



## Space Penetration of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School

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### Abstract

Buntet Islamic Boarding School is the third oldest Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. The Islamic boarding school was founded in 1750 and continues to exist now. It began as a single community in the block of Mertapada Kulon Village and has now grown to include many communities. The penetration of activities in Mertapada Village is interesting to observe in the context of space. Penetration that began with activities that were not economically oriented but developed into economic activities. The early education that was developed was traditional Islamic boarding school education aimed at spreading Islam. The purpose of this study is to explain the penetration space created by the activities of the Buntet Islamic boarding school. This research method combines a spatial approach using an Arch Map with surveys and field observations for ground data checks, interviews, and analysis of descriptions based on map data processing and field surveys, followed by interpretation of spatial penetration caused by Islamic boarding school activities. The study findings show that the Buntet Islamic Boarding School is a hub of activity that is not only focused on education but also on the village community's economic development. Space penetration happens as a result of past experiences and adaptability to the needs of Islamic boarding school education.

**Keywords:** *Economic-Society Growth; Buntet-Boarding School; Arch-Map*

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### Introduction

Buntet Islamic Boarding School, established in 1750, is one of Indonesia's oldest Islamic boarding schools. This Islamic boarding school traces the history of Islam's growth in West Java, particularly in the Cirebon region. This Islamic boarding school was founded by Kyai Muqoyim, the Cirebon Sultanate's mufti. The creation of this Islamic boarding school indicates that the Dutch colonialists had an accord with the Cirebon Sultanate not to provide Islamic religious education in the palace (A. Muhaimin, 2002). This Islamic boarding School depicts the Sultanate of Cirebon's importance in preserving Islam during the Dutch colonial period. Another proof is that the esoteric knowledge and traditions of Sunan Gunung Jati's teachings are still preserved and distinguish this Islamic boarding school.

The Buntet Islamic Boarding School's space has influenced spatial developments in the surrounding rural areas for approximately 2.5 centuries. Space penetration begins with Islamic boarding school activities and progresses to commerce and trade activities that emerge around the Islamic boarding school.

Many research topics have been carried out at the Buntet Islamic Boarding School, but the research focus is on the field of Islamic boarding school education, such as: the traditional Islamic boarding school education system at the Buntet Islamic Boarding School during the leadership of K.H Abdullah Abbas (Khualid, 2019). feminism in Islamic boarding schools; narrative of women's empowerment in the Buntet Cirebon Islamic Boarding School (Nuroniya, 2019), Micro Waqf Bank and Creative Economics in Buntet Islamic Boarding School (Zayanie, 2019). Previous research was Educational Spread of Buntet Boarding School in A Rural Area (Chofyan, 2023) examines the distribution of educational activities while the process of spatial penetration and economic activities of the surrounding community have not been included in previous studies.

Various research related to the location of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School, village development and spatial changes are as follows: "The potential of Islamic Boarding Schools in sustainable rural development Case study of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School" (Fatimatuzzahroh, 2015)," Economic Development of Islamic Boarding Schools in West Java" (Lugina, 2018)," Feminism in Islamic Boarding Schools: Narrative of Women's Empowerment at the Buntet Islamic Boarding School in Cirebon (Nuroniya, 2019), "How do municipal strategies work in rural development: A Critical Realist Case Study" (Mustakangas and Vihinen, 2024), "Spatial and temporal change in urban-rural land use transformation at village scaled A case study of Xuanhua district, North China " (Liu J, 2016), "Heading down to the local? Australian rural development and the evolving spatiality of the craft beer sector" (Argent, 2017), these studies do not yet explain spatial penetration. The space penetration of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School is a novelty from this research.

## **Research Method**

The research method explains the study's context, namely the location of the research. It is then followed by the procedures of gathering research data and analysis procedures. The analysis procedures are including an explanation of data processing, data synthesis, and research findings formulation in accordance with the research objectives.

### **a) Study Context**

The research was conducted at the location of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School, namely in Mertapada Kulon Village, Astanajapura District, Cirebon Regency, West Java Province. The research location is approximately 155.5 km from Bandung City or can be reached in 2 hours 26 minutes using the Cisumdawu toll road route. Although the research location is administratively located in Mertapada Kulon Village, according to the Geospatial Information Agency, it is not located in that village. To see the position of the study location, see Figure 1.

