Chapter 7
Becak Drivers in Prawirotaman

Introduction

A becak is a three-wheeled vehicle for one or two passengers who sit at the front and a man cycling at the back. It is a traditional form of public transportation, which is easily found in most of the major urban areas in Java. For people who live in small alleys where cars can hardly pass, becak are very popular, especially when they are carrying large quantities of goods, for example. It is very convenient to take a becak because it can stop right in front of a house or any place people intend to visit.

As a type of public transportation, a becak is not only convenient but also unique and attractive for foreigners. With flourishing tourism in Indonesia, the becak has functioned as an important marketing tool for Yogyakarta despite the fact that many Western tourists have bad feelings when they ride in becak (Smithies cited in Van Gemert et al., 1999:99). To make the becak more attractive, their wheel-guards are painted in bright colors with special designs (Lemaire, 2000:2).

As an icon of Yogyakarta tourism, the provincial government in Yogyakarta has a special policy regarding becak. While becak are banned in many big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Semarang, they have been protected ever since the late Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX was Governor of Yogyakarta (The Jakarta Post, 02/09/2001). They can move freely in the city. Therefore, Yogyakarta is renowned for its large number of becak. Everybody who visits Yogyakarta can easily find becak at almost every corner of the city.

Along with tourism development in Yogyakarta, becak drivers also reaped benefits from transporting international tourists. Different from the general stories that described becak drivers as hard-working people with insufficient incomes, becak drivers serving tourists, such as those operating in the Prawirotaman area, used to earn quite a good income especially
during peak tourist seasons. Thus, tourism not only flourished and provided jobs for many people who would otherwise have been unemployed (Dahles, 1999b:21), it also improved the welfare of these people. As an earlier study shows, becak drivers form an unskilled work force that migrated to the city from rural areas (Kartodirdjo cited in Van Gemert et al., 1999:101)

Nevertheless, their prosperity ended when the prolonged series of crises struck Indonesia. As international tourists avoided Yogyakarta, the welfare of the becak drivers was also badly affected. How did the becak drivers who used to serve tourists experience these crises? What strategies did they employ in order to survive?

Before answering these questions, I will first introduce my informants who provided me with the necessary information to write this chapter. Subsequently, I will present the stories of their lives before the crises hit because their past also affected the ways they responded to the crises. Subsequently, I will proceed with a description of the organization of becak drivers in Prawirotaman. The next focus is on their experiences with the prolonged crisis followed by topics on their strategies to cope with them. I will present the becak drivers’ experiences because of the monetary crisis followed by socio-political crisis in 1997-1998. Then I will proceed with their experiences with the first Bali bombing in 2002. Finally, I will continue with the latest crisis, the earthquake that struck Yogyakarta in 2006, which also adversely affected their livelihoods.

**My Informants**

Along with my research on the guesthouse owners in Prawirotaman at the beginning of 2005, I also did research on the becak drivers who operated there. I interviewed twelve becak drivers who were still cycling in Prawirotaman and two who had stopped and had successfully started their own furniture businesses. Then, after the earthquake of May 2006, when I returned to the field, I interviewed eight becak drivers who were also my informants during the first phase of my field research. The informants are introduced below.
I start with Pak Tukijo. He had been working as a *becak* driver for approximately thirty-five years, and when I met him in 2005, he had spent almost thirty years of his life as a *becak* driver serving tourists in the Prawirotaman area. Every morning, Pak Tukijo rode his bicycle for more or less one hour, from his village to Prawirotaman and in the evening, he went back. Before moving to Prawirotaman, he worked as a *becak* driver at the Yogyakarta bus terminal. He did not have a proper education. He, who came from a small village in the Bantul Regency, had only finished elementary school. Pak Tukijo had six children but the first two were already independent. One had been working as a mini bus driver but still lived with him. The second was married and lived with her husband in another village. The third and the fourth were graduated from Junior High Schools but they did not yet have jobs. The fifth was three years old and the last only five months at the time of the interview. He, his wife, and their five children lived in a two bedroom-house.

Pak Pardi, a good friend of Pak Tukijo, had been working as a *becak* driver for about thirty-one years in total. He did not manage to continue his education after he had finished elementary school. Before he moved to Prawirotaman, he also worked as a *becak* driver at the Yogyakarta bus terminal. Like Pak Tukijo, Pak Pardi also lived in a village in the Bantul Regency. They both moved to Prawirotaman in the early 1970s when the *becak* organization in Prawirotaman was looking for new members. Pak Pardi had five children. One was married and lived with her husband in another town and the other four still lived with him in the village. He had two sons who worked as construction workers and his other two daughters attended senior high and elementary schools.

Pak Tukijo and Pak Pardi introduced me to Pak Yoto who entered Prawirotaman as a *becak* driver in the 1980s. Before he started to work as a *becak* driver, he lived as a scavenger. As he witnessed the promising prospects of the tourism development in Prawirotaman, he applied for membership of the *becak* driver’s organization in Prawirotaman. During my research in 2005, he had been operating in the area for about twenty-five years. Pak Yoto also came from a village in the Bantul area, just a few kilometers away from where Pak Pardi and Pak Tukijo lived. He had four
children but only three children still lived with him in the village and were still at school. The first daughter was married and lived with her husband.

As I regularly visited Prawirotaman, I eventually knew other becak drivers as well such as Pak Sugi, Pak Marno, Pak Sur, Pak Ragil, and Pak Sardjan who also had their business there. Pak Sugi had been working as a becak driver since he was still a teenager because his parents were too poor to send him to school beyond elementary school. Just as the other becak drivers, he also lived in a village in the Bantul Regency. He had four children. One was already married and lived with her husband in another town. Three children were still at school and lived with him and his wife.

The next one was Pak Marno. He had always been working as a becak driver in Prawirotaman. Until 2005, when the research was conducted, he had been working as a becak driver for about forty years. He, his wife, and their five children lived in the city of Yogyakarta. Among his fellow becak drivers, Pak Marno was known as a street fighter. He was a small man but according to his friends, he was very brave and a strong fighter. They saw him as their protector in the Prawirotaman area. His friends always told me that because of him, no becak drivers or freelance guides from outside the area had the courage to enter the Prawirotaman area when tourism was still flourishing.

Pak Sur was a middle-aged man who had been working as a becak driver for twenty-three years. He lived in Tegal Asri, a small Kampong near Prawirotaman. He had four children. The first worked as a laborer at a furniture factory that belonged to a friend of his. The second was a Junior High School graduate but had not yet found a job. The other two were still at school. One graduated from Senior High School and took Computer and English courses while the youngest was still in his third grade of elementary school. Compared to the other becak drivers, Pak Sur was more highly educated. He was a third-year senior high school dropout. After he left school, he worked at home to help his father to make batik stamps. When orders for batik stamps declined, he had double jobs – he was a welder at a welding shop in Yogyakarta and a becak driver for tourists in Prawirotaman in the evening. In the 1980s, he decided to work fulltime as a becak driver after he witnessed the tourist boom in Prawirotaman.
Pak Ragil was a man in his forties. He started his becak business in the 1970s in Prawirotaman. He was married with five children. He was the only breadwinner in the family. The first two children had married and lived with their husbands. When I interviewed him in 2005, only three children still lived with him. The third was studying at an art academy in Yogyakarta. The fourth was a Senior High School graduate who worked in a supermarket as a sales girl. The youngest was also at home with him but did not go to school because he was retarded.

Pak Sardjan (like his fellow becak drivers I will also call him Pak Yan) was the oldest of all. He was a man in his late sixties who lived in Kampong Sorosutan, Yogyakarta. Before he worked as a becak driver, he used to have a traditional snack business. However, in 1975 he went bankrupt so that he had to look for a new job. He worked as a becak driver and joined the becak organization in Prawirotaman to support his wife and their five children.

Eventually, one day during my first research period in Prawirotaman, Pak Tukijo also introduced me to a number of becak drivers who did not come to Prawirotaman very often. His brother, Pak Giyo, was one of them and the others were Mas Ratmin, Pak Kardi, and Mas Karso.

Pak Giyo is Pak Tukijo’s brother. Joining his brother, he worked as a becak driver in Prawirotaman since the late 1970s. He lived in Kampong Jiwan in the Bantul District. He had two school-aged children. One attended senior high school while the second was still in the first grade of Elementary School.

Mas Ratmin was a young man in his thirties. He lived near Pak Sur in Kampong Tegal Asri with his wife and their three children, one in grade six of elementary school, one in kindergarten, and the last one was still a toddler of 1.5 years. He started working as an assistant to a construction worker, joining his father who was also a construction worker. In 1987, Pak Sur and Pak Wagiyo, who were becak drivers introduced him to the becak group in Prawirotaman so that he could become a becak driver from then on.
Pak Kardi was a man in his forties. He only finished elementary school. He used to work as a becak driver in Prawirotaman for twenty years until in 2003 he decided to stop and worked as a scavenger. He lived in a small village in the Bantul district.

