

Spatial Dynamics of Social Interaction Space in Jakarta's Urban Kampung

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Abstract

Urban kampung in Jakarta offer informal spaces vital for social interaction, despite limited areas from dense populations. Residents' choice of spaces depends on physical conditions, social ties, and practical functions. This study aims to explore dwellers' preferences in selecting informal social interaction spaces in urban kampung. Yet, limited designated spaces restrict opportunities for organized, inclusive social interactions among urban kampung residents. Using a qualitative method and descriptive analysis, the research examines spatial usage patterns and key factors shaping location preferences. Data collection was conducted through direct observations and interviews with local dwellers. The research findings show that residents of the Palmerah urban kampung choose social interaction spaces based on the proximity between their homes and the location of the interaction space. This research ensures that the observed preferences are not only contextual but also reproducible and adaptable in similar urban settings.

Keywords: Dwellers; Preferences; Social Interaction; Space; Urban Kampung

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INTRODUCTION

Cities represent the pinnacle of human civilization, serving as engines of economic growth, sources of innovation and creativity, centers of culture, and arenas for enhancing quality of life (Pradipto et al., 2020). Yet, behind this idealized image, urban kampung are an inevitable phenomenon in the development of Jakarta as a metropolitan city. Their existence is closely tied to the high rate of urbanization, which brings a constant flow of people migrating from rural areas to urban centers (Anggiani & Ayudya, 2024; Ramdhon, 2021). Urban kampung grow in between the development of modern cities, often without careful planning, but remain an integral part of the urban structure. This area is home to groups of people with diverse socio-economic backgrounds (Dwisusanto & Nusaputra, 2022). Although often considered as dense and unorganized areas, urban kampung remain dynamic living spaces for their dwellers.

The social interaction space in the urban kampung is very important because it is the center of community life (Anggiani & Ayudya, 2024; Hardi, 2020). They use informal spaces in urban villages as places to channel their social activities. There, they feel comfortable for their psychological condition, as meeting with other residents and chatting brings joy to their hearts (Paddiyatu et al., 2020). Among the narrow alleys and small yards, these spaces are where dwellers meet, discuss, and build social relationships (Lathif, 2020; Stirena Rossy Tamariska et al., 2019; Tamariska & Ekomadyo, 2017). They not only serve as gathering places but also as a means to maintain cultural values and neighbour solidarity (Nadya & Herlambang, 2020). With these spaces, urban kampung dwellers can feel the presence of a strong community even though they live in a dense urban environment.

Research on social interaction spaces in urban kampung is very important because it can provide a deeper understanding of social dynamics in limited spaces. Through this research, we can see how existing public spaces affect the quality of life and interactions between dwellers, and how they adapt these spaces to their social needs. This research will also reveal how urban policies can be more sensitive to the social needs of communities and provide insights into how spaces can be adapted amidst rapid urbanization.

In architecture, this research is very meaningful. By understanding more about informal social interaction spaces, architects and urban planners can create more welcoming and useful a social interaction space. This means they can design in a way that takes into account how people use the space, incorporating social and emotional aspects into urban planning, ultimately supporting more sustainable living together (Figure 1). This research not only contributes to the development of more humane architecture but also adds to the academic knowledge of how urban spaces can be organized to support social interaction. This understanding will help in creating more harmonious and sustainable cities, where every citizen can enjoy social interaction spaces that facilitate social connectedness and thriving community life.



Figure 1. Social interaction informal space in Palmerah urban kampung
(Source: Author, 2024)

Preference is a person's tendency or choice towards something compared to another. Preference is defined as "(the right to) be prioritized and prioritized over others; priority; choice; tendency; liking. The concept of preference reflects an individual's assessment based on feelings, expectations, and tendencies that lead a person to a particular choice (Silvestri et al., 2020). Preference is the tendency of individuals or groups to choose something based on their experiences, needs, and values. In the context of space, user preferences are influenced by various factors such as comfort, function, and social and cultural aspects inherent in the environment. Understanding these preferences is important for designing spaces that not only meet functional needs, but also support social interaction and the well-being of their users.

