

Chapter 2

House and Neighbourhood

Abstract This chapter deals with the customs and traditions of living in Indonesia. Unfolding and searching for the traces of history is included in this exploration, especially in reference to the ancient Austronesian culture. The important aspects of the exploration in this chapter include the exposition of manners, forms, styles and fashions, how Indonesian people interact and how their relationship with their built environment is in the context of habitation. In doing so, unique and specific ways of living in Indonesia are unveiled and unfolded as constitutive aspects of their idea and sense of home.

Keywords Austronesian · *Rumah* · *Kampung* · Settlement · House · Home · Urban · Indonesia

2.1 Location, Manner and Fashion of Habitation

What is the relationship between dwelling and sitting? Seemingly, both concepts have nothing to do with each other at first sight. Actually, the quest of sitting is based upon the question of how a home is possible. How can we dwell without having a seat? In Indonesian or Malay-Polynesian-speaking communities, sitting is simply not a human activity denoting stay in common sense, but it is probably an allusive concept for the whole idea of habitation, meaning to be able to live in the lifeworld with respect and dignity. According to the language, sitting is originally dwelling in the sense of having an occupation and a social position.

Etymologically, to sit, in its archaic sense, is to take a dwelling place, that is the act of making place for an occupation. As a matter of fact, taking a place for dwelling is actually building the environment (see also Sharr 2007). In doing so, such a place is ready, accessible, appropriate and convenient for human stay. Although the question seems to be strange in its pragmatic sense, the notions of sitting and dwelling are related to each other in the act of taking a position and location (see also Stenstad 2006, p. 135). To sit and to dwell are likely nothing but to find a place for residing our being on earth. The astuteness of dwelling on the earth is actually constituted by the sense of sitting, namely ready for gathering with others and for being related to an environment. Accordingly, sitting is dwelling in the sense of being able to be in relationship with other beings peacefully and beautifully.

What is interesting to find out from the relationship between the concepts of sitting and dwelling lies in the idea of stay and settlement; this act is the fact that every effort of making place is to make peace and beauty possible, sustainable and expandable. It is worth noting that the concepts of peace and beauty do not come from the void. Let us take them seriously in the way of dealing with the essential conditions that make it possible for us to stay. The necessity for sitting is presumably related closely to identifying the boundary of possibilities that lead people to be able to stay. Why do people need to stay? Does stay mean live in the sense of being in engagement with the present, the right now and right here? The word for 'stay' in Indonesian language is *tinggal* with twofold meanings: reside and left behind. The other word for stay is *duduk* meaning literally to sit, sitting and seat. What do stay and sitting have in common?

Since the nature of stay is a joyful engagement with place and others, its possibility is provided by a territorially occupied space as the built environment. Stay and sitting are human activities that enable us to gather, to speak, to listen and to read with respect and dignity. Both activities are undeniably the modes of being engaged with the present. We never fully attain a joyful stay without being integrated and engaged socially and economically with community life. The question of sitting is not simply the quest for finding a place of stay but also a learning process and engagement with places and others for a sustainable relationship that brings about the feeling of a joyful stay.

Among Indo-Malay-speaking populations, sitting, *duduk*, has a special indication and designation concerning permanent stay in the present. The question of sitting is to identify the occupation and profession that is related to where the status of residency is indirectly the subject of inquiry. Why is then sitting not name and origin? The question of where to sit is possibly based on the thought that the existence of man is always in the context of his role and function in the community and society. The question concerning where to sit is to emphasize the priority and interest in what you do for the lifeworld, instead of who you are actually as a historical being. Thus, the question of where you sit is properly understood as an inquiry into our relation and position to the lifeworld right now. This is not simply a question concerning occupation. Rather, the question is to address one's degree of respect based on an engagement with public service and state-related involvement.

In Indonesia, dwelling is idiomatically expressed with the sign of position—*duduk*—and the respective occupation—*kedudukan*. Among Indonesian people, there is a common practice of knowing each other by asking his or her respective occupation, instead of their names. Usually, it is considered impolite to ask their names. Traditionally, it is uncommon for Indonesian people to introduce themselves by saying their own names. In the modern society of Indonesia, one's own name is seldom introduced without any formally given instruction to do so. Only in a limited circle, e.g. modern educated people, are they familiar with addressing themselves by their own names and professions during their first encounter.

