

Urban Fortification and the Contestation of Space: A Case Study in Kayu Putih Housing Complex



Dita Trisnawan, W. Muhamad Rifki Ramadhan, Antony Sihombing, and Achmad Hery Fuad

Abstract Since the tragedy of May 1998 riot in Jakarta, there have been attempts by the community to protect themselves and their properties. The efforts to add protections are achieved through fortification of the area where they live, so that it is closed and difficult to access for outsiders other than the residents. This fortification effort is against the 21st principle of The Charter of New Urbanism that encourages urban areas to be more open, letting cities become friendly places for people, inclusive, and more enliven. This principle aims to create a more dynamic contestation [1] in urban spaces as an effort to improve the livelihood of the city residents, and yet fortification as a protective effort is contradicting the very principle. The Kayu Putih area is chosen as the study area because the author has been part of the residents of the area and witness the development of the fortifications from May 1998 incident up till now, the period of Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study reviews how the fortifications affect the contestation of spaces [2] within the urban setting, and sees its impact on its society [3]. This research uses qualitative method by carrying out field surveys ethnographically in order to access the phenomena and see the impacts that come up. In addition, supporting questionnaires are used to see residents' opinions on fortification, spatial use patterns, and the impact of fortification from time to time on their daily activities and towards the urban space. This study found interesting patterns, especially on the surrounding gates, which became sort of fortresses of the compound/area. Even though the gates closed or have limited access, its existence opens other opportunities for activities, which will not appear if the gates remain open. This research hopefully helps urban designers to consider the expected security [4], as well as the social aspects of fortification and its openness, so that there would be balances between the fortification effort and the contestation of its urban space.

Keywords Contestation of space · Lefebvre · Space production · Spatial representation · Urban fortification

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1 Introduction

It cannot be denied that urban development [5] in Indonesia (especially in the city of Jakarta and its satellite area [Jabodetabek]) has become a significant part of physical evolutionary phases that change many non-physical aspects of living, which influence the way people urbanizes.

Fortification as a concept plays an important role in the critical narration of urban development. Fortification is a term that has long become writer's research topic and concern. During these times, many puzzling questions came to mind and these questions could be developed into a deeper research plan for further research writing purpose. Many of these questions were triggered by writer's previous knowledge on fortification within the urban image changes/scope after May 1998 riot in Jakarta (that recorded an architectural appearance post Jakarta's riot). In another scope, further knowledge on Urban Design—specifically about The Lexicon of New Urbanism [6]—delivered The Charter of New Urbanism that contains ideal housing and settlement plan principles. These two early scientific scopes drive the writer to study about fortification term deeper within the urban architecture context, while also try to understand the context in anthropological perspective.

Contestation, according to Merriam Webster dictionary definition means controversy; debate, the word contestation and the word contest also have the same origin, meaning that a contestation can be called a debate, a fight, a bet, a competition in a contest that has a contestant in it. In the context of urban space, urban contestation has contestants in the form of city residents who take part in a contest in order to utilize its urban space. City residents make use of this urban space through various methods, strategies and tactics [3]. The use of urban space within these various perspectives is a form of manifestation of enlivening urban space life [7].

Fortification makes city space [8] into a contest arena that has a certain impacts due to the existence of the fort itself. This study wants to see the relationship between the existence of fortification and the contestation that occurred in the Kayu Putih area. This fortification effort is obviously contrary to the 21st principle of The Charter of New Urbanism that encourages the spirit of openness in urban space, since this principle expects more open spaces for interaction between urban residents. This study wants to examine the presence of fortification, which is an effort to provide a sense of security from threats with the level of contestation that occurs, especially by considering the context of the Covid-19 outbreak conditions, that eventually have encourage the increased of fortification efforts.

