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## In Search of the Power of Javanese Culture against the Cultural Urbanization in Kotagede, Yogyakarta-Indonesia

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### Abstract

People living now in urban area in most of isolated territory and tend to separated each other from a socio-cultural standpoint which is not found in Kotagede, Yogyakarta. Shared spaces and public accesses that passing private properties are naturally exist. Many of spaces, artifacts and people life were relatively remains the same for several decades. A study that based on the paradigm of architectural-anthropology is intended to explore the ability of inhabitant to face the compulsion of cultural urbanization. The results are way of life, social relationship, and religiosity of Javanese culture become a power to maintain cultural urbanization pressure.

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*Keywords:* Cultural urbanization; architectural-anthropology; Javanese culture; socio-culture-environment relationship

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### 1. Introduction

Urbanization is an issue faced by cities in developing countries such as Indonesia. Urbanization is not only seen as a movement or a migration from rural or suburban areas to the city, but from the standpoint of cultural phenomena is the culture change from an agrarian culture to the modern culture of the city or industrialists. Although the population was residing in the city, but generally most of their way of life is still much closed to the agrarian culture, which is characterized by a simple way of life, togetherness, and a strong social interaction. This kind of life is still evident in the kampong area of the city, which can be regarded as a housing environment that has the authority to determine their lives. The term kampong has been known since the early 20th century in Indonesia as a housing phenomenon in the era of Dutch

colonization for the indigenous population, which is characterized by simplicity, clutter, density and organic (Santoso, 2006:12-14).

While it can be said that the life of the city tends to be individualistic, mechanistic with low social interaction and the city crowded with private properties that tend to be individualistic, marked by ownership boundaries rigid and clear, even the walls of the fence is solid and massive. Pressures that are socio-economic spillovers from urbanization have the power to transform urban areas into new territory as a product of industrialization residential environments. Urban space, is designed very mechanistic recently, the grid concept, without a clear hierarchy, the separation zone, international style, inhuman scale, high technology construction (Tibbalds, 1992:11-12). Urban space and public realm become no longer human. The disappearance of the city kampong is virtually identical to the loss of human life.

Kampong is a bastion of humanity in the modern city (Pangarsa, 2008: 73-74). Kampong in city areas is the severe of urbanization nowadays. It is very different in Kotagede as part of the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In the residential complex as the place of origin of the city is based on the life of traditional Javanese culture is almost unchanged for decades. Tranquility, communality, high socialization, and simplicity of life are remarkably real. It is interesting to learn that in the pressures of city life and the swift currents of individualism-industrialists this environment still exists with particular cultural lives of its citizens. Not found in the public-private dichotomy in micro spaces, and mezzo environment. It's like the concept of representational space as Levebre pointed out that space in fact exist in the community, wishful dreams, desires, hopes and agreements (Lefebvre, 1998: 38-39, 398). Public-private terminology is not easy defined, or expressed with definite boundaries. The spaces do not require rigid territorial boundaries. Space in a public realm is for all people, and no one can claim his own territory. Sharing space is based on social agreement. Space becomes alive and useful based on people consciousness, naturally sharing. Space in fact exists in imagination and hope of the users. Based on the fact that the conditions of space in urban areas growing niche to be no longer human and declining in many aspects, visual, physical, social, cultural, is more or less caused by negative impacts of urbanization and modernization, in this paper described the effort to learn from the past through the study of Javanese culture in Kotagede, Yogyakarta in the face of cultural pressures that urbanization can change the environment and the lives of its citizens. Presumably that the community has the ability and power to maintain the existence of traditional life and to keep the environment and life within that has harmony and humanistic for cities in the future.

### *1.1. The aim of research*

To explore and to formulate key aspects of the cultural life of the community that still exist that explain the basis of man's relationship with man, man and his environment as a cultural force in the face of urbanization with the case of Kotagede Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

### *1.2. Research method*

Using architectural anthropology point of view through the interpretation of space and form to reveal how people use and view architecture. This interpretation can be obtained from exactly how society culture, how people interact with each other and their environment. Humans act and behave towards each other and the environment is basically a way of life as a reflection of culture. How humans use space can be seen as a symbolic activity that explains the concept of a more global and general lifestyle, values, way of life and culture of the society (Rapoport, 1977: 20). With a basic understanding of the activity on how humans behave and act are symbolic expressions of the culture, then the method of semiotics as a series of endless reading of the sign will be used (Piliang, 2003: 256). The process of interpretation of the

existence of space, and how people behave and act in the space is placed as a symbol that can be interpreted through Javanese culture references to reveal key aspects of the ability in protecting the environment and cultural life in it. The discussion is developed to gain a conceptual understanding of how the cultural power can be an essential anvil to face a cultural urbanization insistence.