### **b) Data Procedure**

Research data was obtained from the results of field surveys and field observations. The field survey and field observations were carried out for 5 days from 18 February 2024 to 22 February 2024. The survey was assisted by a team of 2 surveyors. Before carrying out the survey, a survey permit procedure was carried out first with the Buntet Islamic Boarding School, then the survey was carried out according to that date. The survey supporting equipment is maps, data check lists, GPS, cameras and stationery and recording equipment. The survey map has been prepared in printed form to facilitate the ground check process in the field. Spatial changes have been identified on the map. Furthermore, the field survey collected changes in spatial function that occurred around the Islamic boarding school, such as the establishment of new buildings and businesses around the Islamic boarding school. Field observations in the form of interviews with traders around the Islamic boarding school were carried out to strengthen indications of business activities in the community around the Islamic boarding school, Islamic boarding school managers and village officials. The data collection procedure can be seen as follows:

1. Permission for surveys and observations
2. Data collection in field map format (ground check field), the 2022 map will be the map base for Ground Check
3. Interviews with traders, Islamic boarding school managers, village officials
4. Compile field data
5. Evaluate the data collected
6. Return to the field to collect missing data

- 7. Recompile data
- 8. Compile final data

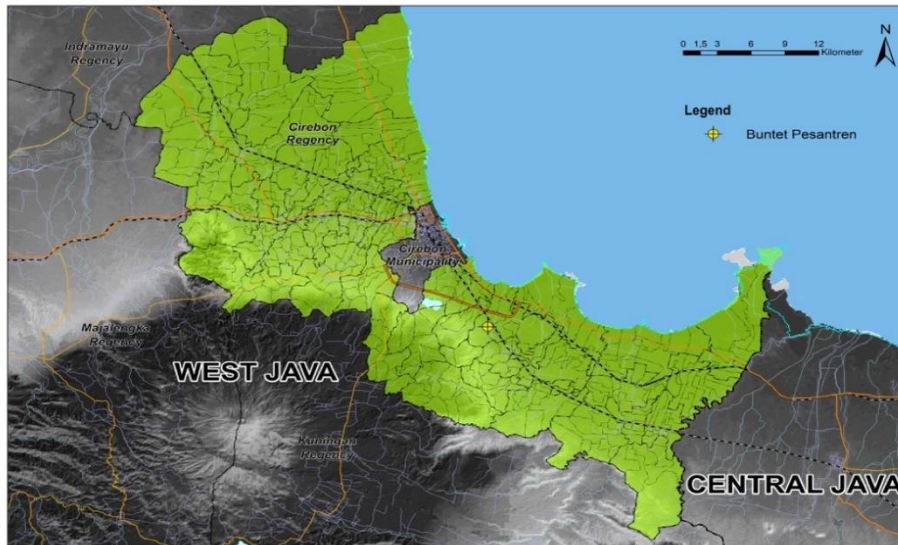


Figure 1. Buntet Islamic Boarding School Location

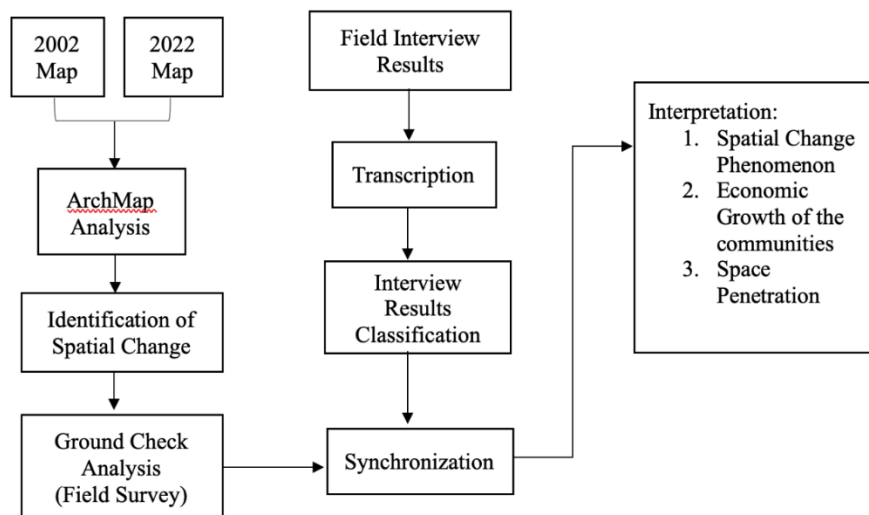


Figure 2. The Analysis Process

**c) Data Analysis**

The analysis process starts from analyzing 2002 and 2022 maps using ArcMap analysis for identifying the spatial changes. The result of the spatial change then verified by ground check analysis. It is then synchronized with the result of field interview to get the interpretation of spatial change phenomenon, economic growth of the communities, and space penetration. The detail about data analysis can be seen in the Figure 2.

