



Shaping Urban *Kampung* Space: The Role of Familiar Events and Community Practices

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Abstract. This study examines familiar events as key elements shaping social space in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan. Drawing on neuroarchitectural discourse, the concept of familiar events is used to explain how everyday spatial practices contribute to the formation of collective memory. The presence of familiar events in an urban *kampung* can be understood as a form of actualization of citizens' rights to space. Employing a qualitative research approach, the data of this study were collected through observation and in-depth interviews. Findings indicate that *kampung* spaces are predominantly used based on their use value rather than exchange value, promoting both social and cultural interactions. These practices demonstrate the community's efforts to maintain spatial awareness and amid urbanization pressures while generating alternative socio-cultural centers rooted in everyday life. Within this context, Tha Yang serves as the cultural and spatial core, preserving collective memory through its historical significance and ongoing communal functions. The adaptive use of constrained spaces, particularly alleys and Tha Yang, highlights how the identity of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan is continuously shaped and sustained through the interplay of social practices, spatial configurations, and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Familiar Events, Urban *Kampung*, Socio-cultural Practices, Social Space, Spatial Configurations.

1 Introduction

Urban *kampung* is a form of informal settlement that developed in Indonesia long before the colonial era. According to the spatial planning dictionary published by the Directorate General of Human Settlements, urban *kampung* is defined as residential areas that are part of a city, have a relatively high population density, tend to lack adequate facilities and infrastructure, and are built informally [1]. The informal nature of space creation in urban *kampung* is an important identity that must be preserved. The interaction between space and the socio-cultural life of the community creates its own rhythms that are rarely found elsewhere.

As a metropolitan city, Surabaya has shown a strong commitment to preserving the existence of *kampung* in its territory. This commitment is reflected in various *kampung* improvement and development programs that have been consistently designed and implemented by the Surabaya City Government. During the period 1984–1990, the implementation of the Kampung Improvement Program (KIP) in Surabaya achieved various physical accomplishments, including the construction of 70 km of access roads, 150 km of footpaths, 93 km of water channels, 56 km of sewage pipes, and the provision of 86 public toilet units [2]. In the last three years, the city government has also continued to initiate various *kampung* development programs, including the Kampung Madani 2023 Program [3], the Kampung Iklim 2024 Program [4], and the Inovboyo 2025 Program [5]. Based on these commitments, Surabaya was selected as a case study in this research.

In Surabaya, the *kampung* located along the Kalimas River can be categorized as the forerunners of today's Surabaya City. This characteristic is evident in the numerous *kampung* in Surabaya whose names derive from ecological or geographical elements such as forests (*wono*), rivers (*kedung*), and marine animals (*kupang*) [6]. Along with the development of the city, these *kampung* have also undergone spatial and social transformations. Rapid urbanization has also triggered the phenomenon of urbanization, which in the long term can put pressure on the sustainability of urban *kampung*. Urbanization has the potential to erode the social, cultural, and community values that have been built up historically [7].

The two main impacts of urbanization on urban *kampung* are changes in social structure and community, as well as economic pressure from more powerful parties. Social structural changes occur when newcomers are reluctant to interact with the social life of the *kampung* community, thereby shifting the established rhythm of social interaction. Meanwhile, economic pressure arises from the conflict between the value of the *kampung* as a space for daily life and the exchange value of space as an economic commodity, for example, for commercial property interests. This tension has the potential to create conflict and accelerate changes in the character of urban *kampung* [8].

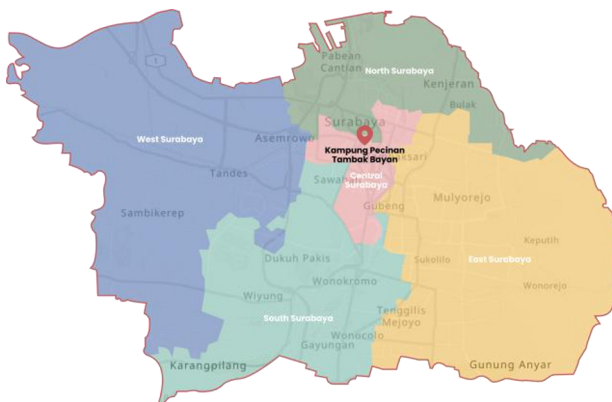


Fig. 1 Location of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan.

