as the RTⁱ or RWⁱⁱ administration or by taking part in activities held in the neighborhood where the waste container is located. That way, these *manusia gerobak* have a stronger position in that they are protected by the people who benefit from their used goods.

Based on its characteristics, the work of *manusia gerobak* is divided into two major categories: cooperative waste collecting and individual waste collecting. Cooperative waste collecting is defined as a waste collecting activity which involves family members and is done at the same time and location. In this category, there are four different waste collecting patterns. The first one is collecting waste together with their children. This type of *manusia gerobak* household looks for used goods collectively, bringing their children along during work. It is certain that the *gerobak* is always used for the children to sleep when the parents are working. The second one is collecting waste without the presence of their children. In this pattern, the husband and wife cooperate in collecting waste. They do not take their children along because the sun is scorching during work, or their children already have friends to play with or things to do. The third one is collecting waste at the same time but at different locations. In this kind of *manusia gerobak* household, all members collect used goods, but when doing their job, they head towards different directions. For example, if the husband turns right, the wife will turn left. At an agreed time, they meet again at home. It is acknowledged that with this kind of waste collecting, they can potentially earn more money. The fourth pattern is collecting waste together at one location. All the household members collect used goods, but they do not wander from one place to another. They have a permanent and specific work location.

ⁱRT, or *rukun tetangga*, is the lowest administrative unit.

ⁱⁱRW, or *rukun warga*, consists of several RT.

In the individual waste collecting category, only one member of the *manusia gerobak* household performs the task of collecting used goods and it is not carried out at the same time and place. This does not mean that one of the couple in the *manusia gerobak* household does not work; it is just that there is division of labor among the household members with various considerations. There are at least three forms of *manusia gerobak* households in this category. In the first form, the waste collecting is only carried out by the husband. This kind of household divides labor based on household conditions such as when the wife is expecting a baby or has one or more children under five years old. The wife, in this case, "works" by taking care of the children. In the second form, the waste collecting is carried out by the husband and the wife alternately based on the agreed distribution of time. When the husband is collecting used goods, the wife takes charge of caring for the children. When the husband gets home, it is the wife's turn to collect used goods. The husband then resumes the babysitting of the children. In the third form, the members of the *manusia gerobak* household have different professions. Only the husband or the wife collects used goods.

Most *manusia gerobak* start their activities at around 6 a.m. This particular time is based on the residents' habit of discarding their garbage at around this time each day. They prefer starting at this time to be safe when working, including from prejudice and accusations of stealing often made by residents, even if that means that they have to start work later and other waste collectors sometimes have got ahead of them. They generally leave their home with their *gerobak* along with all its content, including their children. Late in the afternoon or at dusk, *manusia gerobak* clean the used goods they have managed to collect during the day and then sell them to the *lapak*, that is, the place where transactions occur between *manusia gerobak* and purchasers of their used goods. At around dusk, *manusia gerobak* are usually already back at their home with the other household members. At about 7 p.m., they get ready for dinner. After dinner, those *manusia gerobak* who are tired often go straight to bed, while others continue their evening activities enjoying entertainment or picking up their work where they left it. Between 11:30 p.m. and 00:00 a.m., those who continue working have usually returned to their home.

Based on several poverty attributes, *manusia gerobak* can be objectively categorized as poor. These poverty attributes, however, cannot be concluded automatically. In some cases, these poverty attributes can be very subjective as they depend on *manusia gerobak*'s standard of living. Some *manusia gerobak* admit that their life is indeed the life of the poor with all the attributes attached to them. However, some others do not see their life in the streets as a life of poverty. They even refuse to be labelled as "poor" because they earn quite a large amount of money collecting waste, enough to be able to live comfortably; they can even contribute to their family finances.

Manusia gerobak are not merely passive participants in society despite being trapped in a sub-culture of being conquered, controlled, and marginalized by the socioeconomic structure of the city. As a matter of fact, they are doing "something" and they effect that "something" by applying tactics which are not necessarily performed in a frontal or conflictual way, or in an action that is ideological in nature. Observed closely and specifically, these tactics are performed as a part of their daily routines that are automatic and emotionally affecting and designed to reduce the influence of power initially used as a tool to dominate them. *Manusia gerobak* use these tactics in order to survive, that is, to be able to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

Manusia gerobak are aware of their situation and position as well as the hard and individualistic facts of life in the city. There is never any assurance that *manusia gerobak* can continually fulfill their basic needs as their household financial situation is always uncertain. Another condition they have to face is that used goods have become a coveted commodity not only among *manusia gerobak*, but also among other groups of people who initially did not know the potential

of these resources. Dependence on the government for the fulfillment of their basic needs is impossible. Expecting residents to donate routinely is also pointless due to their individualistic attitude and the stigma that they attach to *manusia gerobak*. Therefore, relying on other people for their life's sustainability by begging for their charity is a utopia and only places them in a more subordinate position.

Their belief in their own ability is the only thing that can assure them that they can survive in the city. With their capacity, *manusia gerobak* must be able to be creative in benefitting from existing opportunities widespread among other actors in various places and at various times in the city. With such social relationships, *manusia gerobak* will be able to increase their ability, communicate with other actors, and coordinate their actions. In terms of other actors, *manusia gerobak* build relationships with their relatives by taking advantage of family obligation in that a family member should help other family members who are in need. Therefore, the life burden of a family member is shared by the other family members.

Manusia gerobak also build relationships with fellow *manusia gerobak* in the form of providing mutual assistance in the hope that the party receiving assistance will return the favor in the future. *Manusia gerobak* maintain relationships with other *manusia gerobak* with certain limitations, especially with the ones they know well, although these *manusia gerobak* are their competitors in obtaining used goods. This closeness with other *manusia gerobak* will eventually threaten their domination over their existing limited resources. Therefore, precautionary measures to minimize these threats are part of the tactics applied by *manusia gerobak* to maintain the sustainability of their income into the future.

Another tactic applied by *manusia gerobak* is building relationships with *lapak* owners. Becoming *manusia gerobak* is basically an effort to defy disadvantageous patron-client relationships. Although having broken free from the dominating *lapak*'s stipulations, *manusia gerobak* maintain their relationships with *lapak* owners, especially when they are selling their used goods or when they have other urgent needs to meet. In addition, *lapak* owners can be their source of assistance. There are some *manusia gerobak* who think that *lapak* owners take excessive profits from them. Thinking this way, they are encouraged to develop manipulative tactics by taking profits from *lapak* owners. They do this by mixing cheap and expensive used goods during the weighing process. Another form of manipulation is done by making their used goods wet. That way, their used goods gain more weight and, hence, result in more income.

The relationships of *manusia gerobak* with small food stalls take the same course. Even though the other customers and staff do not like their presence at the food stall, they maintain a positive relationship with the food stall owner. They understand that the owner is the authority in the stall, not the customers or the staff. The relationship is based on a mutual principle; the food stall owner needs loyal customers, while *manusia gerobak* need the food and other necessities provided by the stall. In the end, the relationship creates trust between both parties and so this makes it possible for *manusia gerobak* to get food, drinks, and cigarettes without having to pay up front.

The nature of the city that is unfriendly towards the poor with practices such as evictions, calls for *manusia gerobak* to muster the courage to speak up. However, with only their voices, they do not always succeed in defending their assets. Therefore, they change their tactics by the use of pretense in front of the authorities in order to survive. This principle of "backing down now to win later" has become the firm footing for *manusia gerobak*. For them, condemnation is a risk that they have to face in their jobs and in their lives. Even though they become victims of condemnation by local government officials, they do not redeem their *gerobak* because they

know that the money they pay, which is a considerable amount, will only be corrupted by the official and this will only make them an endless target of blackmail in the future. A simple smile to an official who cares for the *manusia gerobak* is considered effective in earning their sympathy and, at the same time, shows that *manusia gerobak* can also have respect for other people. With the use of this tactic, *manusia gerobak* can obtain important inside-information about plans for evictions so that they can temporarily move during the evictions only to return when the situation is safe again.

In the end, vagrancy as a lifestyle is not only something that is caused by economic limitations, but, more than that, it is also a choice of life that one wants to lead. *Manusia gerobak* regard the act of vagrancy as an expression of freedom as well as an effort to emphasize that their life is different from the lifestyle of *kampung* (local term for urban village) people. Waste collectors roam around, making use of their knowledge and experience acquired as a result of their interactions. They think that they acquire many things as they roam around: they can make new friends with fellow waste collectors and other street people and obtain knowledge about ways to survive, such as those carried out when they are avoiding raids by local government officials. *Manusia gerobak's* roaming around with their cart is sometimes shown by walking against the traffic. They realize that roaming around is not without risks. The city residents' view on the practice of roaming around which characterizes *manusia gerobak* as wild and dirty individuals who have a tendency to steal keeps them separated from the city's residents even further. This, however, benefits *manusia gerobak* as very few people would be interested in working as waste collectors, owing to these common stigmas. This means that there will be little competition in waste collecting and only those who dare to live by roaming around will fight over the abundant supply of used objects and waste in the city.

This study has observed how capable the poor are in forming and defining poverty and how they understand various situations, give meaning to various events, build relationships with other actors, interact with their surroundings and existing structures in the community, and demonstrate tactics amid urban poverty. Based on these study results, the researcher thinks that it is about time that poverty reduction policies, especially in the cities, were revised so as to make them more effective.

1. Poverty in Indonesian cities, particularly in Jakarta, cannot be addressed with merely the concept of a single, distinct society and culture, as determined by the structural paradigm which views the poor as a unique group with clear and distinct boundaries from other groups that are not poor. In reality, poverty attributes keep changing dynamically, are reproduced based on contexts, and are part of the tactics of the poor when faced with social changes in the city so that they are able to survive. Therefore, measuring poverty cannot be carried out over a relatively long span of time as the needs of the poor are constantly changing in line with the context of the problems they are facing.
2. The social integration of the poor that is formed as a result of the paradoxes of social and economic status found in this study results in the increasing difficulty in developing poverty reduction programs, especially in Indonesian cities. Besides the fact that the line that separates the poor and the non-poor groups is indistinct, the population of the poor in the city can be quite large and very diverse. Many poverty reduction efforts in Indonesian cities take an approach towards poverty prevailing in several developed countries such as the United States of America which views the poor as minorities, belonging to a specific race, and related to slavery in the past. Therefore, the models suggested by Mukherjee (1999) and Mukherjee, Harjono, and Carriere (2002) which regard the poor as distinct social groups that need empowering and facilitating should be reconsidered as they in fact

encourage the labelling of the poor as inferior. This process is seen clearly during the determination of who receives assistance and who does not. In such a situation, universally targeted social insurance programs are worth considering, of course disregarding or facilitating the administrative aspects for the poor by providing sufficient information.

3. To emphasize the position of the poor as subjects both in studies and programs, it is not enough to just capture their voices through interviews or group discussions. The voices of the poor should not only be interpreted in terms of their specific requests and grievances, but instead should be understood in a broader sense as everyday practices, symbols, and sentences expressing their lifestyles. Only by listening to these voices at length can the position of the poor as subjects be realized. Thereby, the data collection programs carried out using the subjective model, both micro and macro, and several participatory methods by Statistics Indonesia should be changed by giving significant opportunity to the poor to convey their aspirations.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The presence of *manusia gerobak* in the city is not a new thing, yet there is a fundamental change in their life pattern. *Manusia gerobak* with their 2-meter-by-1-meter carts used as a means of production as well as a dwelling for household members are becoming an increasingly visible phenomenon and crowding many corners of the city of Jakarta. Twikromo (1999) calls them *pemulung jalanan*, or street waste collectors. During the day time, they roam from one garbage container to another and at night, they stay in the doorways of stores, on the roadside, under bridges, or in other public places to rest. Harijono (2001) describes them as Gypsy-like people who are constantly on the move. The *Republika* daily (2001) calls them “*manusia gerobak*”, that is, a distinctive group of Jakarta residents who spend their days in working with or living in their carts because they do not have permanent homes.

The stories surrounding *manusia gerobak* reflect the fact that poverty is an inseparable part of their day-to-day life. To purchase their daily meals, waste collectors are sometimes forced to buy food on credit, therefore to pay for the relatively large cost of a funeral for a deceased relative is most likely impossible (*Warta Kota*, 2005). For *manusia gerobak*, the influence of globalization that places more pressure on city life does not automatically bring about the propensity to easily submit to their fate when it comes to facing with their future. They are even bolder than ever in making an appearance during their activities, which Dieter-Evans (1980) call “*ekonomi bayangan*”, or “shadow economy”. They are also resolute when facing structural pressures such as eviction by the municipal authorities who consider *manusia gerobak* as making the city dirty and disturbing the peace to the extent that they are difficult to control. As far as the city administration is concerned, *manusia gerobak* are trouble makers. On the other hand, *manusia gerobak* themselves could not care less about the residents of the city who generally have a negative image of them (Twikromo, 1999).

As active subjects, *manusia gerobak* are always creative in inventing new tactics based on their previous experiences. They use these tactics as an effort to create a situation in which they can earn income and that is advantageous in achieving their goals, that is, to fulfill their basic needs. By doing so, they hope that they can survive the ever-changing environment and social conditions in the midst of urban poverty.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

1.2.1 Study on Waste Collectors and Vagrants

In anthropology, studies on waste collectors are categorized into studies on street people in the scope of urban anthropology. Discussions on *manusia gerobak* usually refer to the talks on waste collectors and drifters. For the researcher, *manusia gerobak* is a term that can be used to differentiate between settled waste collectors (from a village) and unsettled waste collectors (having no permanent address). Nevertheless, not all street waste collectors have a cart and not all waste collectors with a cart are unsettled. In this case, *manusia gerobak* are waste collectors that roam around with their carts.

According to Onghokham (1986), the term "gelandangan", or "wanderer", originates from the word "gelandang", meaning "to wander", which is neutral in meaning. Wandering is in fact a tradition for certain nomadic communities. This tradition is carried out based on two primary reasons: political and economic. However, a wanderer is also defined as a person who does not have a steady job and no fixed address or residence. Kayam (1986) states that in communities of wanderers in Indonesia, it is not impossible for something like "a wanderers' culture", or at least "a wanderers' sub-culture", to be born. This is due to the fact that wanderers have certain basic characteristics, as stated by Wirosardjono (1986). These characteristics include having their own circles of acquaintances, norms, and rules that are different from those of other communities; not having a permanent residence; not having a decent job and income; and having a unique and binding sub-culture.

The study on wanderers and illegal settlements conducted by Parsudi Suparlan (1986) in Jakarta and Purwokerto states that the presence of wanderers is a logical consequence of various economic pressures and insecurity felt by some villagers who are later forced to look for a place in the city to live in that is expected to provide better opportunities. Further to this, in his study, he divides the conditions faced by the villagers into two: the villagers' difficulty to own a house so that they make use of unused land to build huts and their difficulty in gaining employment so that they collect used objects to sell.

Similar to Suparlan, Wurdjinem (2001) states in her study that waste collectors exist as a result of job scarcity. Based on a quantitative study conducted by Djuwendah (2000), it is reported that 38% of waste collectors decide to do the job because it does not require a lot of capital and special skills, 29% because the business is time-flexible or they are just trying their luck, 18% because they feel that this job brings more profit than their previous job, and only 21% because they are forced to do it as it is difficult to get a job. Other reasons underlying their decisions to take up the job include a combination of their limited skills and capital and the difficulty to get a job and, therefore, in the end they decide to become a waste collector, which only requires a strong will and endurance.

Alkostar (1984: 120–121) thinks that there are two factors causing the emergence of wanderers and beggars; internal and external factors. Internal factors comprise laziness, unwillingness to work, and a weak mental state as well as a physical or psychological disability, whereas external factors include social, cultural, economic, educational, environmental, religious, and geographical factors. Alkostar (1986) in his writing which refers to a study conducted in Ujungpandang and Yogyakarta states that there are wanderers who work in groups and there are also those who work alone. As homeless and jobless people, wanderers are isolated and separated from normal life in the community and partake in economic activities that are often considered illegal. According to Alkostar (1986), the emergence of wanderers is an abnormal social indication resulting from interactions between human nature and existing social orders.

Furthermore, Rebong, Elena, and Mangiang (1983) indicate that wanderers, aside from all the negative thoughts about them, in fact have a well-defined economic mechanism of their own with *lapak* as the center of their economic activities and in some aspects they are benefitting some factories that use recycled goods in their manufacturing process. Therefore, the presence of waste collectors is considered important for a city. Referring to Muladi (2002), waste collectors are the unsung heroes of environmental cleanliness. Under the scorching sun and amidst the foul smell of various types of waste, waste collectors rummage through the waste, without feeling disgusted and ashamed, to collect used objects such as paper, cardboards, metals, plastics, and other objects to sell.

On the other hand, according to the state, based on Government Regulation No. 31/1980, wanderers are defined as people living in a condition not conforming to the norms adhered to by the local community, primarily: not having a steady job, not having a permanent place to live in, and roaming around public places. For the state, in this case the Ministry of Social Affairs, both waste collectors and wanderers are categorized as PMKS (*penyandang masalah kesejahteraan sosial*, or people with problems of social welfare), which means that they are individuals, a family, or a group of community members who, because of certain obstacles, problems, or disturbances, cannot perform their social functions so that their needs (physical, spiritual, and social) are not met sufficiently and properly. They are even called a societal disease, that is, a social deviation that needs to be prevented, repressed, and rehabilitated so that they return to the generally accepted social norms or the ways of orthodox religious teachings. It was this context that led to the formation of the Regional Regulation on Public Orderliness in Jakarta. According to Twikromo (1999), this regulation will influence the street waste collectors' views on their sociocultural realities that go along with their opposition towards the pressures placed on them by city residents and the government regulation itself.

It is realized that the existing explanation is not yet sufficient to describe the *manusia gerobak* phenomenon. Referring to previous studies, there are at least three things that need to be considered. First, previous studies were more dominant in describing the characteristics of waste collectors and wanderers as people having a distinctive culture which in the end paradigmatically places them as passive people. Second, those studies were more dominant in explaining their dangerous job, health, and the opinion that they are a social disease with their everyday lifestyle practices that are considered abnormal. Third, what is most important is that there needs to be a study recommending policies and programs which can help waste collectors and wanderers move out of poverty.

In line with that last point, this study examines *manusia gerobak*'s tactics and everyday lifestyle practices in surviving amidst urban poverty by giving them an opportunity to share their perspectives as active subjects.

1.2.2 Frame of Reference

Poverty is an abstract concept that can be explained differently depending on one's experience, perspective, and sometimes ideology. The concept of poverty that is formulated in the end will identify poverty attributes. Initially, these poverty attributes are seen as an absolute thing and as a condition lacking a variety of materials. Scientists then create a boundary called a "poverty line" between the poor and the non-poor.¹ Up until now, this measuring instrument is used to count the number of program targets and determine the beneficiaries of poverty reduction programs. These absolute attributes, be it the "poverty line"² or other attributes that are broader than purely economic attributes

¹Sajogyo measures the poverty line by using household income or expenditure equal to rice consumption per capita per year, namely 480 kg for urban areas and 320 kg for rural areas, while the poverty line used by BPS refers to the expenditure (in rupiah) per capita per month to meet minimum food and non-food basic necessities. The World Bank, on the other hand, measures poverty line based on income of US\$1 (purchasing power parity) per capita per day.

²Protests regarding poverty line are more often voiced by the labor community who demands an increase in the standard minimum wage. They view that the standard minimum wage based on the poverty line set by the government is still far too low to decently meet minimum life necessities.

(multidimensional),³ are often questioned by various parties. Thus, poverty attributes become relative based on empirical reality, although without clear boundaries, as a result of the dynamic relativity of the poor. This makes it possible for more people to be included in the poor category.⁴

Poverty attributes are made to facilitate the efforts being made to find out whether or not poverty exists. When it does exist, the condition is considered a problem and will then be overcome by various parties. Overcoming poverty does not mean eliminating poverty attributes, as those attributes are relative in nature despite the fact that there are those that are made absolute, but instead it means finding what causes those attributes to exist in the first place. In the end, a good understanding of these causes of poverty will determine the success of poverty reduction efforts.