In the context of architecture and social interaction space, preference refers to the tendency of individuals or groups to choose and use a space based on comfort, function, and user experience factors. This preference is not only influenced by physical aspects such as layout, materials, and lighting, but also by social aspects, such as the diversity of activities that can be done and the relationships between users of the space. Preferences for architectural interiors can be described through three main aspects: coherence, which relates to the ease of understanding and organizing a space; attractiveness, which reflects the degree of information richness and interest generated by an environment; and comfort, which indicates the extent to which a space feels personal and tailored to the needs of its users (Vartanian et al., 2021). By understanding user preferences, space design can be more responsive to the social and cultural needs of the community that uses it.

User preferences for social interaction spaces in urban kampung also reflect how they interpret and adapt space to their daily activities. Spaces that are more flexible, easily accessible, and support various types of social interactions tend to be preferred by dwellers (Sanei et al., 2018). Factors such as the presence of green elements, protection from the weather, and a sense of security and comfort in carrying out activities also determine their preferences. By understanding these preferences, the design of social interaction spaces can be more directed at improving the quality of life of increasingly complex and dynamic urban kampung communities. In addition, these preferences are also influenced by local social and cultural engagement that shapes how residents use space. By taking these elements into account, designers and policymakers can create spaces that are not only functional but also meaningful to the local community.

Kampung in Jakarta have developed in response to massive urbanization, although they often grow without proper planning. Despite limited land and facilities, residents continue to build a dynamic social life through informal interaction (Figure 1). These spaces play an important role in strengthening community solidarity and identity. However, their existence is often overlooked in city policies and planning. Therefore, it is important to understand how residents choose and utilize social interaction spaces in this dense and growing environment.

Informal social interaction spaces in urban kampung are formed organically based on the needs and habits of dwellers in their daily activities (Pandelaki et al., 2017; Wardhani et al., 2020). Dwellers' preferences in choosing social interaction spaces are not only influenced by physical aspects, but also by social, economic, and cultural factors that develop in the environment (Nowzari et al., 2023). Some places are more popular because they are easy to access, comfortable, or can be used in different ways. However, keeping and improving these spaces can be challenging, especially with urbanization and changes in city planning. That's why it's important to understand how dwellers choose informal social spaces and how these choices affect the way such spaces are designed and planned in urban kampung. Based on this, **the research question is: What aspects influence the residents of Palmerah's urban**

kampung in choosing the locations for their everyday social interactions?

METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the preferences of urban kampung residents for informal social interaction spaces in West Jakarta. The qualitative method is considered the most suitable because the study seeks to explore residents' lived experiences, perceptions, and values embedded in their everyday social interactions within these spaces. By employing this approach, the research captures contextual and dynamic aspects that cannot be quantified, enabling a deeper understanding of the social and spatial factors that shape residents' choices.

Data were collected through a combination of direct observation and in-depth interviews with residents who actively use informal social interaction spaces in the kampung environment. This strategy allows the researcher to gain nuanced insights into how these spaces are used, as well as to identify the physical and social qualities—such as spatial layout, comfort, accessibility, and social ties—that influence the residents' preferences when selecting spaces for gathering and interaction.

The data analysis was conducted using a descriptive narrative approach, in which observation notes and interview transcripts were systematically reviewed and interpreted based on field findings. This process aims to reveal usage patterns and the meanings attached to social interactions occurring in the kampung's public spaces. By doing so, the study generates a more comprehensive understanding of residents' needs and behaviors, which can inform future planning and design strategies for enhancing informal social interaction spaces in West Jakarta's urban kampung.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Palmerah Urban Kampung

Palmerah Subdistrict, West Jakarta, occupies a strategic urban location with a total area of approximately 69 hectares and a population of more than 14,000 inhabitants. Physically, the area is bounded by Jalan Raya Palmerah to the north and the railway line to the south, characterized by high density, compact building patterns, and narrow neighborhood streets. The limited availability of land results in a shortage of public open spaces, compelling residents to utilize small gaps between houses for daily activities. This condition fosters a hybrid character of residential and economic functions, including small shops, kiosks, and home-based businesses, which simultaneously serve as gathering points for residents. Thus, Palmerah Urban Kampung exemplifies the integration of dense urban settlement with the community's economic and social life.