One of the *kampung* in Surabaya that is fighting for its living space due to a land dispute is Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan. This *kampung* was formed around 1930

when several Chinese people came and settled in the area [9]. This *kampung* is situated in a strategic location, which is in the center of Surabaya (see Fig. 1). Due to its advantageous location, private parties readily undertake various methods to acquire the land and redevelop it into a commercial area. In response to this situation, residents then engaged in various forms of resistance to defend their homeland. With support from various parties, the residents of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan have managed to survive to this day. Efforts to defend their living space have been expressed through various strategies, including artistic activities and community events, such as mural painting and the CULIT 2025 art exhibition, which enhance social solidarity and reinforce their claim to the space. These ongoing activities then formed a certain rhythm that influences the formation of social space and can be perceived as a familiar event.

Drawing from the discourse of neuroarchitecture, familiar events can be conceptualized as a patterned event-fragment scheme in which architectural space sustains human perception, recording and suggesting cultural and human narratives, and amplifies emotional experience [10], [11]. At a broader scale, this framework is applicable to neighborhoods and cities. In the context of urban *kampung*, architectural and urban spaces have the capacity to shape collective memories through the utilization of space in everyday practices [11]. Studies that specifically address the daily life of the Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan community remain limited. Existing studies generally focus on aspects of place attachment [9], exploration through documentary photography [12], and visual identity in the context of brand awareness [13]. Grounded in Lefebvre's theory of urbanization and urban space, this study aims to identify familiar events as one of the elements that shape social space in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan. Furthermore, this study also examines the role of Tha Yang as a center of community practices that represents the connection between the community, culture, and collective memory of the local community.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Space in Urban *Kampung* Context

In urban *kampung* settings, spatial configurations emerge through shared acceptance and tolerance of diverse spatial practices among individuals and community members. This process cultivates patterns of behavior that signify cooperation and social intimacy that transcend physical boundaries [14]. The shared use of space becomes apparent in residents' everyday interactions, where communal spatial practices are a defining characteristic of the urban *kampung* environment [14], [15]. These communal spaces play a significant role in social, cultural, and political expression, as evident in the shared use of space that encompasses social, cultural, and economic dimensions, extending beyond physical attributes [16]. These shared spaces then foster social interactions, creating what is known as social space [17].

In examining social space within an urban *kampung*, it is essential to consider both the physical environment and residents' social activities, as together they construct boundaries that encourage gathering and interaction [17]. Social interactions are closely

tied to the spatial character of the *kampung*. The everyday and communal practices of *kampung* spaces contribute to the formation of familiar events, a concept central to the present study.

2.2 Familiar Events Within Everyday and Community Practices

The term ‘familiar event’ is formed by combining ‘familiar’, which means having deep knowledge gained through repeated exposure by sight or hearing [18] and ‘event’, which in this context follows Bernard Tschumi’s idea that architecture inherently involves human activities or events [19]. In an urban *kampung* setting, familiarity arises from continuous interaction and exposure to urban elements, leading to cognitive closeness and understanding of the built environment. The discussion of familiarity in architecture and urban design relates closely to everyday life because these disciplines offer spatial frameworks that shape daily rhythms, allowing people to build a sense of familiarity by living in and engaging with their surroundings [20]. The concept of familiar events in urban *kampung* context highlights how architecture and urban design shape everyday life, creating a spatial framework where individuals form familiarity by inhabiting and engaging with the space around them.