In social science, causes of poverty are predominantly influenced by two major approaches: cultural poverty and structural poverty. The cultural poverty approach is very much influenced by Lewis (1961; 1966; 1988) who thinks that culture causes and at the same time solidifies poverty. Thus, poverty is a way of life which is not only developed by the poor, but also transmitted from one generation to the other. In the context of poverty as a way of life, the poor are seen as a social unit that is separate and adhering to a culture of poverty that is unique and distinct from those belonging to other communities. This difference in culture in the end will make the poor unable to integrate with the wider community so that they will develop a set of coping mechanisms that can bring about negative consequences such as having an unproductive life, loss of childhood, an increase in the number of couples living together out of wedlock, an increase in crime, and more children being abandoned by their parents. In such a situation, the poor are characterized by being apathetic and tending to give in to their fate, having low education levels, and lacking the fighting will and ability to think about the future (Lewis, 1966; 1988).

The cultural poverty approach developed by Lewis plays a role in revealing the causes of poverty. However, this concept is not able to completely explain the causes of poverty that are prevalent among the poor. The weakness of the cultural poverty approach is that it is anti-history and disregards the origin of existing behaviors and norms (Gans in Baker, 1980: 6). This concept is very normative and merely represents the suspicion and prejudice of high-level society towards the poor. Empirical evidence shows that the poor are hard workers and have aspiration and motivation to improve their life. They are capable of creating their own jobs and working hard to meet their needs (Papanek and Jakti, 1986). In addition, they also try to change their fate by moving from one business to another and never lose hope. In fact, their presence in the city plays a role in supporting the life of the city (Suparlan, 1993). Through their activities, the poor give the opportunity to city residents to enjoy inexpensive services. This reality is evidence that the poor are not like what is described by Lewis in his concept of cultural poverty and thus the causes of poverty are more structural in nature.

³Various novel concepts on poverty consider such aspects as powerlessness and isolation. Vulnerability and security also appear as aspects that are often associated with poverty. In addition, a concept on sustainable livelihood is also developed (Ellis, 1998). Sen (1999) then stresses the importance of increasing the capacities of individuals so that they are capable of carrying out various community activities. Lately, gender relation aspect has been entered into poverty concepts.

⁴Results of the *Kajian Kemiskinan Bersama Komunitas di Kendari* (literally, Collective Community Poverty Analysis in Kendari) shows that the actual numbers of the poor in this area are greater than what are stated in BPS records (GAPRI, 2007).

The structural point of view think that social structures solidify poverty. Structural pressures, such as political and economic pressures, result in a number of people in the population being pushed into an unfavorable position. As part of the structure, these people are not capable of facing its strength so that they remain relatively weak and in an unfavorable position (Valentine, 1968). According to Alfian (1980: 5), structural poverty is that which is suffered by a group of community members due to the social structure of the community. They cannot join in making use of the income sources that are actually available to them. This approach is based on the fact that although abundant resources have been distributed to the sectors that are dominated by the poor, they cannot benefit from these resources as the structure prohibits them from doing so. What is meant by structure is the state's authority and wider social structures which cause inequality, excludability, and the loss of the ability to obtain existing resources. Existing structures are considered to have taken away the social, cultural, economic, and political potencies of a group of people (GAPRI, 2003) and confined and hampered the poor to improve, attributing them as a helpless group of people.

Culture and social structure in this report are two different dimensions of analysis. Nevertheless, according to Saifuddin (2007), even though both approaches have different emphases, they both belong to the paradigmatic realm of structural-functionalism. Structural-functionalists think that function is a social duty, an activity that has to be performed with a certain level of precision (Saifuddin, 2005: 159). Although every single individual can respond to a social condition, they still resemble a robot which confronts structural pressures (Saifuddin, 2005: 163). Both approaches regard the (poor) community as a social unity which is culturally unique and single and has distinct boundaries. It is the perspective of these approaches that the poor are helpless in facing the power of culture and social structure. Human activities are considered to be severely hampered so that there is no more room for consciously-made choices. What is left is a single choice. The poor are merely passive social actors that surrender to economic and political slavery. The poor's social actions are formed and regulated by gigantic structures which in general are explicitly ignoring any choices. Referring to Soedjatmoko (1983: 157), the poor are similar to a person who is born into various social structures and is incapable of conquering or changing the structures with his/her own power.

In other words, the poor in both approaches are considered to be static and helpless objects, both as study targets and policy program targets. According to Kieffer (in Suharto, 1997: 212–213), this state of helplessness is the result of continuous interactions between individuals and their surroundings which include the combination of a self-blaming act, distrust, a state of isolation from social resources, and an incapable feeling in a political struggle. Thus, the poor resulting from both culture and social structure are similar: static or helpless. Therefore, empowerment of the poor is needed. Referring to Black (in Gardner and Lewis, 2005: 192), empowerment involves "taking care of, liberating, and even giving power to the poor and the helpless". The consequence of both approaches is that all the actions are considered unable to solve any of the problems because they are mostly done out of pity, and are in the form of behavioral and cultural rectification through training programs and evicting the poor.

Both approaches in the end raise questions regarding the true position of the poor as active subjects, whereas humans are in fact active, creative, and manipulative actors in their surroundings (Saifuddin, 2005: 176). Furthermore, the ability of a person to form and change his/her surroundings is an empirical and analytical matter. Both approaches seem to be ignorant of how hard the poor as social actors struggle to survive with the limited power they possess.

Scheper-Hughes (1992) tries to bridge the positions of the poor between cultural determination and structural domination through her research in Alto de Cruzeiro, Brazil. Scheper-Hughes is of the opinion that the poor and the non-poor have the capacity and potential to develop creative as well as manipulative strategies in facing their surroundings. Taking the case of poverty in the urban Brazil as an example, Scheper-Hughes shows that it is difficult to draw a distinct line that separates both groups, especially because the population of the poor in Brazil is quite considerable.

In her research, Scheper-Hughes tries to unearth poverty based on what really occurs in the empirical reality. The poor are positioned as subjects that think, act, and develop tactics in order to survive. For Scheper-Hughes, the everyday practices in the lives of the poor (in Alto de Cruzeiro) cannot be considered to be the result of inherited cultural poverty, but instead are the most optimal efforts in the current set of conditions within a community. Moreover, the local poor community has endured sufferings throughout a long history of armed resistance. Scheper-Hughes explains that every effort of the poor community to move out of poverty is in fact thwarted.⁵ This experience makes the poor pessimistic about revolutionary offers, which in the end, introduces and develops new ways as a tangible force to change the current set of conditions. Through their experiences, the poor create ideas and new possibilities and find new forms and elements in the material, social, and cultural fields which are currently practiced or will influence their future actions.

According to Scheper-Hughes, positioning the poor as subjects means accepting the authority, agency, choice, and capacity to produce something desired by the oppressed subjects. Morally, people have to start believing in the capacity of the oppressed group to rationalize, collude, and collaborate in "faking consciousness", more than just a paralysis of will. In addition, efforts to understand the forms of everyday resistance, i.e. the tactics and lifestyle practices of the weak as explained by Michel de Certeau (1984) and James Scott (2000), include a risk of romanticizing suffering people. However, is its effect to the soul, consciousness, and will of the poor going to be ignored? In this context (of a confined life), Scheper-Hughes manages to find people who are able to survive the hardship in such a way that they are able to celebrate their life together with happiness and full of hope although they are in an uncertain condition (1992: 533).

Scheper-Hughes discovered how the poor in Brazil give meaning to the conditions they experience. For example, to *mata*⁶, *rua* denotes a place for living that is free from patronizing rules and that is why they have to go there to live as rural migrants autonomously and equally, free from others' orders. Denotation is also applied to spousal relationships so that a change takes place in that these relationships become more rational, as opposed to initially being sacred, and have an economic function in order to obtain free food that is decent compared to what is not available. Since marriage takes economic conditions into consideration, it is normal that poor women get married more than once as practiced by Lordes, an informant in Scheper-Hughes' research. She stopped getting married after finding a husband who had a sufficient salary and pension as an insurance for her to have a decent life.

⁵The poor's religious movements are always hampered by political temptations. The farmers' movement that was initiated by a Marxist when he "dropped by" the area was in fact betrayed by the founder himself who went back to his place of origin. It was clear that the Marxist stopped taking care of the movement as, according to rumors, he had become a consultant to an owner of a cane plantation and a cane-processing factory.

⁶Scheper-Hughes categorizes existing classes into *casa*, or the elite group; *rua*, or those who live in the city and work in the industry sector as laborers, sex workers, etc., or those who live in the streets; and *mata*, or those who live in forests or in the village and depend their livelihood on cane plantations.

Scheper-Hughes also shows how the poor build good relationships with relatives and non-relatives as part of their efforts to survive. These relationships are essential as prevailing resources are being fought over by existing actors. Social relationships that are established between actors are basically based on economic interests. In this context, kinship is economic in nature; it is meant as an effort to share poverty, such as in the case of fictitious kinship whose purpose is to share information on work. Practices such as entrusting the children to a relative or nonrelative and maintaining a good relationship with the *casa*, or the boss, will bring many benefits such as free medical facilities, safety for the children when their parents are working, and opportunities for casual work. Those all are tactics that are applied in order to survive. According to Saifuddin (2007), these social relationships are adaptive in facing increasing economic pressures both at the local and national levels. Furthermore, this long-term adaptation process results in the emergence of a mass of conservative and inward-looking poor people in urban areas. They do not react outwardly such as massively opposing the government's economic policies.

In another part, Scheper-Hughes shows the violent side of the poor's everyday practices. Nevertheless, the violence practised by the state through its officials is not of great power as people thought. According to Scheper-Hughes, rules and structures are not static or non-penetrable. Instead, they can always be passed through in many ways, such as in the case of a criminal who manages to get away from prison due to his/her collusion with the guard. In this context, there is enough flexibility in the structure so that it gives an opportunity to the poor to act and through this, they defend or change the system in which they act and interact. The poor absorb and organize information, consider problems, make decisions, and act based on their interests. At the same time, they also interpret norms, rules, and situations in a different and unpredictable way. This shows that the poor basically have the power or ability to move or affect social activities by manipulating or changing the rules of the game and the opportunities to act in such a way that they will benefit themselves. In other words, the poor can do more than just respond to sociostructural pressures—social structure is fluid and individuals are constantly competing for and fighting over limited resources in their own interests and are often faced with choices (Saifuddin, 2005: 177).

In the end, for Scheper-Hughes, poverty is the everyday practice of the poor that takes part in the creation of the meaning of poverty itself based on the poor's will. A subject understands himself/herself through the reflections of his/her own actions that are not merely experiences, but also intentional actions (Saifuddin, 2005: 284). In this case, the poor use poverty which they denote as survival tactics to justify their ways of viewing life. It is in this case that the poor and the non-poor draw a distinct line. There are intensive interactions between the two in certain contexts. In these contexts, specific interests bind both parties and create cooperations and social integrations between them, so surviving life in the city basically involves a broader social relationship, different from what is assumed by the cultural and structural approaches. This is an approach to poverty as a process (Saifuddin, 2007).

1.3 Research Questions

By taking into account the explanation about waste collectors/wanderers previously, this study places *manusia gerobak* as the subject. As a subject, both the poor and the non-poor have the capacity and potential to develop creative and manipulative tactics in facing their conditions, so the boundaries between *manusia gerobak* and other people are not clear. This is clearly different from the perspective that portrays the poor as helpless, weak, and apathetic people resulting from their having a culture of poverty. This is also different from the description of the poor as

helpless, weak, and apathetic people as a result of their being confined by external structural obstacles. Both approaches work under the structural-functionalism paradigm, and as a consequence both the culture of poverty and structural poverty equally view the poor as a social unity which is culturally unique and single and has distinct boundaries.

In this research, the researcher asked two main questions. Why do some of the poor become waste collectors who work with a cart (*manusia gerobak*)? And what adaptive tactics do they develop amidst urban poverty?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this *manusia gerobak* research is empirical and theoretical in nature. Empirically, this research aims to record the life portrait of a group of poor people in urban areas, the *manusia gerobak*. Ethnographic recording is used to document their views on poverty and their tactics in surviving urban life.

Theoretically, this research attempts to apply an anthropological perspective about how a waste collector working with a cart positions himself/herself as an active subject—not in an object position as emphasized in the culture of poverty and structural poverty approaches—in taking strategic actions to survive.

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Approach

In this study, the researcher uses the qualitative approach to help understand, in detail, and interpret the stories behind events, the reasoning of *manusia gerobak* as the actors involved in these events, and the ways they denote these events. This research uses the qualitative approach which is defined as "a process for making sense out of human or social problems based on a complex structure and a holistic picture, formed through words, reported with detailed information, and carried out in a natural context" (Cresswell, 1994: 2).

The qualitative approach is chosen to express the researcher's views against something that is subjectively researched, in the sense that the researcher appreciates and pays attention to the subjective views of his research subjects. The qualitative approach always tries to understand the subjective meaning of the subject being researched. Therefore, the researcher interacts or communicates intensively with the research subjects. This also means that the researcher has to be able to understand and develop categories, patterns, analyses related to social processes occurring in the midst of the community being researched (Cresswell, 1994: 157–159). The use of the qualitative approach in this research is in line with what Strauss and Corbin (1990) state as, the qualitative approach which is everything related to the process description and change mechanism, especially in the historical context, both in the cultural and social dimensions.

1.5.2 Location and Time of Research

This *manusia gerobak* research took place in Kecamatan Jatinegara within Kotamadya Jakarta Timur. It was carried out on roadsides, under toll roads, around (garbage truck) containers, at stations, and at markets where *manusia gerobak* live and work. Based on the researcher's observations, *manusia gerobak*'s dwellings are spread out in many locations. Therefore, the research

is conducted in more than one *kelurahan* or area so that variation of *manusia gerobak*'s experiences are captured (see Figure 1. Research Locations on page 13).

The research started in the middle of December 2007 and the intensity of visits to the field decreased at the end of March 2008. In the first month, the researcher focused his activities more on approaching the *manusia gerobak* and trying to get to know them. This initial approach was done by observing *manusia gerobak* at several places and trying to know what they do. In addition, the researcher also conducted early mapping before deciding on the informants at several locations. Indeed, it was difficult to observe the *manusia gerobak* as their arrival at a particular place and time was unpredictable.

1.5.3 Data Collection

This research was the initial stage of the ethnographic writing on *manusia gerobak*. Ethnography is meant as a detailed and holistic description on the basis of an intensive field research. In the classic concept, a researcher is involved in the life of the subject being researched within a certain period of time, observing what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 2). The purpose is to produce what is called by Geertz (1992) as an "in-depth description" of a diversity of complex conceptual structures, including what is not said and what is assumed the way it is.

In this research, as recommended by Hammersley and Atkinson, the researcher becomes an integral part of the social world of *manusia gerobak*. This of course brings about a number of implications to the research practice. The researcher is aware that he is part of the research tools. For data collection, the researcher refers to what was conveyed by Cresswell (1994: 150–151) meaning that there are four types of data collection techniques: observation, interview, literature study, and audiovisual recording. However, in this research, the researcher only uses three types of data collection techniques:

- a) The researcher conducts participatory observations, both passive and active. What is meant by the researcher as passive participation is an observation process with minimal interaction. The researcher has chosen to use passive participation to learn the surroundings of *manusia gerobak*. With passive interaction, the researcher can better capture the interactions between *manusia gerobak* by observing their movements or the interactions between *manusia gerobak* and residents, road users, and other relevant parties. At the same time, the researcher can also listen to what they say in order to find out in-depth what they consider to be important. In this case, the researcher follows where *manusia gerobak* go when they are doing their activities.
- b) Because not all activities of *manusia gerobak* can be captured with participatory observation, the researcher also conducts interviews, particularly the unstructured ones. An unstructured interview does not depend on interview guidelines but instead adapts to the course of the conversation with the subject. The topics can change in accordance with the situation during the interview. Thus, the interview seems more like a "casual chat", which alternates with jokes, eating, and/or smoking, rather than an interview conducted by a journalist which bombards the informant with questions one after the other. In-depth interviews are conducted to find out the life histories of Jatinegara's *manusia gerobak*, the social relationships in their households, their community, and their understanding and aspirations. Besides interviewing *manusia gerobak*, the researcher also carries out interviews with other communities, such as waste collectors working without a cart, *lapak* owner, and food stall owners.

- c) Besides observing and interviewing, the researcher tries to familiarize himself with the language of *manusia gerobak* (waste collectors and wanderers in general) by making use of, and reading documents and relevant information, produced by other people. Literature study is quite important in a research process to test, interpret, and even predict. According to Lincoln and Guba (in Moleong, 2001: 161), because documents are stable, rich, motivating, natural, conceptual, and nonreactive sources, they can produce study contents that open up opportunities to extend the knowledge about a particular subject being researched.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

Households	Names of Husbands, Wives, and Children	Age	Sex (M/F)	Places of Origin	Start Waste Collecting
Household 1	Gatot	48	M	Bogor	1998
	Juleha	40	F	Kp. Pulo	2004
	Dewi	4.5	F	n.a.	-
Household 2	Dadang	25	M	Indramayu	2004
	Anisa	20	F	Blok M	2004
	Raihan	n.a.	M	n.a.	n.a.
Household 3	Hamdani	40	M	Tegal	1998
	Rani	41	F	Bekasi	1999
	Hadi	3.5	M	n.a.	-
Household 4	Hasan	58	M	Purwokerto	2005
	Saidah	55	F	Cikampek	2005
	Shinta (left with someone for safekeeping)	6	F	n.a.	n.a.
Household 5	Hamid	55	M	Semarang	2003
	Sumiasih	55	F	Semarang	2003
	Angga	6	M	n.a.	n.a.
Household 6	Supriatna	25	M	Indramayu	2006
	Dedeh	18	F	Indramayu	2006
	Titin	2	F	n.a.	-
Household 7	Masykur	45	M	Semarang	2005
	Surti	40	F	Wonosobo	2005
Household 8	Husen	55	M	Purbalingga	2005
	Khodijah	40	F	Purbalingga	2005
Household 9	Wahyu	50	M	Malang	2000
	Rita	50	F	Malang	2000
Household 10	Maya	38	F	Bogor	2005
	Kosim	36	M	Semarang	2005
Household 11	Muki	37	M	Semarang	2002
	Ahmad	45	M	Semarang	2002
Household 12	Waluyo	48	M	Bogor	2004
	Manda	50	F	Karawang	1999
Lapak 1	Aziz	54	M	Malang	1998
Lapak 2	Wawan	55	M	Surabaya	1996
Food Stall	Nestri	51	F	Sukabumi	n.a.
Cigarette Kiosk	Wanda	64	F	Betawi	n.a.
Other Informants	Imat	29	M	Pekalongan	1987
	Muzakir	81	M	Madiun	2004
	Rumawan	40	M	Malang	2000
	Supriyanto	48	M	Surabaya	2005
	Susilo	50	M	Otista	n.a.
	Subhan	n.a.	M	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Interviews

Note: Informants are given fictitious names to protect their identity.

1.5.4 Research Informants

Informants for this research are chosen based on certain criteria so that they fit the ethnographic research. These criteria include such aspects as being able to give answers at ease, familiar with the information needed, willing to share information with the researcher, and willing to introduce the researcher to other subjects. Nevertheless, finding such an informant is indeed not easy. Although already considering several aspects, it is still difficult for the researcher to draw comparisons between their capacities in giving information.

The research informants are the *manusia gerobak* household members living in Kecamatan Jatinegara. They are generally spread out over several locations. The researcher intentionally avoids focusing on informants located in one area in an effort to capture the existing diversity. Besides information from *manusia gerobak*, information from other communities is also collected. These communities comprise waste collectors with carts who do not wander around, RT garbage collectors, *lapak* owners, and food stall and cigarette kiosk owners.

Twelve households are interviewed, but in-depth interviews can only be carried out with seven households, two *lapak* owners, two food stall owners, four waste collectors not accompanied by their wives, and one RT garbage collector.

1.5.5 Research Limitations

Factually this research shows a number of weaknesses, particularly in the data collection process. Having initially been planned, several areas faced a number of obstacles during implementation, causing the results to be below expectation. Information from *kelurahan*, *kecamatan*, and *tramtib* (peace and order) officials were initially to be collected. However, in fact, not a single piece of data from them could be integrated into this research. This was caused by their unwillingness to provide information due to the absence of a research permit.

Besides the fact that the research did not go as initially planned, the data collected from the informants varied greatly in terms of its profundity. Out of the 12 *manusia gerobak* households and other informants that were interviewed, not all provided comprehensive and candid details of their life history and views. There are also some of them who would only give short and normative answers. The profundity of the data collected from informants hence became varied. They revealed the facts when talking about certain themes, but for the other themes, information was difficult to obtain. This creates a difficult situation for the researcher, especially, in the analysis and writing process.

