

Transforming Lives: The Power of Community Art in Bendungan Hilir's Dense Slum Housing

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of community art initiatives on improving living conditions and social cohesion in the dense slum housing of Bendungan Hilir. The research employs a qualitative approach, involving in-depth interviews with community members, local artists, and NGO representatives, as well as participatory observation. These methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how community art influences the environment and social dynamics in the area. The results demonstrate significant aesthetic improvements, enhanced social cohesion, reduced crime rates, and improved mental well-being among residents. Specifically, murals and art installations have made the area more vibrant and welcoming, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. The beautification efforts are linked to a decrease in petty crimes, as the improved environment discourages vandalism and other criminal activities.

Keywords: bendungan, biophilic community art, slum housing, social cohesion, urbanization,

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Introduction

In Southeast Asia, communal housing has emerged as a significant phenomenon, reflecting the region's rapid urbanization and the consequent housing challenges. Countries like Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia have seen a surge in government and privately funded communal housing projects aimed at addressing the urban housing crisis. These initiatives are designed to accommodate the growing urban population while promoting a sense of community and shared space (Doling & Ronald, 2014 and Sengupta & Shaw, 2017).

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, exemplifies these challenges with its densely populated areas and limited housing options. The influx of migrants seeking better opportunities has led to the proliferation of illegal settlements characterized by poor living conditions and a lack of basic amenities (Sadana, 2023). In Bendungan Hilir, a densely populated area in Jakarta, the residents have developed a strong attachment to their location despite its slum conditions. Many of them are reluctant to relocate, preferring to remain in their familiar surroundings (Sarjiyanto et al., 2023).

To address the housing crisis and improve living conditions, the government has initiated the construction of high-rise apartment buildings. However, a significant challenge remains: how to recreate the original atmosphere and sense

of community that residents cherished before moving into the new high-rise buildings. The core issue is how to design these apartment complexes to maintain the essence of the traditional "kampung" (village) life, where residents regularly interact, socialize, and build strong communal ties (Arima et al., 2019).

Observations of the community behavior reveal that residents frequently gather, chat, and engage in social activities, creating a vibrant and cohesive community (Lewicka, 2010). This social dynamic is crucial to their sense of belonging and well-being. Therefore, the goal is to preserve this kampung atmosphere within the new housing environment, ensuring that residents feel at home and remain engaged with their community.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand the impact of community art on the residents of Bendungan Hilir. The methodology includes various data collection methods such as in-depth interviews and participatory observation. This comprehensive approach allows for a detailed and nuanced understanding of the community dynamics and the effects of art initiatives. Some works such as Anwar & Ardhiati (2023), Gunawan & Ardhiati (2022), Herlambang & Ardhiati (2023), Kholis (2023), and Subagyo & Adi (2023) used the same method, that is qualitative, but their studies are different at least from geographical location and object of study they use.

This study is designed as an exploratory qualitative research project. This design is chosen to delve deeply into the personal experiences and perceptions of the community members, capturing the richness of their interactions and the transformative potential of community art. Data collection methods used are: (1) interviews: In-depth Interviews: Conducted with a diverse group of participants including community members, local artists, and representatives from NGOs (non-governmental organizations) involved in the art projects. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and the emergence of new insights during the conversations. (2) Participatory Observation: Researchers spent significant time in Bendungan Hilir, observing the daily activities and interactions among residents. This method provided valuable context and helped in understanding the social fabric of the community. Detailed field notes were taken to document observations.

The location of Bendungan Hilir was chosen because it is part of the Governor of DKI Jakarta's program aimed at improving living conditions in urban slum areas named Collaborative Implementation Program (CIP). This makes it a relevant and impactful case study for examining the effects of community art initiatives in such settings.

The research is guided by the following assumptions and theories: (1) Social Cohesion Theory: The assumption that community-driven projects can enhance social ties and foster a sense of belonging among residents. (2) Environmental Psychology: The theory that physical improvements in living environments can positively impact mental well-being and reduce stress. (3) Place Attachment Theory: The idea that residents have strong emotional bonds with their living

spaces, which can be leveraged to improve their overall satisfaction with their environment.

Data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and significant insights. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to quantify residents' perceptions and experiences. The triangulation of these methods ensured the reliability and validity of the findings.

