

THE SPATIAL MEANING IN "GADIS KRETEK" MOVIE AS A REPRESENTATION OF JAVANESE SOCIETY

Ing Julita^{*}), Freta Oktarina

^{*}) Corresponding author email : ing.julita@umn.ac.id

Department of Architecture, Multimedia Nusantara University, Tangerang Regency, Banten 15810, Indonesia

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Abstract

The movie series "Gadis Kretek" is an adaptation of Ratih Kumala's novel, framing the family business life within the clove cigarette, known as kretek, industry. This adaptation portrays the societal realities against the background of local wisdom related to the kretek industry in Java. The kretek industry has evolved into one of the largest revenue-generating sectors for the Indonesian government, second only to oil and gas. Kretek have become a cultural heritage of Indonesia, embodying historical and cultural values intertwined with the activities of its people. These values shape a space that relates to form, function, and meaning in architecture, understood through dialogue and image within the movie's scenes. This study will analyze and interpret the production of space in the "Gadis Kretek" movie series and examine the underlying meanings as representation of Javanese society.

Keywords: *Gadis Kretek; Javanese Society; Kretek Industry; Meanings; Social Space*

INTRODUCTION

Movies is a modern medium widely used to communicate ideas, stories, narratives, and symbols imbued with meanings (Nugroho, 2010). Movies can convey messages and values in a language that is easily understood by audiences. Often, movies show the values, norms, and lifestyles of a society, allowing viewers to learn about the depicted culture even if they have never encountered it directly (Wuwung et al, 2021). The movie industry encompasses various types of movies, such as documentaries, profile, feature movies,

short movies, advertisements, and others. Among these, serial movies are particularly popular. A serial movie is characterized by its storyline being divided into multiple episodes.

In recent times, there has been a growing trend of adapting literary works, especially novels, into movie series that draw upon the richness of local wisdom as their foundational context. Like movies, novels also reflect social and cultural realities within a society. The novel "Gadis Kretek" by Ratih Kumala is one such work that has been adapted into a serial movie. This adaptation narrates the life journey of a female character named Dasiyah against the background of the kretek industry in 1964. In movies like "Gadis Kretek," images and imagination about the reality of society are realized (Anggraini, 2015). The portrayal of the female protagonist, Dasiyah, in "Gadis Kretek" is described through her struggle for gender equality and the depiction of religious, moral, and cultural educational values. Moreover, the movie also portrays the reality of Javanese culture, including the livelihood systems, social systems, and religious systems of Javanese society (Luxman et al., 2014). "Gadis Kretek," with all its messages and values, offers a new perspective on the history of the kretek industry. The discourse ranges from the business aspects of the kretek industry to its social and cultural constructs. How does the image and imagination in "Gadis Kretek" frame the kretek industry through architecture? Do the spaces or dialogues within these settings also convey meaning and value? The dialogue or language in space has the ability to do more than merely identify the components that make up our environment (Eckler, 2012). Space can be interpreted through the configuration of a society's identity as reflected in its social activities. The "Gadis Kretek" movie series depicts social activities related to family businesses, workers, and cultural values that shape a space. This study will analyze "Gadis Kretek" through dialogues or narratives in images that depict the

production of space within movie scenes. Scenes set in tobacco drying areas, warehouses, rolling rooms, sauce room, and markets are influenced by aspects of space production. These aspects will be analyzed based on the spatial configurations and discover its meaning.

Language of Space and Form: Reading Space in Literature

Dialogue or the language of space serves as a fundamental tool for analyzing architectural design. It explains spatial conditions, elements, and communicative concepts within a space. Additionally, architectural language can define experiences, developments, or the qualitative aspects of a space. This language allows one to read and understand space, and build ideas that drive the production of a space. According to Eckler (2012), the process of spatial production can be seen through the relation between spaces (organization and ordering). These spatial relations can provide meaning to space as a connector or distributor, as well as in association with other spaces. This space is, of course, not solely determined by distance; the interconnected functions and contextual identities of the spaces also define the significance of the spatial relationships. Moreover, human interactions within a space (operation and experience) contribute significantly to its interpretation. Social activities within a space constitute essential factors alongside physical elements in shaping social space (Lefebvre, 1991).