## 2. The People, Space and Environment of Kotagede

Kotagede is located about five kilometers in the south of the city center. Kotagede was the forerunner of Mataram palace began to grow at the end of the Sixteenth century. It was known as the walled city. Despite the various changes and developments, basically it still leaves the spatial arrangement and the built environment appearance. Narrow walled alleys become the most prominent feature, shared spaces are always found in each house group, public accesses passing between private properties, *pringgitan* which means a space like terrace in front part of traditional Javanese house coincides with a public open space is mostly exist. Nowadays there are no ruinous fragments of the wall constructed in the early history of the town can be found (Santosa, 2007: 3-9).

The area of Kotagede is around 3 sq.km. It consists of three Sub districts or *kelurahan* that are Rejowinangun, Prenggan and Purbayan. The number of population of each sub district is averagely 10 thousand (Kecamatan, 2007: 3-10). In general, the north area Rejowinangun is more likely to change or modern, while the physical elements and the space in the Purbayan and Prenggan seem do not change much. In this study, a part of the area in the Sub district Prenggan is a locus of research.

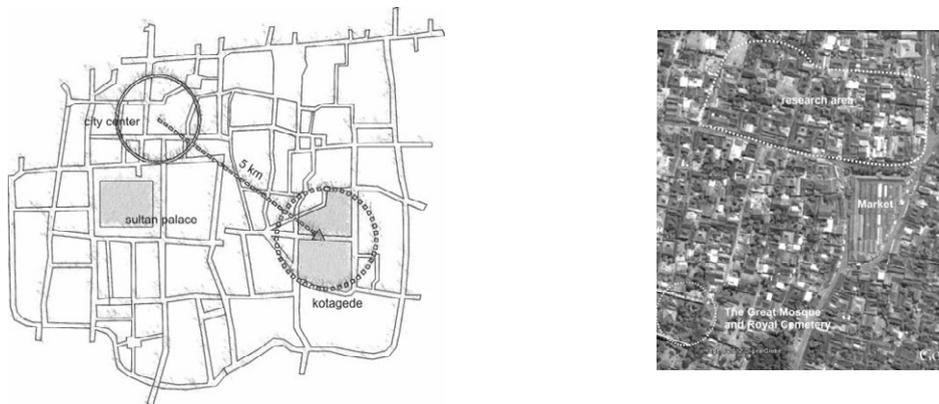


Fig. 1. (a) Map of Yogyakarta; Source: Balistarisan Map, 2002: Map of Yogyakarta; (b) The research area showing the high density of house building (Source: Edited from Google Map, 2012)

### 2.1. The people

Residents of Kotagede district in the past generally came from a family of hereditary brothers who inhabit this place nowadays. It is now no longer the case but generally occupants have been residing in one generation or about 25 years. Residents of Kotagede are mostly burnt silver craftsmen in which the crafts have been a trademark of Kotagede. Thus, almost the entire population of Kotagede work in the informal sector, while government officials are very small, about 20 people in district (Kecamatan, 2007: 31). Work as a traditional craftsmen generations also affect the lifestyle of the people who tend homogeneous, especially in Sub district Prenggan and Purbayan. As quaint residential neighborhood that used to be the forerunner of the city of Yogyakarta as one of the Kingdom of Java-Islam, the life of the

community is always very strongly based on the Javanese culture reflected in the view of life, way of thinking and acting in the association community, social and spiritual life, though in some ways modern life is inevitable influence.

## 2.2. The space

The view of space and the use and organization of space that is basically connected with culture and time, it can be manifested in the division of sacred-profane, inside-out, public-private, here - there, or any movement in space, travel across space (Kent, 1990: 3). Nevertheless in view of such a Javanese cultural context is not clearly visible because of the meaning of such private-public space, sacred-profane is usually together in the same space. Physical boundaries arguably blurred. An everyday space one day turns into a sacred space. A private space to a certain extent becomes public anyway. Spaces outside the building houses typically do not have a rigid physical boundary as a sign of public properties. Open spaces are then as share space which are not possessed by anyone. An interesting phenomenon in the research location and supposed as the same kind was found in another area of the environment which is basically in a general sense as private properties intersected with the general circulation path, so that the front of the house which is normally *pendapa* which means open hall is separated from the main building by the public lane. Traditional Javanese house consists of a space configuration in which from front to back that is a *pendapa*/open hall-*longkangan*/*gangway* –*pringgitan*/terrace-and *sentong*/small chamber. *Sentong* or small chamber is situated in the deepest part, there are three chambers called *sentong tengah*/center chamber, *sentong tengen*/right chamber, *sentong kiwa*/left chamber and the center chamber is as a sacred space for storing homeowner's rice and heirloom.

