

## **The Role of Community Institutions “*Rukun Tetangga*” In Social Housing, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*Social housing has built by the National Housing Authority since 1994, which is intended to be affordable housing for low-income families. Social housing has a heterogeneous resident's background and social bond which is based on grassroots community life in Indonesia, called as “Rukun Tetangga” institution (RT). The aim of this study is to assess the role of the RT institutions and the concept of integration within residential context. This research uses descriptive qualitative method through interviews with the informants and field observations. This research concluded that the residents have the power to adapt and strong conformity in the residential neighborhood. RT institution can integrate the aspects of social activities with the use of space in a residential neighborhood. Community involvement and socio spatial integration will make a comfortable life. Empowered RT institutions can integrate aspects of social activities and the utilization of space in a residential neighborhood.*

**Keywords:** neighborhood, PERUMNAS (National Housing Authority), social networks, “*Rukun Tetangga*” (RT) institutions, social housing

### **1. Introduction**

Social housing has been launched by National Housing Authority (PERUMNAS) since 1994. Development of social housing for low-income people is housing projects with an affordable price and it was equipped with infrastructure facilities. It has helped to reduce the backlog of housing, although it was not optimal. Social housing is built by PERUMNAS with 1,838 of housing units. The development of Semarang City, PERUMNAS Sendangmulyo has a less rapid growth in terms of house occupancy level because there are still 5.5% of houses that were not occupied (Yuliasuti & Widiastomo, 2013).

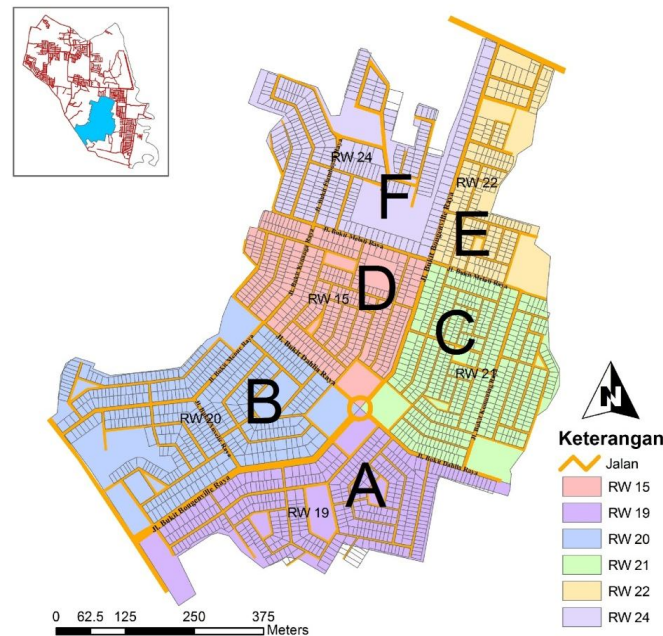
After more than 15 years, people have already had community ties since they had started living in PERUMNAS Sendangmulyo. Social networks that have been formed in this society can be a social capital for the residents in maintaining their lives safely and comfortably. Furthermore, social capital which is formed by social ties in the community influenced by the community formed in the neighborhood. Social capital has correlation between public's trusts with the community involving in family socialization (Putnam, 2000). Putnam also said that the percentage of the community's participation in social bonding has slipped back a few years (Putnam, 2000). Social ties and community involvement in the activities of a neighborhood may improve the ability of people to work together and to build a consensus in the decision to keep the living environment.

PERUMNAS is a built environment that consists of residential buildings, roads, parks, facilities for worship, educational facilities, and etc. Neighborhood has been planned using standard principles of neighborhood planning guidelines. Principles of planning in PERUMNAS are green open spaces, road safety, and public facilities, namely the location of mosques and markets with a radius of walking distance. Although the concept of Clarence Perry has long been an ideal environment of the unit in 1929 which was intended to encourage the public and to strengthen the lives of families with strong ties through the existence of a school or park (Lawhon, 2009), this condition is still eligible to serve as a reference in Sendangmulyo with the boundaries of “*Rukun Tetangga*” (RT) and “*Rukun Warga*” (RW).