2 Methods

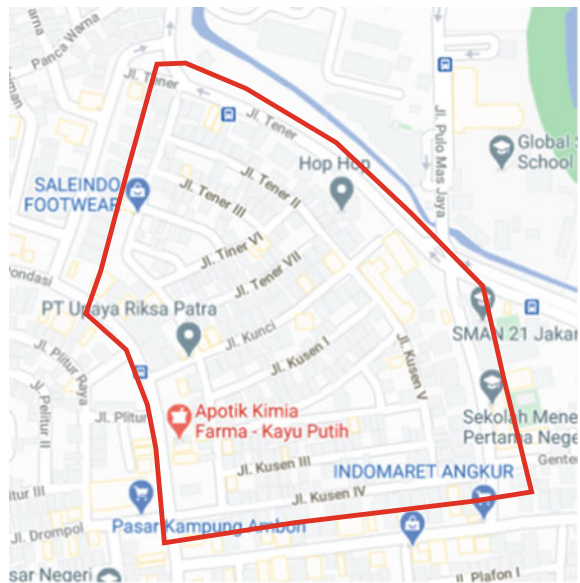
2.1 Study Area

The area as the focus of the research is the residential area in Kayu Putih Sub-district. This area is bordered by Jalan Tener on the northern side, Jalan Sirap on the eastern side, Jalan Angkur on the southern side, and Jalan Pondasi and Jalan Pondasi Ujung on the western side (Fig. 1). The study uses a housing complex in Kayu Putih, since this area has a dynamic chronology of fortification process, recorded by the residents and the author in mind.

At first, this area was an area that was free to access by anyone. Then, the tragedy of the May 1998 riots in Jakarta occurred and had an impact on the sense of security of the residents living in it, so they made a barrier (as a fort) to protect them from the threats that existed at that time. Along the way, after the tragedy (incident) passed, the fort that had been formed was maintained and even strengthened because threats remained, such as the threat of criminal acts, like threats of theft, pick pocketing, kidnapping, and others.

However, with another incident currently happening, the Covid-19 pandemic, the existing fortifications need to adapt and the way of adapting to the situation makes it necessary to delve deeper into the phenomena that occur. This situation re-tests the contestation that has occurred and will change the way the designer's point of view in designing and responding to the possibilities that might exist in the future.

Fig. 1 Location map of study area



2.2 Data Processing

Understanding urban fortification topic in big cities and uncontrolled slum area context can be achieved by ethnographic study [9]. Therefore, it can be investigated how these differences are negotiated and presented. Watson revealed how borders between public and private can be negotiated and redrawn, and how public and private spaces laid out each other. According to this research, author considers the fact on how urban environment is affecting someone's decision to break the rule. The analysis result, therefore, is used to find answers to questions that come from the city, especially in social interaction within urban spaces (where usually guided by various land use functions and people activities).

In seeing and reading the phenomena that occur in housing complex of Kayu Putih area, the author observed using the ethnographic method so that the possibilities and findings appear authentically. This method will also allow the reader to experience the flow of this study by providing an understanding of the phenomena that occur.

The reading of the phenomenon will be delivered by carrying out a field survey (ethnographically) to find patterns of society [10] in using fortified urban spaces and seeing its excesses (which can be seen as a strategy in city) [11]. Apart from field survey, this study also uses a questionnaire for residents of the complex containing maps so that respondents can show the ways they use urban space. In addition to the map, the supporting questionnaire which contains questions that support the map, seeing respondent opinions about fortification condition in the area, as well as exploring its community activities as part of the contestation within the area.

The knowledge gained about fortification was then linked to the patterns [12] and findings about contestation that occurred in this area. Then, this linkage is analyzed by reviewing The Charter of New Urbanism [6], especially on the 21st principle. The final goal, the author hopes that policy makers, urban designers, and architects in general can use the study as an alternative consideration, as the urban principles in The Charter of New Urbanism are not always applicable (even contradictory) to its current conditions and open the chance of renegotiating the principles to each specific context.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Contestation of City Spaces in the Kayu Putih Area

The Kayu Putih area of the research study has five gates that affect the surrounding area and into the inner side of its housing area. These five gates affect the surrounding area according to the context of their respective locations. These gates are then called Gate A, B, C, D and E (Fig. 2). Gate A is the main gate that becomes access for all modes of transportation, both pedestrians, car and motorbike riders,

