

The Village Landscape of Ubud, Bali: Between Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Sustainability

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Article Info

Received on
10 May 2024
Revised on
27 September 2024
Accepted on
17 February 2025

Keywords

Village Landscape,
Heritage,
Cultural Tourism,
Sustainability
DOI:

<http://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v40i1.2867>



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Abstract

The unitary region of Ubud, Bali, is well-known for its unique physical and cultural landscape. Like other communities in South Bali, Ubud is a legacy of a traditional village known as *desa pekraman*. In terms of village environmental management, empirically inherited sociocultural norms are well-preserved. The central crossroad of the *catus patha* pattern is thought to serve both a religious and mystical purpose, in addition to functioning as a regional hub. The village-level implementation of the concept of the three causes of virtue (*tri hita karana*) and the religious concept of the nine land value hierarchies (*sanga mandala*) in residential units are ongoing examples of local wisdom in response to the development of tourism culture and the demands of international tourist destinations. The growth of tourism in Ubud, on the other hand, has transformed traditional patterns and integrated new cultures into the traditional ones. This transformation raises questions about the long-term viability of Ubud's traditional practices in the context new tourism economy. To what extent can Bali's culture survive as a tourist attraction? Through observation and literature studies, the landscape and environment of Ubud Village, as well as the development of environmental forms that occur due to the embodiment of the concept of local wisdom and the efforts made, will be described in anticipation of the development of cultural tourism areas. The significance of the village landscape and its application to the village environment are all explained in this essay. The article then examines Ubud Village's current condition of development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ubud is a village settlement located within the administrative area of Ubud District, known as *kecamatan*, which is one of seven sub-districts in Bali's Gianyar Regency. Ubud serves as the hub of the Ubud tourism area, which includes three regencies: Ubud District, Tegalalang District, and Payangan District. Based on the zonation of this tourism area, Ubud is a sub-district town with no official borders. The term 'town' refers to the built up territory between Peliatan Village and Petulu Village within the Ubud sub-district. Other villages are located in the developed areas surrounding it. The region spans 7,120 hectares and ranges from 100 to 730 meters above sea level [1].

The development of the Ubud Village landscape and its role as a tourist destination has accelerated in recent years [2]. In terms of both quality and quantity, the distribution of

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tourism could be more spontaneous and organized, considering the number of tourists and tourism support facilities available. These improvements and changes have not only increased public appreciation for the tourism industry but also spurred socioeconomic and sociocultural phenomena in areas where Balinese cultural activities are prominent.

As we all know, tourism is the temporary migration of people to tourist destinations outside their regular employment and residence. In this case, activities are carried out while staying at tourist destinations, which provide the necessary amenities [3]. The issue of suitable planning patterns and strategies for the current expansion has local, national, and even global implications. Numerous local and regional governments recognize the significance of tourism for long-term economic growth and are attempting to increase expected returns. Global tourism activities are dominated by the migration of tourists between nations [4].

Nonetheless, apart from the economic impact of tourism activities, which provide fundamental support through increased regional income, tourism also causes a variety of positive and negative socio-cultural impacts, as well as changes to the village landscape, particularly in the naturally built physical environment. The development of the tourism industry in Ubud has a direct impact, which can be seen in the increasing numbers of land use change from agriculture to tourism facilities such as hotels, restaurants, villas, and bars [5]. In this context, the village landscape represents how the Ubud landscape has evolved and changed in line with tourism [6]. These developments mirror the community's diversified socioeconomic activities, which must be accommodated through comprehensive and coordinated spatial planning. This process begins with the most basic housing environment and extends to the spatial arrangement of the built environment in Ubud village.

Ubud is known for its natural scenery and traditional architecture centered around villages, yet it is increasingly being 'pushed' to transform into a tourist-oriented urban development environment. This transformation is considered 'forced' because indigenous knowledge is still utilized, and the spatial layout of settlements is retained. The Ubud dwelling environment of the village reflects the philosophical concept of the three causes of virtue (*tri hita karana*), the religious concept of nine land value tiers (*sanga mandala*), and traditional anthropometry (*tri angga*) [7]. The 'changing-customizing' process introduces new functionalities.