To be frank, the researcher failed to blend in completely with the *manusia gerobak* and their surroundings. It became very apparent that the researcher was present only as a stranger who was trying to exploit them with his questions. This is not their first experience in becoming informants participating in a study. In the past, once the interview and report writing were finished, they were quickly abandoned by the researcher. That kind of experience (perhaps) has made them more passive than before. Nevertheless, several *manusia gerobak* households came to regard the researcher as their friend as they met quite frequently.

II. A PORTRAIT OF *MANUSIA GEROBAK*

This chapter describes the background and factors that explain why an individual or a member of a household decides to become a *manusia gerobak*. Furthermore, the chapter explains the location of dwellings, work categories, daily activities, and poverty attributes of the *manusia gerobak* as the result of the researcher's observations and interviews.

2.1 The Story of Becoming a *Manusia Gerobak*

There is no precise record of when the *manusia gerobak* started to reside in Jatinegara.⁷ Referring to Jellinek (1994), recycling drinking glasses, paper, cardboard boxes, metals, cans, and car spare parts started to exist from the 1950s. Aziz, a *lapak* owner who has been associated with the waste industry for approximately ten years, said that *manusia gerobak* have been present in Jatinegara for a long time. He does not know since when, but clearly remembers that before he owned his *lapak*, *manusia gerobak* were already in the area. According to Aziz, about ten years ago, there were fewer *manusia gerobak*, unlike nowadays where their number is increasing.

Until now, as far as the researcher is aware, there is no exact data on the number of waste collectors, particularly *manusia gerobak* in Jatinegara. This occurs because, firstly, they are considered to be "nonexistent" by the government, so they do not feature on any official census or any other survey. Secondly, the complexity of the criteria used to categorize whether a person is identified as a *manusia gerobak* or not, as among the *manusia gerobak* themselves, there are differences in the terms for waste collectors living in the street, residing in rented housing, and those waste collectors that collect waste by buying it. Waste collectors living in the street and making their carts their "houses" call themselves *gembel*, whereas waste collectors residing in houses, including in the *lapak*, are called *pemulung kampung*. As for waste collectors who collect waste by buying it, they are known as *cinlong*. Thirdly, waste collectors are difficult to count because *manusia gerobak* often move from one place to another and their number change constantly. The presence of a *manusia gerobak* or a *manusia gerobak* household at a certain location and in the locations where they collect waste are uncertain. At one time, they can be in the street, but at another time, they may not be there. They can be collecting waste in the vicinity of a store at one time, but at another time, they may be at the station or a market.

Based on three different observations,⁸ the researcher noted that there were 113 carts and waste collectors spread over the locations of main streets, storefronts, city parks, and the space underneath the highway during the first observation. During the second observation, the researcher counted 21 carts parked at several places and 37 waste collectors were visible on the street. During the third observation, the researcher noted 126 carts parked in front of several different dwellings. These numbers are not the maximum numbers as they could have

⁷Jatinegara is one of the *kecamatan* (subdistricts) in Kotamadya (Municipality) Jakarta Timur that is also the municipality's capital. The name Jatinegara first appeared in 1942 during the Japanese colonization of Indonesia as a substitute for the name Meester Cornelis that sounded Dutch.

⁸The researcher conducted these observations by traveling through the streets in Jatinegara area presumed to be the locations where *manusia gerobak* operate. The first observation was conducted on 20 January 2008 from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., the second on 1 February 2008 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the third on 24 February 2008 from 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

increased if the observations had been made further into the village side-streets. According to one informant, the number of *manusia gerobak* is increasing. This is apparent from the increasing appearance of waste collectors meeting with each other in the streets and other places as well as the crowding of certain locations at night with the collectors' carts.

In many cases, the majority of people who enter the urban informal sector are those with low levels of education, such as the *manusia gerobak*. Most of the *manusia gerobak* stated that on average, they have a low level of education, that is, having only a primary school level of education. However, amongst them, there are also those who had the opportunity to study up until senior high school level. There is even a *manusia gerobak* who has a bachelor's degree. Therefore, the decision to take up waste collecting as a profession does not necessarily depend on education levels. However, a low level of education may provide limited job alternatives, thus, justifying the fact that it makes it hard to secure a more acceptable job.

Becoming a *manusia gerobak* is a process. Past experience play a role in a person's decision to become a *manusia gerobak*. In many cases, the candidates have some work experience. Some of them have formal work experience, but more of them have only informal experience. Work experience in the informal sector comes in the form of employment as: a domestic helper, street vendor, construction worker, residing waste collector, and other similar jobs. Work experience in the formal sector is in the form of working in an office environment. There was, in fact, a *manusia gerobak* who had once become a staff at a company, but during the monetary crisis was laid off.

When analyzed from their places of origin, *manusia gerobak* fall into two categories. First, those who had previously lived in Jakarta and, second, those who had come from the village. Those in the first category generally have work experience, especially in the informal sector. Their choosing to become *manusia gerobak* is based on their prior unfavorable work experiences, either as a result of a lack of income, business losses, or other restrictions. They think that their previous job needed a lot of capital. Another case showed that the conversion to working as a *manusia gerobak* was caused by old age. So, in this case, the person was laid off. The same goes for work habits and life in the streets. There were those who used to be a residing waste collector, but then converted to *manusia gerobak* because their houses were torn down.

Those belonging to the second group choose to become waste collectors because they were persuaded by their neighbors' stories about being able to easily get a high-income job in Jakarta. Nevertheless, there are *manusia gerobak* in this category who had intended, from the very beginning, to become waste collectors in Jakarta for the reasons that the job is easy to do and does not require a certain educational level, and that city residents have high levels of consumption. There is also a *manusia gerobak* who said that he wanted to become a waste collector because his village friends who were also waste collectors asked him to come along and become a waste collector. Therefore, for them, there were no reasons to migrate to Jakarta but to become a waste collector, collecting waste scattered all over the city, dirty waste that is usually avoided but is valuable to the waste collectors. This description is akin to what was mentioned by Wirth (in Dieter-Evers 1986: 4): "Urbanism is a way of life."

From the description above, it is clear that there is a set of arguments that makes a person or household member decide to become a *manusia gerobak*. To think of the decision made by the *manusia gerobak* as a forced act due to their low level of education is incorrect as there are those among them who have studied at a senior high school or even university level. Arguing that there were a limited number of job opportunities is not right either. As evidence, some

manusia gerobak have been known to have jobs prior to waste collection. Moreover, various informal jobs were still available to them if they had wanted to do them. Why then did they decide to become waste collectors? It became clear later on that the decision to work as a waste collector was based on a series of careful considerations, that is, their past work experience, in order to survive. Previous work experience has shaped their current knowledge so that they could see differences between jobs and choose the right and profitable one for their situation. The following are several arguments related to the reasons why *manusia gerobak* prefer waste collecting to doing other jobs in the informal sector.

- a) **The increasing market for used goods.** Used goods are usually defined as waste. According to Azrul (1990), waste is the unused, unwanted, or discarded part of human consumption and production activities and is generally solid in nature. Used goods for the majority of people may not have any significant meaning and value. However, as the demand for environmental protection increases, used goods have become one of the problems. This demand encourages the invention of used goods recycling technologies in order that the goods and the waste created in their production and selling can be reused. Therefore, the time came when a quite considerable market for used goods was created. This was also the time when people could play their part and earn an income by collecting used goods to be supplied to the recycling industry. This condition then opened up interesting opportunities and alternatives: used goods became a resource that could generate real and better economic benefits. The price of used goods rose in line with the industry's increasing demand for the goods. Those with capital became a *lapak* owner or *pengepul*, or, put more simply, a buyer. In other cases, several *lapak* owners started out as used goods collectors. Once they were full-fledged and had the capital and good working relationships with the agents, they organized a number of used goods collectors in a *lapak*. Those who did not have enough capital chose to remain waste collectors. A waste collector's success in the past plays a role in encouraging other people to become waste collectors.
- b) **The high level of consumption in the urban community.** This certainly creates a lot of waste. Most city residents throw away unwanted items such as used plastic drinking glasses and bottles, paper, cartons, and cans as they are not knowledgeable and prudent enough when it comes to throwing away garbage, and classifying the garbage into different types. This condition shows that garbage appears as if it were of no value to them. Perhaps some of them are aware that used goods possess an economic value, but since the quantity that they possess is not that much, they become impatient in stockpiling them. Besides, to the majority of people, used goods are identified with uncleanness and disorder, two characteristics that further estrange city residents from wanting to make use of it. This situation leads to an increased effort to recycle used goods in a process that has no connection with a chemical or biological process. Recycling used goods in this context means reusing materials that have become redundant but are still valuable and reusable to other producers and consumers.
- c) **A small amount of capital.** Waste collecting does not require much capital. *Manusia gerobak* who have joined the used goods business revealed that they did spend some money for capital, but it was not as big as the capital needed for other businesses such as trading. In fact, in certain situations, they did not spend any money at all for their working tools and household needs. This fact is different for *lapak* owners. As a *pengepul*, they have to spend large amounts of money to run their business. *Manusia gerobak* who do not have money to meet their needs start out by joining a *lapak* for a certain period of time. That way, all their household matters and working tools are taken care of by the *lapak*. To get their tools, waste collectors who do not have money look for, or borrow, a

sack. These waste collectors working with a sack do not need a *gancu*—a tool for collecting used goods with a hook attached to a long handle—yet. They simply use their hands to do the job.

- d) **Low risk.** Waste collecting poses a relatively low risk. Loss is a situation in which there is a deficit from the initial capital. For waste collectors, loss is a frightening experience, moreover if it happens repeatedly. It can happen to anyone and it is influenced by various factors. Nevertheless, avoidance of an economic loss is a normal thing to do. An experience of one of the *manusia gerobak* households shows that their becoming waste collectors was not caused by their inability to get other jobs, but rather it was because they regarded waste collecting as a risk-free job and it gives them all the freedom they need. What they mean by loss is both the tangible ones, such as when they are arrested, their used goods do not sell, or they are evicted, and the intangible ones, such as being in a situation where they are subordinated under other people's authority. Waste collecting is indeed not a job without risk, including financial losses. Based on information from several *manusia gerobak* households, the losses they suffer are not the same as those in their previous jobs. The used goods business is not like the catering business which depends on consumers' taste buds. If the food does not sell, it will spoil and become worthless.

The various stories told by *manusia gerobak* households indicate that they are not compelled to do their job. For them, waste collecting is a conscious choice if compared to other jobs in the informal sector in the city. Becoming a waste collector, particularly a *manusia gerobak*, is a choice which is made after careful considerations based on previous work experiences, both their own and those of others.

2.2 Dwelling Places

For *manusia gerobak*, location is an important factor as it is partly the place where they live although only temporarily, meaning that they can move whenever they want. For them, their location is their address, besides being their base, just like a station or terminal to a bus. Wherever they wander looking for used goods, they will always come back to the location which they have chosen to live in, as long as it is still considered suitable. The diverse places in the city give *manusia gerobak* quite a range of location options to choose from. After considering several aspects, they will eventually come to a decision to choose a suitable location. This study has identified several types of locations that *manusia gerobak* make as their dwelling place:

- a) *Underneath the highway.* Based on the researcher's observations, *manusia gerobak* can be seen underneath the highway in Jatinegara. However, in Kecamatan Jatinegara, *manusia gerobak* generally do not live under the highway for an extended period of time. The resident that has lived under that highway for the longest amount of time is a *manusia gerobak* who has been living there since 2002, while the newest resident has only been there since March 2007. *Manusia gerobak* think that this location is relatively open so that it is not their first choice. That is why they do not stay too long in such locations unless it is concealed. Although not their first choice, this location is protected from heat and rain, they have many friends living there, and it is quite spacious so that they can park their carts and sort the used goods that they have collected in comfort, and their children can play freely. All the time they have spent living under the highway, they admit that they have received warnings from the local authorities but have never been arrested. After being warned, they prefer to move to a safer location.

- b) *Storefronts and office fronts.* Both locations provide other options for *manusia gerobak* in Kecamatan Jatinegara. Most *manusia gerobak* gather in groups, marked with two or up to four carts being parked in front of a store. However, there are others who prefer staying alone. Their choosing of storefronts is based on several aspects such as it is a spacious location, the surroundings, the ease and safety of the location as well as its being in the vicinity of such necessities as food. When they occupy a storefront that is used for business everyday, they have to clean up the place first before they can settle in for the night and leave the place before the store opens in the morning. But when they are occupying an unused storefront, they do not feel obliged to do anything and can act more freely. *Manusia gerobak* who occupy storefronts say that the place is not owned by the government, but is the store owner's property. Nevertheless, not all *manusia gerobak* ask for permission first from the store owner. Instead, they state that it is the store owner or office caretaker who should be thankful for *manusia gerobak* making use of their space as it becomes safe and clean.
- c) *The station.* The Jatinegara train station is also one of *manusia gerobak's* dwelling places. They do not sleep in their carts, which they park somewhere near by, but inside the station. There are usually around ten carts there, meaning that there are about ten households dwelling in that place. There are also *manusia gerobak* that live by the street behind the station, next to a garbage dump. They choose the station as a dwelling place because it is crowded with people, both those leaving for the city center and those going back from out of the city to the residences. As a public facility, the station is always busy '24/7'. Food is never difficult to find in this place as many people sell it there. The many train passengers passing through the station everyday present *manusia gerobak* with an abundant supply of used goods. The inner side of the station is also the living quarters for most of street people such as beggars, street musicians, street children, and street vendors. Living together in the station, street people bond with each other.
- d) *The city park.* The other location that *manusia gerobak* choose as a dwelling place is the Jatinegara city park. It is located approximately 500 meters from the station. During the researcher's observation, there were two carts being parked next to the steel fence that was positioned around the park. At that time, there were two women and a child beside both carts. A woman was sorting out some paper, while the other woman was lying down breastfeeding her child. *Manusia gerobak* choose the city park as their dwelling place because it is spacious, has dense trees, and is rather concealed. As a place for taking a rest, the city park is a calm place with a pleasant breeze, especially in the midday sun.
- e) *The sidewalks.* Another location that *manusia gerobak* choose to dwell in is the side walks running along the main street. The reason for this is that it is close to the street. It is also chosen because it is situated at a higher platform than the street so that motorcycles cannot go past and disturb them. Another consideration is the presence of separators on the sidewalk such as the ones on the sidewalk next to a church in Jatinegara that is occupied by *manusia gerobak*. The existence of a garden is another factor. The trees in the garden shade the sidewalk. Besides concealing the area, the garden also makes the place look spacious.
- f) *The traditional market.* The traditional market in Jatinegara is also a location where *manusia gerobak* live in. The market consists of stores and wooden counters for trading. It is chosen because it is considered safe from arrests made by the local authorities both at night and during the day. It is quite a comfortable place to live. *Manusia gerobak* can use the stall counters in the market as their beds, and it is not particularly noisy or dusty.

Moreover, many of them live there. They often spend their resting time playing cards and drinking. The market is considered to provide *manusia gerobak* with an abundant source of used goods.

- g) *A rented house.* Not all *manusia gerobak* live in the streets. It was previously described that there are some *manusia gerobak* who live in the street with the open surroundings as part of their daily lives. However, there are also *manusia gerobak* who choose to live in rented accommodation. Interviews revealed that there are some *manusia gerobak* who rent houses. They have a place in the area which they rent at the price of Rp150,000 per month. Nevertheless, they more often prefer sleeping in the streets, gathering with the other *manusia gerobak*, than sleeping in their rented houses. They also never bring home their carts or used goods because they are worried that they will be evicted from the house as a result of the stigma that is attached to being a waste collector. They consider the rented house to be important for their wife and children, especially if their wife is expecting a baby.

2.3 Work Locations

The daily work of *manusia gerobak* is waste collecting, that is, collecting used goods to be sold or to be reused by themselves. They do not target any specific location as used goods can be found almost anywhere. There are indeed *manusia gerobak* who prefer frequenting a specific location, but most of them do not. Some locations they go to are close, but others are often relatively far from where they live. Generally they have a route to follow, although it is not always fixed. In a day, a *manusia gerobak* can walk tens of kilometers, something that other people seldom do. Based on observations and interviews, the researcher could identify the following work locations of *manusia gerobak*:

- a) *The streets.* For *manusia gerobak*, the streets are the work locations that connect to the other work locations on their everyday route. The streets are public space where many people pass by and discard their waste. In the streets, *manusia gerobak* can also find garbage dumps of stores or food stalls, or even garbage containers. Although the streets provide relatively little waste, it is a commodity that waste collectors, including the “yellow force” (the city's cleaning service) who also collect used goods, compete to get.
- b) *The Jatinegara traditional market.* The Jatinegara traditional market is a busy place where many buyers and sellers meet every day. By the end of the day, all the market's activities will provide a range of used materials, especially plastics and paper, in large quantities. The quantity of the used materials is determined by the size of the market and the length of its operation. The Jatinegara market is considered a big market and it operates from morning until almost evening. Therefore, it provides an abundant supply of used materials compared to the relatively small markets operating on specific days and only visited by people from the surrounding area. The right times to collect waste are during lunchtime and at the close of business because it is at these times that sellers are cleaning up their places of business.
- c) *Residential areas.* Residential areas are important destinations for *manusia gerobak* in collecting used goods. Areas that are often visited include second-class residential areas and housing complexes. *Manusia gerobak* walk along alleys and small paths in second-class residential areas, searching for discarded waste in garbage dumps, while in housing

complexes, their destination is the small garbage boxes in front of each house. Most of the residents in the housing complex are considered wealthy people who do not care about used goods that they have thrown away. However, not all housing complexes are easily accessible for waste collectors.

- d) *Social facilities such as hospitals, schools, and the like.* *Manusia gerobak* think that social facilities have the potential to provide lots of used goods such as plastics, cardboard boxes, paper, and other recyclable items because many people visit these places. The used goods are often found in the garbage containers of the social facilities after they are discarded by the cleaning service officers. One of the private hospitals in Jatinegara discards its waste three times a day. Each time they discard waste, the quantity can be seven large plastic bags.
- e) *Garbage containers.* Garbage containers are important targets for *manusia gerobak* in their search for used goods as they are temporary dumpsters where the garbage of the residents from several RT, or even RW, is discarded before it is taken to the terminal garbage dump. It is normal for *manusia gerobak* to believe that they can collect a lot of used goods in these garbage containers. Therefore, they try to beat the other waste collectors to get to the garbage containers by having their own routes. For an optimum result, they sometimes prioritize arriving at these garbage containers before wandering to residential areas. Often when a *manusia gerobak* arrives at a garbage container, he or she parks his or her cart near the garbage container as a signal to others that the garbage container already has an owner, when actually the owner is walking around the nearby residential area carrying a sack searching for used goods.

2.4 Work Categories

Based on observations and interviews, the day-to-day work of a *manusia gerobak* is very much varied. This variety is the consequence of the experiences they have and their beliefs in waste collecting as well as their responses to the conditions of their households and surroundings. Based on common characteristics, the work of a *manusia gerobak* is divided into two major categories: collective waste collecting and individual waste collecting.

Collective waste collecting is defined as a waste-collecting activity which involves several family members working at the same time and/or location. This category is further divided into four subdivisions. The first one is waste collecting with children. This type of *manusia gerobak* household looks for used goods collectively by taking their children along. During work, they always use their cart for their children to sleep in. The second subdivision is collective waste collecting without the children. In this kind of household, the husband and wife work together in collecting waste. They do not take their children along because the sun is too hot at the time when they are working, or their children already have friends to play with or things to do. The third subdivision is collecting waste "together" but at different locations. Both the husband and wife work as waste collectors, but in doing so, they go separate ways. If the husband goes to the right, the wife goes to the left, and at an agreed time they meet again at their home. They say that this way of waste collecting makes it possible for them to source a bigger income. The fourth subdivision is collecting waste together at one location. Both the husband and wife work as waste collectors, but they do not wander around. The couple already have a specific work location and they live there.