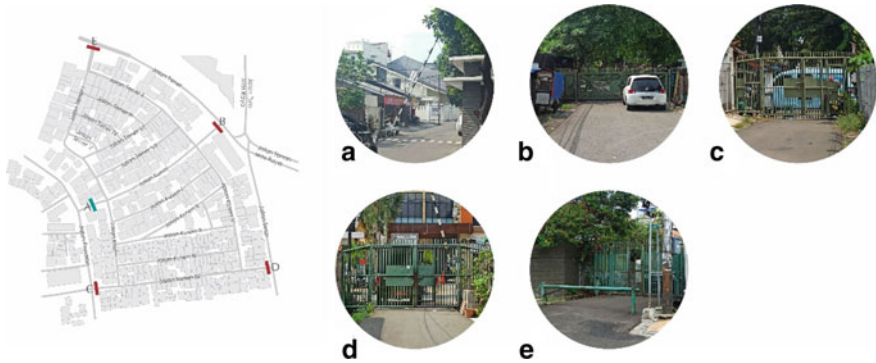


Fig. 2 The five gates which are the access to the housing complex

and cyclists. Gate A is in the form of a portal crossbar guarded by a security unit equipped with a guard post and closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance. The other four gates, Gates B, C, D and E are secondary gates with iron gates, approximately 2–2.5 m high with a 30 cm barrier at the bottom so that only pedestrians and cyclists can pass through them (note that to pass through these gates they need to lift the bicycle).

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the gate system in this complex underwent changes. The four secondary gates are permanently closed, leaving only Gate A which is the main gate as the only access in and out of the complex. The closure of these four secondary gates is a form of response to maintain the security and safety of residents from the outbreak.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the gate system in this complex underwent changes. The four secondary gates are permanently closed, leaving only Gate A which is the main gate as the only access in and out of the complex. The closure of these four secondary gates is a form of response to maintain the security and safety of residents from the outbreak because everyone who goes in and out becomes more monitored and the potential for virus entry is expected to be more controllable. This stricter access restriction further reinforces the contradiction to the 21st principle of The Charter of New Urbanism which encourages urban spaces to become more open and accessible. This tightening of access is not only contradictory, but is something that must be done. The aspects of human safety are more important, because essentially the need for security is more fundamental than the social need (Maslow 1943). This very need goes against the 21st principle of The Charter of New Urbanism. This tightening of access will affect the dynamics of contestation that occur as a form of response and changes in community strategies in utilizing the urban space [13].

The Fig. 3 graph shows the intensity of gate use before the Covid-19 pandemic. The data shows that Gate A (the main gate) is the most often passed gate before the tightening in the condition of the Covid-19 pandemic. The other gates were still being used, where Gate C in particular was quite intensely used, being the second

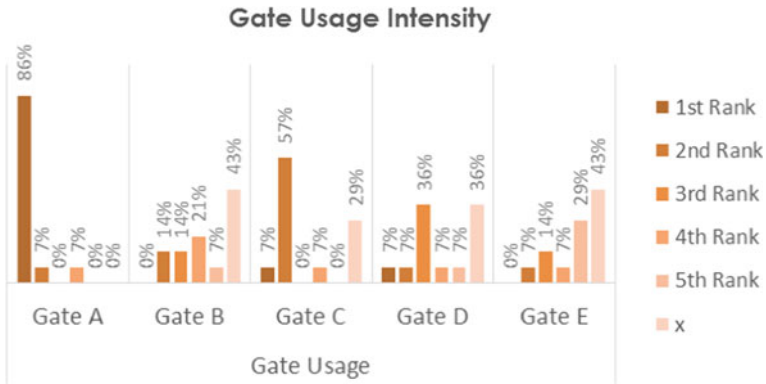


Fig. 3 Gate usage intensity before the Covid-19 pandemic

highest priority in its use. At each gate (as a form of fortification), there was a different contestation and the intensity on the use of the gate. It had an impact on the contestation that occurred in the surrounding area and within the housing environment.

As the main gate, Gate A gets abundant volume of pedestrian traffic (Fig. 4). This happens because people who usually use Gates B, C, D, and E as their main access forcefully use this gate. The residents still willingly do this even though their homes are far from the gate. For motorized vehicle users, the traffic volume remains the same, since before the Covid-19 outbreak all vehicles have indeed used the Gate A as a result of closing other gates for motorized vehicle access.