This essay will examine the impact of tourist development on Ubud's cultural landscape, as well as the philosophy that will shape Ubud's future tourism development. A comprehensive analysis of the impact of tourism on Ubud's cultural landscape can help identify areas where current practices fall short and uncover opportunities for sustainable development. What sustainable models of tourism emphasize cultural preservation? For instance, cultural tourism programs engage local artists and craftspeople without commodifying traditions. Based on previous studies, this essay will explore the current state of tourist development in Ubud and the concept of sustainability, which is crucial in tourism development. As a result, Ubud maintains the philosophical notion of traditional Balinese architecture, which is rich in efforts to balance the environment through sustainable regional spatial planning for tourism development. It is regarded as a legacy that should be treasured and conserved. The following discussion will demonstrate how this can be achieved.

2. METHODS

The study was conducted in Ubud Village, one of Bali's seven sub-districts in Gianyar Regency. This study requires qualitative and quantitative information using a research approach based on qualitative methodologies. The research focuses on exploring the lived experiences of local communities affected by tourism. The research study used a descriptive exploratory method, categorizing the investigation and evaluation as a non-experimental

phenomenon [8]. The context has an essential part in this phenomenon [9]. The research conducted long-term fieldwork in a specific location, immersing in the community to understand the cultural impacts of tourism

[10] defines primary data collection as observation, interviews, documentation, and triangulation. This study used participant observation, interviews, and daily interactions with community members to gain insights into how tourism affects cultural traditions, identity, and practices. The practice of presenting data analysis results with narrative and descriptive explanations alongside visuals or photographs to clarify the data is known as data visualization. The study aims to identify patterns of cultural change, adaptation, or resistance in response to tourism development.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *The Landscape of Ubud: the Cultural Life of Interior Bali*

Ubud Village had a population of 25,694 people in 2010, with the majority living in the centre and surrounding districts [1]. According to their sociocultural norms, most of Ubud Village's people are Hindu. Balinese culture, which derives its religious, communal, and artistic values from Hinduism, links the Balinese, especially the residents of Ubud. Hinduism is the highest priority for all Balinese Hindu community activities and a key source of artistic inspiration for cultural dynamics such as dancing, carving, painting, percussion, and architectural art. It also promotes a variety of Vedic-based Hindu rites (*yadnya*). This ritual sets itself apart from other areas that use *desa mawa cara* customs [11]. This concept depicts how each community conducts ceremonies based on geography, location, and occasion. Ubud's devotional practices (*yadnya*) are highly intense. Roads and bigger public spaces are regularly used for ceremonies such as cremation rites (*Palebonan/Ngaben*) (Figure 1) and sanctification, called *melasti* to springs or sea.



Figure 1. 'Bade' and 'Ox', Palebon Ceremonial Facilities in Ubud
[Source: doc. 2008]

Ubud residents' living systems can generally be classified into two patterns:

1. The clan-nation kinship system.

In the context of Hinduism, which is prevalent in Ubud Village, it reflects social stratification (*catur wangsa-catur warna*). This system indirectly influences the spatial structure of human settlements. Within the philosophical context of the settlement, land use is categorized as

follows: 'grya' for the brahmana clan, 'puri or jero' for the *ksatrya* clan, and 'umah or paumahan' for the *sudra* or *wesya*.

2. The social system

Specifically the social unit, is based on the village's customary territorial unit (*desa adat* and *banjar adat*), along with the accompanying rules/management and customary law instruments a.k.a *awig-awig* [12].