The use of space in the context of urban *kampung* can be formed through two main types of activities, which are individual and communal activities. In this study, individual activities or everyday practices are described as routine personal actions that fulfill daily or household needs, such as cooking, working, and praying. On the other hand, communal activities, or community practices, involve collaborative efforts by various stakeholders aimed at preserving cultural heritage, including events like community meetings, religious festivities, and workshops.

Individual and communal experiences of a space, whether in an architectural or urban design context, serve as the basis for memory formation. The built environment serves as a collective memory repository, holding both individual and communal memories [21]. Collective memory refers to the shared memories a community develops through common experiences or activities within the same space [10]. The patterns of how a community uses a space, based on this collective memory, give that space a unique meaning, which is referred to as a memorable space [11]. In neuroarchitecture, memorable spaces arise from two factors, which are coherent formal structures and routine activities rooted in a particular location [11]. Therefore, everyday and community practices in urban *kampung* foster familiar events, which contribute to the creation of memorable spaces within those *kampung*.

3 Methodology

3.1 Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan as a Case Study

Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan is one of the historical Chinese settlements in Surabaya. This *kampung* is located in Central Surabaya District, making it one of the *kampung* with a strategic location in Surabaya. This is evident in the radius map (see Fig.

2), which illustrates the proximity of this *kampung* to several key locations in Surabaya. Within a 500-meter radius, this *kampung* is proximate to Monumen Tugu Pahlawan (a monument dedicated to the heroes) and Kampung Peneleh Heritage (one of Surabaya's historic settlements). Expanding the radius to 1000 meters includes Kampung Lawas Maspati (a historic Surabaya settlement dedicated to preserving local culture and history), Pasar Turi Station, Semut Station, and the Cheng Hoo Mosque. And at a distance of up to 1500 meters, there are the Surabaya Old Town area, Tembok Gede Cemetery, Tunjungan Street (a commercial and business area), and Surabaya Town Hall.



Fig. 2 Key locations within a 1500-meter radius from Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan.

Located in a strategic location, the residents of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan faced a formidable challenge in protecting their homeland. The conflict began around 1965, when a group of armed military personnel seized 3,800 square meters of land from Chinese residents and forced them to transfer the land ownership certificates to the names of the usurpers [22]. This incident triggered a land dispute in 2006–2007, when private parties claimed ownership of land that had been inhabited by residents for generations [22]. Residents responded to this situation by defending their homeland through a variety of acts of resistance, which resulted in the formation of a distinct pattern of life that differed from other *kampung*.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the spatial configuration of the *kampung* with an area of 3,800 square meters can be seen. At the heart of the *kampung*, there is a main building which served as the starting point in the *kampung's* development. Later on, this building, which is called Tha Yang, became the center of community practices in this *kampung*. Physically, this *kampung* is densely populated with small houses measuring 4x3 square meters and 4x5 square meters, have no yards, and the front porch of the house serves as an extension of the living room [9]. Across from the houses, separated by a

narrow alley less than 2 meters wide, is the bathroom and kitchen area. According to Participant 6, this *kampung* is like a whole house and the *kampung* alley is its interior, “*ibaratnya 1 kampung adalah 1 rumah*”.

