

**INDONESIA URBANISM: THE TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENT
IN URBAN PLANNING ANALYSIS OF THOMAS KARSTEN'S PLAN FOR
BANDUNG CITY**

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ABSTRACT

In 2010, UN Habitat Reports in planning sustainable cities emphasized need of urban planning to reassess itself to be key role in achieving sustainable development. It focused on developing countries because modern urban planning mainly is exported from colonialism process or follow best practice from developed countries. It results most of planning and design are fail to reflect the need and priorities of urban residents. The blue print from best practice has been proved unaffordable and inadequate to deal with diversity of ways of life and need of developing world cities.

The discussion on dichotomy of the way of thinking from western perspectives on local characteristic of urban area in developing countries already spread for long times. Roy (2005) discussed on urban informality as product of planning itself. In order to understand urbanization process in developing countries is necessary to locate the production of theory and policy in the cities of the developing world. Marshall (2004) mentioned that the urban characteristic in Asia new type of urbanism and it is not enough to be perceived by traditional concept from western mind.

Yokohari et al (2000) from landscape and environmental planning perspectives shows that dichotomy rural-urban from western theory maybe not best practice in Asian context. In Southeast Asia, the discussion about Eurocentric McGee (1995) mentioned in this concept, the core-elements that make up the roots of place — the environment, local culture, local economies, historical layering of shared experience.

One characteristic of urban in Indonesia is existence of neighborhoods in urban area with traditional characteristic called as *kampung*. *Kampung* defined as urban residential originally from rural villages which encroached by urban expansion and has traditional characteristic both in spatial and cultural and translated as the traditional settlement. Despite of this area dominates urban space (more than 70%); most of them fall to informal category both in settlement aspect and economic activities. However from history of Thomas Karsten (1884-1945), Dutch architect who lately became leading figure in town planning in Indonesia, he proposed different approach for this type of settlements. It based on concept to integrate traditional value in western practices with his famous quotes” Modernization especially for native settlements must be based on traditional values” (Karsten, 1938).

The main objective of this research is to discuss integrating traditional values in western concept in Karsten’s urban planning theory. The hypothesis is “the traditional settlements was accommodated in urban planning based on concept of integrating traditional values into western practice in Karsten’s theory”. This topic will be explore through historical approach with the objective is to answer three questions. Those are: 1. What were the values of traditional settlements? 2. How was the traditional settlement accommodated in urban planning based on Karsten’s theory? 3. What were the key elements in integrating traditional value to western concept?

This research utilizes historical archives and various publications as secondary data. Mostly, data taken from archives stored in Media Library of Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden; Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam and Memory of Netherlands from National Library of Netherlands. Based on various interpretations from different publications, then reinterpretation analysis was chosen. The primary data will support in analyzing through narrative analysis (Rowlinson, 2007; Elena, 2001).

Based on analysis of the traditional settlements development stages originally formed as rural settlements, the main characteristics of the societies are communality and strong attachment in social structure. Historically, the living condition as clustered agriculture societies, mutual aid became main concept to fulfill their necessities with local production such as food, clothes, and housing material. The basic leadership in traditional societies was spiritual and cultural, and all process creates *kampung* or traditional settlements as cultural unit with self governing societies.

When decentralization act introduced by Dutch government in 1903 the traditional settlements within city boundaries became urban problem with “the *kampung* question” (1922). Three options are proposed, those are abolition, reduction authority and improvement program. Thomas Karsten came to Indonesia in 1914 and started to engage with these issues. His concept to accept local condition can be found in article of Indies Town planning as “There was nothing wrong with land use pattern typical of Indonesian city, its disorder of built-up and open areas, and its mixture of types of housing. Such a mixture was not bad in itself but became the source of distress in the light of technical needs of hygiene, sanitation and drainage” (Karsten, 1920).

This advocating resulted policy in improvement with *kampongverbetering* (kampung improvement program) from Dutch Government in 1927-1938. The scenario tends to preserving condition by providing subsidy for improvement public facilities with straightening and widening street, sewer line, improving public bath, and housing renewal. However this scenario was not achieving goal of planning since the result went to wealthier people not to original inhabitant (Karsten, 1938; Wetering, 1939).

Karsten offered second scenario to integrate new form of traditional settlements in city expansion program. In Bandung in Karsten’s plan, one of example was *Kampung Gempol*. This type of settlements has distinctive features compared to public housing in Europe. First,

this new settlements provided diversity of housing in one block (8 types for 126 units). Common facilities with public bath/toilet and multipurpose open space create environment which support communalism and forming social structure. This condition in line with Karsten's idea about philosophy of urban lives in eastern as "Basic of Eastern philosophy is collectivity, where the requirement and rights of individual were subsumed under the needs of whole which contrary with liberty and rationalism in Western philosophy" (Karsten, 1938).

This approach can be seen as promoting traditional value since Karsten also introduced western aspect in new traditional settlement with street hierarchies and sanitation infrastructure. This project accepted by Dutch government because it would support their development plan with supply labor force in new town.

The key element in success of Karsten practices for second scenarios was translation process. Extracting essences of traditional value with communalism and social structures and translate it by diversity in housing and common facilities which recreate traditional atmosphere in modern practices. These understandings were gained along with his involvement in cultural activity in Java Institute (1917-1942), *Sobokarti* traditional theater promoted cultural emancipation in art and education (1926-1942).

As conclusion, the values of the traditional settlements which extracted in Karsten's theory were communality and social structure. The traditional settlement was adopted in urban planning use concept of traditional value integration in modern practices by proposing new type of traditional settlements. The key concept is willingness and ability to extract essences and translated that workable concept.

Key words: traditional settlements, Thomas Karsten, modern urban planning theory, traditional values.