In the introduction of this book, I discussed what I see as a major bias in social security studies. Many of these studies deal with a range of institutions and mechanisms for support and assistance that exist to protect people against the consequences of adversities. However, rather than looking at agency and the reasons why people take risks or seek to protect themselves, they focus on institutions and community arrangements that potentially offer support in times of need (Hüsken and Koning 2006:11, Lont 2006). Similarly, disaster studies tend to focus on protection and external risk reduction instead of considering the individual and collective risk-reduction practices of people (Bankoff 2009, Hilhorst and Bankhoff 2004, Van Voorst 2014, Van Voorst and Handgraaf 2012). Implicitly, most of these studies appear to depart from the assumption that people prefer security to risk, and that social relationships and village institutions are oriented towards enhancing some form of social security rather than disrupting it.

In this chapter, I intend to draw a more nuanced picture by taking a closer look at Madurese people in East Java, both rich and poor, who are involved in risk-taking practices that potentially endanger their livelihood base. Why do people ‘at risk’ (Blaikie et al. 1994, Wisner et al. 2012) take on large risks?

Poor people are generally assumed to be risk-averse and security optimizing. This emphasis on the presumed human need for security rather than insecurity is also clear in human needs approaches and studies on social welfare. Macarov quoting Goodin (1988) writes:

All societies hold as dogma that social welfare deals with needs, rather than wants. [...] Although there is no good, clear-cut reason to give meeting needs systematic priority over satisfying desires, almost all social welfare programs define themselves as meeting needs – and indeed attempt to defend themselves from the charge that they are answering ‘mere’ desires.

MACAROV 1995:47

This observation is still widely accepted. However, during fieldwork in East Java and East Kalimantan, I became increasingly dissatisfied with explanations of poor people and peasants being risk-aversive and primary focussed on physical needs and security. Although this assumption no doubt holds for a
proportion of the population, and might help to explain some of their actions, I noticed that nearly all villagers sometimes take risks and some deliberately increase risks even when their livelihood base is neither stable nor secure. Moreover, there is a specific category of people, both in East Java and East Kalimantan, who actively take risks rather than search for livelihood security. These people are at the centre of the analysis in this chapter. They take not only profit-enhancing risks, but also ones that endanger the security and the continuity of their households' livelihoods. How can we understand this 'excessive' risk-taking given the above-mentioned assumptions?

This chapter provides examples of Madurese villagers in Krajan, in upland East Java, who deliberately take and combine risks. Locally, the term *orang nakal* is used for these people, which can be translated as something like wayward, wicked or naughty people.¹ I prefer the word wayward, as orang nakal are people who do not follow mainstream norms and values of society, are ignorant about livelihood security and deliberately take huge risks. These risks are not the customary risks related to farming and entrepreneurship, but excessive risks that, at least at first sight, are not oriented towards establishing a sustainable livelihood or long-term social security but seen rather as potentially devastating, putting livelihood security at risk. The focus of this chapter is the practice of excessive risk-taking rather than outcasts in society. It will, however, be shown that risk-taking and deviancy do often, but not necessarily, go together.

In this chapter, I want to show that deliberate risk-taking is not an exceptional event for poor people, but an attractive livelihood style for some villagers who search for an alternative to complying with the village norms and social pressures that urge huge investments in social security and reciprocal relationships. I describe gambling and risk-taking in the village of Krajan, elaborated with some examples taken from case studies. Taking into account the examples of wayward people, I will discuss whether the assumption of inherent risk-aversion in poorer households is justified. I will focus on the local and everyday practices and notions of people in terms of experiencing, avoiding and deliberately engaging in risks.

Whereas the risk-taking in the examples provided in the introduction, such as in vegetable farming (Hefner 1990, Lewis 1992) are accepted and embedded culturally, Vel's (1994) description of Manu Wolu, a bird-nest collector on

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¹ Nakal is difficult to translate into English. A common translation is naughty (often used for children, but also for men who flirt with women, who gamble, or who do not behave according to morals, who are petty gang leaders and the like). Throughout this book, I use the term nakal to refer to people who are daredevils or somewhat wayward.
Sumba, Indonesia, is an example of unacceptable risk-taking and deviancy. In Sumba, gathering birds’ nests from caves is highly disapproved of as it is believed that entering caves brings people into contact with evil spirits. Vel sketches the dilemma of the village poor such as Manu Wolu: ‘Either they submit themselves to the rules of the local community and live a life of hard work and may be sure of a basic level of existence. Or they engage in cash earning activities that are beyond the limits of what is approved of by the local community, and subsequently may be rich at times, but excluded by the community’ (Vel 2000:35). Despite disapproval and danger, a group of mainly youngsters, sometimes described as *kuat jalan* or vagabonds, take risks and engage in such, often physically dangerous, activities. Although they make good money, they lose, to a large extent, access to village networks of support and social security and most of them are still poor in the end. As Vel (Vel 2000:45) argues ‘Deviant behaviour such as “gathering birds” nests is the option for people who are on the outer edge of the local economy, for whom there hardly is a viable alternative to make a living. Coping with insecurity is the permanent theme of their life. In their own assessment, a deviant way to earn cash can be preferable over access to local social security arrangements, if that would imply permanent drudgery merely for the benefit of patrons’.

**Normative and Contextual Landscapes**

As described in Chapters 3 and 4, the social-security system in Krajan is largely based on two normative principles: reciprocity and self-insurance. Self-insurance reflects those individuals and households that protect themselves against adversities through their own savings, independent of social arrangements and institutions. Alternatively, such village institutions and arrangements, often built upon reciprocal relationships, can offer some security and assistance to their members in times of need. This mutual support encourages villagers to contribute to assisting others.

However, these institutions and arrangements do not cover all expenses in times of need. The importance of village social-security institutions is often more non-material than material. When encountering hardship, villagers are first expected to cover their expenses out of their own savings, capital and resources. Only if they do not have resources can they call on social relations for support and then, more often than not, this support is insufficient and coping becomes extremely problematic. For instance, in the case of a burial, the family of the deceased will have to sell its cows or land even if these are its only sources of livelihood. If they do not have any savings, the deceased will be
buried without much ceremony. Risky behaviour and squandering attitudes that endanger the capacity of a household to fulfil the expected obligations and rituals in times of need are highly disapproved. Nevertheless, some poor, and often young, villagers do not want to face the prospects of life-long compliance to these established norms of the ordinary and try to find alternatives. They pin their hope on earning quick cash and opt to violate norms rather than avoid risks.