A. Village Environment; Sociocultural

As is generally known, the environmental pattern of Ubud's settlements is primarily based on the traditional village pattern, which reflect the community's lifestyle and the actual conditions on the ground. According to Alit [13], villages in Bali continue to serve as a hubs for community life, governed by laws that apply to the entire community and are defined by physical borders. The village chief administers rights, obligations, and sanctions within village institutions. Villages in Bali are composed of a community unified in a traditional unit known as the *Desa Adat* (Traditional Village). The people's social life in a traditional village is closely tied to religion (Hinduism), expressed in religious activities and ceremonies related to grief. Physically, the village pattern consists of *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan*. *Parahyangan* is designated for shrines, *pawongan* is allocated for farming and gardening within specific geographical boundaries, and *palemahan* is designed for farming and gardening within particular geographical limits [14].

Several factors determine village patterns in Bali, according to Gelebet [15]. One such factor is ritual value, where the sacred zone is traditionally located in the eastern (*kangin*) direction toward the sun. The values associated with the mountains (*kaja*) and the sea (*kelod*) are considered to be lower based on natural conditions and potential (Figure 2).

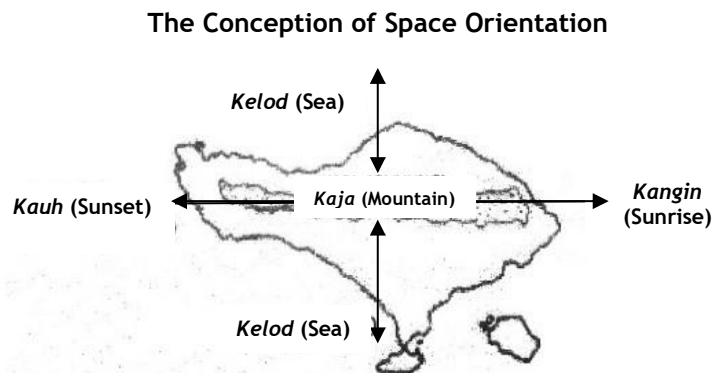


Figure 2. The Concept of Space Orientation in Bali
[Source: Gelebet, 1986]

Ubud's settlement pattern, as a traditional village, mirrors a sacred causeway (*catus patha/ pempatan agung*), particularly in the layout of the major road that runs through the village, both east-west and north-south, creating a crossroads at the village center. The plots surrounding the *catus patha* are supported by vacant known as *karang embang*, and there is an open space (*windu-natah*) on the edges of the hamlet to promote social solidarity.

The Ubud Royal Palace occupies the northeast zone (*kaja kangin*) in the *catus patha*, serving as the environmental center. Community halls, including *bale banjar* or *wantilan*, are located in the northwest zone (*kaja kauh*), while the Ubud Market is in the southeast zone (*kelod kangin*). The Kelurahan Office is positioned in the southwest zone (*kelod kauh*).

(Figure 3). The cemetery, known as *setra*, is located in a low-value area to the south (*kelod*) of the village [16].

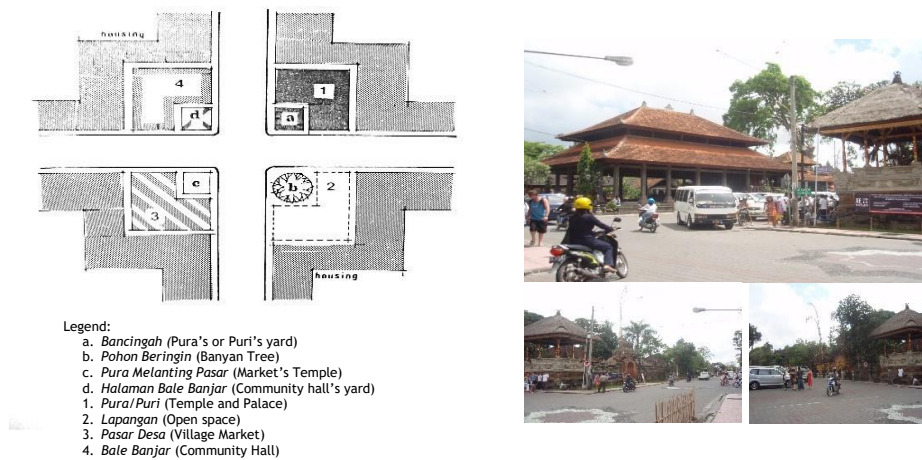


Figure 3. *Catus Patha* Pattern (left) and Main Cross Road of Ubud (right)
[Source: [17] (left)]