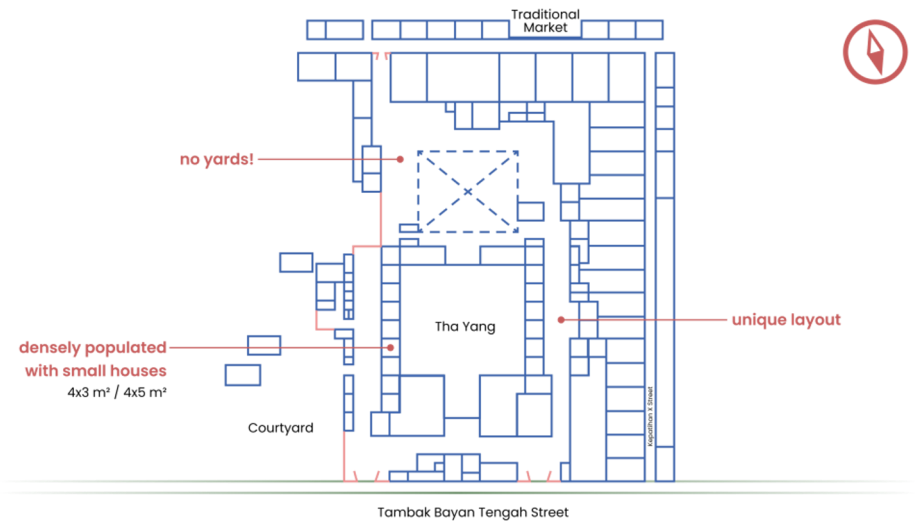






Fig. 3 Map of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan (re-illustrated from a map drawn by residents, 2025).

The *kampung* visually stands out with the domination of vibrant colors, primarily due to murals adorning almost every corner. These murals are one way residents cope with uncertain conditions. Fighting through art is considered a more efficient way to defend the residents' living space from those who want to take away their homeland [22]. Besides murals, efforts to defend the *kampung* are also carried out through activities organized by external parties, such as NGOs, communities, and students. These community practices have become a regular part of the residents' lives and have evolved into familiar events for both locals and the external participants frequently engaged with the *kampung*.

The everyday and community practices observed in the *kampung* are presented in Table 1. These activities display distinct patterns in terms of timing, intensity, and spatial dispersion. It is thus possible to interpret these recurrent patterns as familiar events.

Table 1. Activities in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan

Activities			
1. Informal gathering	2. Redi Murti's comic exhibition	3. Informal gathering	4. Regular praying
			
Source: [23]	Source: [23]	Source: [24]	Source: [24]

<p>5. Cap Go Meh (the fifteenth night in Chinese New Year celebration)</p>  <p>Source: [25]</p>	<p>6. A resident cutting wood</p>  <p>Source: [12]</p>	<p>7. Tambak Bayan Re-calling exhibition (Chinese New Year celebration)</p>  <p>Source: [26]</p>	<p>8. A resident cutting metal</p>  <p>Source: [22]</p>
<p>9. Community gathering</p>  <p>Source: [22]</p>	<p>10. Contemporary <i>barongsai</i> (lion dance) workshop</p>  <p>Source: [27]</p>	<p>11. <i>Barongsai</i> (lion dance) performance</p>  <p>Source: [28]</p>	<p>12. Independence Day ceremony</p>  <p>Source: [29]</p>
<p>13. Children's creative activities</p>  <p>Source: [30]</p>	<p>14. Mural painting activity</p>  <p>Source: [31]</p>	<p>15. <i>Barongsai</i> (lion dance) performance</p>  <p>Source: [32]</p>	<p>16. Music concert</p>  <p>Source: [33]</p>
<p>17. A communal cooking activity</p>  <p>Source: [34]</p>	<p>18. CULIT 2025 Art Exhibition</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>	<p>19. Shopping for daily necessities</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>	<p>20. Buying food at a food stall</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>
<p>21. Preparing food</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>	<p>22. Maintaining a vehicle</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>	<p>23. Feeding animals</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>	<p>24. A group study class</p>  <p>(Field observation, 2025)</p>

3.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Familiar events in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan were examined through a qualitative research approach designed to explore meanings, experiences, and social processes within their natural settings [35]. This methodological framework emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives and lived experiences. The data was obtained from two sources, which were primary data and secondary data. Primary data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were derived from literature reviews of journal articles, news articles, and other materials such as Instagram posts and other written works. The observation technique facilitated direct engagement with and understanding of the community's everyday dynamics. Field observations were conducted on two occasions, on the afternoon of August 10, 2025, and the morning of October 7, 2025.