Sendangmulyo's residential planning was designed by system or a grid pattern, with adaptable building lay-out for house's type. Neighborhood of PERUMNAS is divided into six blocks of residential areas which is called "Rukun Warga" (RW). As a residential institution, RW divided into smaller neighborhood institution which is called "Rukun Tetangga" (RT), while RT is a combination of several households. Indonesian National Standard for Housing Planning (SNI 03-1733-2004) is used to determine the maximum number of RT and RW in every housing, where one RT consists of 150-250 inhabitants and one RW (2,500 inhabitants) consists of 8-10 RT, as stated in the local regulation No. 9 of 2003 on the establishment of RT and RW (Semarang City Regulation No. 9 of 2003). Clarence Perry developed the concept of ideal neighborhood units, intended to encourage the community and strengthen family life with strong bonds through the existence of schools or parks (Lawhon, 2009). In addition, Lynch also saw how humans could understand neighborhood in the region or area of the city that were very complex (Lynch, 1960). Communities under social housing with physical, social, and economic limitations need to be handled for a livable home. Adequate shelter is important for human well-being, in terms of physical, social and economic.

PERUMNAS area divided into six block of RWs (A, B, C, D, E, F) and 53 RTs with an area 53.75 hectares and consist of 1,828 houses (Figure 1). RW boundaries were formed by residents and sub-district's government to determine the boundaries of RW and RT. As a social housing which has been existed for more than 15 years, some of facilities and infrastructure have been decreased, in terms of physical condition of the building and the environment.

With the condition of 21, 36 and 45 square meters housing types, PERUMNAS has a unique neighboring life, such as closeness between the occupants that were not distinguish between types of housing, economic ability and cultural background. This situation can be seen from the existence of local institutions RT with diverse communities and activities. The activities contained in various community-based neighbors boundary region called RW and RT. RT or RW is a physical and administrative boundary that were made at the beginning of the residential that has been occupied. RT or RW is the lowest administrative grassroots in the city government's hierarchy based on family or household (KK).



**Figure 1.** PERUMNAS Social Housing Siteplan (Source: Authors, 2014)

## 2. The Concept of Neighborhood Unit

As the grassroots of local institutions, RT and RW stand with basic local government regulations Semarang Number 9 of 2003 on the establishment of guidelines for RT and RW. According to Neal (2003), "neighborhood is seen as the most important part of the city, consisting of the elements that can determine the social and economic sustainability of the region, through public relations that can hold it together".

Neighborhood generally interacts with people and this is an interesting phenomenon and at the same time can also be seen from the dynamics of the community in their daily lives. In the order of the smallest communities, in Indonesia, we have already known “*Rukun Tetangga*” or “neighborhood institution” is a small scope of family socializing. Neighbor harmony can be complex things, but it also can be simple things, depending on how to think and how to look. It will be complex if the neighbors do not understand the meaning of togetherness in the neighboring. The household members are residents who registered on the family card, represented by the heads of family household, and residents who occupied the house with a contract system.

Communities often defined as a group or network of people who share something in common. It can be shaped by the region or common interests (work, religion, and ethnicity). As the values in society, it is marked by "connected through a sense of membership, through shared activities and shared decision-making and through a common understanding of the living world". The main emphasis is on the principles of sharing among others, collaboration and social solidarity (Butcher, 1994). Meyer et al. (1969) defines community as a group of people who live in the same area under the same local government and law. These people are bonded together in a neighborhood with psychological factors on the basis of economic, social and cultural rights. This definition refers to a society with a locality or region, which is also called "geographical community". This study aimed to look at the geographical area of PERUMNAS Sendangmulyo with the boundaries of RW and RT.

### 3. The Role of “*Rukun Tetangga*” Institution

RT and RW institutions tend to be more engaged and have an administrative function in a neighborhood. In general, however, the function of RT and RW are not just related with the kinship of community. Analysis shows that the RT and RW have a role to coordinate community activities and bridging relationship between society and the government (in this case is the “*Kelurahan*” or sub-district), and structurally RT and RW is the lower administrative organizations and deal directly with the public. RT organizations have a strategic role in relation to society community activities that primarily related to settlement activity, involving RT both in administrative affairs and social issues.

**Table 1.** Number of RT and Household in PERUMNAS Sendangmulyo

Block	Name of RW	Number of RT	Number of Household
A	19	11	336
B	20	9	301
C	21	13	508
D	15	8	320
E	22	6	161
F	24	6	202
<b>Total</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>1,828</b>

**Source:** Authors, 2014

The boundaries of RT area consist of household was also influenced the community because it provides a bond of kinship between people in the RT area (Table 1). RT institutions also provide boundary on the formation of community PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment Community) in each RT. PKK community gives residents the opportunity to join the organization, and this is proven by almost all of people involved in the activities of the PKK in their RT.