Mas Karso was a young man in his late thirties. He was a junior high school graduate. When I visited him in 2005, he lived in Kampong Jiwan, Bantul district, with his wife and their little baby. Before he started to work as a becak driver in Prawirotaman in 1985, he worked as an electrician and as a painter. He joined the becak drivers’ group in Prawirotaman when his friend invited him.

During my visits, my informants liked to relate the success stories of their friends, Pak Wagiyo and Pak Warmin among others. During my field research, I also interviewed them. Both managed to become furniture businessmen in Kampong Tegal Asri and in the Bantul Regency respectively. When I did my research in 2005, Pak Wagiyo had been running his furniture business for almost ten years while Pak Warmin has been in the business for more than fifteen years.

After the earthquake, I interviewed eight becak drivers whom I met again in Prawirotaman. They were Pak Tukijo, Pak Pardi, Pak Sugi, Pak Yoto, Pak Giyo, Pak Ratmin, Pak Kardi, and Pak Karso.

Tourism and the Lives of Becak Drivers in Prawirotaman

Working as a becak driver is especially attractive for young uneducated village men who want to earn a living in cities because it is very easy to start the business and it is easy to combine with other jobs. My informants were generally low educated people who came from poor families in villages around Yogyakarta. Almost all of my informants had only finished their elementary school and only two had enjoyed higher education. One went to Junior High School and the other went to Senior High School. Because their parents had no money, they could not continue their studies at an institution of higher education. They had to work to earn a living and sometimes they helped their parents until they started their own families.
To become a *becak* driver was one of the limited choices they had to earn their living. The procedure is easy. They do not need any licenses and can learn and practice how to drive a *becak* in a few days. After that, they can simply go to a *becak* owner who rents out his *becak* on a daily basis to start with their business.

When I was conducting my interviews with the *becak* drivers in Prawirotaman, they either owned their own *becak* or rented one from the organization to which they belonged. Earlier, they all had to rent from a *becak* owner. To give an illustration, Pak Warmin explained to me that in 1985, he paid Rp. 500 (approximately USD 2 in that year\(^1\)) per day to the *becak* owner. The study of Van Gemert et al. (1999) showed that *becak* owners actually charged various prices. Some charged *becak* drivers on a daily basis while others charged them on a monthly basis. Some *becak* drivers paid Rp. 700 but others had to pay Rp. 1,500 per day. The price difference was due to competition among the *becak* owners and depended on the condition of the *becak* – the older the cheaper. Daytime and nighttime rent also differed. The charge for the night shift was higher because the *becak* drivers usually also charged passengers higher fees during the night (Van Gemert et al., 1999:103). In my study, five informants owned their own *becak* while seven rented a *becak* from the *becak* organization to which they belonged. They paid Rp. 20,000 per month (Approximately USD 2 in 2005) for renting the *becak* from the organization. Those who had their own *becak* usually bought a secondhand one. According to them, the price of a second hand *becak* in 2005 was around Rp. 800,000 to Rp. 1,250,000 (Approximately USD 82 – USD 129 in 2005) depending on the condition of the *becak*.

The income of *becak* drivers is unstable and varies on a daily basis. Sometimes they earn much money but sometimes they wait for passengers for several days and earn nothing at all. The fees they charge the passengers are moreover negotiable. They do not have any fixed charge for each trip. It very much depends on who uses their services and how good they are in bargaining. They will charge more to international tourists. In that case, a

\(^1\) 1 USD = Rp. 1110.6 in 1985 (Source: http://investintaiwan.nat.gov.tw/accessed 3/10/09)
A becak driver will not ask much money for his services because he expects to receive some commission from the shops they visit. However, charges also depend on their business situation. If they have a lot of passengers, then they will raise their charges, if the business is slack then they will not ask too much.

At strategic places in cities or towns, people can easily find becak drivers waiting in groups for passengers. Usually they can be found at bus terminals or train stations to serve people who have just got off from trains or buses. The market is also popular among becak drivers, because over there they can transport trade goods and customers. Or they may just stand in groups at alley entrances to transport people who live in their neighborhood.

Becak drivers used to have three categories of stand locations: top locations, good locations, and inferior locations. Top locations were the places where there were many tourist facilities such as guesthouses, restaurants, and shops. Prawirotaman and Sosrowijayan belonged to this group. Good locations were locations where many tourists passed by. Pasar Kembang, Malioboro, and streets adjacent to Prawirotaman fell under this category. Inferior locations were places where they could only serve locals (Van Gemert et al., 1999:109-110). So in fact, the presence of tourists was important in the determination of the quality of their stand locations (Van Gemert, et al. 1999:110).

In the early stage of tourism development in Prawirotaman in the 1970s, the availability of becak drivers in the area was prominent. According to my informants, at the time, becak were the main mode of transportation from the street to other areas in Yogyakarta. Other modes of transportation such as taxis and buses and minibuses were still rare. Besides that, as mentioned above, international tourists also considered becak culturally interesting. Since the number of tourist facilities such as tour and travel agencies, restaurants, and other services were hard to find in the area, tourists who stayed at Prawirotaman often had to go out of the area and taking a becak was the most practical way at that time. According to one of my informants, Pak Ragil, tourists used to ask for his service to go to Malioboro or to restaurants or travel agencies.
Becak drivers in Prawirotaman could earn a good income from tourism for more or less two decades. My informants recalled that between the 1980s and the 1990s, tourism in Yogyakarta was ideal, income was easy to be obtained, and the interaction between tourists and hosts was harmonious. Tourism opened up wider opportunities for them to earn more income, which came from different sources – fares, commissions, and city tours and excursions. Apart from the fare they charged, they also earned money from commissions when they served as intermediaries between the tourists and the owners of souvenir shops and hotels. When they brought a tourist to a souvenir shop, the becak driver would earn a certain percentage of the purchase. Different types of souvenir shops gave them different amounts of commission. From silver shops they could normally earn 10 per cent commission, from wayang\(^2\) shops 10 to 15 per cent and from Batik up to 20 per cent of the purchase. Besides that, many non-star rated hotels in Yogyakarta also relied on their services as intermediaries. Commissions offered by hotels were also varied and competitive. Commissions ranged between 10 to 20 per cent of a one-day room rate. Usually, becak drivers would try to take tourists to those places that gave them the highest commission. Opportunities to earn money also included city tours and excursions for international tourists. If a becak driver was lucky and he met a foreign tour leader, they could cooperate in arranging city tours or excursions for groups of tourists.

At the time, becak drivers admitted that they earned more from commissions than from the fees they received from transporting passengers. Pak Pardi told me that prior to the crises, he used to charge a tourist Rp. 10,000 (Approximately USD 4.5 in 1990s) for transportation from Prawirotaman to Malioboro back and forth. When a tourist went shopping in Malioboro, it was normal to earn up to Rp. 50,000 (Approximately USD 23 in 1990s) as commission in the 1990s, before the monetary crisis. They further said that the money they earned in one day could cover expenses for the next ten days. During peak seasons, between June to August and between December and February, they hardly ever stopped cycling as they had already been booked by the hotel guests even

\(^2\) Wayang is traditional Javanese leather puppet sometimes sold as souvenirs for tourists.
when they were still on their way. They hardly spent time queuing. Sometimes, they had to spend the night in Prawirotaman, sleeping in their becak, because tourists wanted to go shopping even in the middle of the night.

My informants had a positive image of international tourists who were traveling in that period. During interviews, they often expressed that international tourists were very generous. They said they were also interested in the stories the drivers told them about their lives. Conversations usually took place under way while the becak driver cycled them around. As becak drivers tend to relate their arduous lives to the tourists, the empathy of the tourists would increase so that they often did not mind giving them extra money. The end of the trip did not always mean the end of the relationship. Sometimes, the relationship turned out to be a long lasting as some becak drivers at Prawirotaman experienced.

The repeated visits intensified the relationship between the locals and the tourists. From the subsequent interviews I had with becak drivers, I learnt that in the past many international tourists tended to make repeated visits to Yogyakarta either for holidays or for business purposes. According to my informants, tourists were generally very faithful customers. It was very common that every becak driver operating in Prawirotaman had his own regular customers. When the regular customers arrived, they always preferred the same becak driver. If he was not around, his regular customers would ask someone to look for him. Because of the close and intensive interactions between the tourists and the becak drivers, their relationship sometimes went beyond the business transactions. During my research, becak drivers told me stories of how they often received extra money at the end of a trip with tourists. Sometimes, they were invited to dinner at expensive restaurants, or tourists bought clothes for them and so forth. Two becak drivers even acquired more than they could ever imagine. One was Pak Yan whose daughter was adopted by an American and after she finished her study at one University in the USA, she lived over there. Another one is the story of Pak Ragil whose son had brain problems and with the help of an Australian couple, his son could have a surgery in Australia. In 1972, Pak Ragil happened to know Mr. and Mrs. Miller. They
made regular visits to Yogyakarta and had a good relationship with Pak Ragil. In 1989, when they learnt that Pak Ragil’s youngest son was born with a brain impediment and needed surgery, they helped him. They arranged for surgery in Australia and paid all the costs including the airfare for Pak Ragil, his wife and their son to Australia and their accommodation while they were there. He was so grateful. For him and his family, it was really an unforgettable experience. Even after many years, Mr. and Mrs. Miller still visited the family when they came to Yogyakarta.