Kretek Industry as a Social Space

In the kretek industry, the production space becomes the primary focus when considering the physical aspects of space. Elements such as tobacco, spices, rolling machine, among others, collectively define the identity of the space as a kretek production facility. Beyond the physical attributes, the activities and interactions within this space are important in shaping its character. According to Simmel (1997), interaction inevitably occurs within any space and can be viewed as a social space. Social spaces are never the same because each space is shaped by elements related to its history and society (Lefebvre, 1991). When looking at the kretek industry spaces, Javanese culture is reflected in it. In the early days of the industry, kretek was produced traditionally with workers sitting on the factory floor rolling kretek using a wooden rolling machine (Hanusz, 2000). The process and activities model such as rolling kretek causes interaction between workers. This method of hand rolled cigarette is a cultural value that still survives and is one of the production factors of social space. In its development, there was a government regulation (in 1970) to provide tables and chairs for kretek rollers. This change was not very significant to the activities and social system that had been rooted in

it. The kretek industry is also the largest contributor of female laborers in Indonesia, indicating that the elements of society or humans also play an important role in shaping interactions in social space.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a constructivism paradigm conducted using the media of the Gadis Kretek movie series. The focus of this paradigm is how the message conveyed by the communicator can be actively interpreted by the recipient of the message (Wahyuni et al, 2024). Starting with the data collection process with the observation on movie objects in the form of images, narratives, or dialog (as communicators).

Cultural values, lifestyles, norms and patterns of community interaction in the Gadis Kretek movie series are displayed in the form of dialog as well as expressions, actions or social activities. These elements are seen scene by scene to enhance the storyline and provide information about the setting. This setting becomes the object of analysis that is translated into a layout sketch. The translation process from movie to layout is obtained by looking at scene by scene from the first episode which contains initial story information about the kretek industry and the spatial atmosphere in it. Furthermore, episode two and so on are used as a refinement of the layout that has been obtained in the first episode.

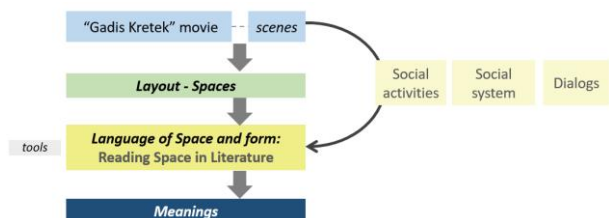


Figure 1. Research framework (Author, 2024)

The layout data depicted is a schematic description of the kretek production space, namely the kretek factory, as well as the living area which is the basis for analyzing the spaces in it. The spaces discussed include the kretek production space (starting from the tobacco drying area, warehouse, kretek rolling room, and sauce room), living area, and market. These spaces will then be read, analyzed, and studied interpretatively and using the language of space to discover a message or meaning in each space.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The presence of industry causes space to experience a long journey and triggers spatial transformation (Oktarina, 2023). The kretek industry is

one of them. The kretek industry has developed from time to time, which indicates a change in spaces such as production spaces in the industry. In the movie *Gadis Kretek*, the kretek industry shown has 2 different time settings that are seen in the mixed storyline (a story with a forward and flashback plot). With the existence of 2 time settings, the space in the kretek industry in the past and present shows significant changes in the movie. Interestingly, despite the transformation of space through time, the kretek industry has a strong value and identity as a culture from its beginning. This is because the industry, including kretek, grew during the colonial era which also shaped and transformed the characteristics of Javanese society and influenced the production of space (Oktarina, 2023). Thus, the discussion will focus on the initial time setting of the kretek industry that developed in 1964 which is shown in the movie as the beginning of the meaning of space in the kretek industry.