Commonly, a well-known person in a neighbourhood usually introduces a newcomer to the other inhabitants during a routine gathering of the neighbourhood. An indirect question concerning the occupation of a newcomer in the neighbourhood

is considered the first most important information by most of the inhabitants. Government officers of high rank and people with high education degrees are the most respected people in the neighbourhood.

The sign of position at any formal gathering is shown by the seat position, which reflects one's social status and rank. It might be associated with a hierarchical system of the socially constructed reality of Indonesian daily life. In most cases, an Indonesian asks the name of somebody if he or she wants to give an order or an instruction. The name is mostly called with the first name. Only in certain ethnic groups, like among the *Bataks*, one calls another's name with his or her family name.

Besides the inquiry on occupation, there is another indirect question inquiring the person in conversation. The origin by birthplace, ethnic group and cultural roots becomes a very frequent question concerning the self-identity of the person. After the question of origin comes the question on kinship and the number of siblings. The occupation and profession of every member of the family and kindred seem much more important than their names. All these questions bring to light the circumstances of a person in the context of kinship. An Indonesian who is unable to identify himself or herself with a kinship or its well-known member might be seen as a lost person.

Among the Javanese and possibly other ethnic groups as well, a highly attained social status shown by a rank of state bureaucratic position or wealth is an important reference to one's self-identity. Sometimes, we never know a person's social status, but we are familiar in Indonesia with identifying a person by his or her kindred relation to other people who have a highly respected background.

The question of origin—*asli*—by birthplace, growing up and ethnic group gives people a clue to self-identity based on his or her personal existing roots. Is it possible to identify the self without any historical roots? Furthermore, the question of *asli* leads us to identify his or her social background, whether of urban or rural origin. The dialect and accent of language are usually an obvious clue of their ethnic origin and birthplace. Then, the questions asked of the person at the first encounter stop at this question. It is generally accepted that any further questions concerning personal identity might be seen as improper manners. Uniquely, most Indonesians avoid directly mentioning the name of their partners in a conversation. We have to find out who the conversation partner is after our encounter without directly asking his or her name.

Positioning in a social constellation is probably a search for identity where one finds himself or herself within a system of social role and function. The question of sitting in the Indonesian context reflects the necessity for the projection of one's identity shown by his or her relations with the others. In any occasion and social gathering, a religious or spiritual leader—*ustadz* or *kiayi*—is commonly in charge of opening the meeting with a ritual prayer—*do'a*. Among the Muslim community, the prayer is mostly made up of citing the Koran's verses in their original form. *Ustadz* or *kiayi* is a highly respected person in the neighbourhood or region. A famous spiritual or religious leader always has a strong influence concerning morality and value systems in social life.

Besides sitting and seat, the sense of dwelling is articulated with the concept *tempat tinggal*. Literally, *tempat tinggal* is the place of living. However, the word

tinggal has a dual meaning. *Tinggal* means leave, go away, left behind for and stay. The concept of *tempat tinggal* is to designate the place where one was born and that which will be his or her place of death all at once. One speaks of *tempat tinggal* when there is a question concerning the most familiar and preferable place of permanent residence. It is supposed to be the way to express one's abode.

2.2 Traces of Austronesians

Nationwide across the Southeast Asian communities, there is a similar cultural tradition when a guest visits. There used to be long-standing rituals between the host and the guest in the house, though some of them have gradually disappeared from daily life. One important tradition is the betel nut-chewing ritual as the introductory offering of guest friendship and hospitality.

Betel nut chewing is a unique habit in the Austronesian-speaking region besides tattooing and tooth filing (Bellwood 1978, p. 135). This practice among ethnic groups in Southeast Asia is notably embedded with dwelling. Why is that so? Do the people in Southeast Asia conceive such a ceremony as a sign of acceptance? The practice of *makan sirih*—betel nut chewing—is never done without the context of settlement. Among Indonesian people, betel nut chewing is the practice of married adults. Traditionally, men and women treat the betel nut chewing as daily entertainment in the way modern people take delight in candies and sweets.

This friendship and hospitality in Indonesia is well known as *ramah tamah*. The existence of a house is made possible by its possible reception of a visit by their neighbour. Then, the guests for most Indonesian houses have their own place and honour in the sense of being highly respected visitors. Beyond such hospitality, we actually do not know what the host has in mind. The ritual of *ramah tamah* is conducted in the form of offering drinks, food or cigarette. All offerings must have to do with a reception of the others from the public domain to the domestic lifeworld.

