

EXPLORATIONS OF SOCIAL VALUES IN MAGERSARI SETTLEMENT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Providing the needs for low-income housing has been a serious problem and seen as a monumental task to be resolved by the Indonesian government. However, what remains problematic at the present might have a solution from the past; the concept of social relations and values to be reckoned from the kingdoms that once ruled in Cirebon. In the city of Cirebon currently exist three palaces; Keraton Kasepuhan, Keraton Kanoman, and Keraton Kacirebonan. The three palaces are still operating with their royal servants. They have settlements called Magersari. The etymology of the word 'Magersari' comes from the word 'mager' meaning to build a fence or to 'protect' and 'sari' meaning 'the core' or something of essential nature. In the past, Magersari settlements were inhabited exclusively by 'Abdi Dalem' or royal servants, but today, the inhabitants include those who have professions outside the palace. Nevertheless, the concept of social relations and values still exists between the king and the royal servants and extends beyond to the inhabitants from outside of the royal circle. Such a phenomenon could bring to light a new knowledge on how to build trust from everyone concerned in the process of creating new settlements. The purpose of this paper is to unravel the concept of social relations and values in Cirebon Palace's Magersari Settlement. The paper uses phenomenology as a methodology. It is the result of an in-depth study and comparisons between several theoretical studies on issues regarding settlements and their social relations. The paper offers knowledge and an alternative solution to the problem in providing housing for the marginalized and urban poor.

Keywords: Value, Concept, Social Relations, Magersari Settlement

Introduction

Spaces for settlements in urban areas is often problematic, especially in terms of the uneven balance between provision and demands. In Indonesia, the government is expected to provide 15 million units of houses per year, including housing for the marginalized groups. Housing has become a basic need to be urgently addressed. In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provision of housing is one of the targets of development in the fulfillment of basic rights for the urban poor.

The 'sharing culture' still being practiced in palaces represents a local knowledge that can be studied for this purpose. Notably, with the spread of new settlements creating exclusivity on their own rights without any efforts to integrate with existing local settlements. Moreover, the building of new settlements often leads to internal conflicts in local communities and among early settlers. Relationships between original settlers with new residents and the settlers with developers often result in conflicts. The government's role as a facilitator of development is limited by operational rules that cannot be completed by the developers. Furthermore, the regulation of the Ministry of Public Housing number 04, (2013) regarding guidelines implementation for infrastructure aid, facilities and public utilities for landed houses are often disregarded by the developers housing. Eventually, local communities (early settlers) are often denying their basic rights of having the services from public facilities or having the right to public space. This phenomenon shows that developers only want the benefits of homeowners.

It is often argued that the house is "a place which holds meaning and significance" (Tomas et al, 2014) and is not only a place we can escape to, but it can also be a place we want to escape *from* (Tomas et al, 2014). Contrary to the problematic relationships between local communities and developers mentioned earlier, the Magersari settlement has developed a harmony between settlers and palaces. Such a relationship had been formed throughout centuries without any notable conflicts. Social phenomenon between Magersari inhabitants and palaces-and the interaction between related parties in such distinct spatial settings can be studied to produce new knowledge concerning values in Indonesia. The problem in question is as follows: What are local spatial values that can be learned from the phenomenon of Magersari settlement in Cirebon Palaces?

Review of Literature

To understand this phenomena, one may relate to the settlement space of Kampung Kauman in Yogyakarta. Kampung Kauman is a residential space located around the palace. Kampung Kauman has specialties for *abdi dalem* interms of obtaining land as the place of residence (Trihatmodjo,2010). Trihatmodjo points out that the value and meaning of Kampung Kauman are strongly related to consensus and desacralization of space (2010). However, these differ from the values and meanings in Magersari Keraton Cirebon.

One of the other similar studies by Chen (1993) reveals that there are different processes in the planning of traditional settlements in the Imperial Territory of Nanjing-China. Traditional settlements are better suited to people's behaviors and local lifestyles. There, the fort became the boundary of the traditional residential area of the Nanjing-China City Empire. It is notable that the Magersari Keraton Cirebon area also has a fort as a boundary of space. The local pattern of behavior and lifestyle is still the same marker for traditional settlements both in Nanjing China and Magersari Cirebon.