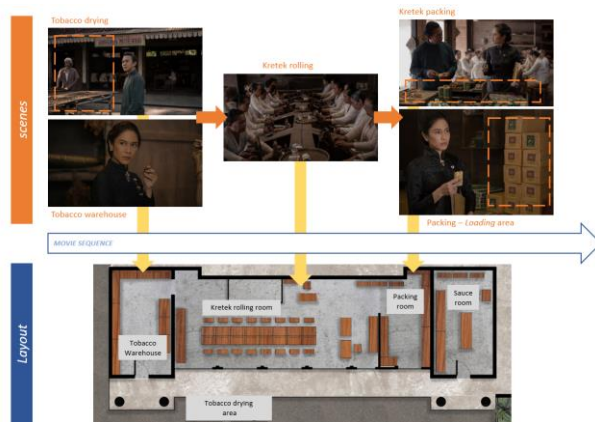


Figure 2. Process of translating scenes into layout (Author, 2024)

In the first episode, the activities of the kretek factory are shown in the setting of Idroes Moeria's kretek industry room with activities such as drying tobacco, rolling kretek, and packing kretek. The scene begins by highlighting the main character, Dasiyah, who narrates her life as the daughter of the owner of the Idroes Moeria kretek factory while showing the deeper setting of the kretek production process. The activities of the *linting* or roller workers are shown in scenes depicting the manual production room, which is the center of production in Idroes Moeria's kretek industry. In the process of working, the rollers require supervision from the worker's superior called *mandor* (Oktarina et al, 2017). This explains the rolling area which is directly connected to the *mandor's* area. Kretek that have been produced are then packaged in the form of small packs, *slops* (1 *slop* contains 10-12 packs of cigarettes), and cartons or boxes which are shown in the next scene which defines the space as a packaging room. The scene

shows that the spatial relationship between rolling room and the packaging room are close. In addition, from the production process, after rolling the kretek, it will be separated and packaged. Packaging in kretek aims to form a brand identity (Aryani et al, 2021), as seen in the scene with packaging objects and boxes with the company's brand logo that support the definition of Idroes Moeria kretek factory packaging room. With this, the process of space production occurs based on the sequence or order of kretek production. This process of space production is organizational in the application of logic, namely the kretek production process, in determining the relationship between spaces (Eckler, 2012).

Organization and Ordering

The production area or kretek factory has the same area as the family residence who owns the kretek factory, Idroes Moeria. This can be seen in the first episode (minute 10) where the character Dasiyah moves to the terrace area of the house which is not far from the kretek factory. From the orientation of the scene, the residential house is in front of the kretek factory. Thus, the kretek factory occupies the deepest position in the site. This image informs us that the position of the kretek factory is important to the existence of the residence because it is a family business and has become part of the residence. In addition, the family of the Kretek owner can carry out their activities at home while supervising the kretek production activities on the terrace of their house. This proves that a space has a relationship with another space even though it has a different configuration of spatial functions. In other words, the kretek factory can be associated with the owner's home and vice versa. A space can be implied as an identity and accepted as an image associated with something (Hendra, 2018). The spatial and zoning relationship between the kretek factory and the residence illustrates that the kretek factory is the identity of Idroes Moeria's residence and the residence is the identity of Idroes Moeria's kretek factory.

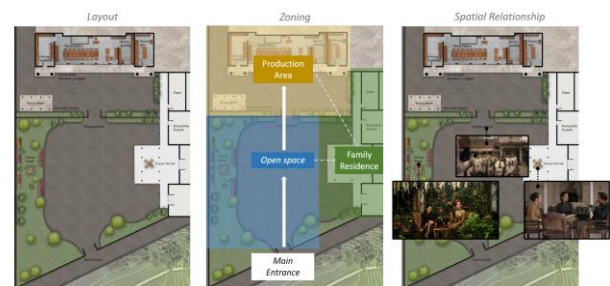


Figure 3. Zoning & spatial relationship (Author, 2024)

Kretek Production Area

Kretek rolling (*Linting*) room is one of the most highlighted spaces in the movie. Space is created from activities and interactions between individuals (Prasetyo, 2015). In this case, the activities and interactions of rolling workers become an important factor in the production of space. The rolling room becomes an engaged space, means that there is interactive involvement between workers. The shape of the space and the arrangement of activities facing each other illustrate the existence of social interaction even though the process of rolling clove cigarettes is carried out individually. In addition, roller workers are dominated by female workers. Dasiyah's character also narrates that the role of women in the kretek industry can only be limited to being kretek rollers. This proves that social construction also influences the process of space formation. According to Eckler (2012), space can be read and formed from the way people see the space. People see and define rolling room as a space associated with gender, specifically women. So that the rolling room has a hierarchical meaning that shows the social level of gender, that in the kretek industry, women can only work as rolling laborers.