I frequently visited such people, most often men, when at home, while labouring in the fields and at places where risk-taking practices come to the fore such as cattle markets, coffee shops and gambling dens. Through these frequent meetings and by taking part in activities such as gambling, friendship led to mutual trust. Based on careful observation and participant observation, made possible by these good social relations, I could gain in-depth insights into risk-taking behaviour. Besides this, these activities enabled me to collect detailed life histories and to touch upon sensitive questions concerning loss, debts, conflicts, sexuality and shame. Men, women, husbands and wives were often separately observed and interviewed. Further, my wife and child played an important role in establishing good relationships with women, in gaining access to women’s stories in ‘backstage’ places, and by cross-checking male stories within female domains.

Risk-Taking in Krajan

In Krajan, three kinds of risk-taking practices are predominant. First I deal with gambling, then with the practice of engaging in extra-marital relationships, and finally with speculation. For the purpose of this chapter, I limit myself to the risk-taking practices of those villagers who take major risks, ones that threaten their own and their household’s future livelihood: the ‘orang nakal’. I translate this as wayward to reflect that orang nakal do not follow the norms and values of society, ignore livelihood security and deliberately take huge risks without being physically excluded from society.

Gambling

In Krajan, about one-third of the male population gambles every now and then. Except for members of some orthodox religious families, nearly all men have gambled at least once. However, less than 5% of these men are referred to as orang nakal, wayward and wicked people who violate established village norms of behaviour in a deviant way. For the other gamblers, gambling does not directly threaten livelihoods, it has more the character of pastime.
During the first two months of fieldwork, I was not aware of the importance and prevalence of gambling in village life. I was still busy paying visits to all the important families in the village (including religious leaders), making good impressions and learning the basic rules of village life. Sometimes, I came across a group of people playing cards or gambling at big festivities like village festivals, weddings and bullfights. Initially, I thought that gambling was a rather isolated activity of a small group of diehards. Each time, I tried to get to know more about gambling, I received vague answers, or negative stories about these orang nakal. Friends and close neighbours, who obviously wanted to maintain a good impression, answered vaguely or assured me they were not like those gamblers. As long as you are an outsider, it is extremely difficult to study deviancy in Indonesia, because negative behaviour will be euphemized to the outsider.

One day, I heard rumours about regular gambling going on in a coffee shop (warung) nearby. I asked if someone knew where it was and when the gambling usually takes place. My neighbours remained silent and only after repeated questions they told me they were not able to take me there, as they did not know the time and exact location either. I was not satisfied with this answer and decided to ask some of the youngsters with whom I already had established good relationships. One of them agreed to take me to the gambling place, which turned out to be only two minutes from my house.

The gambling den was at the back of the warung, where I used to chat and drink coffee in the morning. It was run by an old widow who lived in a small house, a dozen metres away from the back. Then, I noticed sounds of rolling dice, and when I entered the room, they all rose, looked surprised or scared, and gazed at me. The small place was lit with a shimmering light and occupied by more than a dozen people, all from the same vicinity including the village head. I smiled and said: ‘I heard there is gaming around and I wanted to join’. Immediately, I drew out some small money and threw it on the playing board. They all laughed relieved, allowed me to join, and the game continued.

That night I played carefully and long. Eventually I won a significant amount of money (ten days’ wages). The next day, I was the talk of the neighbourhood. All neighbours, also those who had assured me they were not gambling, congratulated me, and asked me to recall the story of the game. Some now admitted they were playing every night and others warned me for playing too recklessly, because they had lost huge amounts in the past.

Some of the women in the neighbourhood came to my wife, trying to find out if she knew that I had been playing that night. When she told them, she did not mind, as long as I would play for fun with small amounts, they smiled understandingly. All people in the neighbourhood seemed very relieved to find
Something similar happened later at the start of the Ramadan (after two months of fieldwork). I decided to fast with the others. Every night, those neighbours still fasting prayed in the prayer house attached to my house. After six days of fasting, I had difficulties with working and I became very thirsty, so I decided to stop fasting in private and took some drinks and food. When I told this to my neighbours the other day, they smiled relieved. From that time on, I spotted many of them smoking or sipping coffee at daytime in their house. That night, nearly nobody showed up in the praying house anymore.

The Rules of the Game
Most kinds of gambling are illegal, but every time there is a large ceremony, wedding, music (dangdut) or theatre (ludruk) performance, there is gambling on the outskirts of the festival terrain. Sometimes empty houses or the houses of players are used. If there is no house available, a garden, behind some trees or the back of a shed provides a convenient gambling place. Such places are needed to prevent outsiders from spotting it, as gambling is illegal. To make these events possible, police, military and sometimes village administrators are usually paid off. It also happens that the military directly sponsor gambling activities and then neither the police and village officials nor religious leaders dare to take action.

Most of the gambling is organized by a group of people. They work together with a creditor (bandar). The bandar does not need to play, others play for him. He adds or collects money every now and then and maintains good relationships with village officials and policemen to safeguard the play. An example of such a bandar is Patik. Being a trader and moneylender, he always has ready cash available and is willing to lend it to organizers of the game. Since he is not playing himself, and seldom watches the game, he always stayed out of trouble when gamblers were seized. He never took responsibility when players were seized. ‘I have the risk of losing money, you the risk of being caught, I do not want to be in trouble’, he said.

Most of the gambling in Krajan is petty gambling where bets are small and villagers play occasionally and irregularly, often only at special occasions like festivals. For many villagers, this type of playing has the character of a pastime and amounts lost do not exceed much of a day’s wage.
There are three basic categories of gamblers in Krajan: those gambling for pastime only at special occasions such as selamatan and weddings, those who gamble regularly, but carefully and strategically, and the addicted gamblers who can hardly resist playing at any occasion. The most common games are cards (judi ceki), balls (judi bola), and dice (judi klodok). In cockfights (aduan ayam) and the typical and popular Madurese bullfights (aduan sapi), larger amounts of money are at stake than when playing cards, balls or dice. Before the 1997 crisis, at aduan sapi and aduan ayam bets of one million Rupiah (€416) or more were no exception.

Most of the cases I was involved in, the bets are contained within realistic financial limits of the gambler. Most occasional gamblers do not put more money at stake than brought to the game. However, there are people who have ruined themselves by gambling away cash, land, goods and even the house in which they live, or are on the way to ruining themselves. In the last five years before the fieldwork, at least twelve families in Krajan lost nearly all their belongings due to a gambling husband or gambling son. Most of these families could not be interviewed as they had left the village, many to Kalimantan, on the run from creditors and/or in the hope of returning some of the lost possessions. Many of the Madurese migrants looking for work in East Kalimantan, who I interviewed there, gave gambling debts as a reason for migration.