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with six participants, guided by three primary objectives: (1) to explore the history and memories of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan, (2) to understand the dynamics and rhythm of kampung residents' activities, and (3) to examine the role of Tha Yang in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan. Participants were purposively selected based on their capacity to provide rich and representative insights relevant to these objectives. Participant 1 is a researcher (36 years old, male); Participant 2 is a third-generation *kampung* elder (male); Participant 3 is a long-term *kampung* resident (53 years old, male); while Participants 4 to 6 are visitors (aged 24 years, male; 27 years, female; and 30 years, female, respectively).

The data analysis in this study employed thematic analysis through coding [36], which was utilized to categorize and label specific segments of data in order to identify and represent emerging themes and relevant information. Following data collection, the analytical findings were presented descriptively and supported by visual materials and activity mapping tables to enhance the clarity and interpretability of the research results.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Familiar Events and the Shaping of Social Space in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan

Social space describes an area used for specific activities that encourage interaction among the people involved [17]. The shape and attributes of this space influence how it is used. Observations reveal that Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan features a distinctive layout where houses encircle a central building and form pathways for movement. Furthermore, the absence of solid barriers between dwellings and *kampung* alleys promotes an atmosphere favorable to social interaction [37].

Through observation, interviews, and literature studies, information was obtained regarding various activities carried out by residents (see Table 1). These activities were categorized by how frequently they occur, which are daily, occasional, and annual events (see Fig. 4). In regular events (Fig. 4a), activity mapping focuses on residents' everyday practices, including daily, weekly, and monthly patterns that structure the

everyday life of individuals and communities in the *kampung*, such as working, preparing meals, children playing, community gathering, and moving around (indicated by the green line). Most of these activities occur within *kampung* alleys and residents' homes. In occasional events (Fig. 4b), activity mapping focuses on community practices that only take place at certain times, such as painting murals on *kampung* walls, workshops, and exhibitions. These activities are often initiated by external parties such as community organizations and students, and are primarily held at Tha Yang. In annual events (Fig. 4c), activity mapping focuses on community practices that take place once a year, including celebrations like Chinese New Year and Independence Day. A mobile event is shown by the yellow line in Figure 4c. In particular, it follows the path of a lion dance performance (*barongsai*), which is a customary Chinese cultural activity performed by two actors dressed as lions during the Chinese New Year celebrations. This mapping shows that all activities in this *kampung* can make the best use of *kampung* spaces, tailored to each event's needs and context.