In the individual waste collecting category, only one member of the *manusia gerobak* household performs the task of collecting waste and it is not carried out at the same time and

place. This does not mean that one of the couple does not work. It is just that there is already work sharing between the couple with certain things considered. This category is divided into at least three subdivisions. The first is waste collecting conducted by the husband. This subdivision is based on sharing of work according to household condition such as in cases when a wife is expecting a baby or has one or more children under five. The wife, in this case, "works" by taking care of the children. The second subdivision is collecting waste alternately between the husband and wife. In this subdivision, waste collecting is conducted in turns based on agreed time slots. When the husband goes to work, the wife takes care of the children. When the husband gets home, it is the wife's turn to collect waste. The husband then resumes the care of the children. In the third subdivision, only one of the couple collects waste. The work is arranged this way because one of the couple has another job.

2.5 Daily Activities

Approaching dawn, when most residents are still sleeping, *manusia gerobak* prepare themselves to start their daily routines. Before they set out for work, as usual, they clean up the place where they have spent the night. They always do this so that the store owner does not evict them the next time they decide to sleep there. Most *manusia gerobak* start their activities at around 6 a.m. They choose this time based on the residents' habit of discarding their garbage at around that time. There are those among the *manusia gerobak* that start working at 5 a.m. They feel safe from being prejudiced and accused of stealing by residents if they start working earlier, although this way, they are sometimes preceded by other waste collectors in the hunt for used goods. Even a mother searching for used goods at 3 a.m cannot escape these prejudices and accusations.

Box 1. The Portrait of *Manusia Gerobak* Households

Manusia gerobak couples are mostly legally married. They have generally been married since they were still in their place of origin. Most of them have had children whom they leave behind in their hometown or somewhere around Jakarta to live with their relatives. Waste collecting without their children is chosen with regard to some considerations, being, so that their children can continue school, street life is not good for their children, their children are already independent, and they do not wish their extended family to know their profession as waste collectors. *Manusia gerobak* couples who originally come from Jakarta met each other for the first time in the streets. Some of them already had a spouse, but then separated. There were also some of them who were still single. Their being alone and having the same goals in life became their motivating force to live under the same roof. This status of living together out of wedlock was eventually formalized in a formal marriage ceremony, although this ceremony is sometimes conducted together with many other *manusia gerobak* couples.

In *manusia gerobak* households, all men (husbands) work as waste collectors, while not all women (wives) do. *Manusia gerobak* regard their household activities as a form of partnership in their efforts to achieve their household goals. The separation between men's and women's activities, especially those that generate income, is rather difficult to do. Waste collecting as a profession is not the privilege of men only; women can do it as well. When women see a working opportunity and thus can make money, they will take it. *Manusia gerobak* couples take turns in carrying out household activities that do not generate income such as taking care of the children and preparing meals.

The households' income is generally kept by the wives. The husbands themselves generally entrust the income to their wives. The husbands are allocated with a certain amount of money to meet all their needs, especially during work, such as meals and cigarettes. *Manusia gerobak* households expend their funds to fulfill basic needs, special needs of a household member, business needs, needs of other households, and sometimes investment needs in the form of a savings account. Their basic needs include daily needs such as food and drink, soap, detergent, tooth brush, and tooth paste. Special needs of the household members include things needed by one of the household members such as cigarettes, clothes, sanitary napkins, and medicine. The funds expended for business needs are generally used for buying used goods (when there is a seller), fixing their cart when it is broken, and redeeming their cart if it is confiscated by the authorities. The funds spent on the needs of other households are usually used for

helping relatives who are in need of cash because of one thing or another. Funds for investment in the form of savings accounts are kept by themselves or with the *lapak* owner.

In most cases, other household members are aware of expenditure. When one of the couple is going to use the funds, he or she usually communicates it first with his or her spouse, especially if it does not have anything to do with the basic and special needs. Communication is established so as to give the chance to the spouse to give it due consideration and take part in the decision-making process. In the case of the husband using the funds for gambling in a card game, the wife usually already knows. The wife does not mind as the money being spent is not much. Besides, it is already part of the funds allocated for her husband's meals and cigarettes.

Manusia gerobak couples often have sexual intercourse in their carts. They regard their cart, which is covered with a sheet of plastic, as the safest place to have sex out of all the options they have. They usually have it before they go to sleep, that is, when there is not anybody around. It is initiated by one of them giving a sign to his or her spouse that he or she wants to have sex. Once they have finished, they remove the plastic sheet from the cart. There was also another account that a *manusia gerobak* couple fulfilled their sexual needs in a hotel. They consider hotels comfortable for such an activity. The hotel mattress is so soft that they can enjoy having sex on it and they can even have it more than once in a night.

Quarrels in *manusia gerobak* households occur every now and then. Like in any other quarrel, they occur because of misunderstandings between the *manusia gerobak* couples. However, they sometimes happen because one of the couple lies to his or her spouse, especially about the use of their income. Most *manusia gerobak* households settle their disputes on their own, for example, by avoiding his or her spouse. The quarrels usually do not last long, but there are also some quarrels that last for days. There are even quarrels which end up in separation after one of the couple leaves his or her spouse. The quarrels sometimes also result in domestic violence with women becoming the victims most of the time.

When *manusia gerobak* leave the place where they have stayed for the night, they take with them their cart along with all its contents. Most *manusia gerobak* bring their children along as well. The children ride in the cart or are carried by their parents in a shawl. There are also *manusia gerobak* who go to work without their children. Before starting to work, some of them first make a detour to a favorite food stall where they drink coffee, wash their faces or take a bath, or have breakfast. Most *manusia gerobak* usually do not eat rice for breakfast. They prefer having hot drinks like hot coffee, tea, or milk. They do not find rice essential in their breakfast menu. Besides smoking cigarettes, they only eat one or two pieces of fried banana to satisfy their hunger. Each time they use the MCK (bathing, laundry, and toilet) facility, they have to pay Rp1,500–Rp2,500 and mostly that occurs once a day late in the afternoon.

Manusia gerobak walk the streets wearing sandals or sometimes without any footwear at all. They enter alleys before going into residential areas and then they return to the streets. They occasionally stop and scrape garbage dumps with their *gancu* or hand to look for used goods. Waste collecting is carried out together with the whole or some members of the household, or individually. Not all *manusia gerobak* bring their cart to work. It is usually left at a food stall or at a trusted place when they are not using it. In these situations, they usually work with a plastic sack into which they put their used goods. This is more often practiced by female waste collectors who are also carrying a small child. Male waste collectors more often use their cart, although there are some of them who use a plastic woven sack as their working tool.

Manusia gerobak have marked the places to visit as their routine operational locations. They know where they have to take their cart to, although sometimes they only follow their feelings that certain places will present them with a lot of used goods. They visit their operational locations every day from various directions, for example, from the front or from the back. They spend three and a half hours to conduct a six-kilometer walk. Based on observations from 06:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., a *manusia gerobak* scraped used goods from 15 garbage dumps along the streets, more than 134 garbage dumps in residential areas, and 4 garbage containers in 4 RW.

When a *manusia gerobak* feels tired, he or she usually takes a break to rest their legs while having a drink and smoking one or two cigarettes. They do not seem to care about the heat from the sun. When it rains, they keep walking with their cart which is already covered with plastic to protect its contents. Both heat and rain are considered sources of fortune. In fact, they consider flooding a blessing as many belongings of the residents that are damaged are thrown away, not to mention the garbage that is swept along by the current.

In the afternoon, most *manusia gerobak* have a lunch break. They usually have lunch at their favorite food stall, but if it is far afield, they look for a nearby food stall. Even though they buy food from a food stall, they rarely eat it in that place. *Manusia gerobak* prefer ordering their food as well as drinking water to take with them. They often ask for extra drinking water since it is free of charge. For their water supply, they always buy bottled water. In a day, a *manusia gerobak* household consumes at least four liters of bottled water. This water is used not only for drinking, but also for washing hands, cleaning goods, and cleaning eyes after waking. *Manusia gerobak* are used to sharing a pack of rice with their spouse. They have their lunch while resting under a dense tree. There are also *manusia gerobak* who have their lunch beside a garbage container swarming with flies and smelling awful. To complement their lunch, they smoke one or two cigarettes.

Late in the afternoon or at dusk, *manusia gerobak* who have finished cleaning their collected waste sell it to the *lapak* owner. The journey they take to the *lapak* is never easy because they have to pull the cart with all their might as it has become heavier because of the used goods in it. The journey gets harder as the *manusia gerobak* have to go in the opposite direction of the traffic and are horned and verbally abused by motorists who are annoyed by their obstruction of the traffic. Based on the researcher's experience, it takes at least half an hour to make the journey by taking shortcuts and going the opposite direction to the traffic. If they follow traffic regulations, the journey to the *lapak* takes a much longer time.

Most *manusia gerobak* in Jatinegara sell their used goods in the Jembatan Item area due to its nearby location. Others sell their used goods in Manggarai as prices are relatively high there. Used goods are not always sold in the afternoon. Sometimes *manusia gerobak* sell their goods in the morning between 07:00 a.m. and 10 a.m. The time when they sell used goods depends on the quantity of their goods. If the used goods are in abundance and it is still possible to sell it that day, then they will sell it directly to the *lapak*. However, they will also save the used goods first if the quantity they have collected is not that large. In such a situation, they prefer selling it on another day when the quantity is right. They sometimes have to wait for another two days. There are also *manusia gerobak* who prefer selling their used goods on a daily basis no matter how much the quantity is. They do this because they need to buy their daily food. A waste collector's income is uncertain depending on the type of goods sold. It can sometimes reach Rp120,000 per sale, but at other times, it can be as low as Rp25,000 per sale.

At around dusk, *manusia gerobak* are usually already back at their dwelling location with the other household members. Some of them spend their resting time chatting with other household members or friends, while some others are still busy with their work. Those who are still busy with their work have not got the opportunity to sell their used goods since they have just acquired them. They are busy cleaning the goods and classifying them according to the types accepted by the *lapak*.

At about 7 p.m., they get ready for dinner. They sometimes have an early dinner, that is, if they are hungry already. They buy their dinner from a small food stall or a Padang food stall which they often go to. The males are usually the ones that do this chore. Sometimes, *manusia*

gerobak buy food or are given food by a resident when collecting waste and bring it home for dinner. They usually buy rice, vegetable soup, and side dishes such as tempe, egg, fish, and/or chicken. Husband and wife, father and child, or mother and child eat the pack of rice together. They have to do it this way because they do not have enough money to buy individual meals.

After dinner, the tired *manusia gerobak* go straight to their cart to sleep. Not all of the household members sleep in the cart as it is also used to keep used goods. The cart itself is narrow, so there are those who prefer sleeping on the floor. Those with children usually send their children to bed first, accompanied by their mother. *Manusia gerobak* who are not exhausted yet, or those who still want to enjoy the evening, spend time with their family or chat with other waste collectors. They often chat with waste collectors who are grouped in the same dwelling place. In this group, there are often several households that come from different regions and have different ethnic origins. They talk about a variation of topics basically whatever they can come up with. Some are related to their experiences and important events during their work such as the fact that nowadays there are more competitors in seeking used goods, including traders who join the business of collecting bottled water plastic cups/glasses. Not seldom do they talk about the latest political events that are related to their lives and while having these talks, they reflect about matters related to their lives and lifestyles.

They can often chat until late at night. Although there is no conclusion or recommendation whatsoever like that in a formal meeting, they can express themselves through the conversation. They can freely say what they feel in their hearts and minds, sometimes using rude street words such as *anjing* (dog), *taik* (shit), *bajingan* (rascal), and the like. If the *manusia gerobak* do not feel like going to bed yet, they look for entertainment or continue their work. They play *gaple* (a card game) for entertainment. They bet Rp1,000–Rp1,500 per game. They do not play in an open area nor in their home, but in a place which is safe and concealed. If not, it could endanger them. After playing *gaple*, some of them drink alcoholic beverages.

Besides looking for entertainment, there are some of them who continue their work. Most stores or food stalls throw away their garbage at night, that is, at around 21:30–22:30. Some *manusia gerobak* believe that there are not many competitors at night. At night, they only collect waste in the main streets where there are many stores and food stalls located not far from their home. *Manusia gerobak* seldom enter residential areas at night as they may be the target of suspicion from residents. Between 23:30 and 24:00, these *manusia gerobak* are usually already back at their homes. However, there are also others who get back even later. In such a situation, they have usually heard news that there will be an event nearby such as a wedding reception or a religious event that will produce a lot of waste.

2.6 Poverty Attributes

Categorizing a person or a group of people as poor or non-poor is usually based on the attributes attached to that person or group of people. All this time, poverty attributes, which function as symbols, have been determined absolutely in order that they can be easily generalized.⁹ Absolute attributes are usually the result of an objective approach, a perspective

⁹Presently, in Indonesia, there are two types of indicators used to determine poverty, namely the macro and micro approaches. The macro approach uses poverty line based on income being equalized with consumption. This indicator results in the controversial aggregate poverty. The micro approach uses 14 indicators. This approach is used for such programs as the Bantuan Langsung Tunai (Direct Cash Transfer) program.

that positions the poor as an object. In this approach, the poor are merely interviewed according to predetermined indicators.

It is understandable then that these attributes are often criticized because they are not in accordance with a subjective approach, which positions the poor as the actors in poverty, and attributes are dynamic in nature depending on the context and culture. Using the subjective approach, one is labelled poor or non-poor based on the meaning of each attribute. Nevertheless, each attribute remains a symbol that may have different measurements depending on the condition and meaning of each subject.

2.6.1 Uncertain Income

”Waste collectors lead an uncertain life: today, they may receive a lot of income, but tomorrow they may get only a small income. They may not even get any income at all because the quantity of used goods they have collected is too small to sell.” This statement, made by a *manusia gerobak* named Supriatna (male, 25, Jatinegara Market, 12 January 2008), summarizes the unreliable income made by *manusia gerobak*.

From an objective perspective, poverty is usually characterized by an attribute of income shortage. If the income of a *manusia gerobak* household is below a determined poverty line, the household is classified as poor. However, poverty lines are usually set based on accumulative measurements for a month or a year. An objective application of the poverty line clearly does not apply for *manusia gerobak* households as they generate income on a daily basis. Although an average income can be calculated, the problem is in fact more complicated than that as an average calculation will only distort the actual reality faced by *manusia gerobak*.

Manusia gerobak's profession is not like other professions which generate regular income. *Manusia gerobak* can sometimes earn a lot of money, but often they only get a little or sometimes do not earn any money at all. *Manusia gerobak* generally sell their used goods every day. When they are lucky, they can earn as much as Rp120,000 per day. When unlucky, they can only earn around Rp25,000 per day. When they do not earn money at all, it is usually because the used goods they have collected is too small in terms of quantity, so they have to wait until there is enough to sell the next day.

This kind of situation shows that *manusia gerobak*'s daily income is unstable. The daily pattern of income generation has made their household live alternately in poverty and sufficiency. On certain days, they are poor as their income is considered lacking, meaning it is not sufficient to meet daily needs, and they have to borrow money to cover their expenses. However, on other days, they are considered not poor as their income is sufficient, or even surplus, to meeting their daily needs. Therefore, the state of being poor or non-poor is relative and both are only very finely separated.

External factors, aside from the internal ones, very much influence the uncertainty of *manusia gerobak*'s income. These factors include: conditions when used goods available on that day are small in quantity; the used goods have already been taken by other waste collectors or other people; the available time is too limited as the weather is not conducive to waste collecting; and, there are events that hamper them from collecting waste. The internal factors include conditions such as when they are sick or resting, and when there are relatives or friends visiting.

One point needs to be highlighted: when a *manusia gerobak* only earns a small amount of money, it does not mean that he or she is lazy. Basically, they want to continue living. This is reflected in their high spirits that never diminishes as they work in the hope that they can earn as much money as possible. However, they very much realize that their job is dependent on factors beyond their control, especially the availability of waste discarded by the city residents. This is precisely the condition in which their persistence is proven: although the places they go to are far away, foul-smelling, dirty, and risky, they still carry out their job day and night. Even though the outcome is not like what they expect, they are still thankful for it. To them, fortune is a predetermined outcome of their efforts.

2.6.2 Uncertain Meals

In the household of Gatot, a *manusia gerobak*, the family usually have breakfast between 10 a.m. and 12 a.m. On occasions when he has not managed to collect enough used goods, he and his wife and two children have their breakfast between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. Gatot's family have dinner at 6 p.m. when he gets home from work. However, when business is not doing so well, they skip dinner all together. Gatot always has his meals with the other members of the household, but unfortunately they do not always have them twice a day. When they do, Gatot only buys them modest side dishes. Sometimes, he has to borrow money to afford such a privilege.

The poor are often identified with their incapacity to fulfill their basic needs, especially their daily meals. Whether a *manusia gerobak* household is able to buy meals is clearly dependent on how much income they can earn in a day. When they earn a good income, they buy nutritious food such as fish and chicken. They can also buy meals three times a day or enjoy other dishes that they wish to eat. On the other hand, when they only receive a small income, or no income at all, they only eat once a day. To make things worse, they often owe money to the food stall they often visit to get the food and become indebted. Most *manusia gerobak* do not have breakfast. They only drink a glass of hot coffee and eat one or two pieces of fried banana. In general, *manusia gerobak* only eat twice a day, in the afternoon and in the evening. Sharing a pack of rice and side dishes with another family member is a common practice for them, as indicated in Gatot's and Hasan's (another informant; see Table 1) households experiences.

For their everyday drinking water needs, most *manusia gerobak* buy bottled water. In a day, a *manusia gerobak* household consumes at least four liters of bottled water. Therefore, they often ask for extra drinking water from the food stall where they buy their meals. The bottled water is used not only for drinking, but also for washing their hands and face.

Besides plain water, other important beverages include coffee, tea, and milk. In a day, a husband or a wife spends money on at least three glasses of coffee, tea, or milk. Other needs that are considered important by *manusia gerobak* are snacks for their children and cigarettes. All the men in the *manusia gerobak* households that the researcher met were smokers, while 8 out of the 12 women were smokers as well. In a day, each household member smoked at least one pack of cigarettes. They do not consider smoking a wasteful habit. For them, cigarettes are supplements that strengthen their body, particularly when working. They admit that by smoking, they become more vibrant when doing their work and it can help them withstand the pangs of hunger.

Although the eating patterns of *manusia gerobak* is uncertain, one thing is for sure: their expenditure on basic needs are relatively large. For two packs of rice and side dishes, they have to expend at least Rp15,000, not to mention the expenses of other basic needs. In a day,

a *manusia gerobak* household spends at least Rp35,000. Therefore, there are some of them who sometimes prefer to prepare their food by themselves.

The uncertain eating patterns of *manusia gerobak* which is considered to be an attribute of poverty, contradicts with their relatively large expenditures which according to the objective approach does not fit in with characteristics of the poor category. This paradox can not be simplified that easily as the boundaries have become even more blurred. At certain times, they eat like well-off people, but at other times, they owe their meals to a food stall. *Manusia gerobak* do not pay too much attention to the nutrition of the food they eat. What is important to them is that they can eat good food to their heart's content. On the other hand, their expenditure on food is indeed relatively large, particularly the proportion dedicated to purchasing coffee and cigarettes. In other people's view, this could be considered wasteful. But, for *manusia gerobak* households, what they buy every day are items that are essential for them to provide everyday, although at certain times, they have to get into debt to provide these things.

2.6.3 Sickness without Medicine

When the researcher met a *manusia gerobak* named Masykur at his work location, he was wearing a sweater and coughing repeatedly. He said that he had a fever and his temperature had been fluctuating for the past three days. He thought that he had been coughing for five days and had not got well yet. However, he had not visited the local *puskesmas* (community health center) or gone to the doctor. He even continued his work collecting used goods.

Another way to tell if one is poor or non-poor is by looking at his or her health condition. In the perspective of the objective approach, one is called poor if he or she cannot afford to visit a *puskesmas*. In reality, *manusia gerobak* live their lives wandering around, tracing the streets, inhaling exhaust fumes from motor vehicles, and scraping dirty garbage dumps and containers, so they can readily become sick. In addition to this, they are prone to disease, especially respiratory diseases. They readily admit to often catching colds, having a fever or headache, and coughing quite often when doing their job collecting used goods. However, they do not regard having these symptoms as being sick, but instead, they regard them as being unwell.

Just like people from other poor communities, *manusia gerobak* will only admit to being sick if they cannot get up on their feet to collect used goods, not because a doctor has told them that they are sick and need rest. This shows that they have their own definition of being sick. As a general rule, being sick means taking the day off and resting. But, for *manusia gerobak*, by taking the day off because of being sick, they cannot buy food, while expecting to get food as a gift from other people is not second nature to them. Besides, to their knowledge, *puskesmas*, doctors, and medicine mean spending money, something which they have only in small amounts. So, their concept of being healthy or sick is established based on a series of experiences, including the demand for survival.

