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Jakarta as Utopia and Dystopia: A Continuous Struggle

Police siren whaling as it makes way through the busy traffic, people crammed in buses and trains, sitting on their roofs just for the sake of saving a few cents, desperate inhabitants committing suicide in various urban spaces on a regular basis; these are typical images of the chaotic urban life. Indeed, since the middle of the 20th century, it is generally agreed that the dystopian moment has dominated the discussion of the urban space. Cities and their societies are turned and perceived as dystopia as they are being perpetuated by policies, development plans, media and also intellectual and academic work. At the same time, there is always a constant struggle whether we should see the urban life as a utopia and a land of hope, or as a dystopia and source of chaos. The panel addresses this issue with the high awareness of the process of *dystopianisation* performed by discourses on space and the city life. Through an interdisciplinary approach – cultural studies, literary studies, and cinema studies – the panel analyzes the dystopianisation of Jakarta, an urban space that is continuously looking for its form following its many political and economic milestones. The panel highlights on the ambiguity of dystopia in Jakarta's context, and the forms of utopian dreams that continue to mold themselves and find a place amidst the mainstream ideas of city as a dystopia. We are interested in finding out if the contestation between spaces, different power groups, and diverse ideas on the urban life itself may give a new significant meaning to what we call "the city." In the end, we are examining whether discourses on dystopia still could lead us to forming a positive attitude toward the city, the Jakarta that belongs to all human beings.