Gambling in Krajan is a purely male activity. Women in Krajan do not gamble, apart from the occasional ticket for legal lotteries in town. Many women know that their husbands are playing, and they are highly opposed to gambling (even petty gambling). They believe that gambling is a major threat to the livelihood security of the household, an irresponsible waste of money and an illness that needs to be cured.

The women are convinced that, even if their husbands win, they will not get hold of the money as the money will not last long. Money earned from gambling is hot (uang panas), earned too quickly, and cannot enter the household domestic unit as such money is spent ‘as fast as it is earned’. Apart from this, the belief that gamblers in the end always lose is strongly rooted in society. This is true to a large extent. Most of the notorious gamblers are not successful in the end due to money leaking out of the circuit. Organizers (bandar), patrons (often military), moneylenders and shopkeepers take their profits and they are usually the only ones who are making a profit in the long run. On the

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Krajan, notes of Rp 5,000 and later 10,000 became the norm. In cockfights in East Kalimantan, Rp 20,000 and Rp 50,000 notes were the standard.

other hand, these stories also function a great deal to scare and to prevent people from engaging into gambling.

Among women, stories of women who lost all possessions due to an ‘irresponsible’ husband are told and retold. A well-known example is the story of *bu* Sulama. Her husband’s gambling behaviour caused them not only to sell his own land, but also his wife’s property she inherited from her parents. Now, the couple has to work as labourers on the fields of others to make a living. According to the female audience, *bu* Sulama should have divorced him before all the land was gone. ‘She must have noticed that he (her husband) had the fever’, one of the women commented.

Although women cannot divorce easily in Krajan, a gambling husband is generally accepted as a legitimate reason to divorce. Women usually try to keep away their husbands from gambling in many ways. A common strategy is to ask money for household needs as soon as the husband earns something in order to prevent the money from being wasted. From this earned money, most husbands keep a minor proportion for their own benefit, used for expenses like coffee, cigarettes, sweets for children and the like. Usually, husbands try to hide the exact amount of earnings, but networks of women constantly exchange information about payments and earnings of their husbands and thus strengthen their bargaining position.

During extended case studies of a few families who we were able to visit regularly, we spoke to husbands and wives separately and observed that spouses already knew the earnings of the man before they met. Frequently, I found women (secretly) saving some of this money for bad times, or for expected expenses such as a *selamatan*, school fees or uniform. This was particularly the case if husbands were notorious gamblers. Nearly half of the wives of the gamblers we interviewed admitted (privately) that they had small savings (*celen-gan*). In most cases, husbands admitted they knew or at least suspected their women to be saving, but they were never sure about the exact amounts. The gamblers in the area around Krajan included both rich and poor villagers and older and younger villagers. Although most of the gamblers are young, the gamblers for bigger kitties are often older and successful villagers. A special category appeared to be the village heads. Out of seven neighbouring villages, at least four village heads were known to be excessive gamblers. Among whom Bagenda, the village head of Krajan is the most notorious, but due to his power, slyness, and influence, he is called a *jago* (a fighting cock), rather than a wayward.

Who are these Gamblers?
In four hamlets of Krajan, with about 400 families, I came across twenty to thirty notorious gamblers. About half of them were poor. Among these heavy
gamblers of Krajan, villagers distinguish two classes: the rich, or children from rich families, and the poor or newly poor. Especially children of richer families are explicitly referred to as orang nakal. These children have never had to work hard and are spoiled in the eyes of fellow villagers. ‘They never learned to take responsibility’. In Krajan, there are at least ten cases where children gambled away family property sometimes with disastrous consequences. Their parents have not been able to stop these children. They often operate in gangs and very often the gambling goes together with other illegal, or semi legal activities as having sexual affairs (outside the village), theft, conspicuous consumption (demanding motorbikes), and drinking.

An example of such anak nakal is Abdul, the brother of Bu Sumyati (30). Her family used to be one of the richest families of Krajan. Twenty years ago, they had more than fifteen hectares of sawah and tegal. The decline in the family’s wealth started with an attempt by Sumyati’s grandfather to run for village head. He failed and lost some of the family capital. The family stayed relatively prosperous and Abdul and Sumyati were sent to secondary school in Bondowoso. Abdul started a notorious lifestyle there and wanted to live like his classmates from town. He demanded from his parents a trendy motor bike, good clothes, pocket money etc. They willingly paid as they thought it right to give their son a good education. Gradually, an increasing proportion of the cattle and some of the family’s rice fields had to be sold or pawned.

Abdul finished his education but was not able or willing to find a paid job. He continued to live a high style at the expense of his parents, and started several small trades and businesses. When these went bankrupt, he took the initiatives to sell most of the already pawned rice fields secretly. Sumyati and her grandfather were very angry when they found out. The last two plots were put in Sumyati’s name preventing Abdul from spending more of the family capital. When all the parents’ property was gone, Abdul returned to live in Krajan where he received disapproval but food and lodging in his parents’ house. Soon, he left for Kalimantan in search of luck or money. Not much later, his parents, without work and income due to the loss of the land followed a transmigration program to Sulawesi in the hope of recovering some of the previous prosperity.5 Since then, Sumyati has tried little by little to repay debts and to return at least some of the pawned fields.

From the rich gamblers in Krajan, gambling traders form a prominent group, who rarely risk their own livelihood completely and who are generally able to

5 In 1999, they returned to Krajan. Although not prosperous, they at least had been able to secure a plot of land in Sulawesi and sold it. With the money, they bought a couple of cows in Krajan and returned the pawned land of their daughter.
compensate huge losses from gambling with profits in trade. Moreover, networks of gamblers serve for them as networks of information and often these networks lead to new business opportunities. Apart from this, as money circulation is high in these networks, borrowing opportunities are manifold and credits and profits are also used for trade. Some of these businessmen occasionally operate as the organizer (bandar), moneylender or pawn-taker, and are able to make a living out of gambling.

Village officials and village heads from the neighbourhood who often play in Krajan form a special category of rich gamblers. The village head of Sumber Dompyong, Pak Zeinol (age 45) bets mainly at bullfights. He owns a number of bulls himself and he would go to the Bondowoso bullfights every week. Sometimes he lost millions of Rupiah in one week, in other weeks he won similar amounts. In addition to betting at the bullfighting arena, he is a notorious cock gambler and dice (klithik) player and pays weekly visits to Krajan gambling dens. During big weddings and similar large events, I would always see him gambling. There were rumours that he compensated for his losses by using village development funds.

