Indonesians in New York City mostly live in and around Elmhurst, Queens a traditionally Asian/South East Asian neighborhood. The population of Indonesians is relatively small compared to the other nationalitites living in Queens. The community is therefore tight knit.   
  
We are using the concept of permanent and temporary spaces to seek the interaction between Indonesians in New York City. Permanent space in this understanding is framed by the consistent pattern of visitor. Whereas in temporary space, there are not so many traces of identity, and the spaces are framed by separate events. 

**OVERVIEW**

As one of the biggest archipelagos in the world, with more than 17,000 islands, the geography of Indonesia is already made up of enclaves within enclaves. 300 ethnic groups with different values, appearances and religions are bounded by an effort of nationalism and the longing for independence. Today, the foundations of Indonesian identity have been situated in religion and language; this both amasses and scatters the nation. 

“Divinity for unity” is the official foundational philosophy of the country. This reflects the importance of religious belief in the Indonesian state. The identification card contains each citizen’s religious information. Religious institutions are also a central point of neighborhoods and cities. Today, the government has acknowledged six different religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. 

“We the sons and daughters of Indonesia, respect the language of unity, Bahasa Indonesia” is the third sentence of the Youth Pledge by 1928. It promises unification in both language and nation. Bahasa Indonesia might be the official language of the country, but it is only the mother tongue of 7% of the population. Some of the 726 regional languages are growing while some others are dying. In Lionel Wee’ Language without Rights (2010), he cited Kymlicka’s concept of a ‘societal culture’ (1995). This is defined as “a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, education, religious, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres (footnote). These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated, and based on a shared language.” Geographical features of archipelagos have shaped different cultures and beliefs across Indonesia but Bahasa Indonesia has assumed an important role. Today, Bahasa Indonesia is growing stronger: more than 80% of Indonesian citizens have it as a second language.   
  
Conflict in Indonesia is common. During 2001, there was an outbreak of inter-ethnic violence in the town of Sampit, Central Kalimantan, between the indigenous Dayak people and the migrant Madurese. In 2002, the Government and signed peace deal in Geneva with the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM), ending 26 years of dispute. Earlier this year, a protest was held during DKI Jakarta Governor Election, using race and religion issue as political drive.

According to the American Community Survey of 2010, there are around 5000 Indonesians in New York City. Most of these people came during 1990s due to the political situation in Indonesia. Today, the number of Indonesians in New York City keeps growing and as the community grows, it is also becoming more diverse. This project asks, do the ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities that are present within Indonesian society replicate in New York City? 

**LINGUA FRANCA AND IDENTITY**

Bali  
Java Javanese Serang  
Java Jakarta Betawi  
Java Surabaya Javanese  
Java West Sundanese  
Java Yogya Javanese  
Kalimantan\_South\_Banjar  
Papua  
Papua  
Sulawesi Makassarese  
Sumatera Bangka  
Sumatera North Batak  
Sumatera North  
Sumatera West  
  
  
In the post-colonial era, the diversity of Indonesian cities is increasing but language and ethnicity remain embedded within each other. As a depiction of diversity, we tested out the variation of languages and accents around Indonesia by asking different respondents to:  
  
1) Say 1-2-3 in regional languages  
2) Say ‘sudah makan belum?’ - means ‘have you eaten?’ in regional languages to notice different languages, specially, language with class hierarchy such as Javanese and Sundanese  
3) Say ‘sudah makan belum?’ - means ‘have you eaten?’ in Bahasa Indonesia to notice the code switching and how affected are accent in the regional language toward Bahasa Indonesia 

**LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY | SPACE IN BETWEEN**

Whether it is a Vihara for Buddhists or Church for Catholics, religious spaces in Indonesia are never used only for religious purposes. The spaces are always used for different community functions. As most of the religions in Indonesia are originatally from outside the country, the language of the religious spaces’ architecture depicts an mingling of cultures. Viharas for Buddhist and Puras for Hindus are feature Sanskrit inscriptions and and South Asian style architecture, meanwhile churches are inscribed with Latin and constructed in a European architectural style. Confucian temples feature Mandarin script and Mosques for Muslims Arabic script.