The informants in this study are residents who simultaneously act as the primary agents of everyday life in Palmerah's urban kampung. A total of 43 individuals participated, comprising both men and women aged between 30 and 70 years, all of whom reside in RW 05, Palmerah Subdistrict, West Jakarta. They are distributed across RT 003 to RT 007 within RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung, with lengths of residence ranging from 20 to 60 years. Such long-term settlement indicates their strong attachment to the neighborhood and positions them as credible sources for understanding the dynamics of social interaction spaces in the area. Although not all informants own their homes—some live in rental housing—their presence remains significant, as they actively engage in the everyday practices of social interaction within Palmerah's urban kampung.

Places utilized as spatial settings for social interaction

From the interviews with the informants, it was found that the informal social interaction spaces in Palmerah's urban kampung consist of private houses, houses that also function as small shops (*warung*), the forecourt of the community hall and guard post, as well as neighborhood alleys (*gang*). These sites are appropriated by residents of Palmerah's urban kampung as loci of everyday social interaction. Although these spaces were not deliberately designed as social interaction facilities, they operate as hybrid spaces—carrying both their primary function and simultaneously serving as venues for social exchange. While a formal facility in the form of a community hall exists, residents of the kampung demonstrate stronger attachment to the informal interaction spaces that emerge spontaneously, shaped by their sense of community.

According to the recorded data, the neighborhood exhibits four primary locations for social interaction, each demonstrating distinct gendered participation patterns. Approximately 60% of all social interactions occur in front of neighbors' houses, which serve as the primary domain for women,

who account for 70% of the interactions in this semi-private, residential space, often while supervising children. Conversely, men tend to congregate more frequently (65% of interactions) at the RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung post near the Community Hall and along the main village street, which together constitute 25% of the observed interaction sites. Small shop fronts contribute only 10% to the total interactions, with a noted caveat that this space requires particular awareness. Overall, this spatial pattern reveals a distinct gender-based division, where women predominantly occupy and dominate more private-residential areas, while men are more active in defined public and formal civic spaces (Figure 2).

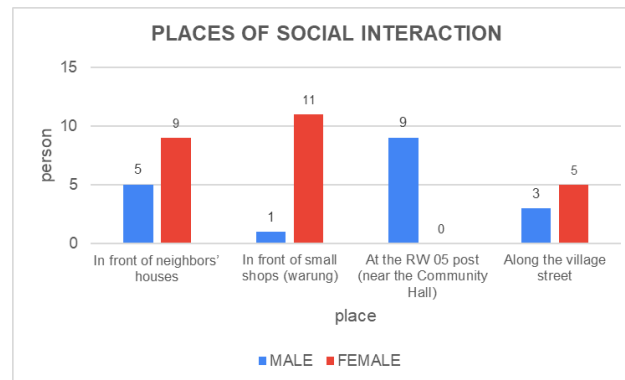


Figure 2. Distribution of Social Interaction Spaces by Gender in RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung (source: Author, 2025)

Terrace houses as social interaction place



Figure 3. Terrace houses as social interaction place (source: Author, 2025)

Residents of the Palmerah urban kampung appropriate their houses as architectural settings for social interaction (Figure 3). The dwellings are characteristically permeable, functioning as “open” domestic environments that remain receptive to the arrival of relatives and visitors for everyday social encounters. The architectural element most frequently occupied for such purposes is the front terrace, a threshold space that operates as the primary locus of communal engagement. The terrace is proportionate to the overall spatial scale of the dwelling; however, it can generally be described as compact, given that kampung houses themselves are modest in dimension, typically extending 2–3 meters in depth and 1–1.5 meters in width. Informants indicated that social interaction is usually enacted in a seated position on the floor plane of the terrace, whose material finish ranges from ceramic tiling to simple plastered cement. Despite the modest setting and the act of sitting directly on the floor, the terrace is perceived as a comfortable spatial domain, fostering a strong sense of proximity and intimacy with relatives. Moreover, its position within the domestic sphere reinforces a relaxed and informal atmosphere, enabling participants to feel at ease, as though inhabiting their own personal dwelling space.

Warungs as social interaction place



Figure 4. Warung as social interaction place
(source: Author, 2025)

A warung is a small, family-owned shop serving goods and food. Warungs serve as one of the social interaction spaces for residents of the Palmerah urban kampung, as explained by the informants. In this study, a warung is defined as a retail space owned by residents of the urban kampung. In Palmerah, warungs are often integrated with the owners' houses, where the living room or the front terrace of the house is converted into a small shop. It is within these warungs that social interaction among residents takes place. Various types of warungs were identified as social interaction spaces in the urban kampung, including general stores, warungs selling ready-to-eat meals, snack shops, and vegetable stalls (Figure 4).