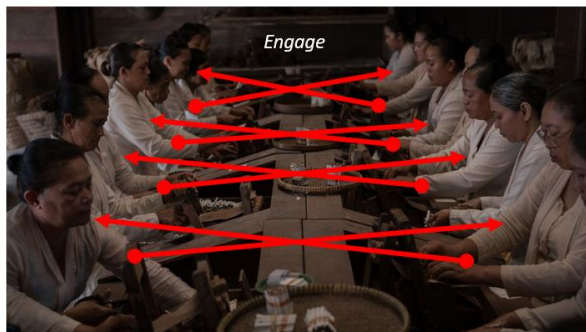


Figure 4. Space as 'Engage' in rolling room (Author, 2024)

The tobacco drying area which is directly related to the front terrace area also creates a different spatial experience. For the production process in the kretek industry, the tobacco drying area is placed in the front area and the terrace area is used for loading activities. In the scene of the movie, the visual or image means that the space formed is a space that functions for production activities. However, if you look deeper into the space, there are group photo activities and celebratory gatherings. According to Lefebvre (1991), daily life, perception, representation of spatial understanding, and spatial images of life can be factors in the production of space. Therefore, space as a tobacco drying area and terrace can be interpreted as moments that structure and provide specific spatial experiences in response to the social interactions of residents.



Figure 5. Space as 'Moments' in tobacco drying area (Author, 2024)

Sauce Room

"The gate of my dreams is the sauce room. Behind that blue door is a place forbidden for me, but that's where my dreams are kept." That's how Dasiyah narrates about the sauce room. The sauce room itself is a room in the production area for mixing the essence of kretek. Similar to the rolling room, the role of women in the kretek industry makes the sauce room have a gender hierarchical meaning. The perception and myth that if women enter it, the taste of kretek will become sour makes this room become a barrier for women. However, for Dasiyah, her interpretation of the sauce room is as a space that holds her dreams or ambitions as a female sauce maker, symbolized by the blue door object. The sauce room symbolized as a room with a blue door informs us that a space can be formed from the physical elements that define the space (Eckler, 2012). In its form, the characteristic of the sauce room is created by the closed blue door. In the spatial experience, the smell of spices also gives meaning to the sensory perception of space so that the space will be remembered through its smell. In the scene in episode 3, the sauce room, which has been entered by Dasiyah, gives the perception as if the space has been contaminated by women. This space is then given some incense, as a ritual tool, to prevent the female-like odor and kretek from becoming sour. From this scene, the sauce room is treated like a "sacred space" and clarifies the meaning of barrier, as a limit space for women, and as a boundary, which divide the relationship between spaces. According to Simmel (2009), the meaning of space also as an individual experience that provides a boundary between the personal inside and outside a community. In addition, the social process that occurs gives a deeper meaning to space (Damayanti, 2021).

Los Mbako: Tobacco Drying Shed

In the kretek industry, the beginning of the production process begins with the main raw material, which is tobacco leaves. To process tobacco leaves into kretek cigarettes, several steps are required including drying the tobacco leaves. The process of drying tobacco leaves occurs in a specific area called a tobacco drying

shed or in Javanese called *Los Mbako*. In the movie, *Los Mbako* setting is also highlighted in the scene to show the process of the kretek industry activities. Although it is outside the site of the kretek's factory, *Los Mbako* appears quite often in several scenes to show how important this space is in the storyline. The tobacco leaves hanging inside *Los Mbako* are physical element objects that can form the focus of a space (Lefebvre, 1991). However, scenes set in *Los Mbako* are often associated with other activities. This makes the meaning of *Los Mbako* as a space for drying tobacco leaves increase and even shift. Movie characters Dasiyah and Soeradja often use *Los Mbako* as a private meeting space. The meeting activities carried out, such as the interaction or exchange goods (the key of the sauce room) in secret, give the meaning of space as an encounter (meeting). The *Los Mbako*, which is not often visited by people, makes Dasiyah and Soeradja interpret this space as a space to come and meet privately. Thus, *Los Mbako* has the experience of space as a social space even though the real function of the space is as a drying room for tobacco leaves.