**Results & Discussion**

The findings of this study cover several key areas related to the Buntet Islamic Boarding School. These include an analysis of the spatial phenomenon surrounding the boarding school, the development of its educational system, and the economic impact on the surrounding community. Additionally, the study examines the school’s adaptation to its environment and the implications of space penetration on the area.

**Spatial Phenomenon of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School Area**

The Buntet Islamic boarding school area was not formed immediately as seen in Figure 1 (see Figure 3). The establishment of Islamic boarding schools, which began in the 17th century and

continues into the 21st century, has altered the morphology of the area. In just ten years (2002-2022), the number of buildings in this area has increased dramatically. This means that the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area is undergoing continuous spatial change. The transition from agricultural/undeveloped to developed land occurs spatially. The process of spatial change was identified from a map of the earth's appearance from 2002 to 2022; over the course of 20 years, there have been significant changes in built space. Conversion of space into housing or commercial activities like shops and others.

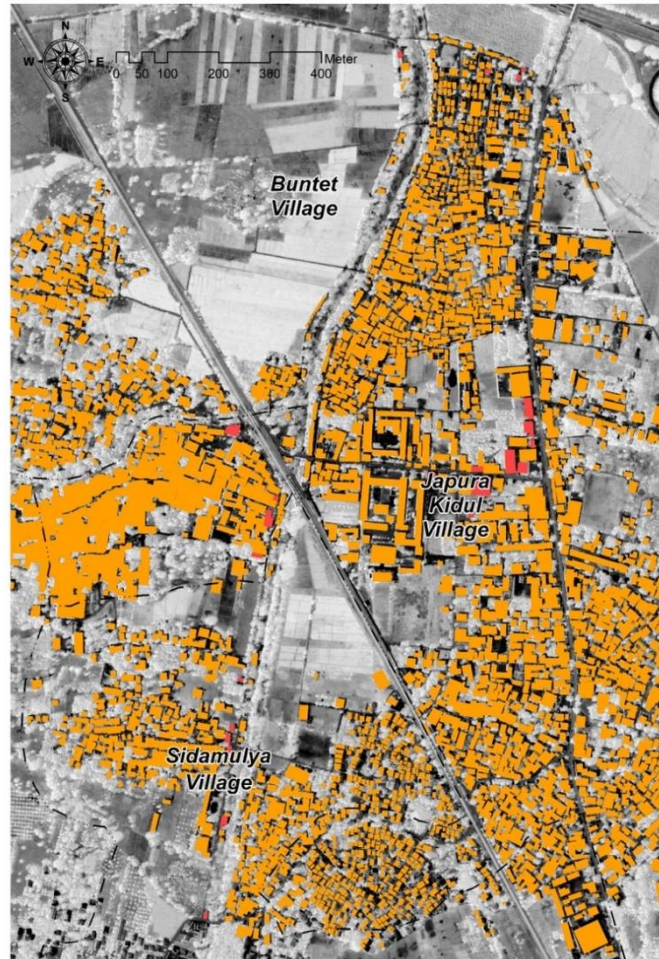


Figure 3. Buntet Islamic Boarding School Area

The morphological process of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area was formed conventionally. Developed from a cluster of buildings surrounding the Islamic boarding school area. The Buntet Islamic Boarding School is located in a rural area about 30 kilometers from Cirebon City Center; however, built space growth is relatively rapid in this Islamic Boarding School Area. The increase in built space in the area is deliberate and polarizes the activities of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School. The morphological process created corresponds to the location of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School.