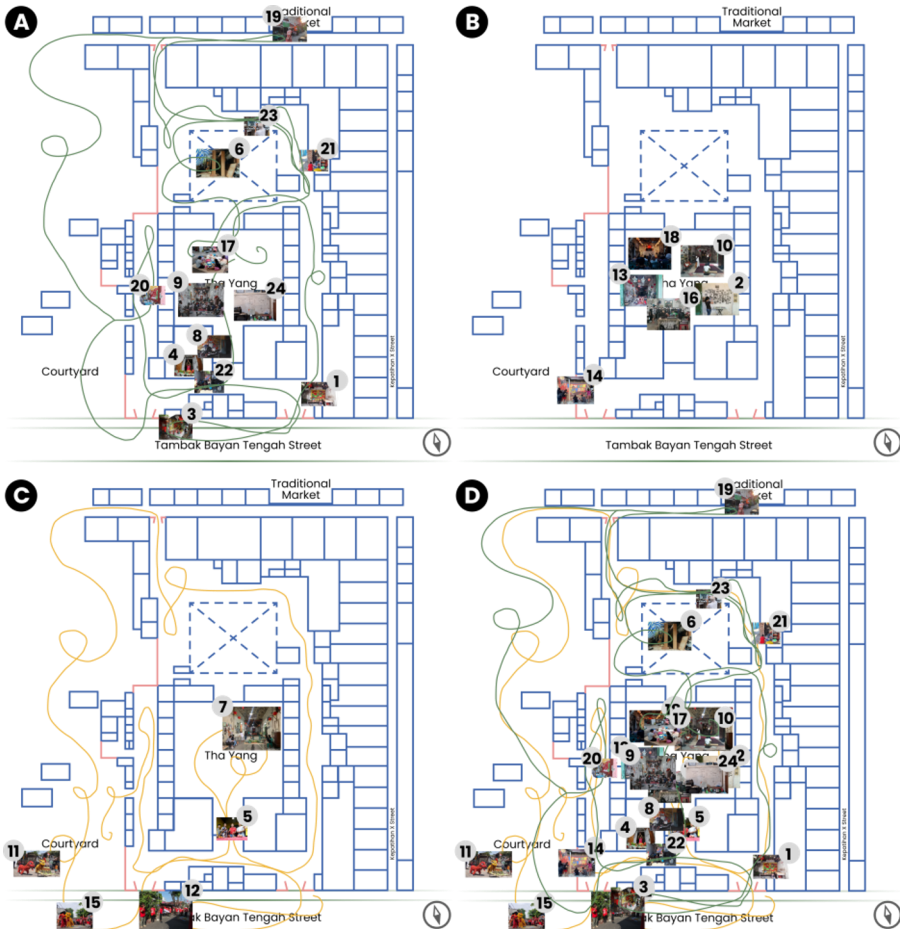


Fig. 4 Activity mapping, (a) Routine events; (b) Occasional events; (c) Annual events; (d) Juxtaposition of all identified events.

According to the three categories of event mapping previously discussed, these events generate multiple forms of social space. Everyday practices situated in the alleys constitute spatial practices that produce commercial and interaction spaces, where activities such as purchasing food from local vendors facilitate social encounters. Residents' presence and routine practices within these alleys also contribute to the formation of security and surveillance points [38]. In addition, the movement of residents through the alleys produces transitional spaces, creating activities such as informal conversations amongst neighbors as they pass each other [39]. Community practices centered at Tha Yang produce religious and cultural gathering spaces, functioning as symbolic and collectively recognized spatial representations. Together, these events also produce domestic-expressive spaces, such as cooking and washing clothes, as well as recreational spaces, including informal recreational activities in *kampung* alleys or Chinese New Year celebrations at Tha Yang.

As previously noted, the shared use of space within a community extends beyond its physical characteristics [16]. Yet, the analysis of the collected data demonstrates that the spatial form of the *kampung* significantly influences the formation of social spaces in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan. These six forms of social spaces can be created from the unique layout of Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan, which then influences the behavior of residents in interacting and carrying out activities. The spatial configuration of the *kampung* alleyways, formed by the arrangement of houses and bathrooms-kitchens facing each other, creates a space for interaction among residents and passersby. Moreover, junctions that open into wider areas function as communal nodes, serving as places that strengthen social bonds between people and their environment [40].

The formation of regular activities within each area of the *kampung* indicates a shared sense of familiarity embedded in the residents' spatial practices. These familiar events not only represent patterns of functional use of space but also show how social practices contribute to the formation and meaning of social space by residents. The quality and articulation of *kampung* space are influenced by the intensity and diversity of activities that take place within it [37], suggesting that space is not merely a physical container, but a social construction that is continuously negotiated through everyday experiences. Accordingly, the spatial character of the *kampung* emerges from the dynamic interplay between routine practices, communal interactions, and residents' collective engagement with their environment.

4.2 Tha Yang: A Place Where Community, Culture, and Memory Meet

As previously discussed, the main building that marked the beginning of the *kampung's* development is Tha Yang. In the early days, the first generation of residents settled here, in the Tha Yang. As the need for space increased, this building underwent several transformations (see Fig. 5), both through expansion and functional adjustments [9], [41]. Some parts of the building underwent minor renovations to accommodate new needs, while most of the structure and architectural elements were deliberately preserved to preserve collective memory and maintain the continuity of emotional bonds between generations [9].

