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# Housing preferences and strategies of Javanese migrants in Jakarta

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**Abstract.** As the center of development growth, Jakarta has been flooded with massive migration from all over the country, especially Java. With the limited skill to compete in the formal economy sector and soaring house price, living in limited size house becomes the plausible solution for the Javanese migrants. This reality bite serves a severe mismatch between the culture-based housing preferences and available rooms in the occupied house. In order to minimize the mismatch, the migrants deliver various meticulous strategies by utilizing the available resources. This paper examines the housing preferences of Javanese migrants in Jakarta and their strategy to minimize the mismatch between the housing preferences and the occupied houses. Qualitative method and means-end chain analysis are conducted to reveal the housing preferences based on Javanese culture, the delivered strategies, and their connections. The respondent selection encompasses low-cost apartment and high-density slum settlements to represent the common housing type of low-skilled migrants in Jakarta. The result demonstrates that the anchored spirit of togetherness in housing preferences takes form in their unique strategies beyond physical boundaries and materiality.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia has been mentioned as one of the world's most diverse nation – for it has around 1.000 communities with more than 400 languages and 17.000 islands [1]. Every community has their characteristics which differ one from another. This is applied to Javanese ethnic as well that is spread all over Java island.

Further discussion then comes into the huge migration of Javanese people to Jakarta – the capital city of Indonesia – which had happened for years and causing them to be the most ethnic population in the city. The amount of Javanese migrants even surpasses the Betawinese ethnic, the original ethnic of Jakarta. The previous study usually discusses migrants who become the minority in their destination places. It shows that migrants tend to live next to their ethnic enclaves [2].

Examining the migration itself can be seen that the main reason is the economic factor. These migrants try to get a better way of living and find moving to the capital city is worth a try. With the limited financial condition, their choices of dwelling are constrained to certain places, such as high-

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density slum area and low-cost apartment. These two choices fit their financial resources, but not their preferences. Consequently, they make some unique strategies to adapt to the discrepancy.

The discussed issues in this paper will reveal Javanese low-skilled migrants' housing preferences – like the majority in Jakarta – in terms of location, closure to family and friends, housing attribute features. The paper will also explain how culture influences one's housing activities. Further discussion will describe the mismatch occurred and their unique strategies in dealing with the mismatch those are a different one to another, depending on the available resources they have.

## 2. Materials

### 2.1 *Javanese Migrants' Housing Preferences and Choices*

Almost everyone has experienced moving from one place to another. This process is called migration, where a family or individual move permanently or semi-permanently [3]. Many factors can affect the process, such as factors in the origin and destination place, obstacles in between, and personal factors [3].

Unfortunately, the migrants often come with limited skill and low competence of education, and most of them are only high school graduates or even lower. With this confined asset, only a few migrants can earn a better living than before in their origin places. Meanwhile, the rest even has to struggle by doing any possible job just to survive. No wonder, living in a comfortable preferred house remains a reverie for some. They also have to deal with the plausible solution, to live in a slum area or a low-cost apartment as mentioned before. The house they choose to live in then termed as a housing choice – which may be distinct from their true preference [4]. The distinction is caused by regulation, supply factor, budget, etc. [4]. Another interesting fact is the evocative data that they have become the most ethnic population in the city, even surpasses Betawinese, the original ethnic group of Jakarta. A study has shown that a newcomer tends to live close to the same ethnic group [2] – a question arises naturally whether it remains important for an ethnic group that has dominated and spread all over the destination city. This will be revealed by a direct interview with the migrants.

### 2.2 *Javanese Culture Influences Housing Activities*

In examining housing activities, culture is perceived to take an important part in influencing an individual or family housing preference [4]. Further, the culture has to be dismantled first into concrete variables such as lifestyle, family, identity, and value, to find its correlation with housing activity itself [5]. To study further about Javanese culture, there are three forms in every culture namely notion and norms, social system, and physical culture [6]. Notion and norms are inherited from generations. In Javanese culture, this involves an obvious level in the social structure. They have been taught to respect the elderly in certain attitudes, such as specific call while communicating with them. Not only by age, but the structure is also applied by how they label different kind of people, from the aristocracy to the proletariat. The notion is also about having many kids because they believe it will bring warmth to the family [7]. Javanese people are also raised to show care to other people – sometimes knowing in the future they may need it in return.

The second form is the social system, that can be observed in their everyday life. In Javanese tradition, they have a close relationship with neighbors, and they get used to help one another or in their own phrase *gotong-royong* (mutual cooperation). They also have a closer relationship with their direct families such as parents, children, and siblings. Furthermore, *sunghan* (hesitate to be burdensome to others) feeling often occurs among the extended family. Javanese people also have specific ceremonial in every important moment of life, such as *midodareni* when they are getting married, *mitoni* in their 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy, etc. They also believe these have to be held in their own houses, as respect and gratitude to their parents for raising them. Javanese people also value a gathering with their loved ones is priceless, which prompts them to put aside anything else. There is even a proverb that says in English “even in starving, gathering together is the most important thing.” The third form is physical, such as carving and pattern can be directly applied in the dwellings. Together, these three cultural forms influence individual or family's lifestyle, value, norms, perspectives applied in their dwellings.