More than just getting donation, a number of becak drivers managed to build up business cooperation with international tourists such as Pak Wagiyo and Pak Warmin who used to be becak drivers in Prawirotaman. Pak Wagiyo was an elementary school graduate who was born as the son of a peasant family. He started working when he was fourteen as a sugar cane ice seller. When sugar cane was becoming more difficult to be obtained and sugar cane ice was becoming less popular among his customers, he decided to become a becak driver in Prawirotaman in 1978. He worked as a becak driver for tourists until 1996. In fact, he did not expect to be a becak driver all his life. He realized that when he was old, he would no longer be strong enough to earn his living as a becak driver. He claimed that only those who had no choices would be willing to remain a becak driver to earn a living. Therefore, while he still worked as a becak driver, he decided to start a business.

In 1995, Pak Wagiyo started his business by buying three antique cupboards in the villages using his savings, repaired and sold them for Rp. 300,000 (Approximately USD 133 in 1995⁴). He was lucky to have brothers who used to work in the furniture industries in Bali. They helped him polish the cupboards. He sold the three cupboards to antique shops he knew from the time he was a becak driver for tourists. The same practice was repeated until he had some regular foreign customers. Bit by bit he could collect more capital, enough to start a business in antiques and the reproduction of old furniture. He concentrated on his business and when he had earned enough capital, he totally stopped his work as a becak driver in 1996.

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In fact, his job as a becak driver for tourists opened up his horizon and widened his relations. He learned how to choose good antiques and he learned the mechanisms in the antique business. As he often drove customers who were looking for antiques, he learned how to negotiate in this business, what kinds of products they were looking for, and how they estimated prices. Besides that, he was also able to meet antique shop owners and cargo officers who, later, became the intermediaries for a number of potential buyers. Cargo officers played an important role in mediating between traders and buyers. A buyer who rented a container for his/her goods, often referred to them for information how to find additional goods to fill up the container so that the expenses for the container would be spent more efficiently. As he told me during the interview:

'My first buyers came from Australia and Germany. They ordered thousands of food trays in 1997. I met my first buyers through a cargo employee to whom I gave some commission. I have known him for quite some time because I often brought the buyers to the cargo office when I worked as a becak driver'.

The order of food trays came to him at the right time. He was one of the businessmen who earned a lot of profit because of the monetary crisis in 1997. He gained benefits from the wide difference of the exchange rate of dollar against Rupiah because the material used for making the trays was all local while he sold the products in US dollars. Using his profit, he began to expand his business. When I was conducting my interview in 2005, he had managed to have four houses – two were used for his family and the other two were used as showrooms. He also rented a storage place to keep his furniture.

Another story came from Pak Warmin who lived in Pundong, Bantul Municipality. He became a successful woodwork businessman after he met an English tourist, Andy, in 1988. Andy came to Indonesia for a holiday after he finished his study at a University and the first place he visited was Yogyakarta. He stayed in a guest house in Prawirotaman. As a tourist, he was traveling around Yogyakarta in Pak Warmin’s becak.

After a couple of days of interaction between Pak Warmin and his customer - a trustworthy relationship grew between them and Andy made
a big step in his life to start a souvenir business. He was interested in traditional handicraft such as wayang, batik and traditional masks. When they talked about a future plan, Pak Warmin suggested that Andy ran a souvenir business in United Kingdom (UK). Furthermore Pak Warmin advised him to buy souvenirs in Yogyakarta and sold the products over there. As it was a totally different from the plan he had before, he needed time to think it over. It was a critical moment for the future relationship between them. I assume that Pak Warmin was smart enough to see an opportunity to open up a business relationship with this man. The following day, Andy was looking for Pak Warmin and said that he was going to follow his suggestion but he asked Pak Warmin to help him with the business. They did not waste time. Pak Warmin took him to different souvenir shops for shopping. Andy bought 200 batik-painting postcards, and a few pieces of silver works. When he thought it was enough, he flew back to his country to market his merchandise. They took the right decision for their future as both of them turned out to be successful businessmen each in his own country. Until 2005, when I was doing my interview, Pak Warmin explained that Andy supplied 375 shops all over the UK. Meanwhile I knew that Pak Warmin was a successful woodwork businessman. Eventually Andy was not the only buyer of his woodwork. He had a number of buyers from different countries such as America, France, Japan, and Australia but he put priority on his relationship with Andy. They built a truthful relationship so that they could rely on each other. They were both business partners and friends. The friendship part of their business dealings guaranteed the sustainable relationship between them.

Although other becak drivers had similar stories like Pak Wagiyo or Pak Warmin, many of them still saw their job as becak driver as an end in itself and they never expected to improve their lives. My informants said that while they earned a lot of money during the tourist boom, they never prepared for their future. Part of their income they gave to their wives and the rest would be spent on having fun with women, gambling, and drinking. They may have been overwhelmed with what they achieved since they earned more than they expected.
Despite the fact that becak drivers often complained about the low status of their job, they did not want to abandon the current job because of the freedom they gained from it. Generally, my informants said that when they started as becak drivers, they did not have any better alternatives. Being a becak driver was considered a hard, low status job with low remuneration. However, once they were in the job they never thought of changing jobs. They did not have a tight working schedule. They could always combine the job as a becak driver with other, seasonal works such as cultivating agricultural land in their villages. Of the fourteen people I interviewed, including Pak Warmin and Wagiyo, twelve had been working as becak drivers for at least seventeen years and the longest for forty years when I was conducting my research. All of them had always been working as becak drivers apart from Pak Yan and Pak Sur who had been involved in other businesses before.

In essence, during the tourist boom, the income of the becak drivers in Prawirotaman were utilized to sustain their households and to fulfill their families’ needs such as the construction of a brick house in their village and to send their children to school. Some could even send their children to higher education without too much trouble, a privilege hardly ever available to becak drivers who only served local people. In short, working as a becak driver without tourism was in fact unbearable.

**The Becak Drivers and Their Organization**

Life seemed to have been so easy for becak drivers in Prawirotaman in the 1980s. Their success stories spread among becak drivers in other parts of Yogyakarta and more and more people became interested in joining their group.

Tourism development in Prawirotaman was like a magnet and attracted becak drivers from different areas to work over there. Of the twelve becak drivers, only two had worked as becak drivers in Prawirotaman before the advent of tourism. One had been there for forty years and the other had been there for more than thirty years. The majority of my informants used
to roam with their becak in other areas such as the bus terminals or at the Beringharjo market, or they had other jobs before becoming becak drivers in Prawirotaman. Compared with other jobs of the same level, they earned a much better living from being a becak driver for tourists. Therefore, people choose to leave their jobs and to work as becak drivers for tourists, although it was considered very hard work because many tourists, who were generally westerners, were much heavier than locals.

As the number of becak drivers interested in working at Prawirotaman increased, those who had been there previously felt the need to set up a formal organization. When the organization was formed in the late 1970s, the tourist flow was enormous. They called their organization P2BPY (Persatuan Pengemudi Becak Prawirotaman Yogyakarta) or Association of Becak Drivers in Prawirotaman, Yogyakarta. In a meeting, they elected two leaders, two secretaries, and two treasurers. The board of the organization was in charge for two years after which a new board for the organization would be elected.

To strengthen their position, the becak drivers who formed the organization looked for back up from the state. They managed to obtain the formal approvals of a number of institutions such as the Kodya (Municipality office), Koramil (Military Head Quarters at the ward level), and the Police. The government's recognition of their existence was important as it proved that they were good citizens and had fulfilled the state's expectations. No wonder they sounded very proud when they said that they were formally organized and that their organization was legally recognized by a number of government organizations. They considered themselves exclusive and different from other becak organizations during that period.

In 1985, due to the internal conflict, the organization split into two different groups, the Pajajaran group and the Tengah Group. The reason behind it was that the management, consisting of six people, lost the trust from their members as they had misused the money belonging to the organization and did not return it. They divided themselves up into two groups according to the area they served. Those who belonged to the
Pajajaran Group served tourists staying at the Pajajaran Hotel, Lintang and Sudarno Guesthouses located close to the alley’s entrance. The Tengah Group served Citra Hotel, and Wisma Yudistira, Jasmine Guesthouse and Arso Guesthouse. All the guesthouses were located in Prawirotaman One and only Arso Guesthouse was located in Prawirotaman Two. In this research, regarding the organization I did interviews with the board and members of the Tengah Group because the organization of the Pajajaran Group was not as active as that of the Tengah Group.