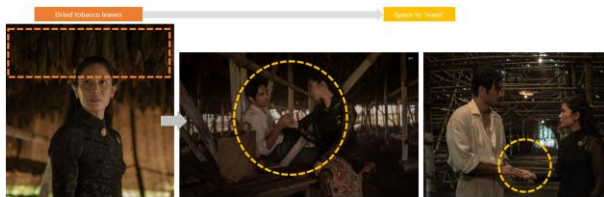


Figure 6. Space as 'Encounter' in *Los Mbako* (Author, 2024)

Market

The market in the movie also has an important role in supporting the kretek industry process. The market is a place to sell kretek cigarette products and also a place to buy raw materials such as dried tobacco. This buying and selling activity is always characterized by social interaction, which again indicates that space is a product of human social interaction (Simmel, 1997). The negotiation process in purchasing raw materials for tobacco leaves is not done in a quiet and private place but in the market. Therefore, the market is also a meeting place or encounter, but it has a different meaning from the meaning of encounter in *Los Mbako*. In *Los Mbako*, the meeting that takes place has a more private meaning. Whereas in the market, the situation of a crowded space with various activities does not interfere with the definition of the market as a meeting space to negotiate goods. This shows that the meaning of space can be formed from different people's perceptions and experiences of space (Lefebvre, 1991). The market is also used as a place to promote the new kretek product to society. The choice of location and space for Dasiyah's kretek product launch event called

"Kretek Gadis" was done in the market. This signifies that the market is a social space, a space where people gather, which becomes a magnet so that kretek products can be introduced to society and increase sales. In addition, this activity indicates that the market is also experiencing additional meaning as a communication space. Space as representation and communication to convey information and express ideas verbally or written through space (Eckler, 2012). So the market has the characteristics of a space with a dynamic meaning.

The areas and spaces of the kretek industry that have been discussed can be viewed from several architectural aspects such as personal and social spaces, barrier and encounter spaces, and spaces associated with hierarchy or gender.

Personal & Social Spaces

From the kretek production spaces, it can be understood that these spaces are social spaces consisting of several personal spaces for each community. Personal space is defined as a mechanism used to regulate privacy with a combination of distance and angle of orientation of each individual (Namazian et al, 2013). The Kretek rolling room, for example, has one rolling table and chair for each worker, indicating that it is a personal space for one worker. This space would be very likely to transform into a social space judging from the arrangement of the objects of tables and chairs with one another and the interactions that occur in it. This makes the relationship to the other occupants can adjust to the level of personal space that exists (Namazian et al, 2013). The role of community interaction in this movie gives an interesting meaning to personal and social space in the context of the kretek industry space.

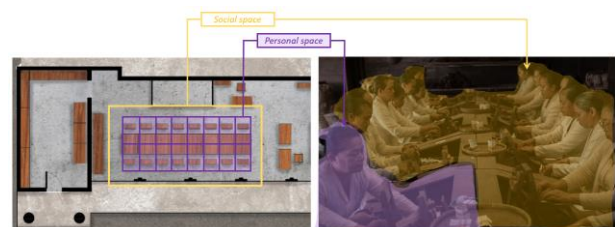


Figure 7. Personal and Social Space in Rolling Room. (Author, 2024)

The personal space can also be explained in the sauce room. The sauce room, as already discussed, has a meaning that seems private. The interactions that occur in the movie are not so obvious and indicate that this space is a personal space for the sauce maker (initially a man). The blue door that symbolizes the sauce room signifies an object that is a simple example of an environmental design feature that is responsive and allows for the regulation of social interaction. Opening it

signifies a desire for social stimulation and closing it represents a positive boundary between oneself and others.

Barrier & Encounter Spaces

With the sauce room as a personal space, it also strengthens its meaning as a barrier. Like a private room, the sauce room signifies the identity of the Idroes Moeria's kretek industry, which has a unique taste from other kretek industries. Therefore, its private and confidential nature creates restrictions on workers (not only women) who interact in it. In addition, the cultural context and beliefs of the surrounding community that prohibit women from entering also minimize the pattern of community interaction that occurs in the space.