It is crucial to understand that when examining the morphological process of the "Buntet Islamic Boarding School" area, certain entities carry symbolic content because these memories are formed over time. It is important to explain this because there are as many memories as there are groups of people, and while they are not bound, plural, or individual, they have their roots on the Buntet Islamic Boarding School space. The event of establishing a space contains meaning and symbolizes an act of life (De Leão Dornelles, 2020). Likewise, the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area represents the meaning of the history of this place

#### a) **Residence Growth**

The Buntet Islamic Boarding School originated as an agricultural village and gradually transformed into a residential community as a result of ongoing development and land-use changes. This transformation is largely attributed to the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural

purposes, which has contributed to a significant increase in both land purchase and rental prices in the area (Wachter-Karpfinger & Wytrzens, 2024). As more land has been converted for residential and commercial uses, the expansion of built-up areas has further driven up land prices, reflecting the growing demand for space and the region's increasing economic value. This process of urbanization not only demonstrates the impact of development on local land markets but also highlights the broader implications of regional growth, particularly in areas where land availability is increasingly constrained.

The expansion of built-up land is reflected in the expansion of houses near the Islamic boarding school (see figures 4 and 5). The development of these houses is a visible manifestation of people's settlement activities in rural areas. Human living conditions have rapidly improved in many rural areas, with rural communities gradually forming based on geo-relationship and kinship (Kong, 2021). Rural settlements are not isolated in space and are distributed based on farming and social relations (Kong, 2021).

Rural areas are distinguished by the prevalence of agricultural land functions. Built-up land is currently the dominant type. The concrete manifestation of these activities is concentrated near the Buntet Islamic Boarding School and spreads along the road network to provide a space for interaction between activities. Space formation in this area is sporadic, which means "unplanned". As is the case at the study location, the availability of a road network stimulates growth from agricultural to non-agricultural land (Wachter-Karpfinger & Wytrzens, 2024). Housing activities grow along the road network, but they do not follow the road hierarchy, so they are not clearly structured.

#### **b) Growth of Business and Commercial Activities**

In addition to housing, there is an increase in commercial buildings in the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area (see Figures 6, 7, 8). The morphological process of this activity is similar to housing activities, namely that it grows following the pattern of the road network that connects access to the Islamic boarding school. The expansion of this activity is concentrated in Islamic boarding schools. The concrete conditions of this activity visually demonstrate the appeal of the Islamic boarding school. The rise in commercial activity is due to the demand for these goods and services. This concept reflects various types of goods and services, as well as the existence of social demand for them (Kiryluk-Dryjska, 2020). As a result, as long as there is demand, commercial activities will develop in this area.

Place attachment and sense of belonging are two significant subjective well-being outcomes of existing traders. Place attachment refers to the process by which an identity connects to a space to establish a sense of safety, freedom, creativity and regeneration (Beeckmans, 2022). It also refers to time spent in the local area and interactions with others (Khosravi, 2020). An individual's sense of belonging develops with the growing emotional connection between the individual and their socio-cultural context. By generating new social relationships, place attachment and sense of belonging can be built. This process is also interrelated with integration (Berry & Hou, 2016). Social factors related to integration have a direct impact on the relational well-being of individuals and communities. Other factors include proximity or connection to family or culture and the quality of relationships built in the new environment, such as relationships with neighbors and the local community (McCubbin, 2013). As an important component of culture and memory, with signs, symbols, language, and artifacts of their past and help them adapt to the environment (Bocagni & Duyvendak, 2021).

Behavior that fosters mutual assistance and cooperation within community relationships is fundamental to the social fabric, manifesting through effective communication and horizontal social interactions (Imam Mukti, 2022). Horizontal social relationships, characterized by equality and reciprocity, play a crucial role in establishing a sense of solidarity and trust within the community. Informal relationships typically begin within the family unit and extend outward into broader societal interactions, where individuals become acquainted with both immediate and extended social circles. These initial interactions form the foundation for individuals to learn and internalize social norms and values, shaping their behavior within group settings (Rahmat Kartolo, 2022).