According to my informants, the objectives of the organization were both strategic and social. The purpose of the organization was especially to improve the welfare of its members, their security and to manage tourist services while they tried to protect themselves from outside becak drivers. The organization also formulated a set of rules for the acceptance of new members. It was not easy to become a member. An applicant had to contribute a certain amount of money to the organization. The organization would first count the amount of savings the organization had, which was divided by the number of its members. A newcomer had to pay the same amount as the outcome of their calculations. The amount to pay increased rapidly. When Pak Tukijo joined in 1978, he contributed Rp. 7,500 (Approximately USD 12 in that year4). A few years later, in the 1980s, a new member had to pay Rp. 75,000 (Approximately USD 120 in that year5). They also set up rules for the members of the organization. They had a piece of blackboard hanging on the wall at the back of a shop, which functioned as their signing-in board. Every member who came to work had to write his name on the board. The first to come would be the first to take a customer. If a driver had been in the queue for more than two days and he was not around when there was a customer, he did not have the right to the same position in the queue when he came. They also conducted a monthly arisan6 for the amount of Rp. 10,000 (Approximately USD 1 in 2005) per month for each member. They also had a credit facility in the organization. Every member who borrowed money from the organization

6 Arisan is a regular social gathering whose members contribute to and take turns at winning an aggregate sum of money.
had to repay it with a monthly 10 per cent interest. With the money they managed to collect, they bought becak one by one which they rented out. The organization spent Rp. 600,000 (Approximately USD 62 in 2005) per year to rent a parking area for their becak from Ibu Har, a kampong residence. In the end, they rented out 10 becak both to members and non-members. They charged members and non-members differently. Members were charged Rp. 20,000 (Approximately USD 2 in 2005) per month and non-members Rp. 35,000 (Approximately USD 3.6 in 2005). The money they earned this way was used for welfare contributions to its members. In turn, each would receive Rp. 100,000 (USD 10.3 in 2005) every year before Lebaran, the end of the Muslim fast. They also used to have so-called voluntary contributions. Every becak driver was required to give some money voluntarily to the organization every time he had transported a customer. They handed over the money to the treasurer of the organization to pay for social obligations. For example, they gave a donation to a member who lost one of his family members, or when a member organized the wedding of his daughter or son, while it also provided loans to members who needed money.

Becak drivers who belonged to the organization admitted that the organization was meaningful. At the very least it could help them cope with irregular and urgent expenses needed for sickness, the death of family members, social obligations in their villages and expenses for their children’s schools.

**Competition**

Prior to the prolonged crisis, the economic situation of the becak drivers had been difficult because of competition. The number of tourists who came to Yogyakarta had decreased and there was fierce competition from other business sectors and from individuals who also earned a living in the tourism industry. Actually, this trend started in the mid-1990s and they increasingly felt the negative impact as the number of tourists decreased drastically after 1998. The following section will discuss the main competitors of the becak drivers in the tourism business arena in Prawirotaman.
The fact that becak drivers who served foreign tourists were generally better off than their fellow becak drivers who served locals had undoubtedly attracted more people to enter the arena. Competition among the becak drivers was becoming tougher as increasing numbers of people with good command of foreign languages turned to becak driving for tourists. The authorities responded to their interest by opening up free foreign language courses to improve the foreign language skills of the becak drivers. For example in Prawirotaman, the Yogyakarta Tourism Department used to offer a course in French and in German while they also conducted English courses for the becak drivers. As expressed by Pak Warmin:

‘The first time I worked as a becak driver in 1985, there were only a few becak drivers could speak English or had any interest in taking tourists as their customers. It was different from the situation a few years later because more and more becak drivers learnt to speak English and they aggressively chased tourists to use their services.’

Since the start of tourism development, becak drivers encountered tough competition from unlicensed guides in gaining commissions from souvenir shops, travel agencies and also from hotels. They spoke relatively better English than the becak drivers so that they could easily steal away tourists from them. Furthermore, becak drivers usually felt inferior towards unlicensed guides so that they could not do much when the unlicensed guides interfered while they were walking with tourists. During my research, becak drivers said that very often tourist guides aggressively hijacked the tourists they handled.

The fast development of more modern types of transportation such as buses and taxies posed another tough challenge for becak drivers. More routes were opened for city buses and the number of taxies was increasing. It was becoming harder for becak drivers to persuade tourists to take a ride with them instead of taking other types of transportation.

Becak drivers also suspected that the receptionists at the hotels received commission from taxi companies and tended to recommend tourists to take a taxi instead of a becak. The fast growing number of taxi companies heightened their competition. One of the ways to obtain customers for
their taxis was through widening their marketing network. They realized that receptionists at hotels were in a strategic position to help them promote their companies. Therefore, undoubtedly, they provided commissions to receptionists who could find passengers for them. This also caused becak drivers to lose their customers.

Besides competition from other types of transportation, the availability of facilities in the area caused difficulties for the becak drivers as well. The popularity of Prawirotaman as a tourist centre attracted investors from outside the area to build supporting facilities for tourists such as restaurants, money changers, and bike and motorbike rentals. Before, becak was the main transport for tourists to such places like Malioboro Street, restaurants, travel agencies, or other places for shopping located outside Prawirotaman. However, as the number of these facilities could easily be found in the area, the number of tourists asked for the services from becak drivers decreased. In addition, the becak drivers faced tough competition from the presence of bike, motor bike and car rentals.

Apart from problems with local investors, becak drivers also had problems with foreign investors who opened businesses in Prawirotaman. Tensions sometimes occurred between the businessmen and the becak drivers. Expatriates living in Yogyakarta were also interested in opening tourist facilities in Prawirotaman. They opened restaurants, cafes, or souvenir shops and they also provided city tours without involving the locals, in this case the becak drivers. One of my informants conceded, that there was tension between the becak drivers and the Belgian owner of the Funky Restaurant regarding the management of tours for Belgian tourists, organized by Joker Tour operator from Belgium. In the past, groups from Joker Tour operator could freely chose the tour program when they arrived in Yogyakarta. Therefore, they very often used the services of the becak drivers, when they went shopping in Yogyakarta. Since Ms. Anna, a Belgian citizen, opened the Funky Restaurant in 1993 in cooperation with an Indonesian, she designed tour programs for all the Belgian groups from Joker Tour operator. In the tour programs, she did not allow the tourists any free time and therefore, they could never take a becak to go shopping. There was only one city tour by becak to the traditional herb production
centre but for this, the becak drivers did not receive any commission. Because of this, the becak drivers complained to the head of RW (Rukun Warga). He tried to help to solve the problem by inviting both parties who involved in the conflict. The Funky Restaurant management promised to reconsider the becak drivers’ complaint, but they broke the promise as they still offered the same tour programs to the tourists. In fact, the limit of contacts between international tourists and the becak drivers not only deprived them of additional income but also of opportunities to open up networks which, in some cases, proved to play an important role in their efforts to improve their economic position.

Although, tough competition had made the prosperity of the becak drivers to fade away prior to the national financial crisis in 1997, but those problems were not strong enough to push becak drivers to abandon their job. One reason was most of the becak drivers were no longer young as they were at least in their forties. At this age, with very limited skills, education, and experience, it was not easy for them to escape their present conditions. The only thing they could do was to subsist on their present low and uncertain income.

Crisis

The low occupancy rates of the guesthouses in Prawirotaman affected the income of the becak drivers who operated in the area. This was because the main customers of the becak drivers were the guests staying at the guesthouses; the higher the occupancy rate, the better the income of the becak drivers. Since the forest fire in late 1997, the occupancy rate of the guesthouses in Prawirotaman started to decline. The situation worsened after the May Riots in Jakarta, in 1998. The number of international tourists remained low for the next few years. However, the becak drivers said that in the following year, international tourists started to come again, although not in great numbers. The majority were souvenir or furniture traders, they said. Then they were shocked by the bomb blast in Bali in 2002. Pak Tukijo said that after the bombing, he did not expect that tourism situation would become better soon. A few years later, while they
still struggled to cope with the economic downturn, they had to deal with the impact of the earthquake. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, Prawirotaman was badly affected. Therefore, the becak drivers could not work for several months. Furthermore, a number of becak drivers fell into even further financial burden because they lost their houses.

The income of becak drivers in Prawirotaman changed dramatically as international tourists abandoned the area. During the crises, several becak drivers often earned nothing even when they stayed in Prawirotaman more than two nights. Some becak drivers earned a small amount of money and even that they considered good at the time. As expressed by Pak Tukijo:

‘During this time, to earn Rp 5,000 (Approximately USD 0.5 in 2005) per day was considered good. Sometimes we did not earn anything for a couple of days. To have a tourist as our customer once in a month was also a rare occasion’.

