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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening Speech</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### I. Cultural Aspects of Living Space

1.1 Integrating Cultural Expression Within Urban Architectural Identity by Krisprantono  
   Page 1-1

1.2 From Qolbu Management to Environment Management of Islamic Architecture by M. Syaom Barliana, MPd., MT.Ars.  
   Page 1-13

1.3 Uniformity in Architecture Concerning to Local Cultural Development by Arya Ronald  
   Page 1-30

1.4 Living Culture of the Chinese Ethnical Community In Old Pecinan and Jalan Cibadak Area – Bandung City by Udijanto Pawitro  
   Page 1-41

1.5 Contemporary Living Style in Malaysian Urban Life; A Comparison of Past and Present by Zuhairuse Md Darus, Mazian Mohd Tahir, Abdul Halim Ismail, Muhammad Fauzi Mohd Zain, Azami Zaharin  
   Page 1-49

1.6 Influence of the Urbanizing World at Urban Settlement Space by Pindo Tutuko, ST., MT.  
   Page 1-55

1.7 Development, Conservation, Community and Urban Design Problems by Donatus Windya G. & Candraningratri Ekaputri W.  
   Page 1-67

1.8 The system and Mechanism of Community in Japan by T. Yoyok Wahyu Subroto  
   Page 1-81

1.9 Implementation of Concept of Balance at Kelenteng / Shrine in Lasem by T. Yoyok Wahyu Subroto, Dyah S. Pradnya, Affah Harisah Husein  
   Page 1-87
CONTENTS

I.10. Aquatic Living Culture of Marine and Riverine Ecopolitan
      by DR. Ir. Budi Prayaño, M. Eng. I-95

I.11. Spontaneous “Rukun Tetangga” Intermediate Action to
      Develop Post Disaster Neighborhood Living Unit in
      Indonesia by Ikaputra & Bambang Hari Wibisono I-100

I.12. Continuing the Urban Public Open Space from the Concept
      of Java’s Traditional “Alun-Alun” Case Study: Alun-Alun
      of Malang City by Lisa Dwi Wulandari I-110

I.13. Sonaf Bukan Sekedar Bangunan Manusia Tanpa Sejarah
      Niscaya Akan Kehilangan Jati Diri Mereka
      by Ir. Donny Y Kusa Bannek, MT I-118

II. Public Facilities Space

II.1. Redefinition of Traditional Market in Metropolitan Area by
      Evawani Ellisa II-1

II.2. Redevelopment of Pasar Senen Cultural Context for
      Enhancing Livability of a Business District by Andri
      Widiyantoko, Dwi Endah Kusumaningsih, & Merry Morfosa II-6

II.3. Spontaneous Public Space, The Neglected City’s Asset by
      Mahatma Sindu Suryo, ST. II-16

II.4. Boundary and Urban Public Space: Design Context by
      Azlimin Samsul Mohd Tazilant, Mazlan Mohd Tahir,
      Zuhairus Md Darus, Abdul Halim Ismail II-22

II.5. Urban Context of Merdeka Square: Challenging the
      Design of First-Grade Civic Center in Indonesia by
      Danang Priatmudjo II-37

III. Street Space

III.1. Design Approach Toward Public Space for Location of
      Street Vendor by A. Ardiyanto III-1
III.2 Spatial Use Living Patterns In CBD by Hendramaji

III.3 Making Good Pedestrian Path Design in the Urban Environment (Case Study: Pedestrian Path on Kyai Tapa Street in West Jakarta) by Nina Nurdiani & Nuzuliah Rahmah

III.4 Living on the “Hyperreality” Street Space Advertisements Expansion on Jogjakarta’s Streets by Harry Kurniawan

III.5 Urban Design Context in the Façade Composition Change Pattern of Ir. H. Djuanda (Jalan Dago) Corridor Bandung by Lilis Widaningsih

III.6 Making a Street As a Public Space: Understanding Conflicts in Commercial Corridors in the City of Bandung by Petrus Natalivan & Sigit Dwiananto A.

III.7 Pedestrians’ Preferences and The Role of Public Activities on the Crossing Bridge by Nurhikmah Budi Hartanti

III.8 The Characteristic of the Street Vendor Location in Urban Area (Case Study: City of Surabaya) by Sri Amiranti

III.9 Some Notions for Creating Liveable Street in Tropical Regions (Sub-theme: Urban Street Space Design) by Ir. Titien Saraswati, M.Arch., Ph.D.