Manusia gerobak believe that the symptoms making them feel unwell will eventually go away by itself, so they do not think that they need to go to the *puskesmas* or the doctor. To keep themselves healthy, they usually rest and have their legs and back massaged. When they think that they need to take medicine, they buy over-the-counter drugs from a stall. They have their own ways of treating their illnesses based on the knowledge that they possess. For example, Gatot's child was experiencing a fever just in the evenings, as if he were suffering from typhus, and the child was treated with only a kind of medicinal oil called *lonyo* which was applied to the child's head and body. Among many parents, this oil is believed to have the ability to lower high temperatures and make various diseases disappear.

Another story related to health was about a *manusia gerobak* named Juleha when she was expecting a baby. At first, Juleha did not want to have her pregnancy checked, just like her first two pregnancies. But, as her age was already 40 and she often felt pain in her stomach, she was concerned about the possibility of her baby developing outside the womb. Feeling that she could no longer bear the pain, Juleha forced herself to have her eight-month pregnancy checked at the *puskesmas* by paying Rp30,000, which she borrowed from a food stall owner. This shows that Juleha's checking of her condition was entirely because she was forced to as a result of the pain she was experiencing. If she had not felt anything wrong with her pregnancy, she would not have gone to the *puskesmas*. As for her choice to go to the *puskesmas*, instead of a doctor or midwife, it was because the expenses were lower.

2.6.4 Our Gerobak, Our Home

Another attribute which signifies that one is, or a group of people are, poor or not is the ownership of a residence. One is eligible to receive BLT funds, for example, if the land that he or she owns is less than eight square meters in size. In reality, *manusia gerobak* do not have any place to live, except for their cart which is no more than two by one meters. This cart is often too narrow to sleep in, let alone to function like a house that has many rooms.

Maya, a *manusia gerobak*, told her story that living as a *manusia gerobak*, that is, living in the streets and sleeping in a cramped cart, is no comfort. But, what else can she do? The cart is the only thing she has got right now, although in fact she is only borrowing it from the *lapak* owner. For a *manusia gerobak*, their cart is their home.

In several cases, there are indeed *manusia gerobak* who are renting a house or a room to live in. They say that they will not be able to buy a house in Jakarta. "Basically, not in a million years can people like us buy a house in Jakarta," said Maya (female, 38, Jembatan Item, 26 January 2008). *Manusia gerobak* realize the risks of living in the streets and that is why they think that a rented house is a comfortable place to live in. However, they sometimes feel reluctant to rent a house due to their uncertain income. Besides, they do not wish to burden the owner of the rented house because of not being able to pay the rent. They are also tired of quarreling with the owner of the rented house whenever they come to collect the rent and there is not enough money.

To have a cart as their home, as well as their place to sleep, is a choice that they make to be able to be close at all time to the sources of used goods. What is the use of having a house or renting a house if it keeps them apart from where they work? A far away residence will only hinder them from reaching their work locations earlier and hence cost them the used goods that they could potentially get as the goods have already been taken by other waste collectors.

Besides not being able to afford it, the reason why *manusia gerobak* do not have a house is also because their view about housing has changed as they struggle with waste collecting. Housing to them is merely a place for eating, sleeping, and chatting. If those are the only meanings of a house, by living in the streets, a *manusia gerobak* can already fulfill these functions. For *manusia gerobak*, food is always available at food stalls, they can always sleep in their cart, and they can always chat wherever they want. In addition, housing will cost them their freedom because of the many social and governmental constraints that they have to abide by. Not having a house means that *manusia gerobak* are not going to be bothered by existing social rules such as those that they would have to follow if they lived in a residential area. Having their cart as their home, *manusia gerobak* do not need to pay for a building license, land and building tax, and the like, which would only complicate the range of problems faced by the

manusia gerobak. Moreover, a dwelling place located far away from waste resources will only be a waste since it does not give additional value to their job.

2.6.5 The Disheveled Look

Another poverty attribute attached to the poor is their appearance, in particular their clothing. The National Family Planning Coordination Board (BKKBN), for example, defines a person to be in the pre-prosperous condition if this person can only buy one pair of clothing, including the ones he or she is wearing, in a year. The generally disheveled look of *manusia gerobak*'s clothing is identical to poverty. Collecting waste by scraping garbage under the hot sun can make *manusia gerobak* look disheveled and many people may find them unpleasant to be with. Supriatna said,

It is just like being treated as an outcast. We look [for used goods] in garbage dumps. People see garbage dumps as dirty places, but we look [for used goods] there for our life and family. If we can be like them and have a house, perhaps they are willing to socialize with us. (Male, 25, Jatinegara Traditional Market, 12 January 2008)

Box 2. A Gerobak for Housing

For *manusia gerobak*, their cart is an essential part of their life. Most *manusia gerobak* only have one cart, but there are those who have more than one also. Some *manusia gerobak* pay cash for their cart, but there are others who buy it on credit or borrow a cart from a *lapak* owner. The cart is not that wide, only around 175 cm by 90. At the top-front part, there is usually a roll of plastic or tarpaulin sheet as its cover.

After taking a rest in the evening, *manusia gerobak* pack their things and do not forget to clean up the place where they had stayed for the night. After that, they start their work collecting waste. It is during these times that the cart becomes their working tool, the place where they store their used goods, and their means of transportation. The cart that they have will have an impact on their time efficiency and income. The bigger the capacity of their cart, the more used goods they can collect without having to go home first. With their cart, they can keep walking to look for more used goods. When the cart is full, they usually use the plastic bags they place on the left, right, back, or top part of the cart to store the used goods they have collected. Besides functioning as a container for used goods, the cart is also used as a means to transport goods from one place to another. For waste collectors, using a cart as their working tool is clearly beneficial, particularly in reducing household expenses.

The cart also functions as a storage for clothes, food, and other precious things such as money and jewelry. There are also *manusia gerobak* households that keep their cooking utensils such as stove, pans, and kitchen utensils as well as dining utensils such as plates, spoons, glasses, and bowls in their cart. There is usually a wooden box (in a similar shape to a drawer) located at the top-back or top-front part of the cart which is used specially for storing clothes, food, and precious items. Although relatively small, the drawer is big enough to store up to ten pairs of clothes. For carts without a drawer, *manusia gerobak* make use of a used bag for storing things. It is hung between the two handles of the cart or they simply put it in the cart. Households having cooking and eating utensils usually have a child under five years old. The parents need those tools to make hot water used for the baby's formula.

The cart also functions as a place for sleeping or resting for the household members, especially at night when it is empty. It is only sometimes cleaned. A sheet of cloth or plastic is usually used to cover the base of the cart. In the afternoon, the children use the cart for a nap when they come along with their parents. They sleep on the cloth or plastic cover on the base of the cart amid the used goods. The parents make sure that there is enough space left to put used goods that they find afterwards. They arrange it that way so that their children's nap is not disturbed. The cart is sometimes used for two people. If the household only has a child, it is usually the mother and child who sleep in the cart, while the husband sleeps beside the cart on the ground on a plastic or tarpaulin cover. For a *manusia gerobak* household without children, the cart is used by the couple to sleep together. However, there are times when the couple sleep at separate places: The wife sleeps in the cart, while the husband sleeps outside it.

As a home, the cart provides them the place to sleep, have sexual intercourse, care for their children, and keep their possessions, including food. Although the price of the cart only ranges from Rp200,000 to Rp300,000, for *manusia gerobak*, their cart is an invaluable asset. The cart is their lifeline. Therefore, they will defend their cart from anybody who tries to take it from them. With the cart, *manusia gerobak* start life and put life on the line, although in reality, they will eventually sell it when they go back to their hometown.

The working and living conditions of *manusia gerobak* contribute to their clothes being dirty and foul-smelling. Take Supriatna's household who only has two pairs of clothes as an example. Some *manusia gerobak* have a special work uniform. Supriatna also has a working uniform in the shape of a piece of oblong T-shirt and a pair of trousers, while his wife wears a white T-shirt which is already worn off, judging from the color that has turned brownish and its loose collar. Their daughter wears a piece of loose clothing as it is already overstretched, so it can be taken off very easily. The household does not take good care of their clothes like most households generally would. The clothes are left lying around in the cart for Supriatna's wife and daughter to sleep on.

Another reason for *manusia gerobak*'s disheveled appearance is their habit of not taking good care of their body and clothes. Besides, they have few clothes only, so they have limited options when it comes to changing clothes. Maya's household, for example, only has two pairs of clothes that she keeps in a black bag. Her household members prefer wearing black clothes because if they get dirty, the stains are not obvious. They take turns in wearing both pairs of their clothes. Sometimes they wear a pair of clothes for two days without changing.

Although on average *manusia gerobak* only have a few clothes, it is not rare that they buy new or used clothes that suit their taste. They certainly do not buy clothes once a year which meets BKKBN's criteria. However, there are *manusia gerobak* who buy clothes once every two months to replace their old clothes that are not worth wearing anymore as practiced by Surti. They usually purchase new clothes when they have extra income or when the clothes in their possession are not worth wearing anymore.

2.6.6 Attributes of Subjective Poverty

According to the objective approach, in plain view, *manusia gerobak* are categorized into the poor group for having the poverty attributes mentioned above. These poverty attributes, however, cannot be concluded automatically. In some cases, these poverty attributes can be very subjective, depending on the understanding of the waste collectors themselves. Some waste collectors admit that they can be categorized into the poor group with all the attributes that are attached to it. Nevertheless, there are also those who do not see their conditions, one of which is their life in the streets, as signifying being poor. They even refuse to be labeled as part of "the poor" because they in fact earn quite a reasonable amount of money enough to be able to live comfortably. They can even contribute to their family finance. Anisa and Dadang live in front of a store in Jembatan Item with their child. Every day, they walk along the streets from Jatinegara Market to Salemba. In a day, they can earn as much as Rp150,000–Rp200,000. Anisa said,

No. It is true that we live in the streets. We also occupy storefronts [at night]. I do not care. That is not important. What is important is that we do not burden other people. We do not harm other people. We only take things that are already discarded. It is better than having a big house, but you get it by taking the people's money. That is stealing. We are not thieves. We earn money honestly. Does our condition fit the definition of being poor if we make Rp150,000–Rp200,000 a day? Besides, just like employees, we have holidays. We do not go to work on Sundays. We can also give money to our parents. Just this afternoon, my mother came to ask for some money. I gave her Rp100,000. She has gone home now. She usually comes to ask for money once every one or two months. (Female, 20, Jembatan Item, 27 January 2008)

For some people, collecting waste is a dirty and low job because one must scrape smelly garbage from garbage dumps to get used goods. This job is also often considered one's last resort as there is no other profession that he or she can do to fulfill his or her needs. However, these considerations are not the case for a waste collector named Masykur. He continues to collect waste merely as a means of engaging in his hobby. This routine activity of his has gone on for a long time although the livelihoods of his children are already secure. Masykur has two married children. One of his children is a manager of a supermarket. His adult son has asked him to stop being a waste collector and stay in a house enjoying the rest of his life in comfort. He is willing to provide him with all of his necessities, including meals and a residence. But, Masykur does not want to live in a house. He prefers living on the street, wandering around looking for used goods.

”Actually my children want me to quit my job [as a waste collector] and have asked me to live in a house. But I don't want to. I might become a burden. Besides, I do not feel happy if I do not work. And then, he [his son] said that he was OK with me collecting waste as long as I lived in a house. I just said yes to satisfy him and save him anymore questions, but I remain in the streets just like now. He does not know it because he lives in my hometown” (Male, 45, Jatinegara Timur II, 30 January 2008).

Based on these facts, we can say that categorizing a *manusia gerobak* household into the poor or non-poor group is not a simple thing to do, even more so if it is done using the objective approach. Oversimplifying poverty problems may even make them more complicated. The objective approach can only see the outer attributes of *manusia gerobak* without really knowing their views. To fill in the blank spots, we need the subjective poverty approach which is very individual and emotional in nature. Poverty does not have a constant value. Instead, it changes with mood and environment. Its presence or absence is felt when one compares one's life at the present time with one's previous life or with other people's lives. Personal feelings such as happiness, security, involvement, and satisfaction play a role in affecting poverty subjectively and comprehensively. Therefore, positioning *manusia gerobak* as an active subject in the right position will help solve the poverty that they face every day. However, in practice, it is true that the subjective approach applied all this time has been manipulative in nature and, therefore, it has failed to capture the aspirations of the poor not only through their voices during probing sessions, but also through their definitions and everyday practices.

III. THE TACTICS OF *MANUSIA GEROBAK*

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the tactics practiced by *manusia gerobak* in their efforts to survive life in the city. These tactics are not only in the form of efforts to increase income, reduce household expenses, and keep their job so that it is not dominated by other parties, but also in the form of attempts to fight against dominating structures.

The *manusia gerobak* community as described previously is one of the community groups to which poverty attributes are assigned. Aside from having weaknesses, poor families also have the capacity to survive. The poor are not the have-nots. From the economic perspective, the poor are those who only have a few assets. On the other hand, they do have cultural and social properties. To stigmatize *manusia gerobak* as a static, lazy, helpless, and isolated group of people is basically belittling the capacity they really possess.

If culture is the implication of socializing practices, referring to Talcott Parsons (in Wiroutomo, 1994: 11), *manusia gerobak* learn to play social roles predetermined by the social system which will result in a structure of basic personality not easily changeable for the rest of their life. However, this is criticized by Berger and Luckmann (1990): after the internalization of values acquired through family socialization, there are other agents that also take part in the socialization process, that is, the objective societal world. The implication is that an individual on his or her own initiative can play a certain role, not merely playing a role prepared for him or her. With such dialectic, an individual can even create his or her role (1990: 262). In this context, seeing *manusia gerobak* as a subject or a cultural agent that has a capacity is something inevitable. In their daily struggle, *manusia gerobak* pay attention to important matters and think of ways to respond to them. These responses are a life network that produces and communicates meanings, asserting the freedom to recreate the person who they really are. Therefore, the poor basically have an authority, that is, the ability to move and influence social activities so that these activities benefit them. They actualize this authority in the form of networking, sharing income sources, and manipulating or changing the rules of the game.

Therefore, they are present not merely as static objects, although they are in fact left in the shade of culture and are conquered, controlled, and marginalized by the dominating socioeconomic structures. A dominating structure always maintains its social institutions in order that its values become secure or not yielding to other forces. It will use the various channels of socialization that are within its control, both directly and indirectly, to legitimize, justify, and imprint the values that benefit the ruling party. Nevertheless, as subjects, *manusia gerobak* will keep on responding to changes with different capacities and opportunities through their everyday practices.

These everyday practices are presented in various forms of tactics to survive and protest the authority of the dominating structure. Referring to Scott (1997), resistance is an action of the members of a particular class to soften or reject the classes above them, or to demand certain things from them. According to Scott (2000), resistance is not meant for overthrowing or altering a dominating system, but rather for survival. This everyday resistance is what he refers to as 'hidden transcripts'. Referring to this definition, resistance does not necessarily mean a collective, frontal, or conflictual action, or is not necessarily in the form of an ideological action. If watched closely, resistance is translated into everyday practices that are courteous and emotional in nature, and dissolve things that were initially used as tools for domination. One of the techniques used to resist is by controlling certain spaces. Through

these spaces under their control, *manusia gerobak* perform a symbolic resistance in the form of verbal actions to refuse definitions given by other people and give meaning to their own experiences. Besides verbal actions, a symbolic resistance is also apparent from their dress code. These symbolic resistances are not merely interpretations, they are also practiced as a means of survival, that is, to be able to obtain food. Therefore, controlling and/or defending spaces, verbal actions, and dress code are tactics used to survive.

3.1 Building Social Relations

Cultural poverty characterizes the poor as marginalized people who live separately from the general community, so there is a slim chance for them to participate effectively in the wider scope of the economy. This, then, results in an exclusive-individualistic attitude. Like the non-poor, *manusia gerobak* are faced with various problems in their lives, such as the meeting of daily needs, a place to live, and other problems related to efforts to do and develop business in order to survive urban life. Realizing that nobody can guarantee their survival but themselves, *manusia gerobak* build relationships with other people. These relationships are informal in nature. These social relationships are necessary to obtain socioeconomic resources so that they can meet their needs and overcome their various urban difficulties.

These relationships comprise horizontal and vertical social relationships. Horizontal social relationships involve people of the same socioeconomic status, which means that they have resources of similar worth to exchange. Vertical social relationships are built by people with different socioeconomic statuses. Whatever the category is, these social relationships are built on the basis of kinship or friendship. With these social relationships, *manusia gerobak* are going to grow their strength and ability, communicate with others, and coordinate their actions. Such values in social relationships as honesty, reciprocity, and commitment which are continuously maintained have economic worth, besides ethical worth.

Manusia gerobak's relationships with others are more than just relationships. These social relationships are also part of their tactics to take advantage of other people. These relationships are adaptive in coping with increasing economic pressures both locally and nationally. Through these relationships, *manusia gerobak*, being a part of the poor community, establish and maintain intensive interactions with each other. There are certain contexts in the form of special interests in these relationships that bind both parties, and make them cooperate and integrate socially. These relationships indicate that the urban poor are not isolated from their wider surroundings, namely a social network that serves the purpose of meeting basic economic needs, instead of a social group with distinctive characteristics (Saifuddin, 2007).

3.1.1 Taking Advantage of Kinships

Living the life of a *manusia gerobak*, at certain times also needs the presence of their relatives, either of their own or of their wife's. Relatives are at certain times necessary as proof that they do not live alone. At other times, relatives are needed to strengthen the household economy in various ways.

Take Gatot's household as an example. He and his wife have relatives living in Jakarta. One of his wife's relatives, Juleha, was even born in Jakarta. Their relatives live around their residence. The condition of *manusia gerobak's* life is sometimes not suitable for children.

Children usually need friends to play with and new things to explore as part of their development process. Gatot and Juleha also realize that the household of a *manusia gerobak* cannot provide children with a number of things that they need. Both of them ask their 4.5-year daughter, Dewi, to spend time playing with her cousin. They think that this is better than letting her play with other street children. Besides the fact that her meals are taken care of, she can also watch TV at her aunt's house and study together with other children. When Dewi's aunt sees her home, she usually gives Dewi something to eat such as rice with vegetables and meat or biscuits and bread. Gatot said,

Yes, she watches TV every day at my younger sister's house. She likes it there. She has a cousin of her age who she can play with there. In the evening, her aunt sees her home. Dewi usually brings home food. Sometimes she brings some snacks that she eats together with her sibling. (Male, 48, Jatinegara Barat, 2 February 2008)

In this context, referring to the social security in Javanese families as written by Geertz (1983: 5), an extended family can provide solutions to the problems of its family members and plays its role as the social guarantor for the children. Such practices seem rare nowadays, meaning that an extended family does not function as the social guarantor for the children anymore. This has the consequence that the burden of raising children lies solely in the nuclear family.

What is practiced by Gatot's household is part of their tactics to survive. Their relative becomes the place where they entrust their daughter. This is done so that their daughter can play, study, and have proper meals, unlike when she is in the streets with them. For them, the street is not the right place for a child to spend time playing, studying, and having meals. It can negatively affect the child's growth. This is certainly a very beneficial strategy for a *manusia gerobak* household. The husband and wife are not busy taking care of their child when they work as there is already someone else who is taking care of him/her. This way, they can concentrate on their work and do not need to worry about their children.

"There, Dewi is with her aunt. Her cousin who is of the same age is also nice to her. Dewi's cousin sometimes comes along when her mom picks up my daughter. They often give Dewi food. It is her cousin who prepares the food for her. Well, you know how children are. They are happy when they are accompanied by their friends" (Male, 48, Jatinegara Barat, 2 February 2008).

The child that is entrusted to a relative or allowed to spend time playing at the relative's house is usually already old enough that they can take care of himself/herself. With such a situation, the relative's household will not be troubled by the presence of the entrusted child. They only need to provide sufficient food such as paper-wrapped rice or snacks to give to the child when he/she is returned to his/her parents. Babies that are still dependent on their mother's milk need to be close to their mother at all times; hence, they cannot be entrusted to other people.

Juleha also made use of kinship to seek protection. She always went to her relatives' house when she had a problem with her husband. Besides a shoulder to cry on, her relatives were also the people whom she told everything that happened to her. Juleha often experienced beatings from her husband and to tell someone what happened to her, she turned to her relatives.