The excavation of traditional values such as in the Magersari Region must be maintained. As Saleh says, "It concludes that today 's architect and planner cannot ignore the complex interaction of the social and physical environment and, indeed, the values of society in the rush of modernity" (1995). Lim (2017 in Yildirim, 2012) asserts that traditional buildings accommodate a value. The long-standing traditional values in the Cirebon Palace have resulted in the penetration of values into the Magersari Settlement Area. This shows the importance of assessing the value of a traditional settlement.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical discussion in this research functions as a background knowledge as opposed to being the basic formulation of the research hypothesis. The basic knowledge functions as a cornerstone in a theoretical dialogue. This paper focuses on a theoretical dialogue in the study of local value. Space is abstract in nature and has a connotation of place (Tuan, 2001) which explains the concept of place as a special kind of object. Tuan further explains that "mythical space" is an intellectual construct that engages the emotions and familiarity into a

place that has its own value. "Home is a place which holds meaning and significance" (Tomas et al, 2014). In addition, in the theory of housing involving a variety of scientific disciplines such as social sciences, it can explain 'social entities', 'relations' (between them) and 'processes' (involving entities in relations) (Ruonavaara, 2018). Some references to local wisdom from the old Sundanese adage, "*Tekad, Ucapan, Lampah*" or Will, Thought and Deed is one and inseparable or in the modern reasoning known as the unity of myths, logos, and ethos are equivalent to spirituality, rationality, and morality (Sumarjo, 2010) which has become the background knowledge supporting this paper.

It is known that space is not merely a physical object but also represents the values within. This background knowledge will be referred to in the theoretical dialogue throughout the paper in search for the meaning of the local value of Magersari settlement in Cirebon Palaces.

Research Methodology

This study returns to the fundamentals that gave birth to ideas in western philosophy as the starting point. Plato suggests that truth can be achieved through human reasoning while Aristotle assumes that truth lies in immanence. Plato's idea grew into an understanding of the truth that relies on the ability to use logic, while Aristotle's grew into a concept of positivism. Immanuel Kant differentiates phenomenon (what is seen) and noumenon (what lies beneath what is seen) as something that bridges the dualism of subject-object that is the precursor of the phenomenological approach (Adian, 2010). Constructivism is the paradigm used in this research sheltered by phenomenology, one that is suggested by Husserl (Agustina et al, 2017).

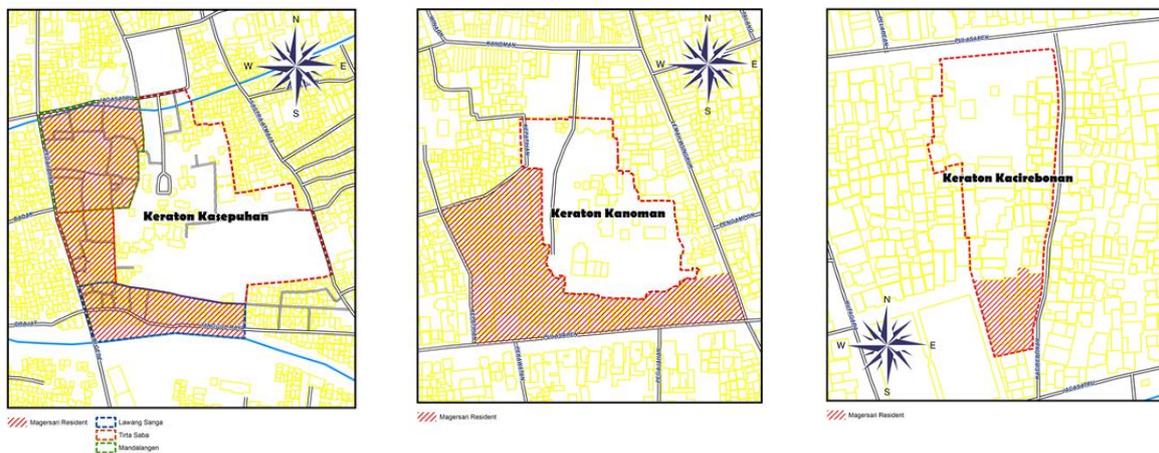
The research conducts interviews and sets "inter-subjective validity" of what is perceived by others to draw the shared experiences of the informants into the descriptive manner in order to identify the essence. The essence is obtained through the process of epoch, phenomenological reduction, bracketing, and the development of structural synthesis to obtain a deeper meaning. Therefore, the researchers describe the whole experience of the early research. The description process is then carried out to obtain significant information unit as an element of a phenomenon that has been experienced from the grand tour. Thereafter, conducting the unitisation of various descriptions of the result of field information has been written in the research logbook (Agustina et al, 2016). In the inductive phenomenon exploration method, followed, the process of identification and classification of information units consists of the following: (1) the functions of the palace, (2) the relation of kings, (3) the rituals, (4) history, (5) physical patterns, and (6) traditions. Then from 6 units of information, it was reduced to empirical themes consisting of economic activities, socio-cultural and physical spatial activities. The concept is then made. Concept formulation is closely related to both textual and contextual understanding. The space of Magersari settlement is formed from the following framework: (1) Two dimensionals related to actions and land articulation (2) Three dimensionals related to spatial characteristics which have a vertical and horizontal mass relationship, (3) Four-dimensionals related to history, culture and beliefs.