B. Housing Environment; Cultural heritage

The yard of the house (Figure 4), like most village settlements in Bali, follows the *sanga mandala* design, which creates a complex spatial arrangement with nine fields. The high-value (primary) zone is located in the northeast (*kaja kangin*), with pavilions (*bale meten* or *bale daja*) in the north (*kaja*), the living room (*bale dangin*) in the east (*kangin*), and the dining room (*bale dauh*) in the west (*kauh*). The *natah*, the courtyard, is part of the processional open space leading to the family temple (*sanggah*). The transitional area (*lebuh*) is in front of the yard's entrance or gate, called *angkul-angkul* or *kori*. The *lebuh* area also includes the back of the yard, considered part of the unoccupied space (*karang bengang-teba*). This area can be used to expand the yard and serve as part of the village's outskirts.

Natah manifests a classic philosophical concept that represents the union of heaven (*purusha*), symbolizing men, and earth (*pradana*), symbolizing women, in a traditional Balinese house [18]. The names of the inner zones and building are derived from *natah*, according to the direction of the wind. The purpose of *natah* is to facilitate ceremonial action related to environmental stewardship (*butha yadnya -mecaru*) and humanitarian rites such as *manusa yadnya* including *mabyakala* and marriage, as well as *pitra yadnya* (the process of cleaning the human body and soul) [19].

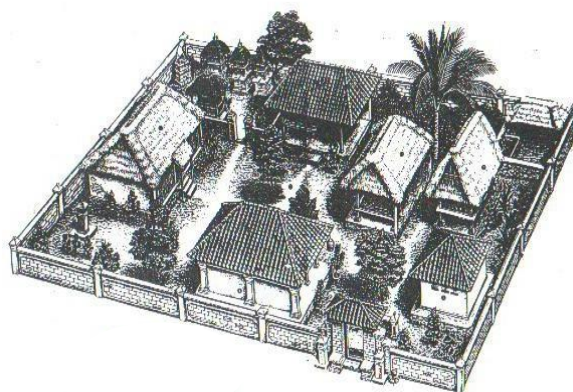


Figure 4. The Perspective of the 'Umah' yard
[Source: Encyclopedia: Indonesian Heritage (1996)]

The space's function determines the building's size and shape, serving as a tool for expressing spatial dimensions. The yard functions as a living place and is important in traditional (Balinese) spatial planning. The primary dimensions are the homeowner's limbs. The basic philosophy is summarized as follows.

C. Housing Concept; *Manik ring Cecupu*

According to Hindu mythology, all beings have been allotted to their separate realms. Since all living things exist in perfect harmony with their surroundings, organisms and their environments can be identified and defined. Equal elements in nature (*bhuana agung*) and humans (*bhuana alit*) become fundamental components as a result of the penetration of the unitary substance of God (*Hyang Widhi*) into the two worlds in the form of *atma*, *prana*, and *sarira* [20]. As a result, this concept is known as *tri hita karana*. In addition to their commonalities, the constituents of *bhuana alit* and *bhuana agung* have opposites. First, there is a difference in scale ('narrow' with 'big' / 'small' versus 'large'), followed by difference in function. The 'content' is *bhuana alit*, while the 'container' is *bhuana agung*. God's creations are genuinely harmonious and matchless when the contents and containers are combined. Examples include fish, water, eels, dirt, birds, space, primates and forests/trees.

The most important or prominent link is between the fetus (*manik*) and the mother's womb (*cecupu*), symbolizing the matchless harmony between the contents and the vessel of *Hyang Widhi's* creation. These components are known as *bhuana agung* and *bhuana alit* in *dharma* and Balinese culture [21].