I observed that they often had to wait for hours or even a day before a passenger, either local or foreign asked for their service. To kill the time, they sat around playing cards or chess or just sat still watching people passing them by on the road. Occasionally, when a foreigner passed by the street, they would shout to him offering their services. They said that the condition was such a contrast compared to the days when the area was still popular for international tourists.

The drop in income directly resulted in deteriorating economic conditions of the households especially when the becak drivers were the main breadwinners in the families. Nine out of twelve becak drivers’ wives in my research were housewives. Three worked but they did not earn a proper income. One ran a small grocery store at home, one worked as a maid for Citra Guesthouse and one was a scavenger. Meanwhile, they also had many children to support. The crises make it difficult for the becak drivers to meet both their families’ basic needs and their irregular expenses. Every day they had to provide money for daily meals, and for the transportation fees of their children to go to school. They also had to pay for other regular expenses such as the monthly school fees for their children and for electricity. Apart from that, they also had other obligations especially when their family members were sick or they had to fulfill social obligations.
Despite the fact that social relations were important, the crises had become an obstacle in the continuation of social participation in their neighborhood for people with uncertain income such as becak drivers. Participation in social activities in the villages has always been used as a benchmark to judge whether someone was a good member of society or not. In Javanese society, one’s existence very much depends on one’s integration into the group (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). It is very important to be accepted by a community, which can also mean, to act according to its rule. In this case, if the rule is that someone has to donate gifts to people who are having a ceremony or a ritual, everybody has to do so even, if for this, people have to borrow money from others. One cannot avoid giving gifts especially when the neighbors come with a hantaran (rice with variety of side dishes). In Javanese culture, this hantaran acts as an invitation to a ritual or a ceremony. When someone receives a hantaran, he or she has to give money when he or she comes to the ceremony. Then, as a family, they also conduct rituals for special days during the Javanese year. The special days for the Javanese are 10 Suro in which they commemorated the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, then on the 15 and 27 Suro, one month before the fasting period they have a ruwah (when they direct prayers to the dead), and Idul Fitri. Each social obligation requires substantial amounts of money and was therefore quite likely a burden for the becak drivers’ families.

Another village social activity, which also brings of income loss is gotong royong (mutual assistance). People in the village still strongly hold the idea of gotong royong. When a member of the community conducts ceremonies or rituals, others are expected to offer their time to help those who conduct the events. My informants expressed that they often had to stop working for a couple of days in order to participate. They felt obliged to be actively

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7 The social obligations for villagers consists of a number of rituals and ceremonies. Layatan – various occasions related to a funeral, from burial to a series of slamatan (Geertz, 1960) which would be held on the third, seventh, fortieth, one hundredth, and one thousandth day after death; weddings and circumcisions. On these occasions, villagers normally give some money to relatives and neighbors who conduct the ceremonies or the rituals. There is an unwritten rule that they should give more than what they receive and the amount should be in accordance with the social class of the person who conducts the ceremonies or the rituals.

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involved in the activity from its preparation until it was finished, to avoid isolation from the community. People had to fulfill the conventions within society in order to be accepted.

Conflicts within the family resulting from financial problems are sometimes unavoidable since income is uncertain while expenses for daily and other needs are increasing. The monetary crisis of 1997 triggered skyrocketing prices of the daily needs. It was followed by the decline in international tourist arrivals due to the social and political crises in and after 1998. Because of these factors, the household economy of the becak drivers in Prawirotaman deteriorated quickly. The situation is particularly difficult for the becak drivers and their families. Conflicts in the family as the result of financial problems are unavoidable since income is uncertain while the expenses for their daily needs are arising. On one occasion, Pak Sur complains that his wife often becomes angry with him when he comes home without any money. He further says that his wife does not appreciate that the tourism business is really slack. When he goes out to work, he always has to bring some money home in the evening. Another becak driver, Pak Tukijo, who faces the same problem, would rather stay overnight in Prawirotaman than go home when he has not received any money that day.

The Becak Organization during the Crises

Due to crises, the number of active members of Tengah Group declined. The members gradually left Prawirotaman to find other jobs. In 2005, when I was doing my research in Prawirotaman, I learnt that only nineteen members still worked as becak drivers there while the organization had thirty members before the crises.

Due to the economic condition of the becak drivers in Prawirotaman, the becak organization made some adjustments regarding its social activities. Basically, the organisation still maintained similar institutional rules to organize its members. One of the rules was that each becak driver belonged to the group had to take turns in transporting passengers. It also organized monthly arisan. The members took turns in inviting their friends
to their house for socializing and for the purpose of the *arisan*. However, since the beginning of 2008, to lessen the economic problems of the members, the organization decided that every member who accepted his friends in his house for the purpose of an *arisan* would receive Rp. 20,000 (Approximately USD 2.2 in 2008) from the organization. The money was intended for buying snacks and drinks for the guests so that the activity would not be too much of a burden to the host.

The organization also changed a number of regulations. Regarding the *becak* rental, in 2000, they had increased the rent of a *becak* from the organization. Members had to pay Rp. 30,000 (Approximately USD 3.6 in 2000⁹) and non-member had to pay Rp. 50,000 (Approximately USD 5.9 in 2005) per month. Also, since 2001, the organization no longer rented the parking area from Ibu Har and members who rented a *becak* from the organization were responsible for paying for the parking space themselves. As they rented only half of the area, they only paid Rp. 300,000 (Approximately USD 30.9 in 2005) per year. The amount had to be shared equally among those who parked their *becak* over there. However, to help the members, the organization would pay the amount to Ibu Har and the members would pay back the organization in installments later.

In 2004, the members also no longer voluntarily gave donations. As explained earlier in section four¹⁰, before the crises, every member had to voluntarily contribute to the organization for every passenger who utilized their service. The amount normally ranged between Rp. 500 and Rp. 1000 (Approximately 0.2 -0.45 USD in 1990). But since it was becoming increasingly difficult to earn an income, they stopped paying to the organization.

In one meeting conducted at the beginning of 2008, the members decided to sell three *becak* that belonged to the organization. Now the organization still owned seven *becak*, which they rented out to its members. The

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¹⁰ This is the section when I discussed about the Becak Drivers and Their Organisation.
Becak Drivers in Prawirotaman

organization earned Rp. 2,400,000 (Approximately USD 247 in 2008\textsuperscript{11}) from the sales.

When I visited the becak drivers on 25 August 2008, they also shared with me that the members decided to distribute the money they had saved over the years equally among the members to improve their welfare. However, the members did not receive the whole amount of money at once, but each received Rp. 50,000 (Approximately USD 5.2 in 2008) per month. This had been going on for the last seven months (since February 2008). However, those who had borrowed money from the organization would not receive their share until the loans were paid back.

Coping Strategies in Times of Crises

The collapse of the tourism economy in Prawirotaman forced becak drivers to find alternative ways to cope with the problem. As in the other two cases with the losmen owners in Sosrowijayan and the guesthouse owners in Prawirotaman, the becak drivers also referred to the monetary crisis that was followed by social and political upheavals, the first Bali bombing in 2002 and the earthquake as the three main incidents which had significant impacts on their livelihood.

Coping with the Monetary and Socio-Political Crises

Prior to the Bali Bombing in 2002, the becak drivers employed similar coping strategies as the strategy that they employed during ordinary tourism low seasons. When the crises begun, the becak drivers expected that the situation would improve soon and they had never imagined that the situation would become worse and deteriorating. To deal with such a dire situation, the strategies utilized by the becak drivers ranged from switching their customer orientation from foreign to domestic, selling assets, reducing and selecting expenses, managing income and relying on

\textsuperscript{11} 1 USD = Approximately Rp. 9700 in 2008 (Source: http://investintaiwan.nat.gov.tw/ accessed 3/10/09)
support from friends and kin. They did not utilize merely one strategy at a
time but they often combined several strategies as summarized in table 7.1.

**Table 7.1 Coping with the Monetary and Political Social Crises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Domestic market</th>
<th>Alternative Revenue</th>
<th>Family &amp; Kin Supports</th>
<th>Selling Assets</th>
<th>Managing Income</th>
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Source: Research fieldwork data 2005-2006

**Domestic Market**

After the May Riots in 1998, all twelve becak drivers I interviewed
switched to domestic tourists and local residents. As a consequence of the
crieses, the local market had become essential for becak drivers in
Prawirotaman. Because they concentrated on the local market, the becak
drivers earned a lower income than before and had to travel longer
distances to find passengers. When they switched to locals, they had to
lower their fees and they also lost the other sources of income they had
such as commissions and tips. It was rare for domestic tourists to ask becak
drivers to go shopping with them because they knew that becak drivers
would receive commission for every transaction. Furthermore, becak
drivers could hardly expect people who lived in Prawirotaman to use their
services because they usually had their own cars or motorcycles. Having
limited base of operation only around Prawirotaman, the becak drivers had
difficult times to cater to local customers, who lived outside that area. They
had to wander around hoping that people in the street would use their
services. As I sometimes saw during my field research, some becak drivers went out of the Prawirotaman area to look for customers. Their favorite areas were again crowded places such as the Beringharjo market, Malioboro, and bus terminals, but they were only cycling around and were not allowed to wait for the passengers in these locations.