Research Findings and Analysis: The phenomena of Magersari residential area

Results of research conducted from 2015 to 2018 shows that Magersari is an area that has a spatial arrangement to a pattern or scheme of *fencing, fortifying* or *guarding* the Keraton. Indeed, the Magersari settlement area is surrounded by the Keraton fortress. This statement was made by the King of the Keraton Kasepuhan namely Sultan Arief Natadiningrat (2015) and by Mr. Iman Sugiman (2015;2016;2017;2018). It is an area given by the king specifically to the *Abdi Dalem* (people who dedicate themselves to serve the Keraton). Accordingly, *Magersari's* main function is to act as a residential area for Keraton's *Abdi Dalem*. (Sultan Arief Natadiningrat and Elang Zen). Fig. 1 shows the location of *Magersari* settlement in relation to Cirebon Palaces area. Magersari settlement is an area located mainly around Keraton-Keraton in Cirebon. Those are Keraton Kasepuhan, Keraton Kanoman dan Keraton Kacirebonan. Keraton-keraton Cirebon have historical value as the center that spread Islam in the West part

of Java. Spread of Islam in Cirebon was pioneered by Sunan Gunung Jati who is one of the members of Wali Sanga. *Wali Sanga* was responsible for the spread of Islamic teachings in Java (Agustina, et al, 2018). In the 16th century, Cirebon Sultanate led by Pangeran Girilaya handed over Cirebon to his three sons; Pangeran Martawijaya, Pangeran Kartawijaya, & Dan Pangeran Wangsakerta. One of his sons, Pangeran Wangsakerta, refused to accept his kingship and decided to learn about Islam. Therefore, Pangeran Wangsakerta wasn't entitled to be a Sultan but became a Panembahan instead.

Henceforth, Cirebon Sultanate had two rulers; Pangeran Giri Laya, Martawijaya, titled as Sultan Sepuh I of Keraton Kasepuhan, and Pangeran Kartawijaya, titled as Sultan Anom I of Keraton Kanoman. Pangeran Martawijaya was the older brother of Pangeran Kartawijaya. In 1808, Keraton Kanoman was divided into two Sultanates; Keraton Kanoman itself and Keraton Kacirebonan. Since then there are three Keratons in Cirebon (Agustina et al, 2016).



Magersari Area of Keraton Kasepuhan

Magersari Area of Keraton Kanoman

Magersari Area of Keraton Kacirebonan

Fig. 1: Magersari Area of the Cirebon Palaces

Source: Agustina et al; 2018

Of the three palaces, only the Keraton Kasepuhan still has the power of the *magersari* land, because the Keraton Kanoman Palace and the Keraton Kacirebonan of Magersari land ownership have been transferred to other parties (the occupants). However, the physical structure of the Magersari area of the three palaces shows the same pattern, namely *Magersari* settlement formed a grid pattern with high-density occupants. The built street network is paved by concrete, and the street width ranges about 1.5-2 meters. Motorcycle is the only kind of vehicle that can access these streets. Drainage sewers are not located by the side of the roads but underneath them. The needs of water for the residents are channeled through fresh water piping network and shallow water wells while electricity is supplied through the electrical grid (Fig. 2).