Warung owners provide long wooden benches to accommodate the visitors engaging in social interactions. Even if the visitors do not make any purchases, the owners welcome them to stay and spend time in the warung. This practice reflects the strong sense of familiarity and kinship among residents in RW 05 of Palmerah urban kampung. Although the primary function of a warung is commercial, owners permit residents to use their premises as social interaction spaces, demonstrating the dual role of these micro-spaces in both commerce and community life.

Community Hall (Balai Warga) Terrace and Security Post



Figure 5. Community hall (Balai Warga) terrace as social interaction place
(source: Author, 2025)

RW 05 of Palmerah urban kampung has a single community hall located adjacent to the neighborhood security post. This two-story community hall is regularly used as a PAUD classroom (from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.) and as a formal meeting space for residents (e.g., Posyandu, Posbindu (community health event), Dasawisma, and similar activities). However, the hall cannot be used freely for residents' everyday social interactions, as the management strictly regulates access to maintain order and ensure that formal programs run smoothly. Access to the hall is strictly managed by the RW administrators; if there is no formal schedule, the rooms are locked, preventing casual gatherings or spontaneous use by local residents.

Residents of RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung can only use the front terrace of the community hall (Figure 5). Those engaging in daily social interactions sit on the terrace steps, which lead to the main hall, casually chatting, drinking coffee, or even snacking while observing the neighborhood activities around them. "It depends on who prepares the coffee or snacks," noted one informant, highlighting how small gestures shape social gatherings. When the terrace becomes crowded, social

interaction participants—mostly adult men—borrow chairs from the gado-gado warung located in front of the community hall, which allows them to comfortably continue their conversations without obstructing pedestrian circulation.

Along the Neighborhood Street (Alley)



Figure 6. Neighborhood street (alley) as social interaction place
(source: Author, 2025)

One of the spaces utilized by residents of RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung is the neighborhood circulation area, namely the streets. The edges of streets within the residential environment are used as social interaction spaces because they are easily accessible to residents (Figure 6). Neighborhood streets function as shared spaces, allowing all residents of RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung to use them. In several street locations frequently used for social interaction, long wooden benches are provided. The presence of these benches serves as a “marker” indicating a space where residents gather for social interaction.

Several points along the streets of RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung serve as social interaction spaces. Many of these points are located at street intersections. This is because intersections are easily visible from multiple directions, enabling residents to know whether their social networks are already gathered there. Neighborhood intersections typically function as traffic points where people pass by to go home, go out, or simply take a stroll. Sitting in these locations allows residents to easily meet or observe many people, facilitating social interaction.

The factors influencing urban kampung residents in choosing spaces for social interaction.

Based on the findings (Figure 7), the most dominant factor influencing the preferences of RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung residents in selecting social interaction spaces is spatial proximity to their dwellings (56%). The majority of residents tend to choose places located within close walking distance, as this reduces the need for travel and allows them to engage in social activities more conveniently and securely. Proximity not only minimizes spatial barriers but also enhances the sense of comfort and practicality in daily interactions. In addition, social intimacy within interaction networks (14%) and the availability of spatial facilities (14%) also play significant roles. Residents prefer to interact in spaces that are socially familiar and provide sufficient facilities to support comfort and engagement.

THE PREFERENCES OF RW 05 PALMERAH URBAN KAMPUNG RESIDENTS IN CHOOSING SOCIAL INTERACTION SPACES



Figure 7. Percentage of preferences in social interaction place in RW 05 Palmerah urban kampung
(source: Author, 2025)

Meanwhile, spatial accessibility (5%) and spatial capacity (5%) emerge as secondary considerations. Although these factors carry less weight, accessible routes and adequate space to accommodate a certain number of people remain relevant in shaping spatial choices. Furthermore, integration with economic activities (7%) is also an important aspect, particularly for residents who combine social interactions with trading or running small shops, thereby giving social spaces a dual function as economic nodes. Overall, this preference pattern highlights that the selection of social interaction spaces is grounded in a combination of spatial, social, and economic factors, with spatial proximity emerging as the most decisive determinant.