In some cases, becak drivers had regular customers who paid them monthly. Pak Sugi with his becak regularly drove a child from the alley to school and he would pick her up in the afternoon. Then, Pak Jan, an Old Dutch man who lived at Citra Guesthouse was also Pak Sugi’s regular customer. Every afternoon, Pak Sugi would take Pak Jan for lunch at a small food stall, Tante Lies Restaurant on Jalan Parangtritis, just a few meters from the alley and brought him back again to Citra Guesthouse after Pak Jan had finished his lunch.

**Side Jobs**

Since becak drivers would no longer rely on their main job as a source of income, all twelve becak drivers I interviewed looked for side jobs to compensate their loss of income. One person may involve in more than one activity but since they had a poor education, the choices were limited to casual jobs. Social network played an important role in helping the becak drivers to find side jobs. Networks of kin, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances were the main sources of information about the jobs.

Prawirotaman residents and their neighbors in the villages both played roles as job providers for the becak drivers. All becak drivers in Prawirotaman relied on local residents as sources of additional income. Due to the long lasting process of interaction, relationships based on mutual trust have been established. Residents in Prawirotaman considered them as part of the neighborhood and they knew each other personally. During the *Idul Adha* (feast of the animal sacrifice for Moslems), when every family in the kampong received one kilogram of beef or mutton, they would also receive the same. Based on mutual trust, they conducted miscellaneous chores for Prawirotaman residents especially when they could not expect a new flow of international tourist. Local residents sometimes asked them to
do some casual work. Sometimes they helped with loading and unloading goods to and from trucks for furniture shops. Sometimes the becak drivers helped repair the roofs on the houses of the residents or took care of their houses when the hosts were not at home. Pak Marno worked as a night guard for two places – Aseng’s Antique shop and a house at the other side of the street. He earned Rp. 150,000 (Approximately USD 15.5 in 2005) per month from each of them. Pak Sugi’s skill in giving body massages sometimes earned him money by giving a body massage to kampong residents, hotel owners or to the guests who stayed in the guest houses. Furthermore, from their neighbors at home in the villages, the becak drivers could sometimes make money by hoeing their paddy fields.

Most of the side jobs that the becak drivers did as discussed above were temporary and incidental, and were strongly influenced by social relations and therefore they could hardly expect to earn a regular and standard income from these jobs. They had these jobs more as friendly favors not because of business relations so that they hardly set any tariffs for their services. For example, Pak Pardi told me that for helping his neighbors by working their land - he normally would work from 7.00 to 11.00 and from 13.00 to 15.30 and earned between Rp. 5,000 to Rp. 12,000 (Approximately USD 0.5-1.2 in 2005) per day depending on the person asked for his labor. Rich neighbors generally would give him between Rp. 10,000 to Rp. 12,000 (Approximately USD 1.03 – 1.2 in 2005) while poor neighbors would give him only Rp. 5,000 (Approximately USD 0.5 in 2005).

**Family and Kin Support**

Nevertheless, although becak drivers tried their best to earn additional income, they did not always have enough to cover their expenses. Therefore, all twelve becak drivers in my research mentioned that they had to rely on support from their relatives, neighbors, friends, and organizations both in their own village and from the becak organization for loans. Few becak drivers mentioned that during the crises they could also rely on their children or their wives to provide for the livelihood of the family.
Families of *becak* drivers could hardly rely on a single income due to their fluctuating and uncertain earnings during the crises. Normally, *becak* drivers were seen as the main breadwinners in their families and other family members only helped to release part of their economic burdens. Big expenses like school fees, repairing the house, paying the electricity bill, etc. remained the responsibility of the husbands. If the wives worked, their incomes were regarded as additional to the earnings of their husbands and were mainly spent on the family’s daily needs. If any of their children worked, they were not expected to contribute to the families’ daily expenses even when they still lived with the family. Only in emergency situations would the children contribute to their parents’ expenses. However, in times of crises, this custom had to be relented. Working children were obliged to contribute more to help release the economic burden of the households. In my case there were six *becak* drivers who mentioned they asked for more frequent contributions from their children in order to be able to sustain the household.

In times when support from the core family was insufficient or absent, they would look for other options such as relatives, friends, or neighbors for delayed payment or money owing. Therefore, they said, they always tried to maintain trust among their fellow community and retained reciprocal relationships to ensure the continuation of mutual relationships with others. The most common choice for loans was the small food shops in their neighborhood. When their husbands did not earn money, wives would go to the shops and buy food on credit and only paid after their husbands came back in the evening with money. To make sure that they could still go back to the same shop, they always repaid the loans after a maximum of three days. In case they still did not have money, they would refer to other people to obtain the money to pay it back. For other urgent expenses or emergencies, they would also refer to relatives, neighbors, friends, and the formal organizations they belonged to such as the *becak* organizations, and the village cooperative. Because of their strict requirements, borrowing money from banks was the least attractive option although they may have been able to acquire higher loans. Banks require the debtors to use their assets as collateral. Besides that, if they borrowed money from banks, they had to pay monthly installments on time,
otherwise they would be fined. It was also not very easy for people like *becak* drivers to receive loans from a bank because they do not have a stable income. A few, such as Pak Pardi who had experiences with borrowing money from the bank, went through his neighbor who worked in a bank. However, he also could not go to big banks but only to a Credit Union, which had less strict procedures but demanded a higher interest rate than interest rate set up by the public banks. Pak Pardi once borrowed money from a Credit Union. He used his land certificate as collateral for the loan. To show his gratitude he gave his neighbor who helped him get access to the Union, a gift in the form of sugar and tea. The *becak* drivers admitted that debts were part of their daily lives especially since income was difficult to earn.

**Selling Assets**

When *becak* drivers cannot obtain loans, all the drivers in my research said that selling assets would be their choice. Therefore, they always had to have something they can sell quickly, which also has a good economic value so that, as long as they kept the goods, they could also reap benefits from them. It is uncommon for the poor to make this reasonable and rational choice. In fact, people with unstable incomes use assets as a precaution for times of financial stress. The choice of goods they kept varied from poultry, electronic devices, and their *becak*. Pak Sur chose to buy *becak* as backup savings. In total, he had four *becaks*, which he rented out to his friends for Rp. 20,000 (Approximately USD 2.1 in 2005) each per month. However, last year (2004) he had to sell one of his *becak* to pay his children’s school fees. He was able to sell his *becak* for Rp. 550,000 (Approximately USD 61.5 in 200412). Meanwhile Pak Tukijo had five chickens, three hens and two roosters as his savings. When he needed money for social obligations, for example, he would sell one of his chickens.

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Besides keeping poultry as a safety valve, some people involved in poultry breeding in order to earn additional income. Two becak drivers tried to start their own poultry business after learning that their neighbors had succeeded with their businesses in poultry. Because they had little experience in this sector, they felt more confident to imitate someone else’s business. As often found in other business areas, imitation was done to minimize business risks and to gain information about channels of marketing. However, without any prior experience or knowledge, it is not easy to manage the business. In 2005, Pak Tukijo started breeding poultry because he saw that his neighbor was successfully breeding two hundred chickens. In September 2005, he received commissions from a tourist and he used the money to buy twenty chicks for Rp. 2,750 (Approximately USD 0.3 in 2005) each, but they all died after three months. He stopped for a while because he did not have the money to buy new chicks. Then, when he received some money from his son who was a driver, he used it to buy forty two-day old ducks for Rp. 4,000 (Approximately USD 0.41 in 2005) each. Learning from his failure, he decided to stop breeding chicken and switch to ducks because his friends and neighbors told him that ducks were more disease resistant than chickens.

**Managing Limited and Unstable Income**

The becak drivers do not only have to carefully manage occasional expenses such as social obligations but also have to carefully manage their daily expenses because of their unstable and dwindling income. To avoid conflicts in the family, my informants decided to divide their income into three different purposes. First was the money they should give to their wives to meet the daily needs of their families. Second was pocket money to use by the family members for their personal needs. Third was the money saved for emergency purposes. In times of crises, they had a difficult time to own money for the second and third purposes. They did not always have sufficient cash even for the first purpose. They gave their money to their wives who were responsible for managing the daily needs of the family and kept the rest when they had extras. Before, as long as they could give money to their wives for their daily needs, they used the rest of their income for themselves. Later, when they owned money, they always had to
save part of it in case they did not earn anything the next day, so that they could still give some money to their wives. Consequently, they had to be very careful with their personal expenses. They adapted their consumption pattern by choosing less expensive goods and carefully considered the necessary items to buy. For instance, they told me that they could no longer eat at a Padang restaurant 13 because they considered it too expensive. Instead, they would buy simple meals – only rice with a vegetable dish and tempe (soybean cake) or tofu at a small food stalls nearby. They also no longer eat any meat because meat and chicken were also too expensive.