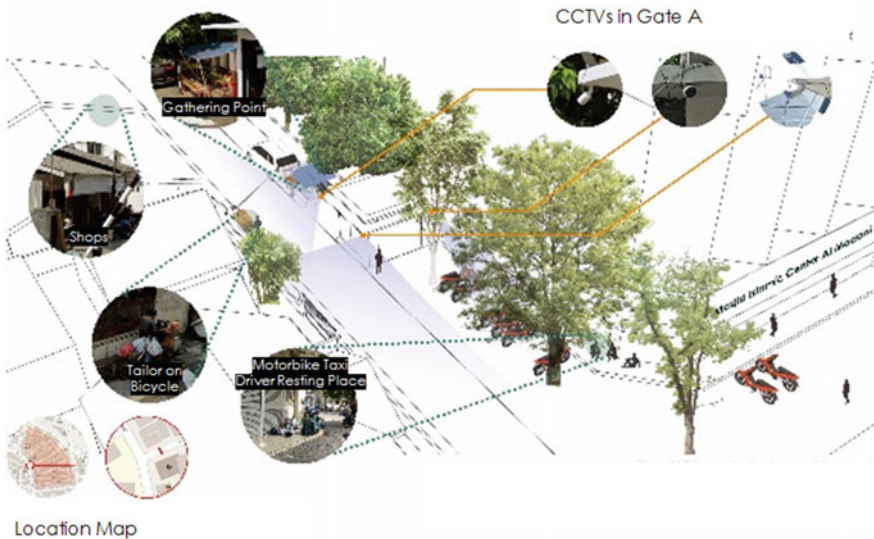


Fig. 4 Contestation in gate A surrounding area

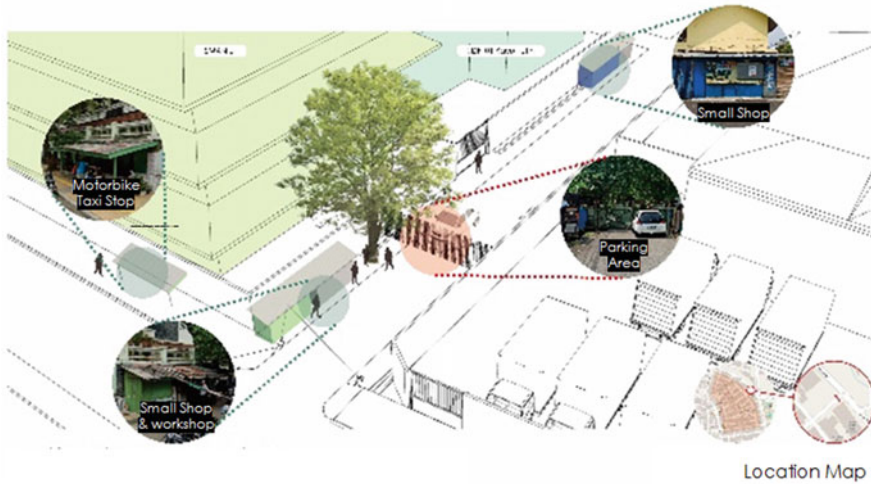


Fig. 5 Contestation in gate B surrounding area

The condition of Gate B before the Covid-19 pandemic was quite busy with two schools, SMA Negeri 21 Jakarta (Public High School) and SD Negeri 01 Kayu Putih (Public Elementary School). The existence of SDN 01 Kayu Putih has a direct effect on the conditions around Gate B because the school’s entrance is in the inner side of the gate, while SMA 21 has no direct effect because the entrance is in the outer side of the gate. The existence of this elementary school brings up small stalls where students can snack on, also for people dropping off or picking up the students. Pandemic condition requires this school to cancel most learning activities at school, thereby drastically reducing human traffic, coupled with the closure of Gate B, affecting stalls to also close their business activities. Apart from stalls stopping their business, the presence of motorcycle taxi drivers, just outside the gate, has also disappeared (Fig. 5).

In the Gate C area, there are shophouses facing two sides of the road, Jalan Kusen IV and Jalan Pondasi. The closing of the gate made the shophouses facing the side of Jalan Kusen IV closed, since they were not visible any longer from the main road (Jalan Pondasi) and no longer passed by people because of the gate’s closure. This did not happen to the mosque shops close to the Gate A, since the mosque decided to move back the gate as far as the shophouses stretched, so that the shop area can be accessed freely by everyone. Because of the position of Gate C is right across the Kampung Ambon Market and right next to a bank office, sellers use the area to sell chicken noodles (in the morning) and *pempek model* (in the evening). *Angkot* (minibus public transportation) drivers also use the area as a place for them to stop to find passengers (*ngetem*). However, due to pandemic situation, the closing of Gate C has the potential to make it more difficult for residents who want to buy food from stalls or want to use public transportation, since they have no

direct access. Fortified gate discourages them to the outsides, since accessing it has become more difficult (Fig. 6).

The position of Gate D, which is right across the Kayu Putih Sub-district Municipal Office, let the outer space used by the officer to park *Satpol PP* (local police) car. In addition, on the inner side of the gate there is a small shop that since the pandemic condition, losing the access to potential shoppers. This potential lost happens because residents do not pass through Gate D any longer, not passing the shop, and make the potential for incidental shopping is lost (Fig. 7).