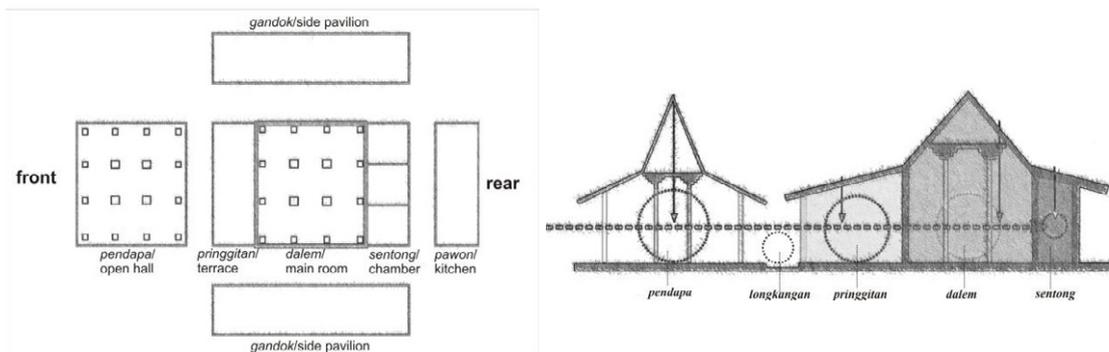


Fig. 2. (a) The arrangement of spaces in Javanese House; (b) The schematic section of Javanese house

In some houses artifacts such studies are conducted by Gunawan Tjahjono, Josef Prijotomo, Arya Ronald and Revianto Santosa for instance, the existence of space is described by its relationship with Javanese cultural context. Duality of spaces and directions, orientation or axis is being the most important keyword as the representation of human spirituality, embodiment of a view of the macrocosmic and microcosmic, the universe and human world. Space which is called *pringgitan* on traditional Javanese houses, used to be held as a puppet event place. Puppet show or *wayangan* is one of the rituals that can be interpreted as a form of expression of Javanese view of the human position in the universe. *Pringgitan* is as the central point of the division of space, a space of transition, the transition from outside to inside, from the universe to human space, which clarifies the duality of meaning and direction (Supriyadi, 2010:

38-39). It seems that *longkangan* or open space between the *pendapa* and the *pringgitan* is used as a public circulation path.

### 2.3. The environment

The dominance of the built environment is very prominent compared with the natural environment; it is understandable because this district is an established area since four hundred years ago as a forerunner of today's urban environment. Increasing demand for housing encourages residential neighborhood in Kotagede as a *kampung* that is characterized by a high density of buildings. The comparison of buildings and open space of more than 70%, thus it is reasonable if open spaces are used in high-intensity, multi function, and even tends to be shared among the occupants of the neighborhood, even any other people. Within the limitations of open space and density of the buildings, the space between the houses becomes a shared public space, and alleys that can only be passed by pedestrians, bicycles or motorcycles. Pathways that are public domain in each group of houses are characterized by the presence of simple gates at the ends of the alley. Wide roads which can be passed for four-wheel vehicles are very limited.

Because the citizen of Kotagede are mostly traders who are not from the high social strata such as gentry clan or nobility, *pendapa* as well as gentry houses are not often found situating alone. The built environment in Kota gede still very strongly reflects Javanese atmosphere that places togetherness, tolerance and harmony in which very dominant in the people behave in their environment. In common, in the *Kampung Purbayan* and *Prenggan* buildings and houses are still old buildings, one-storey traditional Javanese houses and generally they have *pringgitan* or open terraces at the front. Dominant pathway for pedestrians, bicycles and motorcycles as well as the presence of an open terrace at the front of the house makes the inhabitants and settlers in the Kotagede have the opportunity to interact intensively, personally and very human.