As intellectual beings, humans cultivate nature to meet their *triguna* (*satwam*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) needs. As highly developed social beings, they create separate organizations to fulfill these needs. As they travel through life, humans build specific sites for their activities, such as residences, communities, and villages. They construct artificial containers based on their needs while absorbing philosophical conceptions representing natural containers [22].

It is expected that, as its contents, this artificial container will create a sense of happiness and foster a harmonious relationship with the human self. Thus, the three elements of *atma*, *prana*, and *sarira* have been combined within the container. Harmony between humans and their artificial containers can also be understood as a connection between the contents and the container-the embryo in the uterus (*manik ring cecupu*).

D. Settlement Philosophy; *Tri Angga*

Bhuwana alit comprises three parts: the feet, the body, and the head. The structure is divided into '*bhur*, *bhuah*, and *swah*' (*tri loka*), representing the lower, intermediate, and higher worlds in *bhuwana agung*. It is easy to perceive contempt in the human body-below (legs), the middle (torso), and the essential part at the top (head); this is known as the *tri angga* concept.

The *tri angga* is represented in architecture as follows: the upper/main roof of the *angga* represents the head, the body/space represents the middle *angga*, and the foundation/floor (*bataran*) represents the feet (*nista angga*) (Figure 5). This representation is not limited to just one building (*awungkul*) but extends to large parts of the structure. Balinese foundations and columns are often curved, with proportionate heads, bodies, and legs [21].

Traditional dwellings can also have different head-and-body division, such as the feet, body, and head [23]. Traditional structures are considered living entities with legs, a body, and a head. It is also believed to possess consciousness and energy (*atma*) as a living entity. To be considered truth alive, it must undergo the religious process of becoming a living being (*pengurip*) [22].

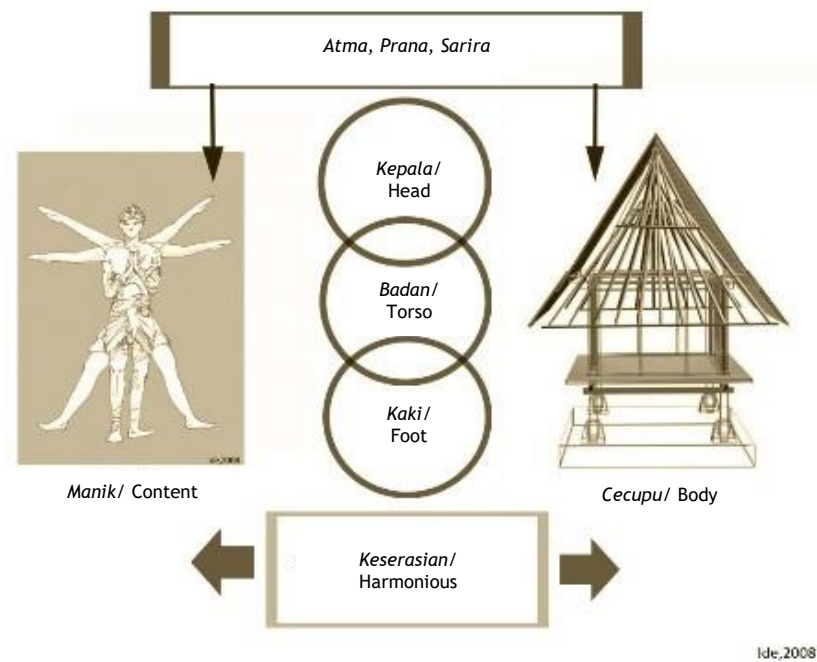


Figure 5. The *Tri Angga* Transformation Concept, in a Traditional Balinese Building
[Source: Idedhyana (2011)]

3.2. Ubud in Tourism Economy

Ubud's popularity as a tourist destination has been primarily influenced by its natural features, including the village scenery and the vibrant local (Balinese) culture, which remains alive and well. This condition is reflected in the area's development, characterized by the construction of tourism facilities, such as hotels and accommodations, which tend to develop along riverbanks, and trade facilities (art shops), which tend to develop in a band pattern along the major road (Figure 6). Furthermore, developing these facilities positively impacts other sectors, such as the industrial sector, which spreads sporadically in residential areas. Based on specific criteria, these can be classified as home, minor, or medium industries.