Traditionally, to express their thankfulness for the visit, the host is obliged to offer the *sekapur sirih*, the betel nut-chewing ceremony, as a sign of hospitality. The betel nut-chewing ceremony is traditionally understood as an overture of conversation. The encounter of the host and guest in Indonesian homes designates a social necessity of knowing each other. The visit among people is traditionally not restricted by kinship, beliefs and business. The obvious necessity of visits in many Islamic communities in Indonesia is the framework of *silaturahmi*. This is an Islamic concept adopted by the Indonesians for mutual respect and visits among neighbours.

The idea of *silaturahmi* pertains to human relationships based on social nature for always being able to communicate and know each other. Sometimes, the practice of *silaturahmi* is understood as knowing each other's business. Principally, the message of *silaturahmi* is to found a mutual respect and trust in each other. In doing so, the ritual of *sekapur sirih* is a way of experiencing a sense of togetherness. Chewing the *sirih* leaves with chalk, *kapur*, tobacco and *gambir* is nothing but to experience various tastes from bitter to luscious, and from hot/spicy to delicious.

Sekapur sirih is an introductory ritual of the visit before the host and the guest enter a conversation. The ritual takes place in the area called *ruang tamu*, a guest room. Here, every visitor of the house is formally received and treated with full respect. Offering the guests of the house a drink is commonly conceived as a common conduct signifying a sense of reception. Usually, the host must never ask their guest what they would like to be offered. It is improper to refuse an offering without tasting it. In any case, offering something is perceived as giving the gift of the house to their guest with a highly respectful intention.

The guest room is the place where all special items of the house are conspicuously on display. The room is commonly located in the front of the house. Though the ritual of *sekapur sirih* today has already disappeared, its spatial trace of sacredness is still maintained by most Indonesians. Drinks and food have substituted the betel nut chewing. The guest room in many Indonesian households becomes the most reserved area. The architecturally decorative accessories represent the personality, cultural values and interests of its owner. This is the room where one can find the best self-image and identity of the host.

The *ruang tamu*—guest room—plays a very important role in the representation of Indonesian formality and hospitality. The way they build and decorate the room reflects their ideals and beliefs. The position of the guest room in the house plan shows its priority to receive the outsiders with the ambience of formality. Sometimes, a wall to define a public realm inside the house separates the room. This phenomenon is characteristically the manner in which the Indonesians treat the outsiders politely, but the real matter is to isolate them in a cage of hospitality. The friends of the house are never seated in the guest room. They will be allowed to come directly into the living area, *ruang keluarga*. It is interesting to observe the fact that there is, at any economic condition of the household, a common attitude for providing the highly respected room for their guests. Does the guest room play the role of the house altar? In many cases of urban houses, the existence of the guest room is evident. The separation of the house territory into two existential areas, the public and the private, does not reveal a clear and obvious segregation.

The guest room in modern Indonesian homes is the platform and display of the symbolically materialized achievement of the host. The trend of the achievement shows various directions looking for an affirmation and identity. The character and the personal taste of the owner are obviously expressed. Then, the items in the guest room speak for themselves as to who the owner is. Here, one can also read who has more authority in the taste and feeling of architectural expression in the house, the husband or the wife.

Moreover, the guest room can be seen as the altar of the house in a moderate sense. Most guest rooms remain ineffective in accommodating the daily activities of the house; its emptiness, cleanness and neatness keep the sacredness of the guest room. Although the guest room does not function in daily life, its availability is a ritual necessity in the context of the idea of a house. In this case, a house with no guest room is an odd case. The house is either masculine or feminine in its spatial character and layout depending on who keeps and runs the household. Though the breadwinner is traditionally male, the wife mostly keeps the household. In the case

of the wife being more dominant than the husband, the last word for any decision is in the hands of the lady. In the Indonesian urban context, such a gender issue does not reveal its outrageous conflict. Every household has its unique way of maintaining the relationship between man and woman, as well as between parents and children.

2.3 Community and Habitation

A socially alienated family in a neighbourhood is usually isolated from mutual help in the case of crises such as fire, house intrusion by thief or robbery, death and other calamities. Being involved in any neighbourhood occasion must be perceived as a respectful and open attitude. The significance of *bersih desa* lies in mutual help in the neighbourhood, which is an expression of the solidarity of the daily extended family. Being friendly—*ramah*—to one's neighbours leads one to the condition of social acceptance. Such friendliness must be shown in the form of social engagement and solidarity with voluntary participation for common interest. As a certain degree of respect, such friendliness is highly valued as the readiness for fusion into a locally oriented context of community. Without such openness, it is hard to grasp the underlying structure of mutual help among neighbours.