III.10 “Outdoor Activity” as A New Life Style by Nurtati Soewarno

IV. Open Space

IV.1 A Meaning Study in Public Space: An Observation Toward Behaviors of the Users of the Lapangan Taman Tugu Pahlawan Surabaya by Nur Endah Nuffida, ST,MT

IV.2 The Using Of Campus Open Space By Students Activities
A Case Study In Trisakti University by Nurhikmah Budi Hartanti IV-12

IV.3. Public Space for Social Activity in Yogyakarta by Dwita Hadi Rahmi IV-23

IV.4. Urban Context of Merdeka Square: Challenging the Design of First-Grade Civic Center in Indonesia by Danang Priatmodjo IV-37

IV.5. Peran Warga Kota dalam Pengelolaan Ruang Terbuka Publik by Freddy H. Istanto IV-43

IV.6. The Concept of Design Public Open Space in Plangkaraya: Consideration Cultural and Ecological Factors by Parmonangan Simanurring IV-49

IV.7. The Ecological Concept of Sub District Jampirejo – Temanggung in Supporting Tourism Industry Growth by Erni Setyowati, Ria Fendriarko IV-54

V. Settlement V-1

V.1. Culture Spirit in Indigenous Malay Kampung by Yohannes Firzal V-1

V.2. Public Space for Ethics Relation in Surakarta by Dhani Mutiari & Wisnu Setiawan V-11

V.3. Spatial Changes Pattern on Chinese Houses in Lasem, Rembang by Yulyta Kodrat P & Nuryanto V-16

V.4. A Prismatic Temporary Shelter Design Limited Comfortable Living Space to Hause Tsunami Refugees in Aceh by Djoko Wijono V-23

VI. Urban Living Space & Tecnology VI-1

VI.1. Planning a Settlement Area after Disaster by Deva Fosterhardolas Swasto VI-1
1. CULTURAL ASPECT OF LIVING SPACE

Integrating Cultural Expression

VI.2. Fire Protection Strategies as A Friendly Urban Utility in Environment by R. Darmono VI-12

VI.3. Toward Bioclimatic Urban Square Design for Hot Humid Tropic City by Jono Wardoyo, ST. MT. VI-24

VI.4. Rules of Thumb in Daylighting Design by Nik Lukman Nik Ibrahim & Muhamad Fauzi Mohd Zain VI-30

VI.5. Failure of the Modern City by Masta Surat & Dr. Mohd. Tajuddin Mohd Rasdi VI-47

VI.6. Living with Disaster in The Archipelagic Context by Budi Prayitno VI-53
The System And Mechanism Of Community In Japan

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Abstract

This research focused on the theme of system and mechanism of community in Japan. It is directed to see what extent was the community successful in creating, enhancing, fostering and exploiting people life in urban living space in Japan. This research is intended to search the nature of community form to promote a better urban living space which conform to local culture. The result of the research pointed that Ujikko system in Japan becomes the highlight of the activity of community life where the setting of community called Sato is. It remains the only formal conception with much apparent formality relevance to community form in Japan.

1. Introduction

The process of modernization of urban development in Asian cities apparently caused the transformation of community form which consisted of meaning, senses and values. This phenomenon also occurs in Japan where the community envisages dual life-style such modern and tradition. In Japanese traditional views, community emphasizes social intercourse in such that people enjoy a primary relationship and forceful sense of community. It is characterized by organic solidarity and interdependent members. In contrast, it is well known that modern life utilizes such facilities as communication and information which make a possibility to avoid encounters. Accordingly, modern stance makes people seem to put a premium on their individual life that refers to associative form. In fact, the existence of associative form seems to be dominant in urban life becomes inhuman since the linkage among people correspondingly diminished.

Coping with the above inhuman life, the community form—as a setting for human activities—in the view of Japanese will be explored to see the system and mechanism of community that organize the dynamism of local social life.

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mechanism and system of social life in Japan is in concert with community members way of living and it refers to socially suitable in such that conforms to individual needs and local culture. The system and mechanism of community then becomes a guide line in creating their living space pattern which leads this research arrives at the system and mechanism of community in Japan becomes the main focus of the research.

2. Importance

The dense population in cities, where according to Bhattacharya (1990) by the year of 2025 approximately one billion people will be living in urban centers of Asian countries, is necessary to be kept someone eyes open before it changes to be a crowd city. It may easily create such phenomena of social and economic problem which often refers to social chaos such as crime, an alienation, a mental stress, etc. The ongoing greatly social change and borderless society actually will affect the characteristics of community. One factor that makes the change is in expectation of the economic efficiency. To response this issue, a socio-cultural approach (which composed of beliefs values and symbol that organize much human behavior) is necessary (to equal the economic approach) to be conducted.