The village head of Gadingsari lost a few cows, a car and a motorbike in the course of four years through gambling. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, large demonstrations by villagers and complaints to the heads of the district (camat and bupati) led to him being deposed. The former village head of Andungsari lost a number of cows, at least one hectare of sawah and another two or three pieces he had pawned because of reckless gambling. He also took huge amounts of cash from village funds. He was not re-elected at the 1998 elections. His illegal use of village funds was investigated and he lost access to funds. To cover his debts, and to repay village funds, he had to sell his parents' land. The village head of Poler lost huge amounts of money to Bagenda, the village head of Krajan. Bagenda offered huge credit and lent him a car indebting him for tens of millions Rupiah. At the same time, Bagenda had a secret affair with the man's wife. After the situation got out of control and the affair became public knowledge, her husband was unable to take action against Bagenda, because of his financial ties. This sexual affair lingered on until the end of 1999.6

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6 I spoke to a few villagers who had seen Bagenda taking this woman to town. When I asked Bagenda in a confident moment about going with that woman, he himself admitted he made the husband on purpose dependent on him, ‘dia diikat kepada saya karena punya hutang besar. Sekarang saya bebas di sana [the house of the village head]’. Besides this, I received much information from one of the confidants of Bagenda who had to provide alibis to the wife of Bagenda. Finally, the affair was confirmed by Prima, a local journalist and friend of Bagenda who had witnessed the couple entering a hotel in town.
Of all the seven village heads, only the new village head of Andungsari is not known as a notorious gambler. He is the oldest son of an orthodox religious family that has provided several village heads in the past. The values of his religion and strong social control in the family prevent him of being wayward or a gambler. In business, however, he took considerable risks by speculating with rice and tobacco prices.

Among common villagers, two categories of gamblers can be distinguished. Children from rich families and children from poor or newly poor families. Often, children of rich families are explicitly referred to as orang nakal, because they never had to work hard and are spoiled according to fellow villagers. One informant said: ‘They never learned to take responsibility’. In Krajan alone, there are at least ten children who have gambled away family property, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Parents clearly have not been able to stop these children from asking for money, motorbikes or other expensive goods. They often operate in gangs and very often the gambling goes together with other illegal, or semi-legal, activities such as having several sexual affairs (often outside the village), fighting, thieving and drinking.

The largest group of gamblers can be found among the poor of Krajan. They come from families who have always been relatively poor, but had some property and income like one or two plots of land and some cattle. The poorest people of Krajan do not gamble regularly, because they do not have cash and cannot get any credit. Moreover, they need all the money they earn for instant consumption. The orang nakal among the poor started gambling wishing to improve their situation quickly in some way or another. They were not inclined to wait long, or save, and invest in social relationships. Some expressed this by saying that they preferred to live high for a short moment, or to have at least a chance of a better life than to live all days in poverty without ever changing anything. Often, gambling becomes its own trap and turns into an addiction as players hope to win back their stake leading to even higher debts.

Bagenda, the village head and other upper bandar of Krajan have good relations with police and military active in the area. Some of these police and military are directly involved in Krajan gambling as well. Bagenda’s good relations with the police are important to protect the gamblers. If villagers are caught by the police, they go to Bagenda and seek his support. In return for his

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7 ‘Kalau saya kerja keras, atau malas, tidak ada bedaan. Tetap miskin. Lebih baik saya hidup betul satu hari dan coba menang daripada miskin terus’.

8 Village heads being involved in gambling is common in Java. Among others, Cederroth (1995:394) notices the same for a village in the west of East Java: not only the village administration, but also the police and military are heavily involved.
protection and mediation, Bagenda receives regular grants. In the years before my fieldwork took place, he sometimes played a double role in this. Although he is a passionate gambler himself, he is often the *bandar* and seldom loses exorbitant amounts of money. Besides this, he supplies credit, buys goods or land from those who lost large amounts and tries to tie people to him by creating long-term debt relationships. According to himself and to some informants who confirmed this, there have been instances where he informed the police so that they would raid gambling places in Krajan. Often, these were games of competing *bandar*. In this way, he showed the regional government he was willing to seriously tackle gambling in his village. At the same time, he received bribes from villagers to free the captured villagers.

I also received reports from different sources that on a few occasions in town, when Bagenda had lost huge amounts of money to Chinese *bandar*, he informed the police about illegal gambling going on. The police captured the players and the money and decided to divide it equally. His excellent relations with police and military make him a feared rival and most villagers choose to cooperate with him. His involvement and success in gambling adds to his status as *jago*, his reputation as a daredevil and strong man.

**Gambling as a Way of Life**

There are good reasons to assume that risk-taking behaviour is not an exception, but that it can be found in most towns and villages in Java. Some of these excessive risk takers show deviant behaviour, but this does not need to be the case. In many societies, there seems to be a small proportion of people of gamblers and non-conformists who take these kinds of risks. Cederroth (1995), who conducted research in Central, East Java, mentions: ‘However, there is a group of dedicated gamblers, many of whom have completely ruined their personal finances by gambling’ (Cederroth 1995:195). In most societies, there is a vast group of gambling deviants violating the norms of mainstream society.

Poverty is often mentioned as a major reason why people gamble according to Cederroth: ‘For many people, their income is not even sufficient to cover their daily economic needs. Such people frequently turn to gambling in the hope of gaining instant wealth. Gambling then has an important role in the household economy of many families’ (Cederroth 1995:6). Later, Cederroth contrasts saving to gambling: ‘Those who cannot, or are simply too impatient to adhere to the boring strategy of long saving periods before getting their reward, frequently try to find shortcuts and instant fortunes by various kinds of gambling’ (Cederroth 1995:170).

I believe that these interpretations are too simple. Many villagers said, they started to gamble in hope for a quick fortune, but after some time, these
motivations changed and the game became a reason in itself. At the gambling place, their eyes start to flicker, they meet with friends, and experience moments of total ecstasy or despair. Often, gambling is an addiction and gamblers refer to it as the real thing, the game that makes a boring life interesting. At the gambling places, friends are made and alliances develop which compensate for social disapproval from society at large.

Further, from the examples in this chapter it can be seen that gambling, sexual promiscuity and speculative trading often go together. This is not a coincidence, as these practices are often related and once being *nakal*, it becomes difficult to go into society again. It slowly develops into a style of living with attributed expectations, social relations and an inherent repertoire of choices. The *orang nakal* represent a way of life that is probably not that economically attractive as most of them do not accumulate much, but it is appealing for many youngsters and older men in search for some thrill to enliven dull village life.