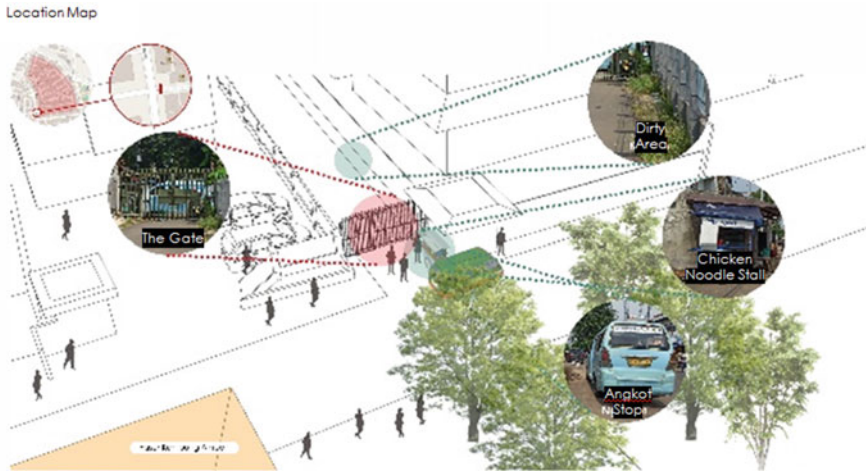


Fig. 6 Contestation in gate C surrounding area

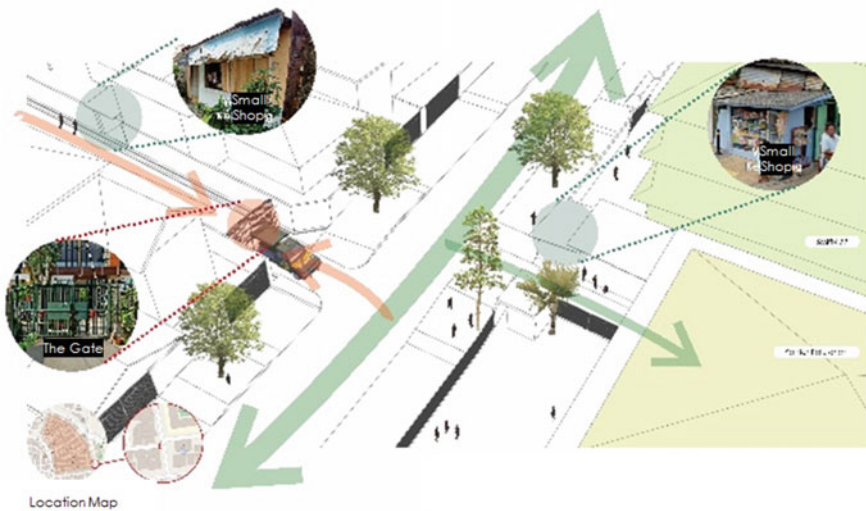


Fig. 7 Contestation in gate D surrounding area

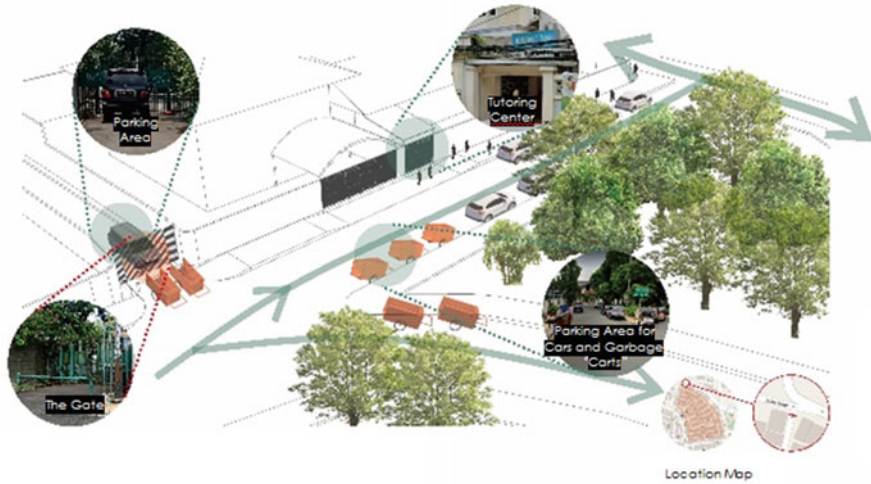


Fig. 8 Contestation in gate E surrounding area

The outer side area of Gate E, which is not crowded with people, has made garbage men use the area as a place to park their garbage carts (Fig. 8). In the area outside Gate E, there is also a tutoring center. Before the pandemic, tutoring students also used the strip to park their private vehicles. The existence of these tutoring students also brings up hawker vendors around the area. Meanwhile, on the inner side, residents whose houses are near the gate take advantage of the area as a parking area for their automobiles.