Figure 6. Angle of tourism support facilities.
[Source: doc. 2021]

Ubud Landscape Village generally expands tourism-related economic sectors, including agriculture (terraced rice fields), trade (hotels and restaurants), transportation/communication, and other tourism-related support services. Tourism-related economic

activities continue to be concentrated in Ubud Village and its surroundings. However, this issue has now begun to spread to neighboring settlements.

Although it is widely known that tourism operations generate financial benefits through higher foreign exchange revenues, they also result in various positive and negative socio-cultural effects and environmental phenomena. Social phenomena that positively impact the local population, such as 'euphoria' or a desire to support tourism expansion, often have negative environmental consequences (Figure 7). These consequences arise because opening new areas with new uses stimulates direct or indirect efforts to exploit natural resources to meet the needs of these functions, driven by profit (economic dimension). There are specific cases where the expansion of tourist attractions leads to adverse environmental impacts, such as pollution, contamination, and a decline in the aesthetic appeal of landscapes. As a result of certain events and situations, the local community has developed apathy and a lack of support for tourism in the area. Visitors, in turn, begin to feel less confident and at ease in location psychologically.



Figure 7. Visual view/ landscape that occurs

Indeed, tourism activities often focus solely on exploiting and heavily relying on environmental assets as tourist attractions, particularly unique natural resources. However, excessive exploitation can lead to unfavorable effects. The growth of tourism is a 'discourse between a gift and a burden' for the local community to understand.

As a "gift" the tourism business is a valuable foreign income source. In an increasing number of locations, the contribution of the tourist sector exceeds that of other sectors year after year. Since the emergence of the global oil crisis, followed by a worldwide economic recession that resulted in a drastic decrease in state/regional foreign exchange earnings, tourism development has been increasingly pushed toward an approach that views tourism potential as an economic commodity. As a commodity, tourism has a long supply chain and can support other economic sectors. It will absorb several employees, increase employment prospects, and improve welfare distribution in the neighboring community. As a 'burden' how can tourism development plans be expected to promote the community's economic well-being and benefit the long-term preservation of the natural and socio-cultural environment by utilizing the community's 'local knowledge'? Policymakers need a financial perspective interwoven with the environment in tourism planning and development. Tourism sector development expectations and reality demand sensible and balanced development planning and strategies.

3.3 Village Landscape and Tourism District of Ubud

Ubud has been a popular tourist destination, particularly for art and culture enthusiasts, since the arrival of European painters such as Hans Snell, Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet, and

Antonio Blanco in the 1930s [25]. Originally a traditional village, like the other villages in South Bali, Ubud's artistic and cultural potential has now 'accommodated' an additional role as a tourism destination focused on Balinese culture. In the name of the 'gift' of economic progress aimed at increasing development and prosperity, tourism activities have significantly impacted Ubud, transforming it into a city. Despite its local origins, Ubud is now a 'lucky' city-global and international in scope! Nevertheless, is this condition a 'weight' for Ubud?

Ubud is defined as a diverse tourism area from a tourism development perspective. It is a developed region with mixed, open-type characteristics that allow local community participation. However, this participation must be monitored, as it has the potential to be sporadic or spontaneous, which could lead to the creation of a contained enclave. In this sense, there are areas tourism development is extensive and tends to be exclusive.

Indeed, it is believed that the economic and welfare system, originally founded on the principle of kinship, has evolved toward a more individualistic consumerism. This shift has been driven by the dominance of the business sector, particularly tourism, and the infiltration of the concept of dense housing and built environment, including non-residential or commercial buildings. The development of commercial properties in residential areas and yards is beginning to challenge the established norms. The growth of *karang bengang* on the village's outskirts, similar to what has happened at the village's physical boundaries, has piqued the interest of wealthy individuals (Figure 8). However, this development did not allow population expansion towards the village's interior.