Spatial proximity to one's dwelling

The distance from residents' homes to informal social interaction spaces emerges as a primary consideration in selecting sites for communal engagement. The reason of being "close to home" is particularly compelling, driven by practical and efficiency factors. Proximity allows residents to conserve both time and energy when moving to and from these social spaces, while also enabling frequent and spontaneous use. Moreover, engaging in interaction near the home fosters a sense of safety and comfort, as activities take place within a familiar environment surrounded by neighbors. Such spatial immediacy not only facilitates casual encounters and sustained sociability but also reinforces the fabric of community ties within the residential setting.

Spatial accessibility of social interaction spaces

Ease of access emerges as a primary factor in residents' selection of social interaction spaces within the Palmerah urban kampung. Locations that can be reached effortlessly, without requiring additional effort or cost, are perceived as more practical and efficient for supporting everyday activities. Residents tend to prefer spaces that are within short walking distance from their homes, ensuring convenience and immediacy. This preference extends beyond mere physical proximity, encompassing a sense of comfort, safety, and integration with daily routines. Through such accessible spaces, social interactions occur more spontaneously and intensively, thereby reinforcing community cohesion and sustaining the continuity of neighborhood sociability in Palmerah.

Social intimacy within interaction networks

Social proximity and familiarity constitute a key consideration for residents of the Palmerah urban kampung in selecting spaces for social interaction. Informants emphasized their preference for places where they are already accustomed to and familiar with the individuals who gather there. This highlights that space is not defined solely by its physical attributes, but also by the social networks embedded within it. The presence of close neighbors, peers, or relatives in particular locations generates a sense of comfort and security, making interaction more natural and sustainable. Thus, interaction spaces in Palmerah operate not merely as physical settings, but as arenas where social proximity is reproduced and community bonds are continually reinforced.

Spatial facilities for social interaction

The physical condition of a place constitutes a vital consideration for residents of the Palmerah urban kampung in selecting spaces for interaction. They are naturally drawn to locations that are well-maintained, evoke a sense of comfort, and provide basic amenities. Within the kampung architectural context, elements such as wooden or concrete benches, corrugated metal roofing as shade, and adequate lighting serve as key attractors. Even in their simplicity, well-arranged spaces psychologically invite residents to remain longer and engage in interaction. Consequently, the physical quality of space directly influences its effectiveness as a social setting, transforming ordinary corners of the kampung into vibrant shared living rooms.

Spatial capacity for social interaction

The capacity of a space to accommodate people is a crucial consideration for residents of the Palmerah urban kampung when selecting sites for social interaction. Informants emphasized that larger spaces capable of hosting extended family members and neighbors are preferred, as they facilitate gatherings on a broader scale. Within the architectural context of the kampung, limited land availability often constrains spatial dimensions; however, residents identify relatively open areas such as the terrace

of the community hall, warungs with outdoor extensions, or neighborhood intersections. Spaces with adequate capacity allow interactions to unfold more inclusively, embrace diverse participants, and strengthen social cohesion within the dense and dynamic fabric of the kampung environment.

Integration with economic activities

The relationship with personal economic activities represents an important factor in residents' selection of social interaction spaces within the Palmerah urban kampung. Informants noted that privately owned vending spaces—such as grocery stalls, food warungs, or small kiosks—are often simultaneously utilized as gathering places. This reflects an efficient use of space, where economic and social activities coexist within a single setting. The presence of interaction spaces that intersect with livelihood activities enables vendors to maintain their businesses while fostering social relations with neighbors and relatives. Within the dense and spatially constrained context of the urban kampung, this dual functionality underscores the flexibility of domestic spaces and highlights the role of local economies in sustaining neighborhood social networks.

Spatial Analysis of Informal Social Interaction Spaces and the Underlying Reasons for Their Selection in Urban Kampung

In the context of the Palmerah urban kampung, the selection of spaces for social interaction cannot be separated from the interplay between the physical characteristics of space (Point A) and the users' spatial preferences (Point B). This relationship demonstrates how domestic, semi-public, and public spaces within the kampung adaptively function to support the everyday social life of its residents. First, the residential terrace emerges as the closest point of interaction within the domestic realm. Its selection is primarily influenced by proximity—both in terms of physical distance to the home and the social networks embedded within the neighborhood. For residents, the terrace acts as an extension of the family living space that opens directly toward the street, thereby enabling casual encounters with passing neighbors. Despite its modest dimensions, often consisting of a cement or tiled floor with simple seating arrangements (either fixed or movable), the terrace adequately serves as a social interface. This illustrates how private space can easily shift into a semi-public realm when proximity and social comfort become the dominant considerations.