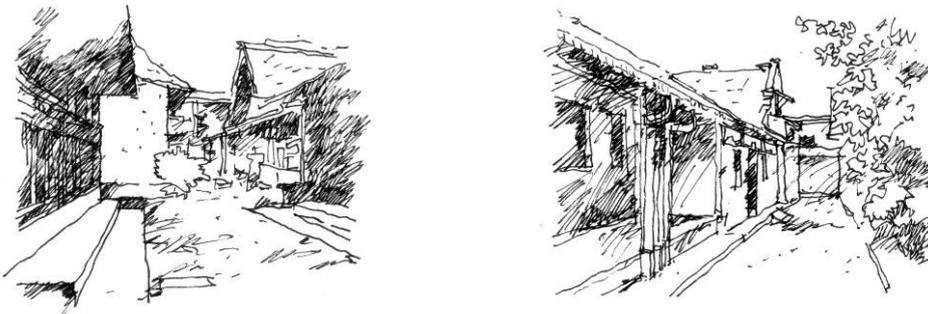


Fig. 3. (a) The steps were placed in front of the terrace; (b) The terrace was situated next to the public pathway

### 3. Javanese Culture

Javanese culture mostly grows and it is sourced from the palace, thus Yogya and Solo as two major centers of Javanese palace are as the central points of Javanese culture. Self-awareness is essential and it is clearly revealed in such a large tolerance possessed by the human Java. Tolerance is response to a variety of reality. Tolerance can be basically seen as wisdom in accepting the changes and developments that come from within and outside of Javanese culture. One feature that really stands out in Javanese culture is the ability to absorb cultural elements from outside and then to be domesticated into a part that is able to develop the culture of Java itself, so it can be said that the Javanese culture is not isolated in the association and the encounter with cultures coming later. Even so characteristic of Javanese culture that

promotes the alignment, harmony and respect in social life, in touch with nature around and God remains almost unchanged elements. The continuous efforts to seek a balance in human life become the core of Javanese sense, good thinking and good behavior, when mingle with others, coexist with nature and related to God that would eventually bring balance itself, the balance of man and the universe.

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To maintain balance in their dealings with others, the foundations of attitude *empan papan* that means knowing our self and understanding our own position and well-putting our self in a social interaction, *tepa slira* that means understanding and self-awareness of others, far from being concerned our self, is a standout for the Javanese attitude.

Appreciation for nature to be a part of everyday life: traditions *bedhah bumi* such as cultivating the land, digging the soil, cultivating fields, selecting and cutting lumber and treating crops are forms of wisdom that the end goal is the balance of man and nature. Long vigil and remembering the Lord are quite clearly expressed through such everyday phrases *Gusti ora sare* which mean God does not sleep, He will always see what is man doing, *pepesthening urip* which means destiny. The tradition of *kidungan* such as singing softly at night is as a form of hope and prayer to God. The Javanese strongly believe that disruption to the universe will affect the human world; the inconsistent relationship between the two will shake the balance that ultimately makes human life is no longer peaceful.

### *3.1. Orientation of life*

Harmony of life into Javanese culture orientation, human harmony with God, each other and the surrounding nature is based on five basic nature of Javanese culture: The life, work, time, relationships with human beings and the natural surroundings. The Javanese attitude, which called *nerimo ing pandum* and introspective are a way of life. Work is obligatory. To ensure that no conflicts which means ensuring social harmony in both man and man, man and nature and man and god harmony and respect are based on the five basic nature of Javanese culture into two fundamental elements: togetherness and respect. Maintaining the safety of the world of nature is maintaining harmony, because nature has given life (Ghautama, 2003: 9-22).

### *3.2. The essential factors of Javanese culture*

Alignment is a central point of orientation of Javanese culture which is reflected by behaves and attitudes inspired by living in togetherness and respect in everyday life. One of the prominent characteristic of Javanese culture is the merging of togetherness and respect among human, human with nature, human with God. All of them are basically the reflections of Javanese spirituality for all orientation is based on Javanese way of life which is colored with devotion to God. Togetherness is the

situation of people in broader social environment that is able to maintain a state of permanent harmony, calm and serene. Meanwhile, sense of respect gives awards hierarchically in association with awareness of the position of the individual in society (Suseno, 1985: 39-69).

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Javanese culture is a fusion of harmony and respect among people, man and nature and man and god. Everything is basically the primary mirror of Java spirituality, because all orientations based on a view of Javanese colored by totality of dedication to God. Thus spirituality which is reflected as a worldview is the main foundation of Javanese culture. Furthermore, worldview is embodied into the way of life in togetherness and respect with the end goal is the maintenance of harmony.

#### **4. Discussion**

Based on the study of space and the physical form of the research sites as well as observations of how people use space, it can then be interpreted how the Javanese cultural manifestations in public life is.