Coping Strategy after the First Bali Bombing

After the First Bali bombing in 2002 which had a devastating effect on the international tourist flow, my informants in general seriously thought about looking for alternative income to sustain their families’ livelihoods. Therefore, besides employing the same coping strategies as discussed earlier, seven becak drivers out of twelve went looking for more stable, better paying jobs. Meanwhile to help with the economy of the family, the wife of one informant decided to go back to work. The rest remained with their present job as becak driver and occasionally were involved in various kinds of incidental activities such as working as cargo laborers, or couriers etc. However, they were dissatisfied with their current situation, therefore, they all thought about finding alternative jobs with more stable incomes to compensate for their loss of income. An exception was Pak Yan. He was very old (in his late sixties) and he was already supported by his daughter who lived in the USA.

Table 7.2 I present the coping strategies the becak drivers employed after the first Bali bombing in 2002.

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13 Restaurants serving dishes from Padang, West Sumatra. They are very popular among Indonesians, and are easily found all over Indonesia.
Table 7.2 Coping Strategies of Becak Drivers after the First Bali Bombing 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>More Stable Alternative Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pak Tukijo</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Pardi</td>
<td>Wife took a job (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Yoto</td>
<td>Collecting worms (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Sugi</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Marno</td>
<td>Work as night guard (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Sur</td>
<td>Duck breeding (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Ragil</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas Ratmin</td>
<td>Welder and construction worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Kardi</td>
<td>Scavenging with his wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak Yan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research fieldwork data 2005-2006

**More Stable Side Jobs with Better Pay**

Seven informants were involved in different kinds of jobs to improve the welfare of their families. Pak Pardi’s wife was back at work as a housemaid in Yogyakarta after the first Bali bombing in 2002. In general, the becak drivers tended to concentrate on other jobs and only occasionally went to Prawirotaman with their becak when the tourism situation seemed to be improving. As discussed earlier the majority of becak drivers relied on their social network to have access to side jobs. This time, their social networks were also crucial in helping them to find other jobs.

They were all involved in casual work, and for this kind of job the start up cost was almost none, so they almost did not need any financial investment. But for other business activities, they might need initial starting capital, and that could be loans from relatives or cash from selling family assets. The jobs available for becak drivers ranged from one such as a scavenger, welder, construction worker, night guard, employee for a travel agency, to collecting sand from a river and trading second hand motor cycles.

One informant earned money by collecting worms from the ditches in the city joining many of his neighbors who had been involved in this kind of work. As many jobs did not provide him with a proper income, he risked
his health for the sake of earning money. He sold the worms to a catfish breeder who used the worms to feed his fish. In order to collect worms, he had to soak his feet in dirty water for several hours every day. Although collecting worms was not a favorable job, he could earn a substantial amount of money if he worked full day compared to his earnings as a becak driver. One liter of worms earned him Rp. 5,000 (Approximately USD 0.5 in 2005). If he worked from 7.00 to 13.00 with a one-hour break, and then started again at 14.00 until 16.00, he could harvest up to five liters per day so he earned Rp. 25,000 (Approximately USD 2.5 in 2005) although for that he suffered from skin disease as a result.

However, in this research I also found that becak drivers did not always choose a certain way of earning additional income based on sound reasoning. For instance, Pak Sur tried to breed ducks but had to stop because of problems with his neighbors. According to him, the business was profitable. He paid Rp. 4,000 (Approximately USD 0.4 in 2005) for each newly hatched duck and after two months, he could sell them for Rp. 13,000 (Approximately USD 1.4 in 2005) each. Unfortunately, he did not have enough space to breed the ducks and the smell from their droppings disturbed his neighbors. He was afraid that his neighbors would protest. If that happened, it would have a bad effect on his relationship with them and therefore he decided to stop the business totally. Social relations were so important that he found it necessary above all to maintain his good relationship with his neighbors.

Coping with Earthquake Burden

After the earthquake struck in May 2006, the Bantul area suffered the worst. The earthquake caused a high number of injured and death casualties in this area and many buildings were damaged. When I was traveling to the Bantul area, the further south I went, the more ruins I saw. All along the road I could see the tents sponsored by relief organizations as temporary shelters.

Four of my informants - Pak Pardi, Tukijo, Yoto, and Sugi lived in the Bantul Regency and they all lost their houses just like everybody else in
their compounds. When I visited them in their villages, there were no buildings at all. Pak Pardi also badly injured his backbone, his knee and his head after a cupboard fell on him. Pak Yoto’s wife and Pak Sugi’s wife also badly hurt their backs and their heads.

According to my informants, the situation was very chaotic after the earthquake struck. In just a few minutes, their houses turned into rubble and the air was full of white dust. They were unable to see clearly. Everybody panicked and was running around in fear trying to find their family members. Women and children were crying loud. When the situation was a bit more under control, the villagers tried to find their family members and to take care of the injured and the dead. Those who were able to survive the earthquake decided to build shelters in the rice fields because there were no buildings left. Many people had to squeeze into one shelter. This was also the situation at Pak Tukijo’s village; forty people stayed in one plastic tent. Unfortunately, during the night, torrential rain poured down from the sky. They had to work hard to build dikes to prevent the water from flooding into the tent. However, not all villages managed to build a tent on the first day. Pak Sugi and his family had to stay under a jack fruit tree the entire first night because there was no material in their village they could use to build a shelter. As a result, they got soaking wet when the rain fell during the night.

It was a stressful situation. People were exhausted and did not have enough food to eat or water to drink. They had to take care of their injured family members who were in hospital. They were also very depressed because they had lost their houses. They stayed in the shelters approximately for three days after the earthquake. Every morning they would go to the ruins of their houses to look for goods they could still use and to clean the area from the debris. They were also worried that thieves might have stolen their valuable things, which were still left under the ruins of their houses. Staying on the rice field was also not at all safe because they were worried that the cobras on the rice fields might bite them. They knew a number of people in the area who caught cobras to supply the food stalls and restaurants in Yogyakarta who specialized in snake dishes. The earthquake
might have disrupted the cobra’s coops. They were worried that the snakes were now in the rice fields and would risk the lives of the refugees.

The earthquake aggravated the peril of the *becak* drivers. Lack of clean water became a problem for the villagers because many wells dried up. At the most, in a day they could only obtain four buckets of muddy water (each bucket with the capacity of about ten liters). When they drew the water from the well, they had to leave it for a while for the mud to settle before they could use it. The cheap rice subsidy from the government was also reduced. Now, the same amount of rice had to be distributed over more people. If normally they received ten kilograms for one family, after the earthquake each family only received two kilograms every month. In fact, the distribution used to be very helpful, as they only had to pay Rp. 10,000 (Approximately USD 1.1 in 2005) rather than Rp. 25,000 (Approximately USD 2.7 in 2006) for ten kilograms if they bought it on the market.

The victims of the earthquake not only suffered physically but were also psychologically traumatized. When I visited my informants in their tents three months after the earthquake, I could see that almost all of them were still not recovered. Two months after the earthquake, they still felt smaller earthquakes so they never felt really secure. Pak Yoto’s wife told me of her experiences in tears. Pak Pardi told me that if he heard the noise of a truck passing by on the road, he felt like running away as it reminded him of the earthquake. Pak Sugi and his wife also kept on telling me that they had nothing left, not even their kitchen utensils.

Food and shelter became crucial issues after the earthquake struck. Under the coordination of the heads of the RT (*Rukun Tetangga*), they set up a public kitchen and a temporary shelter. They collected food and other things they managed to salvage from under the ruins of small food stalls in their villages. With the agreement of the members of the community, the RT heads withdrew the money from the village organization when the banks were back in function. Women were responsible for cooking and the distribution of food to all the members of the communities, while the men were responsible for setting up shelters. Cooperation among the members
of the community helped a little but did not solve the problems since aid from outside did not reach them until a week or so later. In fact, their areas were relatively remote. To reach them, people had to travel for about twenty minutes from the Bantul main road. In this kind of situation, the culture of ‘gotong royong’ (community self help) in the village was very meaningful. Table 7.3 summarizes the coping strategies adopted by the becak drivers after the earthquake.

Table 7.3 Becak Drivers’ Coping with the Earthquake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Family Support</th>
<th>Network Support</th>
<th>Formal Institution</th>
<th>Selling Property</th>
<th>Consumption Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>loans</td>
<td>gift</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>gotong royong</td>
<td>foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukijo</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardi</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugi</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoto</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Aid from both foreign and local aid organizations was not distributed equally. Some villages did not receive any aid, while others resold some of the relief goods delivered to them because they had been given more than enough. According to a report made by Salazar (2006:2), most of the aid was concentrated on the affected villages along the main access roads. During an interview, Pak Tukijo also expressed that the areas close to the main road gained most of the material aid from volunteers and also much quicker. When the volunteers passed, they would be stopped by people asking for aid. Eventually the aids did reach them and helped them survive for about a month.