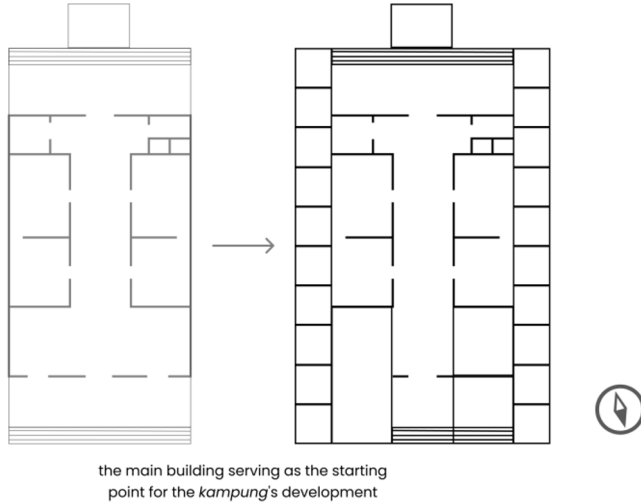


Fig. 5 Tha Yang before (left) and after (right) development (re-illustrated from Cahya & Surya, 2023).

Tha Yang, which literally means ‘living room’ or ‘central room’ (*ruang tengah*), currently functions as a multifunctional area [42]. Data analysis further shows that most community activities occur in this space (see Fig. 4d). As the primary setting for communal interaction, Tha Yang offers a large, open-plan space that allows for flexible use. Every corner of the building appears to record the social dynamics that unfold through events initiated by both residents and visitors, strengthening social relationships and reinforcing Tha Yang’s role as a cultural and communal center [42]. Visual traces of these activities are embedded on its walls (see Fig. 6), ranging from cultural celebrations to everyday communal practices. In line with the discourse of neuroarchitecture, Tha Yang becomes a place where community, culture, and collective memory converge [11], preserving the spirit of life that is continuously nurtured by the residents.



Fig. 6 Walls covered with traces of activities that took place in Tha Yang.

As the heart of everyday life in Kampung Pecinan Tambak Bayan, Tha Yang is regarded as a space that must be protected and preserved. Participants 5 and 6 even noted that if Tha Yang were ever lost, the *kampung*'s social life could become disordered or potentially disappear altogether, "... akan berantakan (it would be a mess)", "kalau Tha Yang hilang.. kayaknya hilang juga deh kampungnya (if Tha Yang disappears... the *kampung* might disappear as well)." Even though it is not formally designated as a cultural heritage site, the long-standing history embedded in Tha Yang will serve as a guide for residents to continue to preserve it.

5 Conclusions

This study finds that social space expressions within urban *kampung* are shaped by familiar events, illustrating how residents' social activities influence the creation and meaning of these spaces. The presence of these familiar events can be understood as a form of actualization of citizens' rights to space. Moreover, community practices that are deeply embedded in residents' daily life contribute to the formation of a memorable place, that is Tha Yang, which serves as a meeting point between the community, its culture, and its collective memory.

Through familiar events and community practices embedded in the *kampung*, residents engage with its spaces based on use value rather than exchange value, treating space not as a commodity but as a medium for social and cultural interaction. This practice also illustrates how local communities, both in this *kampung* and in other urban *kampung* across Surabaya and various cities in Indonesia, strive to maintain awareness and attachment despite urbanization and gentrification pressures that often displace marginalized groups from the centers of urban life.

Beyond advancing insights into how social space is shaped through familiar events, this study also offers implications for architectural and urban design. Spatial configurations in urban *kampung* settings can be intentionally designed to support the preservation of existing social spaces, thereby fostering a sense of familiarity and encouraging social interaction among residents. However, this study is limited by several constraints, particularly its focus on a single case, its reliance on data gathered exclusively during daytime hours, and the mapping method employed in the analysis. Therefore, further research conducted in diverse settings and using alternative methodological approaches is needed to deepen the understanding of social space and the processes through which it is produced.

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