Mutual help among neighbours called *gotong royong* is an ancient tradition that still exists. Even though there are modern and commercial services for traditional events such as weddings and death ceremonies, the sense of *gotong royong* is incorporated as the act of solidarity and empathy for being part of the whole. The spiritual structure of *gotong royong* is grounded in the necessity of being integrated, that is being a part of the community in terms of the *rukun tetangga* or *rukun warga* as a great family. In doing so, one feels at home socially. Based on the feeling of being at home, one is due to keep his or her living environment together with his or her neighbours from any disorder and confusion. They voluntarily organise a defence mechanism for their neighbourhood known as *sistem keamanan lingkungan* or its abbreviation *siskamling*. Such a mechanism is a spontaneous activity in dealing with a dangerous situation for the security and safety of their neighbourhood.

Arisan is another form of social life in the neighbourhood. It is a kind of a periodic cash disbursement of rotating credit association (Guinness in Hill ed. 1994, p. 291). The women in the neighbourhood usually participate in this social activity. They do their term of the *arisan* on a weekday and in an always-changing place. The winner of *arisan* drawn is usually determined as the site of the term. In its principle, the *arisan* is nothing but a social mechanism of saving and a gathering by collecting one's own money in a certain period of time from 6 to 12 months.

Every month, a member of the *arisan* group is due to deliver a certain amount of money. The collected money should be the subject of rotation among the members after being drawn. The winner of every term in a period should have a certain amount of money in accordance with the number of *arisan* participants. Then, in the next term of the *arisan* cycle of drawing money, the previous winner has to pay her contribution until the end of the period of the gathering. Besides the social gathering, chatting and

gossiping are also a part of the *arisan*. In contrast to the *bersih desa*, membership and participation in the *arisan* is voluntary. A healthy neighbourhood must make the *arisan* a pedigreed social gathering in which the amount of money for the lucky draw is not significant.

Among the Muslim community, there is a customary gathering on a weekday or a weekend day for reciting the Koran—*mengaji Al Qur'an*. Wednesday is generally accepted as the day of such a gathering. They call the occasion *reboan*; *Rabu* means Wednesday. A mosque or a *mushola* becomes the place of such a gathering. A *kiayi* or *guru ngaji* leads the gathering—*pengajian*—with his knowledge for interpreting the Koran's verses and the *Hadist*. A mosque in the neighbourhood is not only the prayer hall but also the centre of Islamic teaching and social interaction.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, groups reciting the Koran have been developing in numbers and streams as a social movement that is in response to the aptly accepted secularism among urban communities. In many urban places, such a group might become the centre of possibly reviving Islamic teaching. *Pengajian* or the activity of reciting the Koran in its daily practice not only works at a neighbourhood scale but presumably also at a large scale consisting of people from different neighbourhoods.

The Koran-reciting group, in its widest sense, not only functions as a religious entity of a neighbourhood but also as a reliable supporting peer of social activity. The group must voluntarily take part in any social event such as deaths, births, weddings and other gatherings of thanking God when one wants to make a pilgrimage to Mecca for his or her *Haji*. The Koran-reading group in a neighbourhood functions well on any occasion of thanking God known as *syukuran* or *slametan*. Reading the verse of *Al-Jassin* of the Koran together is the central event led by the *ustadz* for days commemorating a death. Among Javanese Muslims, such a day commemorating death is celebrated with a communal feast called *slametan* (see also Geertz 1973, p. 147). The ritual feast of *slametan* is held after the 3rd, 7th, 40th, 100th and the 1,000th day of the funeral.

Another social gathering in the neighbourhood is *karang taruna*—youth centre—that involves young people, especially teenagers. The *karang taruna* does not have any formally established activity but it is a spontaneous gathering for recreation and sport. Usually, the activities of *karang taruna* come into being during the weeks before August 17th, when Indonesian people celebrate their National Independence Day. Young activists in every neighbourhood are active in the organization of events with various sports and competitive games such as a badminton or volleyball tournament among sub-neighbourhoods—*rukun tetangga*—or individual competition for chess, table tennis, marathon, cooking, etc. *Karang taruna* is a voluntary supporting resource for any social event and occasion in mostly established neighbourhoods. Sometimes, deaths and wedding days in a neighbourhood are conducted well with the support of *karang taruna*.