3.2 *The Linkage of Fortification and Contestation of City Spaces*

With the presence of fortification in this area, the community took advantage of the areas that were formed as a result of the fortification (with the existence of the gates). These areas include the area around each gate as well as the area within the fortified complex. From each gate that was observed, the presence of fortification brought a pattern of activities that became the public’s response to the existence of the gate. Abundance traffic through Gate A, has made it strategic area for trading. Situation has then made the occurrence of mobile hawkers such as tailorman on bike and instant drinks seller. On the other hand, the Gate E area, which has quiet traffic coupled with fortification, has made the area even quieter and is used to park garbage carts, something that is not going to happen in areas that are easily seen and close to areas of activities.

Figures 9 and 10 show how the residents feel about the condition of the area around the gates, both the outer side and the inner side. These graphs illustrate how the contestation that occurs becomes an opportunity for its residents. For example, some residents use the inner area for parking lot because the area becomes quiet after the gate was built. Local merchants also take advantage of the busy outside area to have a small business. Contestation that occurs due to the impact of fortification is not a bad thing for residents, even the survey results show that 71% do not feel constrained by the existence of gates in their residence. These gates provide them with a sense of security (including by changing the gate system during the Covid-19 pandemic) and are also used to support the livelihood of the residents.

Besides having an impact on the area around the gate, the presence of fortification has an impact on the residential environment as shown in Fig. 11. In this diagram, it can be seen that the inner area close to the gate and the axis of Gates A-B has a worse condition than other areas. This occurs as a result of a quiet area because it is not traversed by people and vice versa, there are areas that are very crowded with people, such as the area along the axis of Gates A–B.

Fig. 9 Graphic of gate's inner side condition

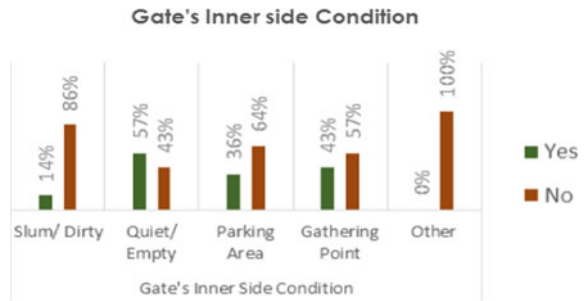


Fig. 10 Graphic of gate's outer side condition

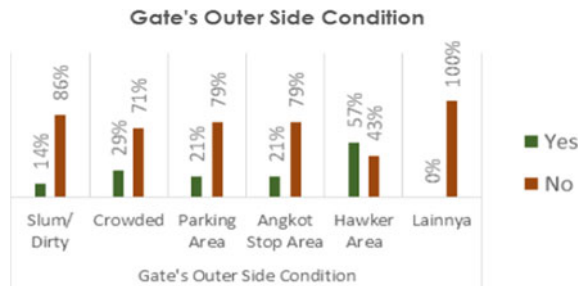




Fig. 11 Diagram of Kayu Putih’s housing condition

4 Conclusions

The presence of fortification in the Kayu Putih area in the form of gating the residential area shows the emergence of contestation which is the result of adaptation to the prevailing conditions. This adaptation process can be taken into consideration when designing an area or city, because fortification that hinders openness does not always hold contestation to a city. The incidents that occurred since the May 1998 riots until the Covid-19 outbreak showed that residents were able to interpret the use of city space [11]. Citizens as parties who play a role in carrying out city life [14] must be the main focus beyond the design made by the designers. Strategy and tactics will always appear in forms that the designers had not thought of. City residents are the ones who always better in understanding their own city space. In designing a new area, instead of making design that are forcing and dictating the movement patterns of the people, it would be wiser for the designers to provide space for the growth of public creativity so that the contestations that occur in urban spaces are even livelier.

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