Based on the interview that was to determine the involvement of residents in the RT institutions, found that most people follow activities of local institutions through the activities, such as gathering, children and elderly health care, and community “*Dasawisma*” (Family Welfare Community that is done by the group of ten members of housewife). PKK community in each RT area is the most widely followed by community residents, who are followed by housewives. The existence of the PKK community became a major potential in neighborhood life which gives the strong kinship and togetherness among residents in PERUMNAS Sendangmulyo. Participation of the community also has a variety of reasons, mostly said that RT organization as a container in socializing and doing activities, but a small part of the community said that they had reason to utilize economic benefits for family through savings and loans activities, and social gathering. Further activities are often carried out by the residents are environmental cleanliness. Furthermore, the development of infrastructure as a whole community benefit, such as improvement of road construction, drainage, street lighting, construction of guardhouse, community hall, that can help them to improve the condition of their neighborhood.

#### 4. Social Networks and Social Interaction

Based on the interview, the majority of the population in each RW lived for more than ten years. Life in the neighborhood may not be separated from the social interaction. Good social interaction will affect the sense of community that can be formed in the neighborhood. PERUMNAS has a variety of activities such as environmental cleanliness, PKK meeting, and man's gathering that were performed on each RT. Table 2 shows the types of interaction that are belong to the scope of RT.

**Table 2.** Social Activity in the Scope of Neighbourhood “Rukun Tetangga”

Activity	RT													Location	Frequency
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Talking with neighbors	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Alley and Pathway	Every Day
Buying daily needs	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Market, Store	Every Day
Playing	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Pathway, field	Every Day
Environmental Cleanliness (cleaning the area by mutual assistance)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Entire the residential	Every Month
PKK Meeting (women welfare gathering)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	House of the occupants	Every Month
Man's meeting	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	House of the occupants	Every Month
Exercises/gymnastic by woman	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Field, Community centre of RT 9	Every Week
“Dasawisma” meeting (women's family welfare)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	House of the occupants	Every Month
Recitation (religious groups)			•	•	•	•	•				•	•		House of the occupants, Mosque	Every Week
Mother and Child Health Care	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Community centre of RT 3, RT 6, and RT 10	Every Month
Night Patrolling (night-watch gatherings)			•			•		•	•	•		•		Entire the residential	Every night
Take Care of Death (social welfare groups)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	House of the occupants	Situational
“Jimpitan” (to collect resident's money contribution)	•		•		•	•	•		•	•				Each house of the occupants	Every Night/Every Week
Family Medicinal Plants (TOGA)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•				Each house of the occupants	Situational

Source: Authors, 2014

Residents of RW 21 have diverse types of activities within the scope of the settlement (Figure 2). Some activities such as gymnastics, health care and recitation were not done independently, but it's joining with another RW. Residents who are included in the scope of the RW tends to follow the gymnastic exercises contained in other neighbourhoods.

Residents followed the activities in the outside of the boundaries of RT became a container to increase interaction between occupants. The use of container together (shared use) proved to be mutually reinforcing the social network of residents. Night patrolling, collecting “*jimpitan*”, family medicinal plants (TOGA) activities are still performed in some of RW, they are RW 19, 21 and 20. Night patrolling activity in RW 21 is still widely being practiced in each area of RT, respectively to maintain the residential security. Night patrolling activity that is undertaken by the residents of RW 21 also takes “*jimpitan*”. “*Jimpitan*” is a daily contribution of each family in the RT, which is placed in front of the house. The meaning of “*jimpitan*” is a voluntary fund given by the residents to add the money cash of RT. “*Jimpitan*” also serves to monitor security and residential conditions which are performed by group in each RT region.



**Figure 2.** PKK Meeting at House of the Residents (Source: Authors, 2014)

Health care activities carried out by women with young children and elderly people to check their health and to weigh the children. This activity performed at each RT in the community hall. The intensity of that activity reflects the participation and the awareness of residents to build a sense of community. The intensity of their presence in the neighborhood activities in the RT, it was concluded that the residents of RW 19, 20, 21 and 15 are actively performs in such activities. Valley (2008) says that a membership in the sense of kinship in neighboring can see from how good is someone recognizes the neighbor in their own neighborhood. Strong membership element in RW 21 can be proven by the ability of citizens to recognize their neighbor in the scope of RT.

### **5. Socio Spatial Integration**

The existence and actualization of RT institutions have become a part of society's adaptation to constantly adjust the willingness of the community (social gathering, recitation, integrated health care, gym, and environmental cleanliness) are still regularly doing in the scale of RT areas. The power of community networks and RT institutions that facilitate community going on every month and in the end also makes a great contribution in the conformity attitude of residents because they understand the benefits from a community or local institutions for the neighborhood life. Social networks of proximity of the RT areas can be seen in the layout area of RT.