### 3. Methodology

In this paper, a qualitative method is used with an interview, direct observation, and means-end chain method. The purpose of using an interview is to reveal their actual preferences of houses despite the limitations. Meanwhile, the purpose of means-end chain method is to reveal the direct influence of tradition toward housing activities, by looking up to the certain chain that ends up with “tradition” on top of the chain. The referred value consists of ten different values, which includes tradition value [8].

Means-end chain method is used to trace spatial attributes – consequences – values. The process starts with identifying the spatial attribute in the dwelling, continuously asking why they are featured to reveal the underlying consequences, to show at last the values upheld by the related person. This method usually starts with spatial attributes, but in a certain condition, it has to be started from the consequences. The certain condition mentioned is a small sized housing that may not contain spatial attributes needed. Starting from consequences or typical activities that the respondents do can unveil the spatial attributes that may be available outside of their houses.

This research is applied to four low-skilled Javanese migrants in Pesanggrahan, specifically, Gateway Apartment where many migrants gathered from all over the country: Manado, Padang, Ambon, Java, and many more. Near this area, there are several industrial places, for example, Cipadu, where many labors are needed. It's not a surprising fact that many low-skilled migrants come and live directly to this area where finding jobs are more likely easy.

Another reason why many migrants live in the Gateway Apartment is the affordable monthly fare, so it becomes a plausible choice for them who mostly comes from the lower middle class. The first respondent rents the apartment unit and another one owns the unit by herself. The third one rents a room in a high-density slum settlement near the apartment, and the last one owns a house in a similar condition. This variation is expected to represent all types of dwelling condition of low-skilled migrants. Despite all the differences of dwelling, all of the respondents earn a living in Gateway Apartment as a food stall owner and a daily-paid worker. The criteria met by these four respondents are as follows: they born and raised in their ethnic area in Java, moved to Jakarta in their productive age and were prompted to find a job to earn a better living.

### 4. Results

The results are shown in the pictures below. From the means-end chain method can be seen the chains which end up in “tradition” value. The results show a variety of spatial attributes that can be used to accommodate a specific Javanese tradition they uphold; whether it is inside the dwelling or not and whether it belongs to them or their relatives’.



**Figure 2.** Mrs. RO's (left) and Mrs. YT's (right)

Right pictures in figure 2 illustrate 5 m x 5.6 m apartment unit condition of Mrs. YT. She owns the apartment and has lived here for about ten years with her daughter and 4 grandchildren. Mrs. YT also

has a stall on the ground floor that sells fresh veggies. Their activities are pretty much the same, standing by for the whole day in their stall and they only use their apartment unit for sleeping, going to the bathroom, and praying. The rest activities such as eating and gathering with family and guests are performed on the ground floor – in front of their food stalls. They prefer to do all things downstairs due to the bigger space, and more fresh air is available.

Talking about her own preference, Mrs. YT answers simply to live close with her daughters and grandchildren. For specific housing attribute feature, she says nothing but a spacious living room. She explains her strategy to receive her guests on a special day is by opening her door unit and rolling out a mat to the aisle.



**Figure 3.** Mrs. WT's (left) Mrs. YN's (right)

Next is Mrs. WT's. Her means-end chain schema is quite different, for there is no chain that ends up connected to tradition value. She explains that she is not into tradition kind of things anymore since she decided only to do what is written in the Holy Bible. But, according to the conclusion taken from those four schemas, the value systems are looking similar from one to another that consist of benevolence and security.

Living in a 5 m x 5,6 m sized apartment, those left pictures in figure 3 explain the condition inside the apartment of Mrs. WT. She lives here with her husband, while her children live in her own house in Bintaro. She rents the apartment here to cut time and transportation cost because she has a food stall on the ground floor of the apartment and works there daily. She also tells the reason to rent this apartment is her preference to live close to her workplace. Mrs. WT also shares her preference for a house with a spacious living room so she can easily arrange a family gathering and any kind of celebration. However, living in a small sized apartment is no big deal for her, because she has her own house in Bintaro already – which can be an alternative place for holding any celebration.

The last one is Mrs. YN who lives in her own house of 7m x 11m. She has lived here with two daughters for the last ten years. As captured on the right side of figure 3, her house already has physical boundaries for a guest room, a living room, a dining room, and two bedrooms. She tells that her preference has already fulfilled for living next to her immediate family members: her uncle and brother. Mrs. YN is the owner of a food stall in Gateway Apartment, and she comes home almost late in the midnight. At such a time like this, she always asks her sister in law to come by and accompany her daughters until she arrives. Other than the location consideration, the spatial attributes of her house have accommodated every activity they do in terms of size, furniture, and arrangement needed.

## 5. Discussion

### *5.1 Javanese Migrants' Housing Preference and A Spatial Attribute Features*

From the interview, can be concluded that their actual preference is to live close to their immediate family members such as parents, children, and siblings. An extended family member will trigger a hesitant feeling – related to their notion as mentioned before. The reason is they can easily ask or give any help to immediate family members due to their natural bond. Specifically asked about the closure to other Javanese, these four respondents agree that it remains no more important, since they believe other ethnics will act good and helpful – for the same root they have as Indonesian. Next preference, the lower priority they have is to live close to their workplace, so they can manage to get home earlier and have more family time. This shows how they put everything else aside so they can manage time together with their beloved ones.