Keraton Fortress and House building at Magersari Keraton Kasepuhan The road at Magersari Keraton Kasepuhan Road and house building at Magersari Keraton Kanoman

Fig. 2: Roads and house buildings in Magersari

Source: Agustina et al, 2017

Each palace has a door connecting directly to the *Magersari*. Even in the Keraton Kasepuhan, there are still houses of former palace's *patih* (prime ministers) connected through relatively large doors. The house is called the *Rumah Gedong*, which means that the building with physical material made of brick because the surrounding building material was made of bamboo cubicles. Now the building is a permanent building made with brick. In the past, the Magersari area in the Kasepuhan Palace was divided into three village blocks, namely *Mandalangen*, *Tirta Saba* and *Lawangsanga* (Agustina, 2015). The name of the village reflects the physical characteristics and functions of the land at that time. *Mandalangen* is a village for *abdi dalem* (courtiers) who served and had a position in the Keraton. *Tirta Saba* was a village with a pool of water, which served as a retention pond, while *Lawangsanga* was the door to the back of the palace. *Lawangsanga* which means nine doors is a pier located on the Kriyan River with the Java Sea. The Kasepuhan Palace through *Lawangsanga* has direct access to the Java Sea (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Connecting door to Magersari at Keraton Kasepuhan and another artifact

Source: Agustina et al, 2018

The residents of Magersari are often involved in Keraton's activities, especially the ones that are related to traditions. Keraton held tradition-related events almost on a monthly basis in a single year (Agustina, 2015). Islamic holidays like *Ramadhan*, *Syawalan*, *Rajaban*, and *Muludan* are regarded as important events in Keraton traditions. Among others is the *Bubur Syuro* tradition held on the 10th in the month of *Muharam* according to Islamic lunar calendar. *Bubur Syuro* is a porridge meal mixed with many sorts of tubers like taro, yam, beans, and other plants. Then *Garut citrus*, potato frikadeller, *serundeng* (spicy fried coconut flakes, made from

sautéing grated coconut), fried onions, basil, chili, and other spices. *Bubur Syuro* was then distributed in the morning to local people, *Abdi Dalem*, Magersari inhabitants and so on.

Bubur Syuro tradition which is held on the 10th of *Muharram* in Hijriyah (Islamic year) coincides with the commemoration of orphan's day in Javanese Islamic tradition. And the 10th of *Muharram* is also an important date in the Islamic tradition in remembrance of the event of the great flood which happened when Noah and his followers were rescued by building an ark before the flood devastated the land. Another notable tradition is the *Rewahan*, of which its very term is taken from the name of a month in Javanese calendar previous to the month of Ramadhan. Every approaching month of Ramadhan is greeted by Keraton by holding the event of *Ruwahan* held in Keraton. In the middle of the month of *Syaban* on exactly the 15th, known as *Nisfu Syaban*, is a very important day, which is the closing book of deeds for Muslims. The procession is carried out after the sunset prayer. The stages start from a 2 rakaat prayer, followed by reciting *Surat Yasin* three times, and after completing the *Isha* prayer followed by *Nisfu Syaban* Quran recitation attended by Sultan, Keraton headmen, Masjid Agung community, the residents and *Abdi Dalem*, celebrated with *Nasi Bogana* (Bogana Rice) distributed to attendants from the surrounding areas of Keraton. This event will be more visible in the procession of traditions where the community will come to the palace because of the belief (Agustina, et al., 2018). The phenomena of traditions can be seen in the procession of events (Fig. 4).

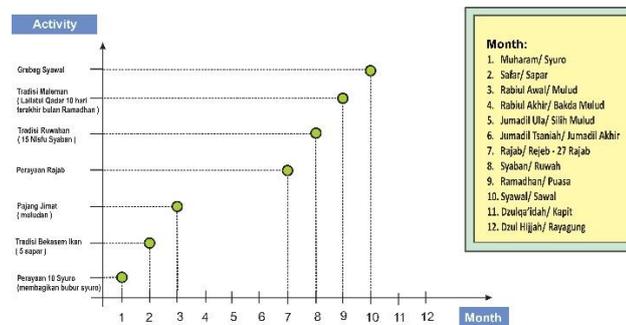


Figure 4. Traditions in Keraton
Source: (Agustina, 2018)

Of all the traditions adhered by Keraton, there are two that hold great interest from the attendants; The tradition of *Muludan* with the procession of *Panjang Jimat/Pelal* and the tradition of *Syawalan*. The space that has a great appeal for the tradition of *Muludan* is Keraton while for the *Syawalan* is Sunan Gunung Jati. For the tradition of *Panjang Jimat*, many inhabitants of Magersari are involved as vendors (Agustina et al, 2016). The place for them to vend is allocated to the inner side of Keraton fortress. The position of magersari residents forms like a safety fence for the palace. This shows that magersari is the protector of the palace and the palace trusts the magersari residents as their protector. Their placement is shown in Fig. 5.