Figure 8. Hotel on a cliffside landscape

There are now opportunities to exploit the remaining unexplored terrain-areas such as *telajakan*, *natah*, and guess-to be developed into housing and commercial spaces. These developments may intentionally or unintentionally alter existing conceptions of the land. While this condition is undeniable, the strong philosophy and worldview of the Ubud people, rooted in their culture and customs, remain the primary drivers of Ubud's identity. This philosophy ensures the continued existence of Ubud as a built environment and a way of life (*adati*), reflected in both its village and architectural landscapes, including settlements and housing units governed by informal rules (*awig-awig*), customs (*dresta*), and agreement.

The expansion of the territory surrounding the capital reflects the development of social, economic, and cultural activities in the regional setting [26]. Urban areas are becoming increasingly distinct. This development is driven by the contribution of traditional space to Ubud's contemporary existence, particularly in residential activities, welfare institutions and services, and economic and recreational services. It is manifested through the layout of land allocation, the harmony between designations and functions, and the distances/dimensions between these designations, which continue to follow the empirical concept of custom (Figure 9). This begins with the placement pattern of 'additional' functions, such as tourist accommodation and dwellings, alongside the primary function of traditional community housing.



Figure 9. One of the 'Pension/ Homestay' in the community house

The buildings that characterize Hindu-inspired culture in Ubud Village include the Ubud Royal Palace, Campuhan Temple, Dalem Puri Temple, and other landmarks. These buildings represent the Hindu-influenced cultural manifestation in Ubud. The components of these buildings mark the area's initial location of cultural development, as they are situated right at the *catus patha* section-serving as the center of the area and a landmark with both sacred and profane functions. These components are preserved and maintained over time. The structure's elements in everyday life align with the holy processions or *yadnya*, creating a defined path or route (Figure 10). Thus, Ubud is a tourism region that preserves local culture by safeguarding the traditional knowledge of indigenous village communities while representing city life through tourism activities (Figure 11).



Figure 10. Naga Banda-Attributes in the 'Palebonan,' the cremation procession
[Source: doc. 2008]



Figure 11. Ubud in 2008 (left), and present (2022) (right)

4. CONCLUSION

The “freedom of sense of space” is a realization that is transformed into environmentally appropriate spatial patterns. The hamlet in Ubud’s tourist region showcases a diverse pattern of village landscapes and remarkably heterogeneous settlements that integrate various welfare development interests into the traditional settlement setting while preserving existing local wisdom concepts (*manik ring cecupu*; cosmic equilibrium). Understanding that a structure is a residential area with a local cultural identity helps balance the building (*lingga-yoni/ purusa-predana* Concept; Earth-Heaven). The enchantment of a natural landscape, progression, and direction are guiding factors in spatial planning based on this concept. (*nyegara-gunung, ulu-teben*, Sea-Mountain, and Heaving Concept). “Dialogue with the entire cosmos,” by the sequence of their various orbits in the supernatural solar system, is the guiding orientation. (*surya-sewana*; a path from sunrise to sunset).

The plots of *karang embang* or *suwung* around *pempatan agung*, supported by *karang embang* in the village and *karang bengang* on the perimeter of the countryside, serve as shared open spaces for community and solidarity. Following the equilibrium of the local “mandala” cosmos (*tri mandala*), the sum becomes *sanga mandala*, a strategy to govern the zoning system’s value. This regulation brings to life the philosophy of *tri hita karana*. As a result, Ubud today is not only a tourist attraction showcasing the exotic appeal of palace legong dancers, but it also embodies the harmonious union of the two “dollars”-balanced and integrated as one unit, the culture of the supernatural. Policymakers (government, third-party businesses, stakeholders, community leaders, and their communities) have declared Ubud Village a ‘National Strategic Tourism Zone.’ Ubud is a sustainable cultural tourism community.

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