Figure 4. The location of additional housing activities



Figure 5. The increase in housing activity follows the road network



Figure 6. Photos of changes to buildings for business/commercial activities



Figure 7. Photos of changes to buildings for business/commercial activities

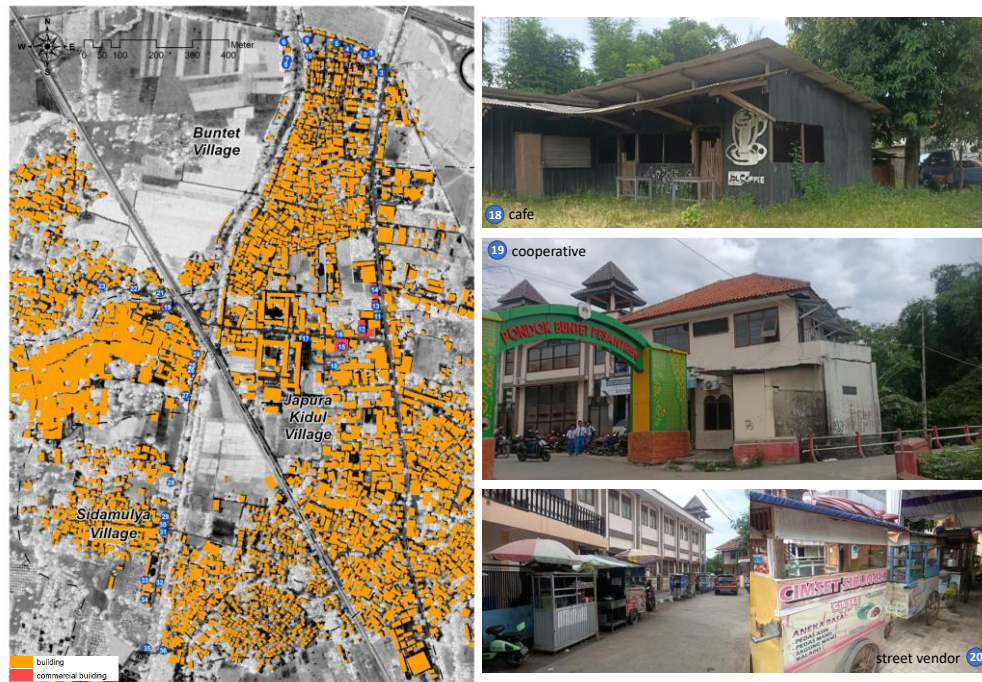


Figure 8. Photos of changes to buildings for business/commercial activities

### c) Development of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School

The Buntet Islamic Boarding School was founded with the goal of spreading Islam. Previously, when Sunan Gunungjati was king of the Cirebon Sultanate, Islam was spread within the palace. Along with the transfer of the king's power to the Dutch colonialists (VOC), the palace was banned as a place to study Islam. Thus, Kyai Muqoyim established the Buntet Islamic Boarding School to spread Islam and combat Dutch colonialism.

The Buntet Islamic Boarding School is currently located in the Manis Block, Mertapada Kulon Village, Astanajapura District, which is 14 kilometers from Cirebon City. Kyai Muqoyim's efforts to establish an Islamic boarding school were met with opposition and destruction by Dutch colonialists, forcing him to relocate and hide before eventually settling in Buntet. The original location was in the Kedungmalang Block in Buntet, then to Pesawahan in Lemahabang Village, Tuk in Karangsuwung, and Beji in Pemalang, Central Java, before returning to the current location in 1958. Kyiai Muqoyim's efforts in both physical and physical struggles have resulted in his current location. spiritual. His spiritual struggle was to fast for 12 months. He fasted in four stages: the first for the prosperity and safety of the Islamic boarding school; the second for the health of his descendants; the third for the students and their followers; and the fourth for his personal life (source of information: from interviews with the management of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School).

The periodization of Buntet Islamic Boarding School leadership from time to time can be seen in the following section:

- Mbah Muqoyim (1758-1785), the original founder of this Islamic boarding school, established the Buntet Islamic boarding school with the goal of spreading Islam and fighting Dutch colonialists.
- Kyai Muta'ad (1785-1852) ran an Islamic boarding school that provided in-depth religious instruction to its students.
- Kyai Abdul Jamil (1842-1919). Focus on the managerial and academic aspects of Islamic boarding school students in order to attract more students from various regions.
- Kyai Abbas (1879-1946). At the time, the Buntet Islamic boarding school began to take the lead in the social sector, specifically in providing food to the poor, as people in Indonesia were under pressure from the colonial countries of Japan and the Netherlands. Apart from that, during his leadership the Buntet Islamic Boarding School also started to build a school based on formal education, namely Madrasah Abnaul Wathan.
- Kyai Mustahdi Abbas (1946-75). The Buntet Islamic Boarding School focused on improving and developing the pre-existing madrasa system. In 1950, the Abnaul Wathan Madrasah system was converted to an Elementary School (MI), influenced by the NU organization's ideas. Then came the establishment of MTs.NU and MA.NU (middle and high school education).