Fig. 5: The locations of Magersari vendors
During the event of Pelal/Panjang Jimat in the month of Mulud in Keraton Kasepuhan
Source: Agustina, et al; 2018

The *Kliwonan* is a tradition held on the night before Friday *Kliwon* (Javanese Calendar). This tradition has a long-standing history among the people. The *Kliwonan* tradition is held in the form of Quran recitation, dhikr, and prayer at Mosque. The spatial radius formed by these events is centered around the Mosque and then radiates towards the end at *Makam Gunung Jati* (the tomb of Gunung Jati) (Agustina et al, 2016). This tradition is attended not only by people from Cirebon but also by the general public from different regions. Attendants have started to come to the events from the time of *Ashr* prayer (afternoon prayer).

Local Spatial Values of Magersari Settlement

Values have a meaning associated with the measurement system, hierarchy and quality or significance to man (Bagus, 2000). While the concept is an idea or perception, a mental depiction of an object, or a process that exists beyond the language of reasoning in order to understand certain things. The concept formulation of Magersari spatial values corresponds to a spatial dimension created locally through induction.

The local spatial concept in Magersari can be constructed from pattern construct and spatial value construct. The pattern construct can be perceived by three things: 1. Activity pattern, 2. Spiritual belief pattern, 3. Spatial pattern. The three patterns are explained through signified and signifier of earlier mentioned themes. The construct of values can be divided into value attachment and value system. Spatial value attachment of Magersari is very much related to the past (historical attachment), most notably the spread of Islam by Sunan Gunung Jati. The attachment to Sunan Gunung Jati could not be detached from this area. It is as if the Keraton itself is an embodiment and a constant reminder of the historical figure. The value system brought by Sunan Gunung Jati still exists in Keraton spaces including Magersari settlement. Now the embodiment of Sunan Gunung Jati rests upon Sultan in Cirebon Palaces. He is the contemporary image of a historical Sunan Gunung Jati.

The value system construct is derived from the phenomena of Magersari settlement. This value is revealed through phenomenological sign, signifier and signified. The value system construct shows a religious value system. The value system constructs a sense of brotherhood called *Wargi*, the value of sharing, and a value of spatial sanctity. Those values render the settlement as a space for *Ummah*. A unified space between Keraton and its people, and there lies a spatial unity and integration.

Those values are affected by value defining factors constructed by spiritual consciousness from the King/Ruler of Keraton. The value defining factors exist due to the words of wisdom from Sunan Gunung Jati: *Ingsun Titipna Tajug Lan Fakir Miskin* (Agustina, 2015). Such philosophy implies the entrustment/responsibility in taking care of *Tajug*, a place to worship and also of the poor (Agustina, 2017), to entrust means to give a mandate to the next generations. This philosophy is constructed from the dominant *Musholla* (prayer building) phenomena, and Magersari settlement conserved and protected as an integral part of Keraton of which its inhabitants come from the marginalized Muslim group. Such underlying philosophy is adhered in determining all policies by the King in Keraton. The construct of this local concept is shown in Fig. 6.

Religious values are indicated through textual comprehension of *Wargi* culture, space sharing, and spatial sanctity. Transferability is executed through theoretical dialogue approach of concept findings from field research. The concept of spatial value is affected by defining factors; that is the spiritual consciousness of the King/Ruler in the residential space. The spiritual consciousness is reflected throughout horizontal space in the settlement. Spirituality is an activity of perceiving life. Perennial philosophy explains that in essence, life and consciousness are the same. This means that life is the exteriority of spiritual manifestation while consciousness is the interiority of spiritual human being. Therefore, the process of presenting meaning or value (reality) in the realm of a leader's consciousness is essential in the making of policies, including spatial policies for settlement.