The beatings often took place when her husband could only collect a small amount of waste, meaning that it did not convert to a sufficient income to meet their household's consumption needs. At such moments, Gatot saw Juleha only as a "burden" since to him she was just

another household member to feed with no income-generating capacity. Juleha was in fact in her eighth month of pregnancy and that was why she could not help her husband collect waste. Every day she only took care of her second child and her family's cart at their residence.

Her relatives suggested to her to leave Gatot. According to her relatives, she needed to do that so that he knows how difficult it is to take care of their children. Juleha did not think the suggestion was the best option, especially because her children are still small. She could not bear thinking that her children would be brought up by her husband who she fears would sell them. She then explained the problem she was facing. She thought that every time she was beaten up by Gatot, it was caused by a minor problem, namely her husband did not get enough waste to sell in order to buy food and other daily needs. She told her relatives about her problem to let them know that her household's problem is an economic one, that is, her household has an insufficient income to meet their daily needs. The telling of her problems to her relatives was her way of telling them that her household needs their financial assistance. This condition is in line with what was conveyed by Geertz (1963) through the term "shared poverty", which means demanding other family members to help a family member who is experiencing more suffering than the rest of the family so that no family member would have to go hungry. This proves correct in Juleha's case. Every time she comes to her relatives after being beaten up by her husband, they would give her money to lessen her household's financial burden as well as to hopefully stop the beatings.

A different situation is faced by Rani's household. She has a brother who works as an M01 public transportation driver taking the route from Senen to Kampung Melayu. As a driver, her brother is acquainted with many people, including street thugs (*preman*) and food stall owners, in his territory, namely Jatinegara. This inspires Rani to make use of her brother's network. Rani's household has two carts: one is used by her husband to collect waste, while the other is only used to keep clothes and cooking utensils. Rani prefers collecting waste using a plastic bag while carrying Manggara, her child. She takes advantage of her brother's influence to know her surrounding neighborhood better. That way, other people will know Rani as their friend's relative who is also respected and even protected. She benefits from this closer relationship with the people in her surrounding by being able to park one of her carts in that area, where a food stall is nearby. She does not need to worry that her cart would be stolen as the people in that area know her brother well. Besides, her brother always watches over her cart when it is parked in that area.

3.1.2 Taking Advantage of Non-family Relationships

Besides benefiting from kinship, *manusia gerobak* households also make use of non-family relationships as part of their efforts to survive. There are various relationships of this kind. Some are relationships with fellow waste collectors, *lapak* owners, and food stall owners.

a) Relationship with Fellow Waste Collectors

For a *manusia gerobak*, other waste collectors are not only colleagues. They are also neighbors. They are, in certain situations, like family members who socialize values, and protect and take care of each other. Sometimes they remind one another when there is a problem between them.

They sometimes feel that they have a closer relationship with fellow *manusia gerobak* than they do with their own family. Some *manusia gerobak* still feel ashamed to share their situation and problems with their own family due to their life as a waste collector. By contrast, they can share various matters freely with other *manusia gerobak*, including problems that they face

when working and tactics they adopt when negotiating with security officers and the residents they meet.

Besides sharing experiences, fellow *manusia gerobak* also help one another. When the waste they have managed to collect is still too little in amount, they can borrow money from other *manusia gerobak* to meet household consumption needs and pay it back at the end of the day. In addition, when a *manusia gerobak* has earned a rather large income, he/she would not hesitate to spend some of it on cigarettes for his/her good friends. In this case, the assistance is mutual in nature, which means that for helping a *manusia gerobak*, someone will receive help from the *manusia gerobak* they have once helped. Although it looks as though nothing is expected in return after an assistance is given voluntarily, the recipient of the assistance will bear the obligation to return the favor in the future (Marzali: 2005). Masykur said,

”We're all leading a life of hardship. Whom are we supposed to share problems with? What's the use of quarreling with each other anyway? If we can help others, then we will. So, when later we ourselves need help, they will be willing to help us as well” (Male, 45, Jatinegara Timur II, 16 February 2008).

Good and close relationships with fellow *manusia gerobak* are created when they have known each other well. When two *manusia gerobak* who do not know each other meet in the street, they will generally not speak to each other. They do not address each other not because they have hatred for each other, but because they are worried about the consequences of knowing the other *manusia gerobak* well. *Manusia gerobak* consider other waste collectors their competitors in collecting waste. So, if they know many waste collectors, they are worried that their locations might be taken by these other waste collectors.

In addition, there have been cases where waste already collected by some *manusia gerobak* was stolen during their sleep by other waste collectors. This has made them more careful with other waste collectors. In such a situation, other waste collectors are considered not only competitors, but also threats. *Manusia gerobak* realize that among waste collectors, there are those who are ”mischievous” for stealing already cleaned waste belonging to other waste collectors. These mischievous waste collectors usually do not steal all the waste. They steal just part of it and leave behind the rest for the owner. Nevertheless, what they do is disturbing as it reduces the *manusia gerobak*'s income.

One of the tactics they use to hinder other waste collectors' attempts to steal their waste is by limiting relationship with these people. Even if they are acquainted with these people, they are careful with them. Another tactic is by keeping their waste in a safe place and guarding it. To guard the waste, they place it on their body when they sleep. Before these cases of theft, the already cleaned waste was usually put next to them, but now it is used as their pillow or they put it under their legs. With these tactics, *manusia gerobak* try to minimize or prevent the theft of their waste that they have collected over the course of the day.

b) Relationship with *Lapak* Owners

In the waste industry, a *lapak* owner plays the role of an intermediary trader who buys waste from waste collectors and sells it to large-scale trader called ”the boss” who then sells it to a factory that recycles used goods. In operating his/her business, a *lapak* owner at least has a sufficient amount of capital, not only for purchasing waste, but also for providing working tools such as carts and other work facilities such as housing and work capital. Based on the experiences of *manusia gerobak*, *lapak* owners usually look for waste collectors as their workers

so that they can run their business. To save operating costs, *lapak* owners will provide their workers with various necessities, such as a place to live in. Since all their needs are already met by the *lapak* owner, waste collectors are obliged to seek waste and sell it to the *lapak* owner. And the waste collectors must agree with the price level that the *lapak* owner sets. The *lapak* owner buys the waste at a very low price from them and sells it as high as possible. The selling price for waste collectors living with the *lapak* is cut Rp300 for each kilogram as a form of rent for living there.

Such relationship between the waste collectors and *lapak* owner is a patron-client one. The waste collectors are expected to work hard to earn an optimum income for the *lapak* owner. Such a situation is of course disadvantageous for the waste collectors and, in several cases, has created dislike among them towards the *lapak* owner. They consider it a form of exploitation. According to Scott (1983), exploitation is a pattern of relationship which shows asymmetrical elements and conspicuous coercion, if compared to other relationship patterns, so that it can be easily recognized with its exploitative characteristics if seen objectively. In the end, the interests of the *lapak* owner collide with those of the waste collectors who wish to increase their income and welfare. Therefore, waste collectors usually choose to leave the *lapak* and work on their own as an independent *manusia gerobak*.

By becoming *manusia gerobak*, these waste collectors break loose from the rules set by the *lapak* owner for the waste collectors working for him/her, although they will still associate with the *lapak* owner. This time, the pattern of relationship is considered fairer as *manusia gerobak* can freely sell their waste to any *lapak* they wish. Besides, *manusia gerobak* are not rushed any more to meet targets nor are they ordered around by the *lapak* owner to seek waste. Their work schedule also changes. They feel that their schedule for seeking and selling waste is more flexible now.

Despite their freedom to choose any *lapak* they wish, *manusia gerobak* have their regular *lapak* to sell their waste to. They do this so that at times of emergency, they can rely on the *lapak* they regularly visit for help. The *lapak* owner can lend them money which they pay back in installments. This relationship is mutual as both parties are in an equal position, unlike the situation when the *manusia gerobak* are the *lapak* owner's subordinates. In this exchange and social relationship, both parties are obliged to return the positive contribution by the other party with something of equal worth. In such relationship, *manusia gerobak* are usually going to be loyal customers of the *lapak*, unless the *lapak* owner one-sidedly changes the pricing of the waste. When that happens, *manusia gerobak* will sell their waste to the *lapak* owner that buys at the highest price.

Even so, there are those among *manusia gerobak* who think that the *lapak* owner still gets a larger income than they do. Hence, they do not feel that it is wrong if they take advantage of the *lapak* owner's income. They do this by adding together all their waste, so that both low-priced and high-priced waste mix, or sometimes by wetting their waste before weighing. For example, Gatot mixes used brown and white cardboards in a single pile to get a higher return for his waste. With this strategy, the *lapak* owner will buy the used white cardboards at the same price as the brown. Used brown cardboard is bought at Rp1,200 per kg, while the white cardboard is Rp800 per kg. That way, Gatot gains a profit margin of Rp400 per kg from the selling of his used white cardboards.

According to Gatot, other waste collectors often use the same strategy. They think that this is a normal thing to do as the *lapak* owner gains a lot of profit from them. What Gatot does is one of the manipulative tactics used to increase income. This practice is also their effort to

resist the domination of the *lapak* owner who in their opinion has split the profits with waste collectors unfairly.

c) Relationship with Stall Owners

Eating, drinking, and smoking are among the daily needs of *manusia gerobak*. The fact that their income is uncertain has forced *manusia gerobak* to employ various tactics to meet daily household needs. When their income is sufficient, the meeting of their household needs is not much of a problem. The problem arises when their income is not enough, while, on the other hand, the meeting of household needs cannot be postponed. Their fight against the pangs of hunger has forced them to broaden their horizon to minimize the risk of jeopardizing their survival. They are compelled to use their creativity so that they can keep meeting their consumption needs.

Stalls (stalls selling coffee drinks, cigarettes, or cooked rice) are the places where *manusia gerobak* meet their basic necessities. A good relationship with the owner benefits *manusia gerobak*, especially at times when their household does not have enough money to buy basic necessities. They take advantage of their good relationship with the owner of a stall near their dwelling place by buying food and other items on credit from the owner. This happens when business is poor and their income from the selling of their waste is not enough to meet daily needs. In this case, the debt functions more to open opportunities for accumulation rather than to inhibit growth.

Gatot said that he had known the owner of the stall located near his house for the last four years, that is, since he moved to the neighborhood. When his income is not enough, he buys on credit from the stall owner. He usually only earns between Rp10,000 and Rp15,000 when he can only collect a small amount of waste. This kind of money is certainly not enough for his household's consumption needs. And then, he asks the stall owner to let him buy some food on credit. He promises to pay his debt once he has earned a larger amount of income from the selling of his waste the next day. The stall owner usually grants his request. She trusts him as he always pays his debts as promised, that is, the next day as soon as he comes back from the *lapak* where he sells his waste.¹⁰ The stall owner has a strong reason for trusting Gatot. She said, "I know him. He has many relatives living here. Besides, when he buys food on credit from my stall, he pays his debt back the very next day" (female, 51, Pasar Jatinegara, 16 March 2008).

Besides always keeping his promise to pay his debts, another reason why the stall owner lets Gatot buy food on credit from her is because she has known this waste collector, who always buys food and drinks from her food stall, for a long time. Apart from borrowing from this food stall, Gatot also buys cigarettes on credit from a stall selling cigarettes located across the street from his house. Using the same method, he could convince the cigarette stall owner that the next day after he sold his waste, he would settle his debt. This method was quite effective for him to obtain cigarettes despite the fact that he did not have money.

Other waste collectors who make a daily income that is insufficient to meet their basic necessities also owe money to stall owners. Even so, building a good relationship with stall owners is not an easy thing to do. From an economic perspective, the waste collectors buying rice from a food stall is not disadvantageous. They always pay what they buy accordingly with

¹⁰Although the waste they have managed to collect is still small in amount and they have not earned much income yet, *manusia gerobak* will pay their debts first after they have weighed and sold their waste at the *lapak*. The remainder of their income will then be used for meeting their household's consumption needs.

the price. Nevertheless, for the other customers in the stall, waste collectors often pose a problem. Their dirty and untidy appearance—they also speak loudly and rudely—make most of the other customers who are enjoying their meal feel uncomfortable. A situation of this kind is certainly disadvantageous for stall owners as their regular customers would not come to their stall again.

One night at ten o'clock, the *manusia gerobak* that the researcher was visiting had not had his dinner yet. And then the researcher wanted to invite him to eat at a food stall. However, he refused because he felt ashamed of the dirty clothes he was wearing. He feared that he would make the other visitors feel uncomfortable. He said, “No thanks. [I feel] Ashamed. [My clothes are] Dirty. It’s not a good idea. At this hour, there are many visitors. They will later lose appetite after looking at my appearance. Why not take my wife instead (he pointed at his wife who was expecting a baby)?” (male, 48, Jatinegara Barat, 15 March 2008).

The presence of a *manusia gerobak* in a food stall can quickly change the mood. When a *manusia gerobak* arrives at a food stall and waits for the food he/she orders, the food stall can suddenly become quiet. Other visitors become silent and their enthusiastic faces because of enjoying their food suddenly turn weary. Another case occurred when a *manusia gerobak* once bought food at a food stall with her child. It is normal that a child cannot stand still and touches whatever he/she sees. But, this worried the other visitors, in their minds, the displayed food which the child had touched was therefore contaminated by a disease. This type of attitude from the other food stall customers and staff causes *manusia gerobak* to refrain themselves from certain things. If they do go to a food stall to buy food, they will not stand too close to the other visitors or they will stand a little bit far behind. Besides, *manusia gerobak* never eat their food at the food stall. They always ask for their food to be wrapped so that it can be taken away and eaten elsewhere.

The food stall owner certainly cannot prohibit *manusia gerobak* coming to buy food from their stall. What matters to them is that *manusia gerobak* pay for the food that they order at the stall. So, whoever comes to the stall to buy food will be served well, moreover if the customer, including *manusia gerobak*, is a regular customer. The attitude of the stall owner is in contrast to that of the waiter who sometimes treats *manusia gerobak* unpleasantly.

The food stall owner has known for the past two or three years the *manusia gerobak* that the researcher was visiting that night. She does not mind someone’s having waste collectors as customers as long as they do not cause trouble and always pay their debts on time. Besides, the number of *manusia gerobak* who buy food from her stall is small as they live in separate places. For *manusia gerobak*, their relationships with stall owners are very important.

d) Relationships with the Authority

Any city administration has their own preference as to how they want their city to look. As a consequence, those who do not fit in are forced to adjust themselves to the illusive picture of urban life: beautiful, orderly, and safe. For the city administration, *manusia gerobak* are considered to belong to one of the groups with the rest of the urban poor, namely a group of people that always disturb the beauty, orderliness, and safety of the city. Their dirty appearance and migratory way of life are considered to pollute the city environment, disturb its orderliness, and cause crime in the city. They are forced to choose between adjusting their life to the existing regulations voluntarily or being ridded from city life through controls (*penggarukan/penertiban*) conducted by the authorities.

The city administration sometimes conducts these *penggarukan* unexpectedly. Besides being conducted based on existing regulations, *penggarukan* are also carried out based on reports from community members who consider the presence of *manusia gerobak* a nuisance. At other times, *penggarukan* are conducted within the framework of an assessment for the Adipura ("clean city") award and *manusia gerobak* happen to be in the way. *Penggarukan* can also take place when a high-ranking official is going to pass by certain streets where many *manusia gerobak* are gathering. *Penggarukan* by the local authorities usually occurs when most waste collectors are having their meals or cleaning their waste that they have collected over the course of a day. Often the authorities take the waste collectors' carts in which the gathered waste is kept before it is sold to the *lapak*.

Rani and Hamdani, a *manusia gerobak* couple, described the moments when a *penggarukan* happened to them. It was late in the afternoon and they were cleaning their collected waste at their residence. Suddenly, three Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP) vehicles stopped in front of their location, while other vehicles headed for a location of waste collectors in the neighboring region. Five of the 20 *Satpol PP* officers got off their vehicle. One of the officers then ordered all the waste collectors to leave the location. He said, "Hey, hobos! Scram! You're dirtying the place!" Other officers took away their carts and collected the waste that was being cleaned. Feeling annoyed by these officers who did not appreciate what the waste collectors were doing, Rani tried to negotiate with them so that their belongings would not be taken away. She told her experience:

"Which government agency are you from? Even though you come from the *kelurahan* [urban village] office, you cannot just take away people's belongings like that, Sir! Who are you to say that this is a dirty place? I have a broom, Sir. It's not that easy to collect this waste, especially nowadays when many traders also collect it" (Female, 41, Jatinegara Timur II, 9 March 2008).

Rani was not willing to give up her belongings that her family had tirelessly collected just like that. Even so, the *Satpol PP* officers kept doing what they were there for. They took away her belongings without considering her argument. Rani continued her negotiation efforts by saying,

"Sir, I didn't steal these things. I collected them myself while carrying my baby, Sir! I am fully aware that you are government officers, but certainly there are better ways to do this. We can talk this out! If I am not allowed to live here, then just say so nicely! Not by taking my things away. It's tiring to collect waste in the streets, Sir. And now you're taking it all away just like that!" (Female, 41, Jatinegara Timur II, 9 March 2008).

Finally, after Rani's persistent argument, the officers were willing to back down and both parties agreed that the waste collectors' belongings would not be taken away, but they have to leave the location. Since she had already got what she wanted, that is, to keep her belongings, Rani agreed to the proposed agreement. She thought that it was alright for her family to move (first). What was important for her was that she did not lose the waste she had collected. According to her, they are used to moving to another place. When it is safe already, they can always come back to the original location.

Rani's experience does not happen to many other *manusia gerobak*. Masykur told what happened to his friend in his location. At that time, the government was unceasingly ridding the city of vagrants. The *Satpol PP* officers did not care whatever excuse was given by the waste collectors. That afternoon, Masykur's friend who was in front of a store got picked up, including his cart. When this happens, waste collectors cannot do anything except look at their cart being taken

away by the officers. They do not bail their cart either because usually the officers will ask for an expensive bail, namely between Rp200,000 and Rp400,000. Waste collectors think that it is better for them not to get their cart back than pay the officers. Besides, it is unclear as to what the money is going to be used for. Subhan from Tegal, along with other waste collectors, has also once experienced being picked up by the Satpol PP officers. They were then put on a bus and dropped off in Central Java. But, this did not stop them from coming back. Subhan and friends then took a lift to go back to Jakarta and became *manusia gerobak* once again.

When *manusia gerobak* have lost their cart, they do not lose hope and cease being a waste collector. In fact, their experience of having been picked up by the Satpol PP officers enriches their knowledge in that they will know what to do the next time there is a *penggarukan*. They realize that *penggarukan* is a risk that comes with the job and life as a waste collector, just like the risks involved in other jobs. Realizing that *penggarukan* is part of their job, they never stop working because of it, although they have to rely on their sack from now on.

On the other hand, according to a *manusia gerobak*, not all officers are mean like what most people have in mind. Among the Satpol PP officers, there is one person who always informs *manusia gerobak* during the night if there is going to be a *penggarukan* the next day. He comes and says something like, "You should move temporarily tomorrow morning. There is going to be a 'guest'. The 'guest' is going to pass by and observe."

The waste collectors follow up the news by preparing themselves and moving before the *penggarukan* takes place. *Penggarukan* carried out in Jatinegara usually start at 8 a.m. and finish late in the afternoon. Therefore, waste collectors still have time to inform their fellow waste collectors. The news is then spread out to all reachable waste collectors in the *lapak* or streets. After weighing their gathered waste at the *lapak* and informing others about the coming *penggarukan*, they usually pack their things and take their household members to move for the time being. The news is usually true. In the morning, many officers come to their location to pick them up. However, the *manusia gerobak* are nowhere to be seen as they have gone away. After the *penggarukan* and the condition is back to normal, they return to their residence. When the Satpol PP officer who leaked the information sees that they have come back, he can only say, "How stubborn!" And they reply smilingly, "Well, Sir, where else can we move to?"

Not long after that, these *manusia gerobak* found out that the officer lived in Jatinegara, near their location. According to Juleha, he perhaps felt sorry for her as she was expected to deliver her baby anytime soon and she had small children to take care of. Since then on, although they did not know him very well, they address him first whenever they meet him in the streets. Although he only replies with a smile, they believe that addressing him first is the right thing to do to draw his sympathy and, at the same time, show that *manusia gerobak* also respect other people. Therefore, it is hoped that everytime there is going to be a *penggarukan* at their location, they will always be informed beforehand so that they can save themselves and their belongings from the *penggarukan*.