Results and discussion

RW 07 in Kelurahan Karet Tengsin, Tanah Abang, Central Jakarta, is a densely populated area with various community initiatives and activities. This area, located in the Karet Tengsin Urban Kampong is prone to flooding and burning. This is due to the dense and uninhabitable condition of the buildings.



[Source: Processed Google Earth map by Muharrami, 2023]

Figure 1. Map of study location

Based on the survey, the majority of buildings in RW 07 Karet Tengsin is a building with poor non-permanent and of uninhabitable quality. Most of the buildings have roofs with materials such as asbestos or roof tiles and are in a leaking condition. In addition, the walls of the buildings are made of wood, boards or a mixture of boards and bricks. Meanwhile, the floor is made of cement plaster.



[Source: Field Survey, 2023]

Figure 2. Condition of poor houses in RW 07 Kelurahan Karet Tengsing, Central Jakarta

Residents in RW 07 actively participate in communal activities such as "kerja bakti" (community clean-up efforts). These activities are routinely organized and involve cleaning gutters, trimming trees, and ensuring the general cleanliness of the neighborhood. The local government collaborates with various departments and the community to address issues like flooding and sanitation. Residents often gather to chat and socialize with their neighbors, maintaining a vibrant community atmosphere. These informal interactions are crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and community spirit, which are essential for the residents' well-being. Community engagement is essential for developing their village. Design ideas from the communities in Benhil should be preserved, as is also the case in Kampung Petogogan Jakarta (Lestari & Kurniawan, 2018).

The power of interaction among these residents is a strong asset to create a new atmosphere in a new residential environment (in this case, flats). the community in RW 07 Karet Tengsin compactly provides the ideas they want into a design that is assisted by Architecture students of Pancasila University Jakarta. Here are some key communities and activities in this area based on field survey by team:

1. STBM (Community-Based Total Sanitation) Community: RW 07 is a priority location for the STBM program initiated by the local government. This program involves the community in sanitation education and waste management to ensure a clean and healthy environment. Activities include the installation of septic tanks and campaigns to stop open defecation;
2. Religious Study Groups and Activities: Like many densely populated areas in Jakarta, RW 07 has active religious study groups and activities that help

strengthen social bonds and provide moral support to community members;

3. Youth Groups and Karang Taruna: The Karang Taruna youth organization in RW 07 is active in various social and youth empowerment activities. They participate in sports, arts, and various social programs that support skill development and leadership among local youth;
4. Economic Activities and MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises): There is a community of local entrepreneurs running various small businesses, including culinary ventures, handicrafts, and service providers. These entrepreneurs often collaborate to organize bazaars and training sessions to enhance their business capacities; and
5. Kampung KB (Family Planning Village): Kampung KB is a program implemented to improve residents' quality of life through effective family planning and reproductive health education.

These communities reflect the importance of collaboration and active participation by residents in various government programs and local initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life in densely populated areas like RW 07 Karet Tengsin. This is similar to the situation in Kampung Kingkit when handling floods communally in Jakarta. Community life in Kampung Kota, where discussions and sharing of ideas to solve local issues are held through "rembug" or group discussions, represents a very good local wisdom (Kurniasari et al., 2019).

Some of the design ideas to be implemented in the new residential environment are places for residents to interact both indoors and outdoors, a playground for their children, and colors that symbolize cheerfulness on the walls of their residential buildings. Togetherness and interaction among residents must be maintained. For this reason, there must be more places for interaction, including places of worship, in the new residential environment. These ideas have been translated into the following designs:



[Source: The authors, 2023]

Figure 3. New Masterplan of RW 07 Kelurahan Karet Tengsing, Central Jakarta based on communities' ideas



[Source: The authors, 2023]

Figure 4. Colourfull of the wall to bring new energies of their life. North view (above) and South view (below)



[Source: The authors, 2023]

Figure 5. Colourfull of the wall to bring new energies of their life. North view (left) and South view (right).

Conclusion

These projects have fostered social cohesion by bringing residents together. This has strengthened a sense of community and common purpose. In addition, these beautification efforts have reduced petty crime, as the improved environment has led to less vandalism and other criminal activity.

Participating in art projects has provided residents with a creative outlet, boosting their mental health and overall well-being. These findings contribute to the field by showcasing the transformative potential of community art in urban slum settings. The study suggests that community art can be an effective tool in urban development strategies, enhancing both the physical and social fabric of dense slum areas like Bendungan Hilir.

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