Most of residents in RW 21 Sendangmulyo have high social power. All activities that related to both economic and neighborhood activities originated from the social activities undertaken by residents in the area. Social capital (interaction, intensity, and sense of belonging) which exist in the community, under RT institutions, including community engagement, connectedness, reciprocal relationships, tolerance, compassion, patience, friendship, honesty, discipline and ethics, as well as sharing information. This can be seen in conjunction with the fulfillment of the needs of residents, environmentally sensitive housing, safe, inclusive, well planned and managed jointly by the occupants of the housing. This is consistent with the concept of sustainable environment according to the Bristol Accord (2005)

In fostering community engagement, relationship and friendship between residents, conducted by routine meetings every month such as social gathering or man's meeting. Man's meeting performed by routine in the second week of every month and women's gathering is performed every first of the week at each of the resident's home in a rotation so that all residents know certainly each member's house of the RT. In addition, there is also women's association in the RT called “*Dasawisma*”. Gathering and “*Dasawisma*” activities are one of the forums for women to establish harmony life in the neighborhood. Through these activities the residents can know to each other more closely and familiarly.

Money contribution of each family in the social gathering, partly used for RT and to finance other activities. RT institution's fund is used to repairs and to maintenance the residential environment.

The activities in the social gathering include socialization of the sub-district's government's program, future activities that will do by RT, RW, or other organizations, and exchange information with each other. In connection with the program or activity from the RT, residents can also give suggestions and opinions as well as revealing his questions. It is to encourage participation and community involvement in the process of neighborhood's improvement. Thus, in some RT institutions already have community management (PKK and "Dasawisma") that are good and effective, where the management of the community prioritize citizen support and leadership of RT administrators.

Another important element that must exist in the community is an element of tolerance, especially considering Indonesia is very rich in cultural diversity, such as diversity of education, religion, culture, etc. Elements of the tolerance are respected by RW 21. Residents in the each of RT can do sporting activities together, such as football and gymnastics exercise in the field in RW 21 that is located in a neighborhood (Figure 3a).

Safety residential aspects must be filled to make comfortable and safety housing. Residents of RW 21 are together doing safeguarding the neighborhood security, as a form of awareness and responsibility to the neighborhood. Residents of RT 03 took turns doing security patrolling. The patrol schedule is made and agreed upon by residents. At the patrolling activities, residents will go around the housing that is included in RT 4 to secure the crime, and also take "jimpitan" that hung on the front of the door in the each house of residents. The money from "jimpitan" voluntarily is given by the residents to add the money cash of RT. The money cash of RT is used to finance the activities by RT, such as repair the roads, improved lighting, environmental cleanliness ("kerja bakti"), and to help people that were in trouble, such as death of a family member or stricken by disease.

Another important element that supports healthy lives is done with a good service to basic facilities of residents. In some areas of RT, access to health facilities and nutritious food can be obtained easily. There are clinics near by the residential to get access to the health facilities that are accessible from public with an affordable cost.

In addition, residents of RT 03 cooperate with another RT to conduct medical examinations of children in the age under five years old and elderly people (Figure 3b). Medical examination conducted by nurses. In these activities are also given nutritious food and vitamins for children under five years and elderly people. This activity is a program from sub-districts ("kelurahan") which is done and coordinated well by RT in RW 21.