3.2 Picking the Time for Collecting Waste

Like other jobs, waste collecting also has regular working hours. Waste collectors' working hours are created as a result of the habitual time of residents, stores, stalls, and social facilities to discard their waste. Therefore, to earn a good income, *manusia gerobak* must have the knowledge about what time and where waste is discarded.

What they need to do is follow the waste collecting schedule exactly to earn a good income. If they fail to do so, they may face many difficulties carrying out their work and earning an income. The change in the residents' habitual time to discard waste will in turn affect *manusia gerobak*'s working hours. *Manusia gerobak* will change their working hours if they feel that the schedule they have is no longer suitable for the existing situation. Take Wahyu's schedule as an example. Previously, he collected waste all day long from 7 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. However, at other times, he started working at 10 a.m. At noon, he went back home to have lunch. If he had not had his breakfast in the morning, his lunch would be his "breakfast". He then had a rest at home until 3 p.m. and began collecting waste again until 6 p.m. or 7 p.m.

The knowledge of timing for collecting waste has an implication on both *manusia gerobak*'s and the residents' opinions. *Manusia gerobak*'s timing for collecting waste can differentiate between those who are waste collectors and those who are not. *Manusia gerobak* say that there are specific times for collecting waste. If they collect waste outside of these times, they are usually going to be accused that they are not waste collectors, but thieves. In this case, they are using waste collecting as a cover-up. One waste collector said,

"If a waste collector does not know the times when people discard waste, that means that he/she is still learning to be a waste collector, or if they are not collecting waste, they are just using the activity as a cover-up" (Male, 45, Jatinegara Timur II, 17 February 2008).

Manusia gerobak have the understanding that in general residents only discard their waste once a day. They discard their waste in the morning between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. During these times, most residents clean up their house and discard their waste which they have piled up from the previous day. Sometimes, while cleaning up their house, they throw away used goods. The waste and used goods are thrown away into the trash can, waiting for the city-employed garbage collection workers to take them away. This presents an opportunity that *manusia gerobak* take advantage of. They have to outrival these workers in getting access to the waste first. Knowledge of this kind affects *manusia gerobak*'s behavior in that they wake up earlier than normal and then go straight to residential areas to rummage through one trash can after another. If they do not do this, they will only get waste from garbage containers which have already been taken by the city-employed garbage collection workers.

Manusia gerobak say that they can get a lot of useful used goods from the waste discarded by residents in the morning. Even so, since many waste collectors are aware of this, these used goods become objects of competition. Therefore, whoever comes first has the biggest chance to get the most waste. Competition also comes from garbage collection workers. These workers also make use of used goods to augment their income.¹¹ However, they only consider this as a side job and only take certain used goods, leaving the rest for waste collectors. Besides these workers, traders who also collect plastic glasses and bottles are another source of competition for *manusia gerobak*.

¹¹After having a conversation with an RT/RW garbage collection worker named Susilo, the researcher managed to find out that Susilo earned only Rp350,000 per month. Every month, he collects Rp5,000 from each house in all six RT as the garbage collection levy, by doing this he can gather around Rp800,000 per month. This amount of money is too little. Moreover, not all the houses pay the levy. Out of the Rp800,000, Susilo gets Rp350,000, while the remaining Rp450,000 is submitted to the RW to be added up to its cash money. However, everytime Susilo has the garbage unloaded from his *gerobak* and loaded into the container, he has to pay Rp5,000 per *gerobak* as the expense for unloading/loading the garbage. He pays the expense using the money he gets from the results of selling the used goods that he collects from the residents' receptacles.

Other *manusia gerobak* who depend on waste from garbage containers usually prefer starting work between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. During these times, the RT/RW garbage collection workers have finished collecting the residents' waste and the waste has been transported to the larger *kelurahan* garbage containers. Nevertheless, not all of the *kelurahan's* garbage containers collect waste during these times. In some *kelurahan*, the garbage collection workers collect waste in the afternoon, while in other *kelurahan*, the workers do their job late in the afternoon or in the evening. Their working hours depend on the policy made by the respective *kelurahan's* waste management unit. *Manusia gerobak* are aware of this difference in working hours and, therefore, there are those among them who specialize in going from one garbage container to another to collect waste.

Since some residents discard their waste late at night or past midnight, *manusia gerobak* collect waste during these times. There are some residents who do not want to take the trouble to throw their garbage out the following morning. That is why they throw it out at night before going to bed. Besides these residents, grocery stores, food stalls, and other stores usually discard their waste at night when they are about to close. Another thing to consider is that most residents have their trash receptacles built in front of their fence, so waste collectors can reach it without trespassing. The fence of a house is a distinct separator between what is inside and what is outside the house. Siegel (1986: 125) said that a fence is a strong manifestation of security. Furthermore, he said that the purpose of making a fence is to draw the line of one's ownership and to protect it from thieves or from unwanted individuals who may have access to a region. Therefore, seldom do *manusia gerobak* search for used goods at night as they are worried of being suspected by residents of thievery. They try to avoid being accused as thieves. One waste collector said,

"I was searching for plastic bottles at night not because I was avoiding the heat during the day nor did I want to steal the residents' belongings, but because there were no plastic bottles left when I looked for them in the afternoon" (Male, 36, Jembatan Item, 10 February 2008).

With such awareness, when they work at night, *manusia gerobak* only collect waste at certain places which are relatively open to the public such as trash cans located at the side of main streets. That way, they will not be accused, or even watched surreptitiously, by the residents. The statement made by the male *manusia gerobak* above supports the notion that used goods are available everywhere and there is no time restriction to collect them. People discard garbage or used goods anytime and anywhere. For *manusia gerobak*, what matters is getting used goods and if possible, beating other waste collectors to the used goods so that they can collect more than the others.

Unlike the night *manusia gerobak* who do not enter residential areas, *manusia gerobak* who work very early in the morning, namely at around 3 a.m., are bold enough to enter these areas as most of the residents are usually still asleep at that time. They work at that hour because it gives them the opportunity to obtain used goods that are thrown away to the streets, alleys, and small paths at night. Besides, not all community members discard their waste in the morning. At this hour, most waste collectors are resting. This means that there is little or no competition. If he/she is lucky, a *manusia gerobak* can be the first to collect used goods. In certain cases, collecting waste at such an early hour is not free from suspicion or accusation by the residents.

Safety is certainly important for their survival. The residents' suspicion and accusation have put some waste collectors in a difficult situation in the past that these waste collectors decide not to work at night and past midnight. Even so, there are still those among *manusia gerobak* who work during those hours after considering a number of existing conditions.

Manusia gerobak who collect waste at night or past midnight usually do their job alone. By collecting waste alone, they try to change people's opinion about waste collectors. By doing their job this way, the chance of a *manusia gerobak* committing a crime is very small as his/her capacity to do so is limited. This is different from the case where two or three *manusia gerobak* collect waste together at night. When they enter and leave a residential area, they would certainly be suspected of having committed a wrongdoing not only by the residents, but also by fellow *manusia gerobak*. Another strategy used by *manusia gerobak* in relation to collecting waste at night or past midnight is by handing over the responsibility to women. Some residents consider that women would be less likely to commit a crime. Therefore, female waste collectors can do their job more freely. In addition, *manusia gerobak* also take the age factor into consideration when working at night. Young waste collectors would be considered to be more suspicious than old waste collectors. The suspicion towards old waste collectors is reduced as they are not as strong as the young ones.

Manusia gerobak's experience and knowledge regarding timing for collecting waste are not immediately formed. An older waste collector's techniques are usually transferred to new waste collectors. These techniques at least have something to do with the timing of when to collect waste, places to search for waste, and the ways to collect and sell waste. Even so, these techniques are not strictly followed by other waste collectors. Everyday interactions between waste collectors and the residents' behaviours in discarding waste also add up to the waste collectors' experience which may influence their waste collecting techniques and differentiate these techniques from those of older waste collectors.

3.3 Choosing and Controlling Locations

Giddens (cited in Barker, 2005) states that comprehending the way a human being behaves in a distributed space is the key to conducting a social analysis. To analyze space, it needs to be differentiated from place. The meaning of place involves the meeting of physical properties, while space refers to an abstract concept. An empty space can be occupied by a concrete and specific place, and people. Therefore, what is meant by place is the center of humans' experiences, memories, and identities.

Referring to the above definition, place is essential to *manusia gerobak* in maintaining their position. This does not only mean the location where they live, but also the locations where they collect used goods. In these various places, *manusia gerobak* demonstrate their everyday activities, which are at the same time their survival strategies, such as earning income, buying food, and spending leisure time.

A *manusia gerobak* household chooses its location to live based on a series of arguments. These arguments have economic dimensions as well as sociocultural ones. With respect to economic value, living a vagrant way of life is free. *Manusia gerobak* do not need to spend any money. The case would be different if they rented a room or house. They would be burdened by the rent. They feel that they are already burdened by many difficulties. An additional one would be too much to bear. This is understandable as they lead a subsistent life. They do not know what is going to happen the next day, moreover the next month. The rent is considered a burden which distracts them from their work. "It feels like they are always having to meet a target," said a *manusia gerobak* (female, 40, Jatinegara Timur II, 17 February 2008).

Manusia gerobak households also base the choosing of their dwelling place on economic and non-economic considerations. Nas (1986) states that based on everyday experiences at various locations, every citizen can create a mental image of an area. Therefore, they can identify areas that are considered safe and those that are not. This indicates that certain spaces are actually managed culturally; they are created and presented. Economically, waste collectors usually consider proximity to necessary resources such as used goods, basic necessities, and selling location. That way, they can gain more in terms of material needs and time. A waste collector said something about her place of choice:

"I [choose to] live here because it is close to the market. In the market, there is a lot of garbage that I can collect. There are many *lapak* as well over there, so I don't have to travel too far to search for and sell used goods" (Female, 50, Pasar Jatinegara, 8 March 2008).

Non-economic considerations are based more on the safety of a location, especially from *penggarukan* by the government. Therefore, some waste collectors prefer staying at out of sight locations. Even so, in reality, the dwelling place of most *manusia gerobak* is not entirely hidden. They choose the location because *penggarukan* rarely occurs there. Dadang said, "I have moved several times because the places where I lived was often evicted. Here, eviction rarely happens" (male, 25, Jembatan Item, 16 January 2008).

Before moving to Jatinegara, Dadang had once lived in Matraman. However, after only living there for three months, he was taken into custody by municipal officers. The place had to be cleaned up as the mayor was going to pass by that area the next day. He said,

"I was once detained when I was in Matraman. I fought them before that. It was because they were rude. I was pleasantly sleeping when they kicked me while shouting, 'Move! Move! You're dirtying the place!' I stood up. And then I challenged them to a fight. Luckily, someone came to separate us" (Male, 25, Jembatan Item, 16 January 2008).

The choosing of a location is part of *manusia gerobak's* efforts to secure themselves, their household members, and their belongings. Their everyday spatial practices to some extent is an expression of their daily resistance to day-to-day repression and domination.

At their work locations, the strategic practice would be in the form of controlling the locations. There are at least two types of work locations for waste collectors, namely those that can be "owned" and those that cannot. Basically, work locations cannot be owned, but because these locations are considered rich with resources, there are certain parties that wish to take control of the locations. Take garbage containers as an example. Initially, any waste collector can rummage through garbage containers to get used goods. But, since they are considered valuable economic resources, certain waste collectors make an attempt to take control of these garbage containers. A waste collector who happens to have control of one garbage container explained that he decided to take control of the garbage container because the local residents discard a lot of their used goods into it. He shared his experience as follows.

"At first, I only wandered around this area. Sometimes I searched for used goods in this container and it turned out that the results were quite good. And then, [since] the garbage collection worker was already old, I helped him move [the garbage] from the *gerobak* to the container. The worker then said, 'Just wait for used goods to come to this container.' Since then, I have parked my *gerobak* next to the container and other unfamiliar waste collectors have never looked for used goods in this container" (Male, 40, near a garbage container in Kebon Nanas, 9 February 2008).

The waste collector started to take control of the container by parking his *gerobak* nearby. He did this regularly every day from morning to afternoon. When his *gerobak* was being parked next to the container, he did not stay idle in that place. Instead, he could go, for example, searching for used goods around the neighborhood using his *karung*. In other words, his *gerobak* being parked next to the container was a sign that the place already had an "owner". The constant presence of the *gerobak* next to the container eventually drew the attention of the local RT/RW officials who wondered to whom the *gerobak* belonged to. In such event, the waste collector is summoned to agree to some terms such as the requirement to maintain cleanliness of the garbage container and pay cleanliness maintenance levy. The levy is basically a form of tribute paid to the RT/RW officials. *Manusia gerobak* usually agree with the terms so as to feel safer to do their job. In this way, their "owning" the garbage container is legitimized.

When a garbage container is "owned", other waste collectors' access to it is limited. In other words, they have lost their right to collect waste from that container. Trespassing would result in either an oral or a physical quarrel. The "owner" of the garbage container will usually do whatever it takes to protect his/her territory. Since the "owner" has already established a good relationship with the RT/RW officials, the garbage collection workers, and the local residents, he/she will easily gain support from them and they will testify that he/she is the "legal owner" of the garbage container. Even so, the control of the garbage container by the "owner" does not take place the whole day. When the signifying *gerobak* is not parked near the container, it is not under anybody's control anymore, meaning that everybody has equal rights to collect waste from it.

Different rules apply for the control of garbage receptacles in public facilities such as hospitals. As a public facility that is quite busy, a hospital produces an abundant amount of waste. Unlike garbage containers, garbage receptacles in public facilities are "owned" 24 hours a day and nobody, except the "owners", can collect waste from these receptacles. The control of these garbage receptacles is more complex. *Manusia gerobak* have to pay a certain amount of money to get access privileges. Not only that, they also have to pay the local RW some money both regularly and incidentally such as when there is an event being organized in the area. Hence, they gain a stronger position since their existence will be protected by their stakeholders.

On the one hand, such practices are detrimental to *manusia gerobak*, but on the other hand, they feel that there are advantages that they can reap. Except for financial problems, they face no more problems such as the need to travel far distances, sometimes, in the rain and, most of the time, under the hot sun. Based on these advantageous calculations, Manda, a female waste collector, agreed to the conditions determined by the parties with interest.

Some *manusia gerobak* not only collect used goods from the streets, garbage receptacles, and garbage containers, but also buy them, sometimes, from stall owners and residents who gather used goods. Some residents are already aware that used goods are salable. However, they do not make the collecting or selling of used goods their main source of income. Stall owners or residents collecting used goods usually gather these things from their surroundings. There are some of them who often sell used goods to waste collectors. A purchase transaction takes place when a *manusia gerobak* has the capital and both buyer and seller have agreed upon the price. If both conditions are not met, the stall owners or residents will sell their gathered used goods to other waste collectors. In such case, waste collectors will regard stall owners or residents as their regular customers if both parties have at least transacted once. In a week's time, for example, *manusia gerobak* will visit stall owners or residents to buy used goods from them. When another waste collector is present and intends to buy used goods from the same seller, both

waste collectors will usually get into a quarrel. The waste collector that comes later is considered trying to steal the other waste collector's customer.

The control of public facilities such as the streets by *manusia gerobak* is not only an effort to minimize household expenditures, but also a form of resistance against the residents and city administration. One of the ways to control the streets is carried out by travelling against the traffic flow. This common practice is a violation of the road rules, but along with their *gerobak*, *manusia gerobak* dare to do so, or even to cut in the traffic to cross the street, so that they can save time and energy. The practice of cutting in the traffic is actually not only done by *manusia gerobak*. Motorcyclists also often do this to get to their destination more quickly.

Manusia gerobak's intention of cutting in the traffic is to show everybody that no traffic rules regulate *gerobak* in the streets, so it can go anywhere its owner takes it from whichever direction. What is important is that *manusia gerobak* will not get any sanction for doing it. It is a different case if it is done by motorcyclists that are restricted by a number of traffic rules. Despite the existence of the rules, they violate them. This shows that *manusia gerobak* understand the existing rules very well, including their gaps.

The presence of *manusia gerobak* in the streets is often considered to be a source of traffic jams by vehicle drivers. In many cases, car drivers or motorcyclists blow their vehicle's horn in order that the waste collectors make way for the vehicles. With regard to this matter, *manusia gerobak* state that the streets are a public facility that everyone, including *manusia gerobak* and their *gerobak*, are entitled to use. According to them, it is the vehicles which cause traffic jams as their numbers have exceeded the streets' capacity. Often, *manusia gerobak* will not step aside when their *gerobak* is in the vehicles' way, even though this action will cause a traffic jam. If the traffic jam does happen, their *gerobak* is usually unable to move and, in such event, waste collectors can be very patient in waiting. They never protest the car in front of them. Besides behaving this way, they also dare to speak up, or even swear, when the vehicle drivers blow their vehicle's horn. They will often say something like, "The road does not belong to you ancestors!"

The presence of *manusia gerobak* and vehicles in the streets shows that the streets as public space are contested by many different parties. In cities, sidewalks have many functions and become the places for many activities. Various people make use of them in their own way. But, in reality, municipalities have manipulated the sidewalks so that they have ceased to become pure public space. In addition, the inadequate streets for vehicles have caused motorcyclists to use sidewalks as an alternative to the streets. As a consequence, the rightful users of the sidewalks are deprived of their rights. This street contest makes *manusia gerobak's* capacity to resist against vehicle drivers even more apparent. Their resistance can be understood as an action to restore the street's function as public space that everyone, not only certain classes of people, can enjoy. At least, they are making attempts to speak for pedestrians and cyclists whose rights have been deprived by motorcyclists who in fact already have their own path.

Another tactic that *manusia gerobak* practice at certain times has something to do with the choosing between their *karung* or *gerobak* as their working tool. As waste collectors that work with a *gerobak*, *manusia gerobak* certainly possess a *gerobak*. However, at certain times, instead of using their *gerobak*, they use their *karung* to work and this is done for various reasons. Their use of a *karung* to collect waste is basically one of their tactics to adapt to the narrowing street that makes it difficult to collect waste with their *gerobak*. Rani stated, "It is difficult to search for waste with a *gerobak* since the road is narrow. The head of this state should know better that the roads are already narrow, so why on earth did he create busways? Of course, they make the roads even narrower" (female, 41, Jatinegara Timur II, 27 February 2008).

3.4 Vagrancy as a Lifestyle

There is a close connection between identity and place. Identity is something that makes a person different from or similar to other people, both individually and socially. In other words, what makes someone similar to others also makes them different. Social identity becomes joined with the rights, obligations, normative sanctions, and roles of existing in a group. Therefore, identity is something that is created through daily interactions.

The same thing applies for *manusia gerobak*. In their everyday rituals, they sleep in their *gerobak*, on storefronts, on sidewalks, under highways, and at other places they see fit. Indeed, they do not own a house, that is, a place to live in as imagined by people in general. *Manusia gerobak* live in places that have no boundaries between public and private areas and have no walls and roofs. They live as vagrants.

Some of them admit to having money to rent a house, but to them, a rented house does not suit their job. Besides, living in a *kampung* is not as free as living in the streets. Maya says,

”I have a room in Kebon Nanas area. I pay the monthly rent of Rp150,000. However, I prefer gathering with my fellow waste collectors who sleep in the streets. There, we can live freely” (Female, 38, Jembatan Item, 26 January 2008).

Another waste collector added,

”I have money to pay rent. If I want to, I can live at my old rented house. Unfortunately, it often floods there. But, waste collecting is considered negative by other residents, so it is better to live in the streets” (Male, 25, Jembatan Item, 27 January 2008).

Unlike the previous two waste collectors, Hamdani prefers to live vagrantly because he cannot afford to pay a monthly rent. According to him, waste collectors earn an uncertain income. They may not be able to pay for their daily meals, let alone pay expensive rents. Hamdani said,

”If I have money, I’d like to rent a house, and not live in the streets like this. If I rent a house, my family would not be cold and my kids could play. We can socialize with others. We won’t feel embarrassed. Well, we can live like normal people. In contrast, living in the streets like this gives us constant worries. When there is an eviction, we must move” (Male, 40, Jatinegara Timur II, 27 February 2008).