##### *4.1. Public-private*

Basically private spaces are personal still owned by the occupants of Kotagede, but this private space is limited to the deepest part of the house. The middle and the front can be said as the territory of semi-private or semi-public with the possibilities to be function able to the public or guests. Meanwhile, the leading edge of the terrace which is generally in the form of general circulation paths very public, even without any obstacles anyone can use this terrace. Of course its usage is still within the bounds of decency such as just taking a rest, sitting and chatting and very reasonable with greetings the homeowners. In this place at certain times especially at late afternoon residents chat and play with children freely in open spaces such as alleys and spaces between buildings. The merging of public and private social relationships reflects very highly in the community. That social life expressed by intensive interaction is very important in relationships. The greater the overlap of public and private space shows the higher role of social life. Of course it is extremely different when both spaces are completely separated as in modern city environments that describe the separation of the individual from the social interaction and potential of undesirable conflict for people in kampongs of Kotagede. In one of the gangs known as the Gang Rukunan that mean togetherness some houses are found and interrupted by a public access. This fact is increasingly clear that a public interest takes precedence over private interests. That social interaction becomes more important as the fairness of life for the community and eventually leads to the spirituality that places human soul to be as a guardian of balance in various aspects of physical and spiritual life.

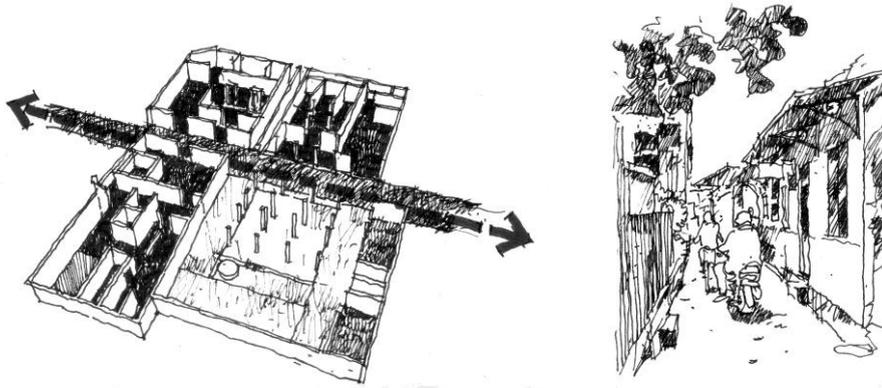


Fig. 4. (a) The public circulation is crossing the private space; (b) Not only pedestrian but also motor rider passing through the private properties

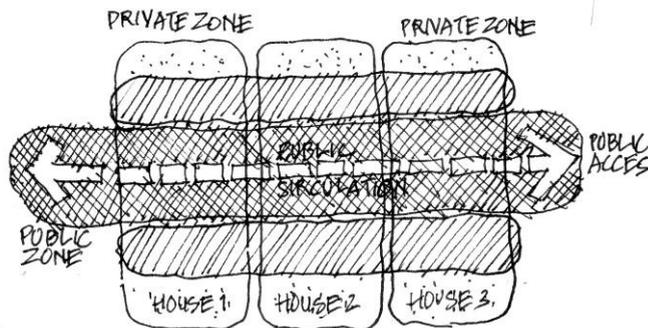


Fig. 5. The scheme of public-private space in the row of houses

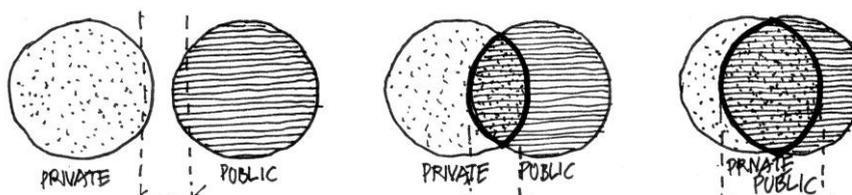


Fig. 6. The scheme showing the public-private space in modern world (left figure) that is totally separated, and different with the mostly merge of these public and private space in traditional society (right figure)

#### 4.2. Open space

Open space in a residential neighborhood Kotagede is relatively very limited. Open spaces are in the form of narrow alleys. Alley becomes a distinctive characteristic of the environment. Gang gives access

to anyone, because the width only allows for pedestrians, bicycles and motorcycles. Alleys formed by the space between the buildings that house the Kotagede commonly became known as the walled city. The use of space is as a circulation path to express social consensus on the need to track the movement of residents and newcomers in the neighborhood.