3. Community in Japan

3.1. The spirit of community

In order to know the Japanese community, it will be necessary as a starting point to identify the key element (basic idea) of the Japanese community. Japanese community is familiar with many annual festivals called matsuri. Matsuri actually related to historical background and GROUP of LIVING system of Japanese tradition. It is the one basic core ritual in general Japanese community to gain happiness. It is held to commemorate important events in related to farming activities. Matsuri in Japan actually constitutes the materialization of the unity between group of people and their ancestral to include their God or Goddess. In the word of Yoshihiro (1991) matsuri in Japan are a sort of religion. It can be identified by ritual activities which are predominated
when *matsuri* is performed. So it can be understood that initially *matsuri* among the Japanese may become the part of their life. In *matsuri* performance people who are living in same community seem to be elicit amicable relations beginning from its hard preparation until in the end of the performance. Participation in *matsuri* is carried out based on the basis of private interest. By involving in *matsuri*, people can interact each other as mutually supportive in handling conflict generally.\(^{12}\) *Matsuri* performs the living, creative and conservative nucleus of Japanese tradition. It also serves as a source of energy vitalizing the community. It is a brand of community life where the spirit of togetherness—a true sense of community—is existed. Moreover it constitutes all lanes and lines of Japanese civilization.

3.2. Community Way of Living

According to Kojiro (1977) the Japanese community originated in ancient Japanese agricultural communities in the period of Natural Shintoism. In primitive times, men used unsophisticated techniques to sustain themselves on nature yields. Their respect for nature had a religious feeling and they prayed to mountains, rivers, trees and stones as a symbol of that nature. As they act farming activities, it required great land area and vigorous communal workers. It caused they lived in very closely bound and the concept of *ubusuna-gami* and *ujigami* were developed.\(^{13}\) The equivalent of this community core is found in *Yamamiya* (mountain shrine), *Satomiya* (village shrine) and *Tamiya* (field shrine) and on the axis of religious activities connecting these places see Figure 3.1.

\(^{12}\) It is noted that nowadays the actual *matsuri* performance that initially related to the farming activities has been changed into a symbolic of community mainly in the city area. It caused by the majority occupation of community members are NOT related to farming activity.

\(^{13}\) *Ubusuna-gami* roughly means the guardian deity of the place where one was born while *ujigami* means the one's clan of *ubusuna-gami* (Nakajima, 1981)
Figure 3.1. Typical Traditional Japanese Community Core

In the later days of Shoden Shintoism became the Okumiya (Yamamiya: sacred spot situated at the top of a well shaped mountain/shintai: the dwelling place of God); Jinja (Satomiya: the place chosen at the foot of the mountain near a human settlement to greet the God, and Otabiso (Tamiya: the sacred place where the God is received in the middle of rice fields in order that prayers be offered for a bumper crop). respectively. Nakajima (1981) noted that the original meaning of the shrine (jinja) is a group united under a symbol of something higher (a God, kami) than man. Later, the Gods were personified and supposed to dwell in the shrine itself, and the word jinja came to indicate the building especially. Jinja, then becomes the central point of living space where the group of residents surroundings have responsible to maintain the jinja. They belong to local councils which are units of neighborhood community. This neighborhood community at least has annually festival called matsuri.

3.3. Spatial-Knit System in the Community

Matsuri usually involves a number of kumi members (a group of 40-60 families) who live about 100-150 meters of faces ROW HOUSES. In kumi there is
the smallest group of family (6 families) of Japanese community is called *mukou sangen nyo tonari* (three faces row-houses) which spread along 10 to 20 meters. They live within the territory of a shrine (*jinja*) which covers about four to five *kumi* namely *Sato* that consists of 200 houses. So here *jinja* as the central point people to commemorate their ritual activities, has a basic role to unify the *kumi* members. This role provides human contacts in which feeling commitment and identify in certain community are existed. It contains some domestic conventions that have to be acknowledged by community members.

3.4. *Ujiko* System

*Sato* as typical single community in Japan is organized by *Ujiko* system. *Ujiko* is a group of residents of the area of the *jinja*’s tutelage who responsible to maintain the *jinja*. They belong to local councils which are units of neighborhood community and have a role in guiding the area of community. The structure of *Ujiko* system can be explained as follows, (see Figure 3.2)

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.2. Ujiko System in Japanese Community**
3.5. Sato the Area for Living Space

Sato—as a group of kumi which contains 200 families—spreads along 400 meters and has an area of 400m x 400m. It should be noted that 400m is a distance that can be reasonably covered on foot. In spatial terms, the typical extensive community will cover an area of 1800m x 1800m including mountain and fields of which 400m x 400m are inhabited see Figure 3.3. The number of houses averages 200 houses with a population of 1000 people. It is intended to encourage the development of a community spirit. The 200 houses is divided into 4 or 5 kumi as an effective group or and active joint in activity group that serves of energy vitalizing the community. Meanwhile group of sato becomes a CHO that is inhabited by 5000 people and spreads along 1000 meters.

![Figure 3.3. Typical Extensive Community Area covers an area of 1800m x 1800m²](image)

4. Conclusion

The analyzing about community above can direct us to know that Japanese has own way in creating their living space system which is represented by Sato based on Ujiko system. It is initially organized by farming villages culture. It is a system and mechanism of community which is used for setting the
living space for the community in Japan where its members can find a sense of common good, shared lives, culture and views of the indigenous world and collective action within a unit of collective housing as well.

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