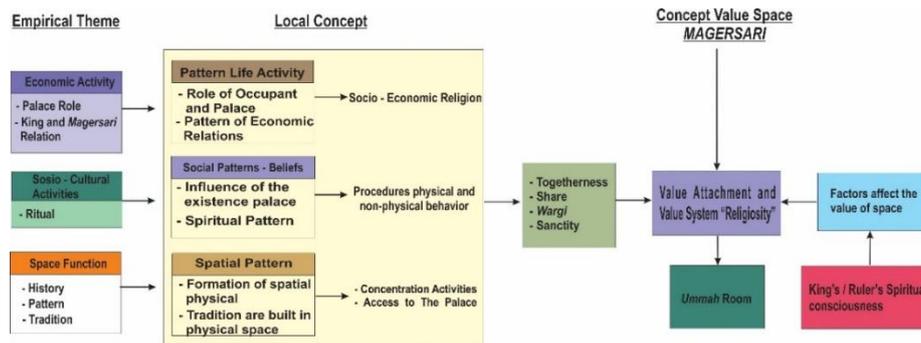


Figure 6. The concept of local spatial values

Source: Agustina, 2018

A spatial consciousness constructed from Magersari settlement is one that is of religiosity. A consciousness that reflects a spatial construct of the ruling entity/the King. Basically, a human being has a hierarchy of reality. Huston Smith in his book “The Forgotten Truth” (Hidayat, 2003) called this levels as *the great chain of being* or existential levels. The existential planes comprised of God at the highest and the rest including human beings and other creatures beneath him. Planes of existence consist of terrestrial, intermediate, celestial and causal/infinite plane. A human being has levels of existence i.e. level of selfhood that is body and mind, and soul or in Islamic term: *jims*, *nafs* and *‘aql* – believed to exist as what is called “spirit”. Attainment in planes of existence can be reached by a human being from the lowest to the highest that is God. The attempt to reach the highest or experiencing God is performed through mystical experience also called experience of unification or *wahdat-u ‘lwujud* (Hidayat, 2003). A unification is shown through a parameter of inner sense as a spiritual blessing. Spiritual blessings according to Tamami (2011) are achieved by the human beings with characteristics of: (1) *khauf* or fearful (2) *tawadhu* or humility (3) *takwa* or self-preservation (4) *ikhlas* or sincerity (5) *shukr* or grateful (6) *mutmai’nah* or serenity.

Current phenomena represents the King’s spirituality shown from his policies in giving a place to reside for the marginalized group instead of choosing to commercialize the land. The commercialization of land as a materialistic value is non-existent in the Magersari settlement, withstanding the current global civilization that is becoming more materialistic and dominates human lifestyle entirely. Globalization is an era of openness with advanced technology and telecommunication. Culturally, the era of openness gives channels for influences from many different nations and societies with diverse cultures especially the one that affects a person’s propensity to materialism. This situation opens up transcultural phenomena in many ethnic groups and societies in Indonesia including developing a materialist culture. The rise of such era requires wisdom, prudence, vigilance and conducive attitude towards life (Suratno, 2014).

Conclusions

This research has sought to find a local spatial concept that is religiosity. The Magersari local spatial concept can be formulated from pattern construct and spatial value construct. The pattern construct can be perceived by three things: 1. Activity pattern, 2. Spiritual belief pattern, 3. Spatial pattern. The three patterns are explained through signified and signifier of themes. The construct of value can be divided into value attachment and value system. Spatial value attachment of Magersari is related to a historical figure i.e. Sunan Gunung Jati. Currently, the descendants of Sunan Gunung Djati still exist and still carry on the tradition of his past (Agustina et al, 2018). A construct of value system suggests one that is of religiosity. A value system that constructs a sense of brotherhood or *Wargi*, the value of sharing and the value of spatial sanctity. Such values create a space for *Ummah*, a space of consciousness created by a common understanding, belief and the spirit of togetherness, sharing and helping each other. Those values are affected by value defining factors constructed by the spiritual consciousness

of the King/Ruler of Keraton. This local value can be employed in planning a settlement for a marginalized group.

The local spatial concept found in Magersari settlement can be considered as an example. Developers must be able to create mutual trust and protection for settlers from marginalized groups. They should provide space for marginalized people by means of activities such as fencing / protecting settlers in the established group. Further, it should create a trusting relationship between marginal and established communities through joint activities and integrated space. The spatial arrangement could be derived from the space for *Ummah*, a space that unites commercialized spaces and the space for the marginalized group. This paper argues that this is a response to concerns regarding this issue from the developers of housing in Indonesia and can be utilized in the development of culturally meaningful housing in Indonesia.

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