- Kyai Mustamid Abbas (1975–1988) is the younger brother of Kyai Mustahdi Abbas, who was 60 years old when he was appointed leader of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School. This appointment was made because Kyai Mustahdi Abbas' son, Abbas Shobih, was still young.
- Kyai Abdullah Abbas (1988–2007). Kyai Mustamid founded MAN (Madrasah Aliyah), a formal educational institution under the Ministry of Religion. When Kyai Abdullah's leadership became involved in political activities, the Buntet Islamic Boarding School began to develop relationships with high-ranking bureaucrats. During this time, a new Islamic boarding school was built on the edge of the main Cirebon-Sindanglaut road, spanning two hectares.
- Kyai Nahduddin Royandi Abbas (2007–2018). Kyai Nahduddin began to focus Islamic boarding school activities on local social and economic issues by establishing Buntet Mart, a pharmacy, and a boarding school cooperative system. During this period, endogamous marriages emerged, namely marriages between close relatives.
- KH Adib Rofiuddin Izza (2018- present)

The change in leadership at the Buntet Islamic Boarding School has implications for growth in its surroundings (see figure 9). Following the development policy for Islamic boarding schools, the locations are widely distributed. Islamic boarding schools were founded to spread Islam, but they evolved as educational dynamics and government education policies changed. The Ministry of Religion classifies Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia into four groups: A, B, C, and D. Type A maintains traditional characteristics, with students living in dormitories near the kyai's residence. Type B is the traditional type that is taught other subjects at the madrasah. Type C teaches in public schools, including elementary, middle, and high school. Type D is a boarding school that combines traditional and general schools. Buntet Islamic Boarding School has developed not only Islamic boarding schools with traditional nuances but has also developed them to higher education levels, such as nursing academies and even university level high schools.

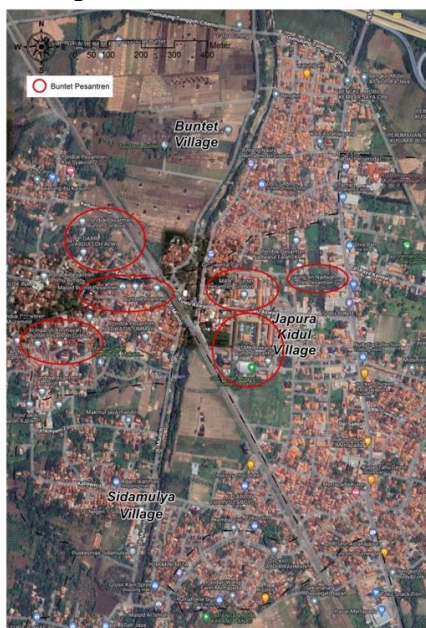


Figure 9. Distribution of Locations for Buntet Islamic Boarding School Activities.

#### d) Economic Growth of Village Communities

The socio-economic preconditions and potential for restructuring in rural areas can be very diverse, especially the specific modes of governance and practices for rural spatial restructuring (Zhang & Pan, 2020). Similarly, in the villages in the current study area, the Buntet Islamic Boarding School's educational activities resulted in the restructuring of rural space. According to (Wachter-Karpfinger & Wytrzens, 2024), 'rural' from a development perspective can be linked to two things: rural areas as a space for economic activity, or local communities as development agents. The rural business line has the potential to boost rural areas' economic development, resulting in a causal effect from the village development mechanism. The success of village communities in providing rural services supports to boost the production of local services. The Buntet Islamic Boarding School's activities significantly benefit the local community, including the expansion of community business activities

Empirical evidence suggests that people who behave for the sake of others and nature can also act for themselves; thus, it is reasonable to assume that a person with a pro-ecological and pro-social orientation can engage in self-care behavior (Knox, 2021). Kyai Muqoyim's actions at the beginning of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School were evidence of his concern for religion and humanity, as well as his pro-ecological and pro-social values. The consequences of his actions can be seen for more than 250 years, possibly even longer, owing to the existence of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School Room. His pro-ecological and pro-social actions have consequences for the economic growth of the village community where the Buntet Islamic Boarding School is located.

#### **e) Space Penetration of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School**

The terms "penetration" and "space penetration" refer to the act of entering or passing through a space. Buntet Islamic Boarding School activities are undergoing a penetration process, with Islamic boarding school activities being identified as expanding into rural areas. Penetration occurs gradually and evolves over time. The existence of a strong memory of the past, as well as a process of adaptation to changes over time, fueled the over 250-year evolutionary process. These two findings came from interviews with traders and students who were impressed with the founder of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School, Sunan Gunungjati. Meanwhile, the adaptation process is driven by Islamic boarding school leaders' policies of adhering to Islamic boarding school development policies.