Social gatherings among the inhabitants of an Indonesian neighbourhood are mostly not institutionalized, though there are activities related to the collection of an enormous amount of money. An economic activity in a neighbourhood is mostly a private business in the form of a *warung* or kiosk. The local government

usually leads the initiative for organizing several *warungs* into an integrated complex nearby, a *pasar*. The more organized structure for retails and public services than *warung* mostly falls under the concept of *rumah toko* or shop-house. The structure of *ruko*, the abbreviation of *rumah toko*, is mostly a two- or three-storey building with compartments and direct access from the street or parking lot.

A single retail unit or *warung* is simply a small shop or restaurant that is architecturally integrated with the house form. Shops in a neighbourhood with a relatively homogeneous profession are usually members of a cooperation. Among shoemakers, batik painters and wood carvers, there is commonly special cooperation where the products are managed to control their quality and price. Such an economic organization mostly has government assistance.

2.4 Homeland and Custom

The home in Indonesia is understood as *kampung halaman*, literally meaning neighbourhood with a yard. The idea of home in the colloquial way is grounded in one's involvement with one's neighbourhood and place. *Kampung halaman* is the metaphor of birthplace or fatherland where one has a relationship with one's own community and land. It is actually the way to articulate the homeland. What is important for the idea of home is the social network known as *Kekerabatan*, the kinship. Home is not entirely a geopolitical definition but a socially accepted position. *Kekerabatan* is the socially bounded relationship among people in their familiarity. Every *kampung halaman* as a homeland has its own customary laws and unspoken proprieties, which are comprised in the notion of *kebiasaan*. The highest authority of such customary laws is known as *adat istiadat*, that is in several regions of Indonesia the most authoritative source of all laws, such as in the Minangkabau and Papua regions for land tenure and acquisition.

The Indonesian *kampung* is not a simple village in terms of geography. *Kampung* is more a settlement with social cohesion and corporation. This is not to say that living in a *kampung* is free of disputes and conflict among its population. *Kampung* might rightly be described as a socially constructed settlement with a special nearness of extended family. The population of *kampung* in urban Indonesia varies from 100 to 5,000 inhabitants. A small-scale *kampung* does not have effective resources for social and collaborative activities. The average *kampung* has approximately 1,000–2,000 people with a population density from 90 to 200 people per hectare.

As mentioned earlier, a *kampung* is an extended family. It is also an extension of the home in the social context. Every *kampung* has its own social units or groups that sustain social cohesion and collaboration. The housewives let them voluntarily join the *arisan*, a game of money collection by rotation of the winner. Men and boys become voluntary guards of their *ronda kampung*. As mentioned earlier, boys and girls are members of the village youth group known as *karang taruna*. In the youth informal association of *karang taruna*, boys and girls are active in community activities, such as spontaneous art performance, vocal group, eventual bazaar, etc.

2.5 House and Home

Ethnic-wide, the house in Indonesia is called *rumah*. The origin of the word *rumah* dates back to the Austronesian *umah*, *humah*, *uma*. The idea of *rumah* pertains to the roof over the head or shelter. The other words for house are *papan*, *hunian*, *wisma*, *griya* and *graha*. *Rumah* designates the idea of providing a protective structure in the sense of territory. The idea of *rumah* comes from its origin *uma*, *omah*, *humah*, the sign of captivity and domain, though its connotation never speaks of conquering nature. Instead, the word *rumah* gives people the idea of habitation and familiarity.

Rumah in the Indonesian cultural context is always associated with the representation of an institutionally married couple. Its hearth, *tungku*, or kitchen, *dapur*, gives the sign of *rumah*. Without any hearth, there is no homestead. *Rumah* makes the meeting of an institutionally married couple possible that becomes simultaneously the origin of the hearth. *Rumah* is also the place to tame everything from its rudeness—*kekasaran*. Then, the word *rumahan* is to signify the state of being tamed. The condition of *rumah* is designated with certain norms and codes of behaviour. In contrast to *rumah* is *jalan*, a public area or outdoors; *jalan* is the place where rules and orders are not the primary concern. Everything in the house has always to do with human comportment. In the Indonesian context, the spatial division of the house is based on two kinds of rooms, which are the front and back of the house. Though the use of the wall or partition is often more complex than that dualistic category, the division of rooms is apparent in the way they perceive the front as the daily served area while the back is the daily supporting domain. Is the front domain a productive category and the back a reproductive one? As a matter of fact, the daily servicing domain is always associated with *orang belakang* or the servants of the house.