**Figure 3.** (a) Gymnastics by Women in RW 21 (b) Integrated Health Service in RW 21

**Source:** Authors, 2014

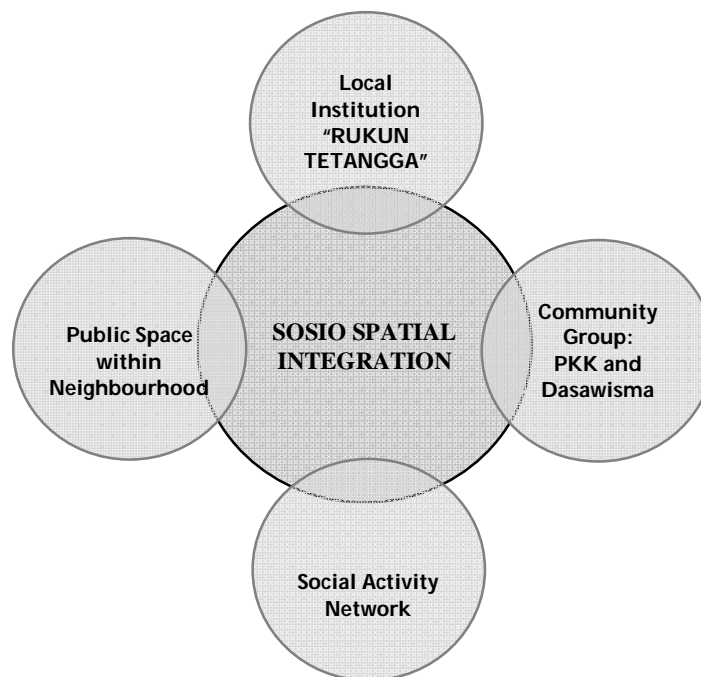
Residents of RT 3 also establish reciprocal relationships harmonious, as well as fostering a sense of awareness among residents. If there is one of the residents has lost their family members, so that other residents are glad to help people who are grieving with personal power and financial help. In the personal power side, residents will take care of the funeral prayer and their cemetery. In the financial side, the residents individually fill the fund for taking care of the resident's death or from money cash of RT to give help for funeral expenses. In addition, if there are residents who are sick, than other residents will visit together as well as providing medical aid from both individuals and RT organization's funds. Besides health services, the residents also have the easiness to fulfill the daily needs with the existence of the market that is located not far from the residential, called "Krempyeng's market" (Figure 4).

“Krempyeng’s market” does exist in the morning, not permanent, and it is finished in the afternoon. The market located in the centre of PERUMNAS Sendangmulyo and can be reached within walking distance.



**Figure 4.** Market at Perumnas Sendangmulyo (Source: Authors, 2014)

Socio-spatial integration has a strong social network that can be seen on the adjustment of housing conditions in terms of the form and quality. Community centre in the RT is used as a place together in giving an integrated health care activities that were done by grouping three until four RT in RW 21 to share the place together. At once, community centre in the RT is also used to be a binder in the aspect of spatial and physical proximity that can be a binder of social and spatial network for residents of the PERUMNAS called Socio-Spatial Integration (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Socio-Spatial Integration Concept in Social Housing (Source: Authors, 2014)

Clarence Perry developed the idea of ideal neighborhood units in 1929 and it was intended to encourage the public and strengthen family life through a neighborhood bond in terms of schools and parks or open space. Kevin Lynch (1991) said how humans understand their neighborhood due to the increasingly of complex lives. Valley (2008) revealed that to stay or not to stay longer on a neighborhood life, can help to explain the elements of integration and fulfillment of needs in the sense of neighbors. Most of the residents of Sendangmulyo revealed that they will stay longer in this residential area. The reasons why they want to stay longer are the location of Sendangmulyo that is very convenient because of the peaceful neighborhood, not affected by flood, easily accessible to the city centre (CBD), so daily needs are relatively easy to be reached within walking distance that is below 400 meters. The other reasons are sense of intimacy, togetherness and high concern of residents that can be seen in the activities of residents under RT institutions that were driven by PKK community.

## 6. Conclusion

PERUMNAS residents faced the challenges to have a good adaptation to defend itself and maintain a life in the neighborhood. A prominent characteristic of the housing with various type of housing (21-house types, 36-house types and 45-house types) make the residents can coexist to be able to interact as a comfortable neighborhood, without differentiated by background levels of income and social conditions. Residents in social housing, which was built as a planned residential, are able to manage the neighborhood and social networking as a form of social and physical adaptation. It is characterized by shared use of space like RT halls for social activities between some of RT institutions, such as sports grounds and road use for social activities as shown in RW 21 and sports field in the scale of RW. It proves the ability of residents to have social integration so that cause of social interaction and the emergence of good social networking through local institutions called neighborhood institution or RT institution. Besides that, various local institutions under the RT institutions such as the family welfare empowerment (PKK) community, “*Dasawisma*” community, recitation community, gymnastics community, social gathering, and man’s gathering, have activated neighborhood activities to become more familiar and peaceful in the neighboring life.

Planning of social housing for low income people has been less attention to aspects of human behavior, through the power of RT institutions should be encouraged in the concept of neighborly harmony. Because bond residents tend to weaken, through the power of RT institutions developed an integrative theory in solving social and physical problems. RT institutions need to be more powerful, efficient, and more sensitive to social and spatial conditions towards the concept of sustainable housing. So that, the recommendation is RT as local institutions, that grow and develop at all levels of Indonesian society, need to be considered as instruments and strategies in the development of grassroot society.

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