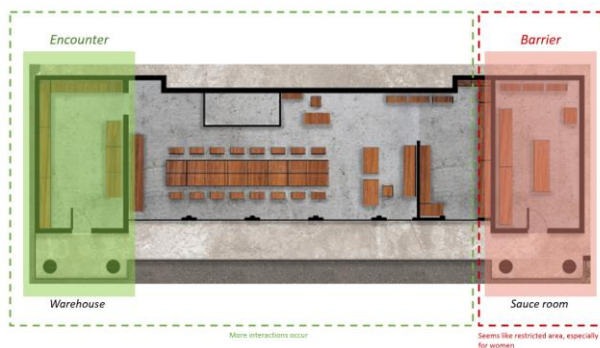


Figure 8. 'Encounter' and 'Barrier' in the organization of kretek production space. (Author, 2024)

In contrast, the surrounding spaces, such as the rolling (*linting*) room, warehouse, and even *Los Mbako*, show very diverse patterns of interaction. They meet each other and give a more alive significance than the sauce room. Not only that, *Los Mbako* also has a shift in function as a space for encounter for the characters Soeradja and Dasiyah. The need for a private meeting space for Soerdja and Dasiyah makes *Los Mbako* the right place for them. Apart from the fact that it is rarely visited by workers, the distance between the kretek industry area and residential houses is also far apart. This fulfills the need for space by users. Like Louis Kahn's opinion about architectural space that not only satisfies functions but also satisfies the psychological needs of their users. So that the meaning of space presented in the Idroes Moeria's kretek industry space becomes more dynamic.

Hierarchical & Gender based Spaces

Interestingly, hierarchy also has a strong meaning in this kretek industrial space. The gender element greatly influences the perception of the community formed towards spaces. Gender and architecture are characteristics that can influence space design through lifestyle formation and preference

(Arslan, 2023). Lifestyle formation and preference in this context can be interpreted as culture and social life by Javanese society. The social construction of Javanese society towards women's gender at that time strongly illustrates the production of the kretek industry space. Women were considered to only be able to have careers in certain positions and there are myths about women in the kretek industry. The rolling room and sauce room are spaces that are strongly influenced by gender factors. The sauce room has a more gendered sense of space than the rolling room. The perception of this space is also supported by its private and forbidden nature for women. Unlike the rolling room which only displays the value of hierarchy or the career level of women as rolling laborers. These two spaces both have aspects of space production that are based on gender. Even so, the produced gendered spaces display unique and different characters. It can be recognized that physical design and equipment are not always the only elements that show that space is occupied by a particular gender, but socio-cultural, religious, regional aspects by Javanese society also have a very strong role in the production of a space, namely the kretek industry space.

Javanese Society Characters within Kretek Space

Through the meaning of space that has been discussed, it can be understood that the space presented in the movie scene is not only limited to visuals or images, but also sense and perception supported by moments created by the interaction of the society. The kretek industry space reflected in the movie does not solely appear from interactions alone. The human element called the society has an important role in the production of space. The Javanese people who work in Idroes Moeria's kretek industry define a strong character in the kretek industrial space. The Javanese social system includes kinship, *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and socializing (Luxman et al., 2014). In the movie, the use of calling someone *mbok*, *mas*, and *mbak* symbolizes the existence of a kinship system. The same thing when it comes to the language of space that shows the relationship between spaces that are very close to each other between the kretek factory and living area. Not only that, the condition of the production area and the living area that are open to each other also gives the meaning that the character of the kretek industry shown is based on family. This nature is also supported by scenes in the movie that show interactions and heartwarming moments between workers. Like the discussion about kretek rolling room which shows rolling activities carried out individually. However, due to the character of Javanese society who like to socialize, the space for individual work has the character of a social space. This makes the kretek industry space far from being a rigid form. Therefore, the space in the

kretek industry is a representation of the character of Javanese society.

CONCLUSION

Space provides unlimited exploration in its meaning. Many space production factors can define space tangibly and intangibly. Space is displayed as an image, providing visuals and information related to the background. But the presence of people and their interactions give a different impression in the meaning of space. It can be interpreted as a space of engage, encounter, barriers, hierarchy, and moment. This explain the kretek industry in the “Gadis Kretek” movie far from rigid and formal image like stereotypical industrial space in general. Thus, space is not only as background information but also as a message. And in the movie “Gadis Kretek”, the meaning of each space of the kretek industry is as a social space which is a representation of the interaction and character of Javanese society.

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