The migrants do not merely consider the location, but they also have a preference for spatial attributes as well as concluded from the interview and the means-end chain method. For example, according to the interview performed to all respondents, they do have a preference for a spacious room that may gather many people inside. Another concern is how to indulge their guests and make them feel comfortable in their houses. The spatial attributes those are used to accommodate this consideration are different among the migrants due to its subjective nature, and it will depend on the owner's perspective. For example, Mrs. YT deems the best way to indulge their guests is by letting them enjoy fresh air and beautiful view on the ground floor of the apartment, while Mrs. YN finds setting her house to relax is the best one. She does it by putting some green vegetation, a spacious windy living room, and even two standing fans, with particular consideration to the well-being of her guests.

### *5.2 Culture Affects Migrants' Housing Activities by Direct and Indirect Ways*

It is proved from the interview and schemas that culture does influence one's housing activities. Even though there is no physical attribute that is revealing Javanese' culture, but in schemas, there are many chains found that led to the tradition value. These come from spatial attribute such as spacious room for family and friends who come and gather to celebrate certain ceremony of big moments in life in their own residence, in order to strictly follow their Javanese tradition. However, one schema showed a difference– Mrs. WT who said that she does not hold the Javanese tradition anymore and only follow her religion. In her schema, no chain is found to be connected to the tradition value. Nevertheless, the composition of these four migrants' values looked similar.

The exact similar values of these four respondents are benevolence and security value. It makes sense how these two values can be upheld as they may be derived from the notion and norms that have been taught for decades. For example, the behavior to care for other people that encourages them to put on mind about their family and friends' wellness, influences their way to serve their family members, as reflected in their consideration on organizing their dwellings. This is also proved by the means-end chain, that reveals many actual consequences of the spatial attributes which are based on the prominence of their beloved guests. A specific example reflected in Mrs. YN's. The dining table was bought especially for serving her guests well, while she and her family used the ordinary kitchen table for daily routines.

All the above also prove the theory that says we have to dismantle culture first into concrete variables before correlating it with housing activities [9]. It can be concluded from the means-end chain method that the values they uphold and the perspective they have, have been influenced by culture, which next can influence housing preference in terms of location, size, spatial attribute features.

### *5.3 Different Strategies on Mismatch Occurs Depend on Available Resources Migrants Have*

This part can be seen by direct observation in the houses and from the interview. These four migrants have different strategies in dealing with the mismatch that occurs between housing preference and choice they get. In the most limited condition as in Mrs. RO's, she limits her relation to friends and neighbors, so she doesn't have to host any friends in her dwelling. On the other side, her strategy to arrange the

Javanese tradition she keeps on upholding is by coming back home to her origin place. She explains how the lack of relatives in Jakarta, budget, and small sized of dwelling has forced her to go back to her hometown. Meanwhile, in her rented room it can be seen clearly how she compresses all primary activities in the available area included sleeping, eating, taking a rest, etc.

Up next, Mrs. YT and Mrs. WT's strategies are to deal with their small sized apartment units. For the mismatch of spatial attributes that Mrs. WT prefers, it is solved by her own house in Bintaro, as it has a more spacious room inside and perfect for holding any family gathering. She also takes advantage of the spacious area in front of the stall to welcome her close guests. Mrs. YT has the same strategy for welcoming her close family and friends. However, for holding the traditional ceremony and gathering, she makes use of the function hall of the apartment. Their dwellings are merely used for sleeping, taking a bath, and praying. The rest activities are done on the ground floor, they even sometimes do the prayer in the stall area.

Mrs. YN's dwelling – is the most spacious area of all respondents, therefore, not only separation between public and private area, but she can also make separate room to welcome formal guests and closed ones. Talking about the mismatch, the location of her house actually fits her preference which is close to her brother. The spatial attribute features inside also fit her preference of a spacious living room to accommodate many people in a family gathering. Not only that, there seemed to be more specific spatial attributes, like side access, a dining room, many more. These are for the comfort and well-being of her family and friends who visit.

## 6. Conclusion

From this research, it can be concluded that Javanese migrants' housing preference in terms of location is to be close to their direct family members that include parents, children, and siblings. As in spatial attributes, they prefer a spacious room that is wide enough to welcome their family and close relatives. Specific preference to live close to Javanese neighbors is not important anymore. About the strategies for dealing with the mismatch, they do it differently. In the most limited condition, migrant will compress activities to the primary needs and do it in the available space of the dwelling. The allocation of space will also be minimized by merging private and public area. A dwelling that is wide enough allows a physical boundary to separate between the private and the public area. In the best condition, they have specific attribute features as the owner prefers. About the strategy to overcome the limitation especially in terms of size, they use outside spatial attributes available such as extension right in front of the dwelling, a function room, and the restaurant area if they live in an apartment, or it can be far away in their hometown.

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