The agreement is based on mutual interest's tolerance. Permission to use circulation path is not even necessary, just enough to say hello or good manners as a nod is enough for the user path. Tolerance is also necessary for users such as reducing the speed of a bicycle or motorcycle, walking or speaking with reasonable notice has to be the attitude of tolerance. Tolerance as attitudes and actions with regard to the interests of others is small one but it is important part in the culture of Java. Other open spaces are open courtyards, that also do not have many rigid boundaries can be seen as belonging together, anyone can use these spaces. Some pages are multifunctional, such as for sports, children's playground, to socialize and to hold certain rituals that require relatively large spaces. Without clear and rigid boundaries of ownership of open space it reinforces the interpretation that the harmony and tolerance is a reflection of the view of life that puts ownership is not as absolutes. That space and the natural environment is the Lord's used for the common necessity and it is very unwise to claim as private property for the benefit of the individual.

### *4.3. Building*

The buildings that exist in the environment in Sub district Prenggan Kotagede and Purbayan mostly houses, except in Sub district Rejowinangun that has been mixed with shops and workshops of silver. Building a traditional Javanese house for most people typically do not have a pendapa or open hall at the front of the house. In the survey only a few houses having that kind of hall are found. Terrace that called pringgitan is almost always found, as an open space at the front and it is used for a variety of activities that is more multifunctional and highly flexible use. In the first place this kind is often used to hold ritual staging puppet show, but for some reasons it is now rarely or almost never held. Some homes are found not having a patio or pringgitan so that the circulation path directly in front of the home will meet the entrance. For houses with pringgitan, there is commonly a steps on the front extending to all sides of the terrace which can be used to sit back and mingle. Most of the terraces are not completed with furniture, so it is only floor which can be used for floor mats and more users possibly use it. A house building in the location of the research is almost entirely Javanese traditional old building, although it has to be altered by renovations or upgrading the display. The existence of space and some traditional architectural elements are still retained while building updates have been made; it explains that the inner occupant's comfort has been fulfilled by the physical condition of their home. Flow of modernization indirectly affects changes significantly in physical space and environment. Another interesting manifestation is that in each group there is always the simple gate into the marker. This gate is as the base and the tip of the cross circulation in each home cluster. Almost no-rise buildings or buildings look very different. This grows atmosphere of equality without distinction hierarchy of the occupants. The interpretation of equality appearance though it is not in a uniform format indicating that the protrusion individuals is avoided within their social environment. Space and physical formations in the Kotagede are able to develop peace, harmony and able to avoid individual distinction.

## **5. Conclusion**

From the results of discussions interpreting manifestations of architectural space and form in the Kotagede to formulate essential things of Javanese culture to face the pressures of modern life as a result of cultural urbanization, several conclusions can be explained as follows:

- In terms of configuration of space and buildings in the neighborhood which is a residential area of Kotagede town, the significant changes that point to a lack of effect of modernization on the existence of physical space and environment are hardly found.
- Even though with no changes in space and physical form, the Kotagede neighborhood is still able to maintain an atmosphere of peace and tranquility as well as human social equality strength.
- The potency of tolerance, togetherness and respect to animate total attitude and society's behavior is capable to grow the harmony of life among others, human nature as well as human beings with their God.
- The view of life putting togetherness is more prioritized over the interests of individual to make the life in a state of harmony without conflict arising, as if every citizen really understands the obligations as an individual, as well as a social being, a part of nature and God's creature.
- The more the merging of public domain and private territory the more togetherness will be obtained. This fact in turn will ensure minimizing the conflicts in the social relationship.

These cultural elements are become the power of the inhabitant in Kotagede against the pressures of cultural urbanization that characterized by the rapidity of change in many aspects, and tend to be individualistic, mechanistic and inhuman.

## 6. Recommendation

While it is not within the scope of quite in extensive spatial nevertheless this study has been able to reveal the cultural forces that still exist in the city in defending themselves from the forces of modernization that generate a lot of gaps and contradictions, particularly for people living in the city kampongs.

Some records may be explained here that the need for the further deepening of the research objects, are:

- The need for comparison with studies in different locus.
- The object of research done by expanding the scope of difference cultural backgrounds of its citizens, as well as the heterogeneity, including in different cities.
- The assessment should also be done in a few kampongs that have varying levels of change.

With such further research, an understanding of the position, roles and threats to the *kampongs* of the city can be obtained more clearly and comprehensively.

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