Moreover, being *nakal* offers poorer villagers the change to acquire some status (and not only among their own folks) as daredevil and true men. Risk taking represents machismo, the he-man, and probably the only chance to obtain a better life which otherwise could never be achieved. Being wayward and *jago* enables one to win at least some kudos in the cultural, sexual and political domain of Krajan. Sometimes, being *nakal* develops into a creative counter strategy, a life filled with gambling and dangerous living offering an opportunity to distinguish oneself from the bourgeois, the common folk, the people who never become anything special.

An example of an *orang nakal* who has become successful is Bagenda, the village head. Since his teenage years, he was known and feared in the area as an uncontrollable daredevil, involved in all kinds of semi-legal enterprises, able to resist and cooperate with local leaders, the police and the military. Often, villagers used nicknames for him referring to famous fighting cocks or bulls. He was elected village head at the age of 26. Until now, much of his power and prestige is based on his past and his rigid, creative and sometimes violent style of leadership.

The similarity between him and the fighting cock (*jago*) is clear and this term is also used by villagers for other reasons. Within and outside Krajan, he is well known for his brutality, his success as village leader and for his sexual escapades. *Jago* is a word commonly and historically used for gang leaders and their machismo in Indonesia (Schulte Nordholt 1991). The relationship between gambling and crossing sexual borders is often mentioned by (religious) opponents, by women, by spectators and by players themselves. *Jago* not only receive status from daring bets, but also from having many
extramarital affairs as well. Engaging in illegal sexual relationships can be more risky than gambling.

**Extra-Marital Relationships in Krajan**

Another form of risk-taking in Krajan is the engagement in extra-marital relationships. Although the risk of revenge (*carok*) is high, the number of men and women engaging into extra-marital relationships is considerable. Of the sixty adults in the neighbourhood, a large majority of the men and about half of the women have had sexual experiences or relationships outside marriage. Often these affairs remain hidden but sometimes, when a couple is discovered, the case is brought to public trial.

The general norm is that no extra maritral relationships should take place but, within certain limits of decency, extramarital relationships can be acceptable. It depends on the people involved, who knows about it, and how the relationship develops. Love relationships outside forced weddings, or relationships of widows with married men, and relationships of first wives in polygamous households are sometimes acceptable, but only if they remain hidden and invisible, which is difficult as houses stand close to each other and are always open. Often, sisters, brothers or mothers of the girl who know or are suspect about an affair, protect the couple if needed. Often, neighbours also know or suspect an affair, but do not bring it into the open as long as maintaining good relationships with the families involved is considered more important than moral considerations. In addition, the fear of the revenge by the man involved, or his friends, refrains people from bringing it to the fore.

If an affair is not socially acceptable, continues too long, becomes too visible, or is disapproved by most relatives and neighbours, and leads to gossip, a discovery is likely and in the most extreme cases it will be reported to the village counsel. Most of the discoveries I studied during the research period, concerned men from outside the village such as peddlers, tobacco traders, schoolmasters and the like who had a relationship with a woman or girl.

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9 In the area I lived, quite some cases have been discovered over the years. Other stories I received from men and sometimes women and healers (*dukun*) who told me about their sexual escapades and of those of close friends for whom they had ever provided an alibi. Many of these stories could later be crosschecked by my wife, or by friends. Sometimes we accidentally came across signs of such relations as for instance when our domestic helper, put a bag with water in our fridge. When we asked for what purpose she did this, she told that a close friend and neighbour had asked her secretly for a large bag with ice. She had not menstruated this month and she was afraid she was pregnant. Her husband had gone to Kalimantan four months ago. Other stories provided indirect clues such as illegal abortions and women inquiring privately for abortion pills.
from Krajan. In some other cases, the relationships came to the fore when the man or his family was not liked by the relatives and neighbours of the girl. If brought to the open, cases have to be settled according to local law, the couple is publicly scorned, huge penalties have to be paid and the couple are often forced to marry.

Men and women having or having had extra-marital relationships are not automatically called *nakal*. It depends on the frequency and the kind of relationship. If the relation and the flirting is too public, playful, macho, short term, or multiple, and lead to gossip, women run the risk of being called *nakal* or cheap (*murah*). *Nakal* is used where women flirt actively, take initiatives, or visit places where men can be found (for instance at certain *warung* and gambling dens). Women who easily give in to pressure from men or to temptations are called *murah* (cheap, or easy; without having any backbone). Being called *nakal* has a very negative connotation for women. Nakal behaviour of women is disproportionally sanctioned.

Despite the tremendous risks of discovery, a love relationship can go on for years despite the fact that other people know about it. Pak Oke told me: ‘The best way and the safest is to search a girl far away in Bondowoso or in another village. Every now and then, you meet in a place where nobody knows you. To love a girl in the neighbourhood is very dangerous because you have to establish very good relationships with the parents, husband and with neighbours of the girl in order to establish a regular visiting pattern to make your presence in the house unobtrusive. You have to make yourself trusted by those most closely related to the girl.’

Another way of diminishing risks is meeting in the house of a friend or relative. This is the safest if you have a friend who does not talk. Some of the *warung* in Krajan and along the road to Bondowoso have this function too. Most *warung* comprise an area to drink and sit and a kitchen with one or more bedrooms, and these beds can be ‘borrowed’ for some time. It is not difficult for women to slip in to a *warung* from the back or to enter the kitchen as most *warung* sell vegetables, *tahu* or dried fish. Men often sit in the front, chatting and drinking coffee. The lover can easily slip into the back of the *warung*, leaving a friend in the front as an alibi. Two or three *warung* in Krajan make quite a good living out of this business.

Clifford Geertz in his famous ‘Notes on the Balinese Cockfight’ explicitly links cockfights with sexuality. He argues that Balinese men identify themselves strongly with their cocks, a symbol for male masculinity, where the fight between cocks is a fight between men (*Geertz* 1973:417). In accordance with Geertz’ observations, De Jonge analysed the Madurese bullfight on East Java as a symbol of Madurese masculinity and sexuality offering a valuable picture of
aspects of society which in other spheres of life tend to stay invisible (De Jonge 1990, 1994).