❮ ❯

Religious spaces are not free spaces, even though most of it is open to public. There are boundaries between spaces, and hierarchies within them. The Indonesian government has made all of the celebrations of these six religions national holidays so that Indonesian people will continue to respect each other’s’ religions. 

Outside the identity of a devotee, Indonesians interact through other spaces such as food bazaars and Independence Day activities. 

**Indonesians in New York City: A Sense of Unity**

Indonesians in New York call Elmhurst *‘kampung Indonesia’*or Indonesian village. The feeling of being in New York slightly diminishes as people talk in Bahasa Indonesia or their own dialect, purchase Indonesian foods and groceries or even pray together.

“Even where citizenship has been granted, immigrants are expected to integrate as quickly as possible, and this usually includes the obligation to learn a new language, often under trying circumstances that make few allowances for the learning difficulties they may actually face.” - (Wee, 2010)

During the authors’ observation and site visit, most Indonesians in Elmhurst are able to speak English but many, especially the first generation, are not fluent. The second and third generation have become very familiar with the surrounding culture of New York City. Most of them have perfect American pronunciation and some are even able to speak in Mandarin, due to their occupation and residence. Elmhurst acts as a safe space of integration and transition for Indonesians in New York City.

“People as infrastructure indicates residents’ needs to generate concrete acts and contexts of social collaboration inscribed with multiple identities rather than in overseeing and enforcing modulated transactions among discrete population groups.” - (Simone, 2004)

Using the concept of permanent and temporary spaces as a framework, we sought to understand the interactions between Indonesians in New York City. Do conflicts and differences that originate miles away in Indonesia affect relations between Indonesians in New York? Were there still traces of tribal, ethnic, linguistic, and religious boundaries?

“While immigrant networks depend on the constant activation of a sense of mutual cooperation and interdependency, these ties are often more apparent than real—especially as a complex mixture of dependence and autonomy is at work in relations among compatriots.” - (Simone, 2004)

We explored permanent spaces: the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia, a mosque, a church and groceries stores which are routinely occupied by Indonesians. The temporary spaces we looked at are the Indonesian restaurants around Elmhurst, NYU, several other mosques and churches where pop-up bazaars occasionally happen. Different spaces display different patterns. The Consulate General building is an official and formal space for Indonesians and in it Indonesians blend together through the use of Bahasa Indonesia. Al Hikmah mosque in Queens are not only home to Indonesian Muslim communities across tribes and languages but to surrounding Muslim communities from the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh. There, assimilation of foreign language –especially Arabic— happens. Meanwhile, Bethany Church in Queens is a co-owned space of Christian communities where they rotate time shift in between various communities one of them being the Indonesian community. The church uses Bahasa Indonesia as the official language but hosts an English interpreter too. There, the community is more homogeneous (East Javanese) that the dialects are very visible in the services. Through permanent spaces, boundaries are formal but the communities and membership inside it are fluid -growing and decreasing-.   
  
Temporary spaces do not reflect any boundaries of tribes, ethnicities, languages or religions and sometimes act as an introduction of Indonesia to foreigners rather than to other Indonesians. Hence, relationship between Indonesian are very tight and warm in these spaces. The use of Bahasa Indonesia is dominant within these spaces, dissolving personal linguistic identities into a bigger collective identity.   
  
Generally, the tension which are happened in Indonesia today are not reflected in the Indonesian community in New York City. There are enclaves and boundaries that set apart some sub-groups of this community yet there are more spaces where they collaborate and mingle. The struggle to survive in New York City has glued the Indonesian community together and strengthened their collective identity as Indonesian. The role of Bahasa Indonesia is prominent and it is used by Indonesians in New York that may be of different linguistic identities to communicate with each other. That said, as the community grow there is the possibility that in the future it will cluster around borders of tribes and religion, as another form of adaptation and integration to survive in the City.