#### **f) Past Memories**

Memory is the collection of past experiences that have been (re)articulated in current locations. Individual, familial, and collective practices, traditions, and narratives can all help to shape one's identity. Everyday objects (Owen 2021), experiences and practices, and 'memorable' events all influence memory. Memories can be conscious, subconscious, or unconscious, with varying degrees of determination and negotiability, or they can be embodied psychological affective traces that emerge in unexpected ways. Memory processes distinguish between declarative memory, which includes semantic memory of what is remembered and episodic memory of autobiographical experiences, and procedural memory of implicit and routine activities; each of these types of memory contributes to different types of place attachment (Lewicka, 2014). Situated daily experiences and routine activities, which form memories, are critical to the formation of personal, collective, and place identities; similarly, individual and collective memories generate narratives and basic attachments to locations. Memory works through connection, which is a part of our everyday lives, where we accumulate experiences, live relationally, and create meaning. Similarly, the Buntet Islamic Boarding School fosters strong memories of the past in students and surrounding residents, as they stated during interviews.

Memories emerge as a result of physiological-psychological-emotional-affective responses triggered in the human body-mind by specific locations, material artifacts, sounds, smells, and practices. The body is both intrinsic to memory accumulation (Ahmed 2004) and the site of performative memory and remembering (Griffiths 2021). Thus, bodily (auto)biographical and related emotional and affective experiences, beliefs, and worldviews are central to both positive and negative memories, as well as their relationships to place and community. Memories play an important role in the mutually produced spatial and temporal elements of place identity, as well as one's sense of place and belonging in a specific location. Personal and collective memories are part of the 'affective circuits' found in everyday landscapes and places to meaningfully interpret past and present experiences and orient oneself for the future. Collective memory reflects and creates imaginative geographies while also shaping individual understandings of one's place in the world (Said 2000), which is especially relevant for place attachment. The Buntet Islamic Boarding School leaves a lasting impression on its students, as it provides an ideal environment for learning. Aside from that, this area is home to the descendants of Kyai Muqoyim, the original founder of the Islamic boarding school, which triggers psychological and emotional memories of the past.

#### **g) Adaptation**

Understanding people's lives and histories requires an understanding of space (Knox, 2021). Sociologist Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991) has described the 'production of space' as a conglomeration of abstract material objects within them, with the 'social space' created as human activity unfolds through experience, cognition, and imagination. Whitridge (Knox, 2021) acknowledges that there is an "imaginative place-world that is completely separate from landscapes, bodies, and real measurable things, but also no material world that is not completely invested with significance as a prerequisite of human thought and reasoning, a kind of social substance articulated in a culture through diverse ways of knowing and diverse forms of expression."

All possess implications that have been assigned, maintained, and reconstituted over time by the people who live there, their daily practices, and their interactions with material objects. Similarly,

the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area is an expression of the social and cultural substance created by its residents, particularly the Kyai-kyai who run the Islamic boarding school and their descendants who live there. The Buntet Islamic Boarding School area experiences an imaginative and adaptive process in order to maintain the existence of Islamic boarding schools by developing variations in education such as nursing, workshops, and universities. This process evolved over a long period of time, specifically over 250 years, leading to what it is today. Spatial penetration occurs when Islamic boarding school activities penetrate rural spaces to the point where agricultural activities and farming communities are barely visible, with Islamic boarding school educational activities and students dominating.

## Conclusions

The penetration of space in the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area occurs in an evolutionary manner, as evidenced by the morphological process of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School area as a result of the concentration of buildings that follow the Islamic boarding school's location. This morphological process contains symbolic content from the Buntet Islamic Boarding School entity, specifically the Kyai and their descendants. This process lasted over 250 years, and the phenomenon that occurred spread to the core of the Islamic boarding school building. The new buildings that grew from the policy of increasing types of activities other than Islamic boarding schools, such as nursing, health, high schools, and others, were followed by business activities and even street vendors as a consequence of the agglomeration of Islamic boarding school activities.

Space penetration occurs as a result of the founding figures and Sunan Gunungjati's strong past memories. This figure is created from the living spaces of clerics and their descendants, so that the memory of the past becomes strong, allowing space penetration. Aside from that, adaptations made by Islamic boarding school leaders to increase activities result in penetration of the Buntet Islamic Boarding School space.

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