De Jonge draws a parallel between Madurese bullfights, *aduan sapi*, in the arena of Bondowoso and Madurese society at large:

The *aduan sapi* is replete with sexual symbolism. The arena and its immediate surroundings are a stage for the expression of ‘male sociability’, and the fights as well as the surrounding phenomena serve ‘male identity functions’. Bulls are symbols *par excellence* of sexual vigour, courage, power, and aggressiveness [...] To watch and take part in the contests, even through betting or by hanging around the arena, enhances the masculine identity of those concerned. This way their machismo is strengthened and they are encouraged to display the connected behaviour and continue in this. The sexual symbolism [of the bull] is confirmed down to the last detail, as is apparent from the rubbing of the area around the bull’s genitals and the painting, polishing and decorating of its horns, which are phallic symbols (Blok 1981: 427). The high point of the event [bullfight] is perhaps the dance [...] of the winning bull. At that moment, the bull’s power is metaphorically taken over by the men and displayed to the woman. (*cf.* Douglass 1984:243) The events inside and outside the arena unambiguously emphasize and reinforce Madurese ideas about relations between the sexes.

Indeed, the sexual connotations in the Madurese bullfight and jokes surrounding the animals and owners are manifold. In analogy to the bullfight, Madurese men fight for money and women. In showing force and masculinity, they get more attention from women and receive more status. This fighting often takes the shape of gambling and wagering family life, status and safety as the consequences of discovery can be high and sexual affairs – or even rumours about it – easily lead to fights, hatred, or even revenge murder (*carok*). The play for women and status does involve non-material chances and losses, although money is often involved and the financial risks can be high.

Since colonial times, Madurese men have been known for their touchiness, suspicion, temperament, hot temper, fierceness, vengefulness, combativeness and violence (De Jonge 1995:13). Since 1994, no murders have occurred in Krajan due to repression by the village head, but some villagers have been wounded in fights during the research period. In the same period, at least four men have been killed by *carok* near the village.

Given the dangers and risks involved, one might wonder why women take these risks and get involved in extra-marital relationships. For women, there
are a number of reasons to engage in risky extra-marital relationships. Among the reasons are love and desire, financial reasons, status and the ‘thrill’ – the wish to live more dangerously. Although not allowed by the government, Krajan girls often marry at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Madurese women in East Java are among the youngest to marry in Indonesia (Jones 2001). Often this first marriage is seen by girls as a way to fulfil the wish of the parents, or just as a logical consequence of having finished primary school. Often, these marriages break up after two or three years and then the girl is free to marry a more desired partner. Around 30–40% of first marriages break up after a few years.

A marriage is really counted as a marriage if there has been sexual intercourse. An inability to perform sexual duties can be a legitimate reason for divorce (Niehof 1985). Often the potential husband, or his relatives, try to force or persuade a girl to sleep with him. However, girls who do not want to marry the choice of their parents can fiercely refuse. If they resist their parents, they might be beaten, refused food or locked up until they do agree. Sometimes, relatives even take watch in the house of the new married couple to ensure they stay in the same bed for the whole night.

Although sexuality in Krajan is connected to marriage, pleasure and reproduction, marriage usually has nothing to do with notions of romantic love. A popular Indonesian saying is: ‘Marriage teaches you to love your husband’ and some female informants added: ‘or to hate him’. Nevertheless, many marriages stay unbroken. Common reasons to marry and to stay married are that an independent household forms an economic and autonomous unit and offers social security, care and access to an income. Only by marriage can a couple gain access to crucial resources such as land, cows and collective labour arrangements.

Hidden sexual relationships outside the marriage might be a better option for both men and women frustrated in their marriage. For instance, Mega, a young woman, who was forced to get married eight years ago, managed to continue a loving relationship with her former boyfriend. In her case, maintaining her marriage and keeping a secret love affair is satisfying. She keeps on good

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10 For marriage, a health and age certificate is needed. All girls have to be checked by the local health post if they are already physically ready for marriage. At this occasion they receive also information about anti-conception. As girls usually do not know their age, the local nurse gives a statement that the girl is sixteen years old. Another possibility is that the girls marries and only gets permission from local religious leaders. As soon as the girl is sixteen, the marriage is officially registered. Often marriages are not registered at all due to expenses involved.
terms with the relatives of her husband, she respects her parents, and keeps a
good image in the society. With the help of her mother, she is able to meet her
lover every now and then. The marriage stays together, while needs and desires
can be satisfied elsewhere. Some of these women (and often their mothers)
actively use and enjoy the room of manoeuvre created by attention and finan-
cial gifts from lovers.

The foregoing description of engagement in sexual relationships might be
too positive. Especially for women, the risks of extra-marital relationships are
high. Not all young women are able to deal with their loving relationship in a
positive way. Some urge their lovers to marry them and threat with suicide if he
does not want to. In more than one case during the fieldwork, young women
committed suicide when their love affair came out and their lover refused
to marry her, or meeting became impossible. Often, thwarted love, or being
deserted, leads to sorrow, frustration, and pain among young women.

In addition, the behaviour of jago is often threatening to women. Some are
lured or forced into a relationship with some of the jago men and cannot resist
the demands of these men. In other cases, women were raped. In societies like
this, often women become victims of subordination and power of macho men
and for them, machismo and other attractions of male behaviour are more
often a heavy burden than a pleasure.

**Speculation**

Among the wayward people in society are also those who, according to villag-
ers, take reckless risks in farming and trade. Insecurities in crop output are
normal in that farming in Krajan is insecure due to fluctuations in rainfall,
market prices, etc. According to villagers, reckless risks are those risks that
endanger livelihood security in the long run. Often, risk takers in agriculture
are also daredevils in other sectors of society. A good example is the family of
Limatus. They invested a lot of money (the price of a small cow) into tobacco
farming while resources of the family were already limited due to excessive
gambling. By borrowing a lot of money, they wagered the subsistence of the
family and when they lost, few options were available. No more money could
be borrowed and relatives and neighbours no longer wanted to invest in social
relations or mutual gift giving with this family.

Not all speculation in farming is reckless speculation. Traders, large farmers
and local businessmen constantly speculate on possible future profits.
However, if they lose, they usually still have a buffer of protection avoiding a
total fall in livelihood. Here we are concerned with most reckless speculators.
Generally, these villagers believe that every couple of years there is a big smash
and huge amounts of money will be made with tobacco farming. While most
farmers watch market prices of the previous years and contribute to an economic cycle of rising prices when little tobacco is planted followed by declining prices in the years after because of an increase in supply, the wayward people counter the expectations of the majority and take huge risks. Limatus indeed had made some good profits in previous years but, in those years, he was better equipped to counter the negative effects if losing.