Although becak drivers like other victims did receive some aid, they could not wait too long before they had to go back to work. The first month they could subsist on instant noodles, biscuits, and rice with some side dishes they received from donations but the aid ceased after a month. Even though many things had to be done at home in the following few months, they had to manage their time between looking for passengers and working at home. In less than a week, they were all back at work and occasionally they stayed at home. Pak Sugi was the first to resume his work after having
stayed at home for three days. Pak Pardi went back to work with a swollen knee and backache after a week. When it seemed that nothing much could be gained from going to Prawirotaman, they would stay at home. At home, they selected materials from the debris around which they could still use to rebuild their houses. They had to do it fast because after the earthquake many scavengers were around to search for their stuff.

When the aid stopped, the villagers, including the becak drivers, had to cope with the problem of the scarcity of food. Every family had to carefully manage the limited food for all the members of the family. One of the solutions taken was to reduce consumption. As an example, Pak Sugi and his family decided to cook only half of the usual amount of rice. If they normally cooked one kilogram of rice for the family of four adults and one little boy of five, now they cooked only half a kilogram. If normally they bought vegetables with tofu or tempe (soybean cake), now they only ate the vegetables they could find growing in their surroundings such as papaya and cassava leaves. During one interview, I also saw that his youngest son was eating rice with Soto (a kind of chicken soup with bean sprouts) they had bought for Rp. 1,500 (Approximately USD 0.2 in 2006). It was the lunch of the whole family. There were hardly any ingredients in the soup, and they only had a little bit of rice to go with it. They had to manage their food very well in order to survive.

Housing was also a problem. They could not rebuild their houses soon after the earthquake since they did not have any savings at all or their savings were not enough to start building a permanent house. Therefore, setting up plastic tents was the only solution to protect them from rain and heat. In the afternoon, the tent was steaming hot from the sun in the dry season but at night it was bitter cold. They spread mattresses on the ground without any sheets on them. I found hardly any furniture or utensils inside their tents. When I visited them, we sat on the plated mat in the open air. Only Pak Pardi still had an old sofa outside his house. However, they had to stay in tents for five or six months before they could start rebuilding their houses.
The tradition of community self-help between neighbors, which is still widely practiced in the villages may have accelerated the building of new houses. However, it also depended on the financial ability of each individual family. Some could start rebuilding their houses soon after the quake while others had to wait. People like becak drivers needed to wait quite a while before they were able to start rebuilding their houses. As expressed by Pak Pardi, in his neighborhood, soon after the situation was under control, a number of families started to build their houses. A family who already had all the materials needed would ask help from his neighbors. Usually, the family who built the house provided the neighbors with food. If they helped for more than a week, they gave some money, which amounted to half the amount of payment given to construction workers.

For becak drivers, the ability to build a house very much depended on the availability of support they could attain. The more support they had the sooner they were able to rebuild their house. Of all the becak drivers I interviewed, Pak Pardi was the one who built his house the soonest as he had gathered much support. His wife had a job as a housemaid in Yogyakarta. His first two sons were construction workers so that Pak Pardi did not have to hire any workers to help him with the building construction. Besides that, his sons were still single so that they did not have family burdens. After the earthquake, his two sons received many jobs to repair damaged buildings so that they had money to help their parents. To rebuild the house, his sons spared their wages to buy new building materials such as the iron rods and cements, besides using the material they collected from the old house. Each earned Rp. 30,000 (USD 3.6 in 2006) per day. They worked from 8.00 to 16.00. Arriving from work they would work with Pak Pardi on their own house from 17.00 to 22.00 each day. Pak Pardi started rebuilding his house in mid September, four months after the earthquake. When I went to see him on 16 September 2006, he had just started rebuilding his house two days before. He did not bother to wait for the Rp. 15,000,000 (Approximately USD 1,640 in 2006) aid the government had promised to give to poor people. In fact, support provided by family members helped him to overcome this crisis.
Pak Tukijo started rebuilding his house in December 2006, seven months after the earthquake, and after receiving a loan from his relative. However, to minimize risks and to convince his relative that he would indeed pay back his loan, he only borrowed the money when he was sure that he would receive government aid a month later. He borrowed Rp. 7,500,000 (Approximately USD 818.8 in 2006). Using that money and his savings as well as some money he received from his old customer from Holland in December 2006, he started building his house. When I visited him at the building site on 23 December, he was busy working with six people from Temanggung whom he had hired to rebuild his house. He paid each of them Rp. 35,000 (Approximately USD 3.8 in 2006) per day. Since they came from outside Yogyakarta, they slept there too and ate with the family. They had started about twenty days before I saw him. He could not hire any construction workers from Yogyakarta because those he knew already had jobs at the time. He could no longer wait to build his house because the rainy season had already started some weeks earlier. Once, during heavy rain, the tent broke and the room turned into a pool. The family could not sleep that night because the mattresses on the ground became soaked. The water fell into the rooms and could not flow out because of the half-meter high walls Pak Tukijo had built around the house. He had to keep up the plastic tent so that no more water flowed into the house. After this ordeal he decided to borrow money from his relative to start building his house.

The rest had no option but to wait for support from the government before they could start rebuilding their houses. Pak Yoto decided to build his house after he had received the first installment of Rp. 3,500,000 (Approximately USD 382 in 2006) in December 2006 and he also received some money from one of his customers. The rest of the aid would be distributed in January 2007. With the help of his son, he started rebuilding his house.

Meanwhile, Pak Sugi still had not received either personal or government support. He had to wait for government support although he urgently needed to rebuild his house. In his village, the policy was to draw a lottery to decide when the villagers would receive the aid. He would only attain it in January the following year (2007). However, since the rainy season had
already started, he had to repair his house to protect his family from the rain. He hardly had any money. Therefore, in order to build a semi permanent house, he bought plaited bamboo for the walls and asbestos for the roof. In order to buy these materials, he had to sell his old motorcycle for Rp. 2,000,000 (Approximately USD 218 in 2006). He had to build the house himself after he returned home from work. To build the house, he could not always expect help from his neighbors because they had already gone back to work. Usually only when they were free on Sunday or on national holidays his neighbors would help. As the result, he became very sick. When I went to his house on 23 December 2006, I met him at home and his wife told me that he was ill. Two days before he had fainted in Prawirotaman because he worked too hard while he ate only unhealthy food.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the lives of the *becak* drivers evolved from prosperity to despair because of the prolonged crisis that struck their businesses. In times of booming tourist arrivals, the *becak* drivers operating in the Prawirotaman area may serve as an example of the multiplier effect of tourism. Many tourists used to stay in the guesthouses in Prawirotaman and the *becak* drivers reaped benefits from the tourists’ interest to experience this traditional mode of transportation. From encounters with the tourists, the *becak* drivers not only gained more income but also built up wider networks. Eventually, tourism development constituted a significant contribution to the economy of the *becak* drivers who, without this development, would have earned only a meager income from their jobs.

However, the prolonged crisis affected the *becak* drivers’ businesses badly. Just as in the other cases, there were three points in time they considered as having affected their businesses most dramatically - the monetary crisis combined with the social and political crisis, the First Bali bombing in 2002, and the earthquake that struck Yogyakarta in 2006. To counter each crisis, the *becak* drivers employed different coping strategies.
The monetary and socio-political crisis led the *becak* drivers to take immediate actions. Just as in the other cases, they also took steps to redirect their market orientation to the domestic market. They also referred to alternative avenues in a limited way. Generally, they engaged in temporary casual work to earn additional income. As earnings were volatile, to cope with their daily needs, they also had to rely on family and kin for support in a form of gifts and loans and they resorted to selling their assets to pay for urgent needs.

The Bali bombing caused the *becak* drivers to search for jobs that were more permanent. After the bombing, they realized that it had become virtually impossible for tourism conditions to improve in any way soon.

As the earthquake struck their area badly, their lives became even more insecure. It was beyond their capacity to cope with this calamity. Therefore, they relied mostly on support from others. For their survival, they coped through support from family in the form of loans, gifts, or services. Support also came from networks, both local and foreign, and from formal institutions preventing them from falling into an even deeper crisis. Apart from that, since support was not always sufficient, they also had to resort to selling property and consumption adjustments.

Overall, the impacts of the prolonged crisis in the businesses and in the lives of the *becak* drivers were significant for two reasons. They were vulnerable in the face of prolonged crisis because they served only a limited market niche, the international tourists staying at the guesthouses in Prawirotaman. The unbreakable rules and regulation of the division of the area among different groups of *becak* drivers formed a serious handicap in their search for domestic passengers. In addition to that, they were vulnerable because they lacked economic capital and skills. To cope with the series of crises, they mainly relied on their limited social networks, which had more or less the same problems as they faced themselves.