Second, the warung occupies a distinctive position as a space with dual functions—economic and social. Its role as a gathering place is encouraged by accessibility, proximity to existing social networks, and its direct link to daily economic transactions. Strategically located at key nodes within the kampung, the warung is easily reachable by many residents. Beyond fulfilling basic consumption needs, it provides opportunities for interaction while shopping, waiting, or conversing with owners and fellow patrons. From the perspective of social architecture, the warung embodies Oldenburg's notion of the “third place”—a non-domestic, non-formal setting that nonetheless proves productive in cultivating the community's social capital.

Third, the terrace of the community hall and the neighborhood guard post stand out as semi-public communal spaces. Their selection stems from greater capacity, central accessibility, and comparatively maintained physical conditions (such as tiled flooring for sitting, available chairs, and partial roofing). Unlike the smaller scale of residential terraces, the community hall accommodates larger gatherings, as reflected in its spatial volume. Spatially, these infrastructures illustrate how modest community-provided facilities can operate as highly flexible collective arenas.

Fourth, neighborhood streets function as the most inclusive form of open public space. Streets are chosen for their universal accessibility, flexible capacity, and the natural social encounters they facilitate. As everyday circulation spaces, streets inherently bring people together without formal arrangements, enabling spontaneous and fluid interaction. At certain moments, streets are also transformed into venues for collective events, such as religious celebrations or community work (gotong royong). In this sense, the street becomes a “collective meeting ground” that strengthens the social cohesion of kampung residents.

Taken together, these four locations illustrate a spatial hierarchy of social interaction in Palmerah's urban kampung. Private–semi-public spaces (residential terraces) are linked to proximity and intimacy; semi-public–economic spaces (warungs) to accessibility and dual functionality; communal spaces (community hall and guard post) to capacity and physical provision; and public–open spaces (streets) to universal accessibility and functional flexibility.

Insights from the informants highlight that the residents' preferences in choosing spaces for social interaction are not determined solely by physical attributes but are closely tied to social, economic, and cultural dimensions. In other words, the architecture of Palmerah's kampung reveals an adaptive dynamism that integrates functional spatial needs with the values of togetherness, proximity, and affordability.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that residents' preference for social interaction spaces in Palmerah's urban kampung is shaped by a dynamic interplay between spatial characteristics and socio-cultural values. Proximity to one's home emerges as the foremost determinant, as interaction spaces located within or near the dwelling—particularly the terrace—offer both practical convenience and a sense of intimacy within familiar networks. Accessibility and ease of use further reinforce this preference, with residents favoring spaces that can be reached effortlessly and integrated into their daily routines. Beyond physical attributes, the social dimension is equally decisive: residents gravitate toward places where they encounter familiar peers, relatives, or neighbors, fostering comfort and continuity of interaction. The physical condition and spatial capacity of these sites also influence their selection, as modest facilities such as benches, shade, and adequate space encourage longer stays and inclusive gatherings. Moreover, integration with economic activities adds another layer of attraction, as spaces like warungs simultaneously sustain livelihoods and community interaction, embodying Oldenburg's notion of the "third place." Streets and intersections, with their openness and visibility, provide the most inclusive setting, reinforcing kampung cohesion through spontaneous encounters. Collectively, these findings suggest that the preference for interaction spaces in Palmerah is not driven solely by physical form, but by an adaptive balance between spatial immediacy, accessibility, social intimacy, functional capacity, and cultural-economic integration.

Design strategies for interaction social spaces in urban kampung should prioritize proximity to dwellings, provide shaded seating, and ensure flexible use for both daily routines and community events. Integrating small-scale economic activities, such as warungs, can further strengthen the vitality and inclusivity of these spaces. Future studies could explore how design interventions—such as micro public spaces, flexible furniture, or green shading—affect residents' patterns of use in kampung settings. Comparative studies across different urban kampungs in Jakarta or other cities may also reveal broader insights into the adaptability of social spaces.

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