Many of those who lost their bets on tobacco and could not repay their debts went to Kalimantan in 1997 hoping for a better future or to recover debts and then start farming in Krajan again. After the 1997 tobacco season, about 40 indebted families left for Kalimantan. Besides those indebted, many others went to Kalimantan in search of a quick profit. Only a very few of these migrants were successful and returned with savings. Most of them were not able to save as gambling in Kalimantan is common, prices are high and returns were disappointing. Given the recent outbreaks of violence against Madurese in Kalimantan, migration turns out to be a very risky choice.11

_Migrants, Ramblers and Vagabonds_

A last related type of risk-taking can be found among migrants, ramblers and vagabonds travelling around with local theatres. Some of these migrants have upped and left without much preparation, ‘just to try their luck elsewhere’, others departed well prepared. Most of the Krajan people migrated to Kalimantan to work in the oil palm plantations for a couple of months up to several years. Some never returned. Those who returned have not been very successful. Only few Krajan villagers got the opportunity to follow a transmigration program. Another share of the migration has a more temporary and cyclical character. If there is news of good working opportunities, some depart for Bali, Madura, lowland Java or the area of Banyuwangi to work as peddler, waged labourer, sugarcane cutter or in logging. Often, villagers travel in bands in search for work.

It is remarkable in this migration process that some of the poorest villagers seem so desperate that they depart with hardly any money, just to try their luck somewhere else. Among them are notorious _nakal_, who feel the fiery breath of debtors or angry villagers, or whom simply want a change of scene and to try their luck elsewhere. Some villagers take the bus to Denpasar, Bali, and leave with just a borrowed Rp 10,000 (1999 prices). The only thing they know is that there is a businessman probably in search of people to sell brushes and sunshields. After paying for the bus, they only have money for two meals.

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11 In spring 2001, when the most violent outbreaks took place, at least 55 Krajan villagers returned. No casualties of Krajan people have been reported.
Sometimes, these people return to the village with some money or goods and are able to buy a bag of rice. Mostly, they return with nothing, because of bad luck, theft, prostitutes or heavy gambling and need to borrow again from neighbours and relatives who would rather see them leaving than arriving. In their absence, they cannot contribute much to the welfare system in the village and are often excluded from village social security.

They exchange village networks for the viable and fluid relationships along the road with fellow ramblers that can be strong for a short time, but often turn out to be unreliable. Participating in migration, criminality and commercial activities is not a sign of innovation or development (Vel 2000:45). It is an option for people who are on the outer edge of the local economy, for whom there is hardly a viable alternative to make a living. Coping with insecurity is the permanent theme of their life. From their own viewpoints: a deviant way to earn cash can be preferable over access to local social security arrangements that do not have much to offer for its poorest members.

Analysing Risk-Taking in Krajan

Deliberate risk-taking by the very poor seems to be a reaction to poor prospects and dull and tied village life. Some people no longer want to work each day for a small wage without any prospect of improvement and a better livelihood with fewer difficulties. They might opt for the thrill and the change of success, even if that means they risk their minimum subsistence. However, even for them, this style is less risky than it seems because gender structures in the household and social relations in the society sometime offer a minimal safety net. Some of those who lost rice fields, cows and family by heavy gambling, switched to another style and found a place in society by becoming a client, or a labourer on their former land. Others continue to live dangerously and roam the region in search for work and fun, not seldom joining theatre groups (ludruk) and only return to their house, parents or relatives in need of a meal or loan. If they run out of possibilities at home, they still can flee to Bali or Kalimantan to start a new life there.12

The aforementioned does not imply that other villagers are not taking risks at all. Most of them do take risks in farming, trade, and social relationships, but

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12 Migration to Kalimantan has increasingly become risky as ethnic violence against Madurese has shifted to the Central and Western provinces of the Island in the 1990s and early 2000s. As a result of the violent clashes between 1999 and 2001, migration is increasingly oriented at cities and towards safe sectors such as plantations and mines.
Risk Taking

they do it within a reassuring context of subsistence base and resource reserves. Huijsman, who concludes that one farmer can be both risk averse and risk preferable at the same time applies to the situation in Krajan. His other conclusion that some farmers, confined by structural differences in society, cannot take risks in farming simply because they are not able to due to poverty (Huijsman 1986) does not hold in the context of Krajan. Further, poor villagers take huge risks if they play with their last penny. Especially for those living on the edge of existence without any chance of improving their livelihood, breaking out of the accepted ways of living might be an attractive option. Based on my fieldwork I conclude that risk-takers are to be found among both rich and poor and old and young farmers. An exclusive focus on the financial aspects of risk-taking does not give enough attention to cultural and normative decisions of farmers, which are not directly related to farming, but affect farming strategies as well.

Risk-takers, who break out of the (social security) system of the village, form a potential threat to the functioning of the society according to many villagers. If too many villagers, or youngsters, follow their example, the whole social fabric of reciprocity and mutual support (village social security) is at risk.

Orang nakal are expected to experience a lot of resistance from those who live a ‘decent’ life, and, more importantly, who are interested in maintaining the local social security system. Besides this, the orthodox Muslims in society are very much opposed to orang nakal and the village head was pressured to forbid gambling and sanction promiscuity. Unlike the past, in case of violation of village norms and traditions, now Islam offers the strongest arguments by those feeling threatened by these deviants. Usually, the most orthodox villagers are not directly engaged in social relations with the deviants. They often react with hostility as they have internalized the moral norms now being violated and experience this violation as a personal attack. Their lifeworld and their group feels most threatened by this behaviour. Radicalisation of Islam in Indonesia is a severe threat for the orang nakal.

This partly explains some of the furious and violent actions of common villagers and orthodox religious groups against gambling and ‘immorality’. During the research period, on several occasions, orthodox Muslims tried to ban gambling and increase penalties on adultery in the village. In the Ramadan of 1998, the bullfight arena in Bondowoso was burnt down as well as places of prostitution. At the same time, they succeeded in banning cockfights in Krajan. Around the 1999 elections, public gambling was also prohibited and gambling places were raided by local followers (pagarnusa) of religious leaders (kiai). Despite these threats, gambling continued, but even more unobtrusively than before.
Concluding Remarks

This chapter has addressed excessive forms of risk-taking by villagers, with customary risk-taking being outside the scope of this chapter. In describing peasants’ excessive risk-taking, I wanted to question the assumption that peasants are inherently risk-averse. The practices of the orang nakal (wayward villagers), who take and combine risks and in this way put a severe strain on their financial and non-financial resources, are described. Moreover, a focus on such ‘deviancy’ reveals the norms and structures in village society. I concluded that deliberate risk-taking can be an attractive option for peasants. It seems that the orang nakal see compliance with the village norms, and the inherent social pressures to make huge investments in social security and reciprocal relationships, a price too high.