The layout of the house plan is typically developed from two domains, which are antagonistic and complementary. The front domain has its centre in the guest room, whereas the hearth or kitchen becomes the core of the back domain. Any other room is developed in accordance with the family's necessity and capacity. The complexity of room arrangement in Indonesian houses today still shows its organizing system based on the front–back spatial category. The modern house is aptly dominated by the front domain. Nevertheless, the back domain of the house reveals significantly the various functions adjacent to the front category. The bathroom, pantry and kitchen are representations of such functions. In a traditional setting, the rooms of the back domain are located as a complement to the main building.

The significance of *rumah* is developed from the ability of humankind to learn their life socially. In doing so, the new circumstances are managed and identified as a part of his or her newly built environment. Thus, to erect a *rumah* is not merely to construct the shelter or building but also to establish relationships between people and their environment. The further characteristic of this idea is articulated in the concept of *rumah-tangga* in which the involvement of people and their social life in their built environment is institutionalized.

Tangga means stair or step. Its idiomatic significance is to articulate the social rank and status of a newly married couple who are traditionally able to enter into a social life with neighbours. In old Javanese, *tangga* literally means people living

close to our house. *Tangga* also means side-by-side houses. *Tangga* are to address the people whom we know well from daily life personally. They live and surround us as neighbours, lending an open hand for voluntary support in the case of crises: childbirth, marriage, funeral and promotion. *Tangga* are the people who one could rely on their readiness to help and to live in friendly cohabitation. Accordingly, only those who are ready to engage in social life properly have *tangga*. *Tangga* cognates with *tetangga*, meaning neighbour, community and environment in the broadest sense. The substantive of *rumah-tangga* establishes the oneness of the house and neighbourhood. *Tangga* here is in the sense of *tetangga*. Thus, the structure of an Indonesian home is founded on the phenomena of continuously establishing relationships between people and their environment as a community.

The relationships between people and environment are essential in the sense of *rumah-tangga*, because its significance brings about a socially established institution. The trace to understand this idea is given by the word *papan*. *Papan* is associated with *mapan*, being established, and *kemapanan*, establishment. *Rumah-tangga* is the foundation of social establishment. Without that, it is difficult to get social acknowledgement and support from the community with whom one lives.

Rumah-tangga as a concept of living is not absolutely determined by the physical structure of *rumah*. Rather, its essential structure stands on the ground of social institution. *Rumah tinggal* is not only a building where a family lives but also a predicate of being settled down in the social sense. It is morally unacceptable that a *rumah tinggal* is without any social engagement in the community where she or he lives. *Rumah tinggal* is a residential house with a social bonding. A group of *rumah tinggal* is a territorially and socially organized settlement as a community unit called *rukun tetangga*. Literally, *rukun* means at peace, and *tetangga* is neighbour or somebody living next door. Thus, the sense of *rukun tetangga* lies in its closely associated familiarity of neighbours based on friendliness and cooperation. Mutual help among neighbours is traditionally kept and sustained by them with routine social activities such as *bersih desa* (village cleaning and maintenance), *arisan* (a periodically gathering occasion with a roulette game of money) and *pengajian* (a Koran-reciting group).

Routine social activities are the mechanism to keep the members of a neighbourhood always in touch with and to know each other well. *Bersih desa* is usually organized by the neighbourhood leader in order to maintain clean drainage, roads and public spaces. This activity is also to manage sewage, solid waste and security in the neighbourhood that are in order. *Bersih desa* takes place on holidays or on certain days during epidemics or flood, or in anticipation of the celebration of the National Independence Day or other local anniversary days. *Bersih desa* is also a social mechanism to collect voluntary contributions of goods and money that enables them to conduct the activities.

Although participation in the *bersih desa* is voluntary, its consequences are socially compulsory. The absence of one in such a participation should be well remembered by their neighbours. It is never followed with any social sanction but a silently conspired action of isolation from mutual help. One who never takes a part in such a social activity is considered a socially alienated person. The consequences are often present as indirect counteractions from the entire neighbourhood.

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