This shows that living as a vagrant is not only a condition caused by economic constraints, but also a life choice that they make consciously. *Manusia gerobak* consider living vagrantly an expression of free life. According to Sullivan (1982: 12–13), *kampung* is a social bond whose members are involved in various activities such as night patrols, *arisan*¹², *gotong royong* (neighborhood mutual assistance) activities, and the like. Involvement in such activities makes one eligible for membership of a *kampung*. Therefore, *kampung* residents are a group of people whose life is restricted by rules that need to be obeyed. Hence, *kampung* residents are not truly free people as they are confined by these rules.

¹²*Arisan* is a community rotating savings and credits association where in a regular social gathering, its members contribute to and take turns at winning an aggregate sum of money.

Manusia gerobak have greater freedom than people living in residential areas. Their vagrant lifestyle is, at the same time, an affirmation that they have a different life from that of *kampung* residents. The *kampung* rules, which are considered to be a burden, are not relevant to them. They can freely live, sleep, or do whatever they want, anywhere, and no one will stop them. That way, they can take care of themselves and are free from the rules of their surroundings. Freedom is therefore meant as the antonym of the rules applied by *kampung* residents.

In addition, freedom for them is also understood to be the ability to live anywhere, whenever they want. Hence, *manusia gerobak*'s freedom is signified by their mobility from one place to another. This mobility is not only concerning the change of their work locations on a daily basis, but also about their choice of a place to live that is safe for their household's survival.

Waste collectors' vagrant lifestyle is not without purpose. *Manusia gerobak* decide on a vagrant way of life based on the knowledge and experiences they obtain through their interactions. According to *manusia gerobak*, they can benefit a lot from their traveling such as getting new waste collector friends or other friends from the streets. Their growing network of friends will eventually add to their knowledge about street life. The new knowledge about street life will become a useful reference in the future. *Manusia gerobak*'s living vagrantly is also very much related to their effort to sustain life as by wandering to many places, they can locate new places that are rich with sources of used goods. In addition, it is sometimes done to avoid evictions undertaken by officers from the local municipality that constantly target waste collectors. In other cases, *manusia gerobak* move from one place to another to avoid conflicts with other waste collectors.

Gatot, for example, is willing to move to a new dwelling place just to avoid the bad influence of a fellow *manusia gerobak*. Another example, Masykur and his wife had to move from a storefront because of another waste collector that had made the store owner angry. The store owner said that the *manusia gerobak* staying the night on his storefront had made the place dirty. Masykur knows the waste collector mentioned by the store owner. To avoid conflicts with the store owner and the guilty waste collector, he decided to move to a new residence.

Living as a vagrant is not without risks, both physical and social risks. Physical risks involve their health and appearance, while the social ones are connected to efforts to get rid of them. They are fully aware of these risks. Limited access to adequate clean water has forced them to rarely take a bath, clean their hair, and wash their clothes. Besides, they only have several pieces of clothing which they use to work and sleep. Sometimes, they change their clothes only after several days. In short, they do not care much about their appearance. It is, therefore, no wonder that they are often dirty, dark, and sometimes smelly.

Such an appearance eventually causes the government and community to react. Referring to Douglas (1966: 35), to the municipality, the presence of *manusia gerobak* that appear dirty is considered to be dirtying the city and transmitting the seeds of criminality that may corrupt the existing order. They are, therefore, considered unfit to live in the city and must be removed so that they will not disturb the beauty and order of the city. Then, the government officers make attempts to remove them. From the point of view of the government officers, social checks or controls are believed to be the best way to clean the city from vagrants or street people (Twikromo, 1999: 121–122). Furthermore, it is also said that these efforts are effective to directly reduce the number of street people, at least temporarily. Wahyu tells about a change of location, "Well, as far as we are concerned, when we are condemned, we leave. But, when things have gone back to normal, we return to this place" (male, 50, Jatinegara Market, 14 March 2008).

Manusia gerobak almost always go back to their old place. They keep going back because they consider the location strategic and hence they need to hold on to it until certain times. In addition, evictions undertaken by the government officers are nothing to be afraid of as in several cases, *manusia gerobak* can in fact obtain prior information about their execution plans. That way, they can avoid them before they occur. In their opinion, such a pretense is safer than frontal resistance.

Besides the fact that *manusia gerobak* have a dirty appearance, they also do not have a national identification card, or KTP. To the government and *kampung* officers, anyone without a KTP is categorized as an illegal resident, that is, someone who does not have an official citizenship (Sullivan, 1992: 131–132). It is a fact, therefore, that *manusia gerobak* are not registered as citizens. In other words, they do not have an official citizenship or, in other words, are illegal residents. No wonder then that their presence quickly attracts the attention of the officers. It can be understood that there are people who think that *manusia gerobak*'s presence in the city is a form of violation to population laws. Such a situation further pressures them and to avoid it, they have to keep wandering from one location to another.

Another type of risks faced by *manusia gerobak* is the social risks posed by citizens. *Manusia gerobak* appear dirty because they live and work in dirty and polluted places and their skin, especially their hands, feet, and face, are dark as a result of daily exposure to the midday sun. According to Murray (1994: 129), a dark skin colour is undesirable because it is considered to have a negative and unclean connotation. Therefore, the picture of *manusia gerobak* wearing dirty clothing, having a foul smelling body, living and working in slum areas, as well as having dark skin makes them even more undesirable. Due to socialization by municipal officers and after witnessing the facts themselves every day, residents eventually come to the conclusion that *manusia gerobak* are bad in nature, are illegal residents, and have a habit of stealing. It is undeniable that there are some of them who steal. This fact corroborates residents' prejudice that all waste collectors are thieves. In their prejudice, the presence of waste collectors in the city will bring danger to the residents.

Manusia gerobak are perceived as threats by residents, especially those living in housing complexes. Often, people display notice boards with the writing "Waste collectors, do not enter!" placed at the entrance of their housing complexes. Even if this type of notice board is not installed, the residents of the housing complex usually make it perfectly clear for the security guards to stop waste collectors from entering their complex. A situation such as this confirms the perceived image that waste collectors are dangerous. Moreover, this threatening image is maintained and strengthened continuously through the prejudice that waste collectors like to steal. This is then used by the residents of housing complexes as their foundation to keep an eye on and control waste collectors, especially *manusia gerobak*. As a result, a label is created for waste collectors that they are a group of deviants that are isolated from daily social intercourse. They are never engaged in conversations by most citizens. They usually follow *manusia gerobak* with their eyes and then ignore them once they have walked past. This clearly shows that waste collectors are not wanted.

Rani tells about an event when she was going to collect waste in a housing complex. She was not allowed to enter the complex by the security guard due to complaints from the residents regarding previous thefts. They accused waste collectors of being the culprits and therefore asked the security guard to forbid waste collectors to enter their housing complex. As a result of being forbidden to enter, Rani then said,

“Have I caused you any trouble or something? Or have I stolen the residents’ laundry? If you don’t trust me, when I get out of the complex, you can check through my things. But, if I’m proven not guilty of stealing, you have to tidy up my things” (Female, 41, Jatinegara Timur II, 22 March 2008).

After hearing Rani’s argument, the security guard let her in to collect waste in the housing complex. This shows that at certain times, the courage to convince other people is also very much needed by a waste collector. According to Rani, a waste collector must not give up when he/she is forbidden to enter a housing complex. At least, he/she will gain experience on how hard street life can be when he/she faces people who forbid him/her to collect waste at certain places.

For *manusia gerobak*, such behavior from residents is in fact considered advantageous. Residents’ opinions about waste collectors that they are illegal and dirty, and like to steal further distances the waste collectors from them. *Manusia gerobak* are identified with a negative image, that they are dirty; and hence, should be kept at a distance. With this kind of imaging, residents are not interested in waste collecting as a livelihood. Only a few people will enter the waste collecting industry due to these stigmas. In other words, in collecting used goods, *manusia gerobak* will not face too much competition and only those living vagrantly will be fighting over the city’s abundant sources of used goods. This is where *manusia gerobak* are able to give meaning to vagrant living in that they can transform the social isolation they face into certain tactics in order to maintain a rich supply of resources that are not taken by other people.

The situation mentioned above shows that a vagrant lifestyle actually emerges as a reaction to certain conditions faced by *manusia gerobak*. On one hand, to *manusia gerobak*, vagrant lifestyle is a solution to their many problems, especially the economic ones. Living vagrantly, *manusia gerobak* feel free and are able to share and support each other with other waste collectors and show how to survive relying on their own ability. On the other hand, symbolically, vagrant lifestyle describes a process of resistance against meanings created by the community, besides the fact that it is also a tactic to gain benefits in sustaining their life.

IV. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Before becoming a *manusia gerobak* a person usually undergoes a process. During this process, previous life experiences influence their decision to lead the life of used goods collection and become a *manusia gerobak*. To them, previous livelihoods, either the formal or informal ones, are considered not to have given them economic benefits that are considered enough to be able to satisfy all of their household needs. To avoid such unfavorable conditions as the risk of suffering losses, including losing their residence due to eviction, *manusia gerobak* choose to live as vagrants. In the end, the choice to become a *manusia gerobak* tends to be based more on their desire to live freely, to work without pressure, and to be free from the control of others who—as they wish—order, keep an eye upon, and set certain targets for them.

With the experiences that they acquire while working, *manusia gerobak* are able to identify places and interpret situations, including opportunities and threats. They eventually pick locations which they consider suitable and beneficial. These locations include the places where they park their carts and spread their sleeping mats and the strategic places where they work. Based on the schedules that they have made, *manusia gerobak* know when they need to wander, collect used goods, and rest. With their knowledge about the right time to collect used goods, not only can *manusia gerobak* obtain enough used goods, but also they can avoid residents' prejudices against them. Having the necessary knowledge about places to collect used goods is also important. Despite the fact that used goods can be found everywhere, there are specific spots where *manusia gerobak* can find more abundant supplies. They will try any means necessary to take control of these places in order to secure their income for the following day.

Indeed it is not easy living the life of a *manusia gerobak*. The work involved in collecting used goods requires physical strength, especially for children who are brought along. In addition to this, wearing dirty clothes, living without health insurance, sleeping on storefronts or in their carts, sharing wrapped meals of rice with their spouse beside a garbage container, and living without other people acknowledging them are all part of everyday life for *manusia gerobak*. A feeling of embarrassment is common among those who have just started to become a *manusia gerobak*. Over time, this feeling fades away and it shapes into a feeling of confidence to live a totally vagrant way of life. *Manusia gerobak* do not need to feel embarrassed because of their appearance, although as a result of it their exclusion from the city continues to happen.

Manusia gerobak are well aware of their own situation as well as their position in the city as much as they understand the hard and individualistic realities of city life. They cannot guarantee the meeting of their basic needs as their income is uncertain. For them, it is impossible to rely on the state to fulfill their basic needs, and expecting residents to donate regularly would also be an impossibility. Therefore, putting their survival in the trust of someone else would be a fantasy, which in fact places them in a subordinate position.

The only thing in *manusia gerobak*'s belief that can help them survive the city life is their own capacity. With their capacity, they are forced to be creative in benefitting from existing opportunities spread among other actors that can be found at certain places and moments in city life. Social relationships are an imperative for *manusia gerobak* in order to reinforce their

strength and capacity, communicate with others, and coordinate their actions. With these other actors, they can foster relationships, for example, with their relatives, taking advantage of such family traditions as helping one another in times of difficulty. Another type of relationship may be between waste collectors in the form of mutual assistance, meaning that the receiver of assistance is expected to return the favor in the future. Despite the fact that becoming a *manusia gerobak* is principally a form of resistance against disadvantageous patron-client relationships, *manusia gerobak* also have relationships with *lapak* owners. As a compensation for being disfavored, *manusia gerobak* develop manipulative tactics to take advantage of the *lapak* owner. In addition, they also build relationships with stall owners on a mutualism basis, which strengthens their trust for one another. This type of relationship makes it possible for *manusia gerobak* to eat, drink, and smoke cigarettes even though they do not have any money.

The city's unfriendly atmosphere toward the poor, such as the condemnation that they often experience, has forced *manusia gerobak* to muster their courage to speak out. Even so, their voice alone is often not enough to defend their belongings successfully. Hence, they turn to the tactic of pretense in front of the government officials and authorities to be safe. Giving way temporarily to achieve victory later on becomes their primary tactic. For them, *penggarukan* is a risk that comes with the job as well as their life as a *manusia gerobak*. When they are taken into custody after a *penggarukan*, they do not attempt to bail out their *gerobak* because it is expensive and they know that the bail will only be profited by certain people. If they do bail out their *gerobak*, they will most likely become a victim of repeated extortions by local authorities. Smiling at a government officer who has shown consideration toward them is considered effective in drawing their sympathy. This is also done to show that they continue to have respect for others. With these tactics, they can obtain information on evictions that are about to be carried out by the government, so they can move temporarily during the *penggarukan* and then return when their home location is safe again.

For *manusia gerobak*, living as a vagrant is not only a condition caused by economic constraints, but also a lifestyle choice that they make consciously. They see it as an expression of freedom and it is also their way of confirming that they have a different lifestyle from that of other city residents. Living as a vagrant is a tactic resulting from their knowledge and experiences that they acquire during work. They use this tactic to live and avoid *penggarukan* undertaken by the government. When they wander around the city with their *gerobak*, they sometimes walk against the traffic as a symbol of resistance. They are well aware that living as a vagrant is not without risks. They are stigmatized as uncivilized and dirty vagrants who like to steal, and the stigmatization only further distances them from other city residents. With this stigma attached to *manusia gerobak*, not many of residents would be interested in working as a waste collector. This is certainly beneficial for *manusia gerobak* as it means that collectors of used goods will have little competition in the business. In other words, only those living as vagrants will be fighting for the city's abundant resources of used goods.

This study has seen that the poor are capable of defining poverty as well as understanding the situations they face and giving meaning to various occurrences. Moreover, they are also able to build relationships with other actors, interact with their surroundings and the structures existing in their community, and demonstrate various tactics amidst urban poverty. These tactics are not always ideological or frontal, nor do they always pose potential conflicts. If watched closely, they are translated into everyday practices that are courteous and touching to the heart, dissolving things that were initially used as tools of domination. *Manusia gerobak* apply these tactics in order that they can live by being able to meet their basic needs, namely food, clothing, and shelter.

Through a series of meanings and applications of tactics by *manusia gerobak*, the poor will eventually take the position of subjects. Having such a perspective, *manusia gerobak* are certainly not the representation of static and helpless human beings as portrayed by previous studies. In their own paradigm, they have views and capacities that enable them to face the changes and pressures of the city of Jakarta.

Such subjective approach, which sees poverty from the eyes of the poor—as active and creative subjects—is certainly different from the way the culture of poverty sees poverty. The latter has the view that the poor become poor due to their culture that deprives them of the initiative to escape poverty. In this context, it is clear that the culture of poverty is the result of judgements made by an external party that the poor are passive and static human beings and have a culture that is different from the culture of the non-poor. The perspective of the subjective approach on poverty in this study is also different from that of the structural poverty approach. The latter sees that poverty is eternalized through social structures that continuously confines the poor so that they become nothing but controlled machines.

4.2 Policy Implications

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher considers that it is about time poverty reduction policies, especially those related to urban life, be revised in order to improve their effectiveness.

1. Urban poverty in Indonesia—especially in Jakarta—cannot be addressed solely with the distinctive community and cultural concept embraced by the structural paradigm, which views the poor as a distinct group of people with clear boundaries different from those of the non-poor group. In reality, the attributes of poverty are dynamic and reproducible based on contexts, and are part of the survival tactics of the poor in facing changes in the social conditions of urban areas. Therefore, poverty measurement should not take a relatively long period of time to carry out as the poor keep changing in line with the context they are in.
2. The social integration of the poor resulting from the paradoxes of socioeconomic statuses found in this study makes it even harder to create effective poverty reduction programs, especially in Indonesian urban areas. In addition to this, there are indistinct boundaries between the poor and the non-poor because the population of the poor in urban areas is large and there are many variations involved in the population. Many of the poverty reduction programs implemented in Indonesian urban areas adopt approaches to poverty used in developed countries such as the United States that consider the poor to be minorities and unique races, and to have experienced slavery in the past. Therefore, models suggested by Mukherjee (1999) and Mukherjee, Harjono, and Carriere (2002) which regard the poor as a social group that needs empowering and facilitating should be reconsidered since this affirms the label that the poor are inferior. This kind of labeling can be seen clearly during the determination of who gets the benefits from assistance programs and who misses out. Therefore, universally targeted social security programs are worth considering. This can certainly be done through the facilitation of administrative aspects for the poor and by making adequate information available.

3. To affirm the position of the poor as subjects, both in studies and programs, capturing their voices through interviews and group discussions only is not enough. Their voices should be understood not only as words, but also as an everyday practice, a symbol, or a sentence that expresses their lifestyles. Only by bringing insight into their voices can the effort to position the poor as subjects be realized. Therefore, BPS data collection using subjective models, both the micro and macro, as practiced until now and several participatory methods should be amended by giving significant room to the poor to convey their aspirations.

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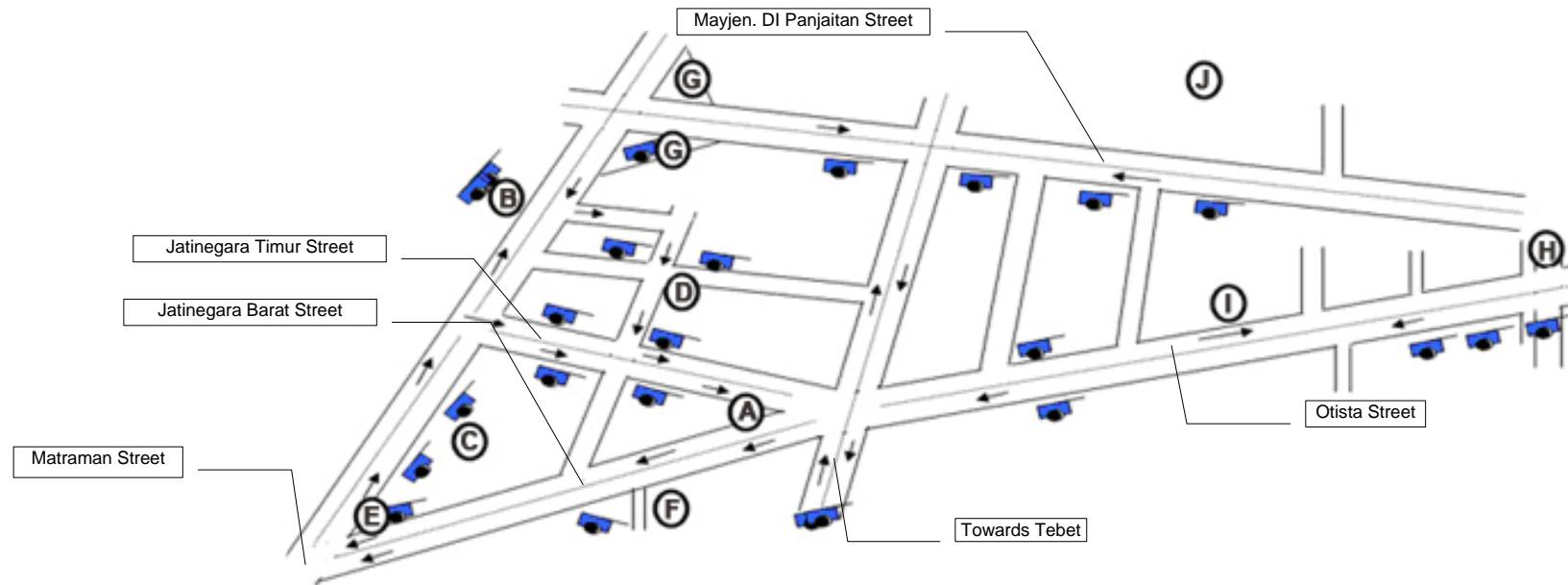
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Government Laws and Regulations

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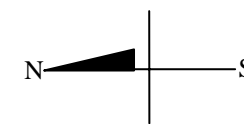
APPENDIX 1. Map of the Research Locations



Source: Observation.

Note:

- A : Kampung Melayu Terminal
- B : Jatinegara Station
- C : Jatinegara Market
- D : Jembatan Item
- E : Catholic Church
- F : RSIA (Hospital for Mothers and Children) Hermina
- G : Viaduck and Waduet Parks
- H : Space under the Cawang Toll Road
- I : Gelanggang Remaja (Arena for Teenage Activities)
- J : Kecamatan Jatinegara Office



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