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of people in Indonesia have seized the opportunities available: cash in the villages has greatly increased, as have risk-taking, gambling and travelling. A number of people have deliberately taken risks and bet on a better life, others just gave up living ‘a decent life’, went nuts or became addicted to gambling or a thrilling lifestyle. In Krajan, around 5 per cent of the population – mostly male – follow such a style of risk-taking, and one that seriously endangers their families’ livelihoods.

Wayward people are deviants in the sense that they ‘differ in moral or social standards from what is considered normal’ (Hornby 1990). By studying deviancy in a society, something about that society can be learnt. Behaviour cannot be described in the abstract, but has to be related to the norms that are socially defined as appropriate and morally binding for people in the society. For the wayward members of society, these norms, coupled with the disapproval of their behaviour, make cooperation and interaction with common villagers difficult. The failure of orang nakal to live up to socially defined expectations often makes life for them both miserable and difficult. Merton (1957) in writing about deviants observed: common people cannot count on them, although in fact they must. Deviants are difficult to predict (also by the scholar analysing societies) and to penalize.

Depicting wayward peasants as deviants does not explain why they live as they do and why, in so many societies there are a number of gamblers and risk-takers. Are they all stubborn and bad people, unsuited to doing good or

Deviancy is an inappropriate term as it has a negative connotation and suggests society is somehow uniform or has a consensus about norms and values. Therefore, I opted to speak of a wayward livelihood and social security style in this book. This style is but one of several possible styles in a society.
following mainstream society? Is risk-taking a viable livelihood style in itself, or just a strange way to make a living, an alternative to a dull life that will never yield a big reward? To answer these questions, I believe, a more differentiated approach is needed, one that offers insight into the reasons and the creativity of the people involved.

The studies by Hefner (1990) and Lewis (1992) discussed in the introduction show that risk-taking is often facilitated by the specific economic and agro-ecological context. In their studies, vegetable farming by its nature invited farmers to take risks in the hope of higher returns. Tobacco has much the same characteristics as vegetables: a cash crop needing expensive inputs with highly unpredictable returns due to fluctuating market prices and climatic risks. Although conditions for speculating are not similar in each society, can they explain everything?

Maybe excessive risk taking is a reaction to, and an unintended consequence of, pressures from policy, culture, religion and social control by the family or village society. Whatever, for some reason some people decide to take an alternative road. Some villagers expressed it as that they simply could not breathe within existing patterns. One said: ‘I just cannot work only for my daily rice. Especially, when I was young, I could not live quietly here in the village, I had to escape every now and then’. Once depicted as nakal, such wayward behaviour can develop into a style that becomes perpetuated by stereotyping, stigmatization, government policies and exclusion from credit or certain forms of income. Thus, societal reactions and non-conforming responses create a ‘spiral of deviancy’ through which relatively minor deviations may be amplified. This is particularly the case for machismo, sexual and gambling behaviours, and for drifting, but much less so for speculation and risk-taking in other spheres of life. Wayward villagers gradually develop a deviant identity, a lifestyle that is difficult to leave behind in village life.

This lifestyle can best be described as reflecting those living dangerously as gamblers, risk-takers, speculators and so-called ‘wayward’ people, the orang nakal. It is a kind of counter-style, contrary to the other styles in society which are oriented towards sharing, accumulating wealth or mutual help. The orang nakal are people oriented towards chance, thrills and risk-taking rather than security. They are the minority of a population who do not want to live according to the rules and regulations of the society, who take deliberate huge risks and are ‘unreasonable and irresponsible’ in the eyes of others. Among these wayward people are some youngsters, criminals, gamblers, prostitutes, some migrants and jago (macho gang leaders).

Engaging in sexual relationships can, for instance, be very risky for the Madurese. Both male and females gamble with their lives, livelihoods and...
social positions. Heavy gamblers can endanger their work, land, the family’s capital and thus the household’s social security. Migrants may give up everything at home for an unsure and dangerous future. Nakal youngsters can consume the family capital by demanding parents sell land to give them money for clothes, a motor bike or other things without contributing to the village economy or to the care for their parents in return.

Risk-takers are to be found among both rich and poor and among old and young farmers. A focus on only the financial aspects of risk-taking overlooks the cultural and normative decisions of farmers that are not directly related to farming but also affect farming strategies. In the eyes of many villagers, these risk-takers, by breaking out of the village system, form a potential threat to the functioning of the society. If too many villagers follow their example, the whole social fabric of reciprocity and mutual support (village social security) is at risk. This partly explains the sometimes furious and violent reactions of common villagers and orthodox religious groups against gambling and ‘immorality’. During the research period, orthodox Muslims tried several times to ban gambling and increase penalties for adultery in the village. During Ramadan 1998, the bullfighting arena in Bondowoso was burnt down along with places where prostitution was carried out. During the same period, cockfighting was banned in Krajan and, around the 1999 elections, public gambling was also prohibited and gambling places were raided by local followers of religious leaders (kiai). Despite these threats, gambling continued but more hidden than before.

The village head of Krajan is a good illustration that daring risk-taking can become a successful lifestyle. He used to be one of the most notorious jago, or delinquents, in the region, but is now highly successful in politics and business. Moreover, his experience and status as a former gang leader, womanizer and daredevil is an important basis of his power and influence in the village, and shows to others that a risky lifestyle does not always end in failure. The reverse might also be true, that those who comply with the village norms and values, and invest in social relations and social security, might also have backed the wrong horse as village social security is not that strong and does not always yield the expected outcome.

Many villagers take risks in business, agriculture or in sexual relations, but these risks are usually taken within a context of security. These are ‘normal’ risks that are reasonable to take once a certain level of subsistence has been achieved. The orientation of orang nakal is different: they do not seem to care about risking the things they have, and are more interested in the chance of winning something and the thrill of the day.

Deliberate risk-taking by the very poor seems to be a reaction to their limited prospects and dull and tied village lives. Some people no longer accept
working every day for a small wage with no prospect of improvement and a better livelihood with fewer difficulties. They might instead opt for the thrill and the chance of success, even if that means risking their minimum subsistence. Maybe also for them, this lifestyle is less risky than it first appears because gender structures in the household and social relations in society will sometimes offer a minimal safety net. Some of those who have lost rice fields, cows and family by heavy gambling have switched to another style and found a place in society by becoming a client or a labourer on their former land. Others continue to live dangerously and to roam the region in search of work and fun, often joining theatre groups (ludruk) and only returning to their house, parents or relatives when in need of a meal or loan. Another possibility might be to run to Bali or Kalimantan to start a new life there. Now our attention shifts to East Kalimantan and to these migrants. In the next section, we turn to how they fare on arrival.