

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11425177

# SPATIAL AUTHENTICITY, LEADERSHIP, AND TEMPORALITY: AN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE AKUR CIGUGUR SETTLEMENT

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Received: 11/11/2025

Accepted: 18/12/2025

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## ABSTRACT

*Traditional settlement planning often focuses on physical and technical aspects and frequently neglects the existential, cultural, and spiritual dimensions that fundamentally shape community identity. This study aims to examine the existential dimensions and spatial authenticity of the AKUR Cigugur Traditional Settlement by applying a Heideggerian phenomenological framework. Using a qualitative approach grounded in existential phenomenology, this research synthesizes field observations, in-depth interviews, and document studies to illuminate the lived experiences of the AKUR community and their adaptive strategies in sustaining their traditional environment. Findings demonstrate that leadership, belief systems, nationalism, and human values serve as core elements of spatial authenticity. The Pikukuh Tilu belief system emphasizes the ontological link between humans, nature, and the divine, while rituals such as Seren Taun serve as cultural mechanisms for preserving continuity amid change. Nationalism manifests through cultural inclusivity without undermining indigenous identity, allowing tradition and modernity to exist in dynamic balance. Temporality is shown to be essential: the past functions as inherited cultural memory, the present becomes a platform for actualization, and the future guarantees sustainability. This research proposes existential phenomenology as an ontological paradigm for settlement planning prioritizing lived human experience above technical instrumentalism. The study contributes to planning theory by offering a culturally embedded model of spatial practice and provides practical insights for policymakers aiming to design resilient, identity-rich, and ecologically integrated indigenous settlements.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Existential Phenomenology, Indigenous Settlements, Spatial Authenticity, Ontology of Planning, Process Innovation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Planning theory has evolved significantly over the decades, transitioning from rationalist paradigms focused on technical efficiency and scientific objectivity (Dadashpoor & Heydari, 2022) toward communicative approaches that emphasize dialogue, participation, and stakeholder negotiation (Rahmafritria *et al.*, 2020). However, both paradigms often fall short in addressing the experiential, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions that define traditional or indigenous settlements, particularly in the Global South. Critics have pointed out that technocratic and positivistic approaches tend to disregard the deep social constructs, cultural meanings, and ontological values embedded in traditional landscapes (Chandy, 2023; Hillier & Healey, 2014).

The emergence of communicative planning theory attempted to address these gaps by introducing participatory models, yet it too faces limitations especially when applied to culturally embedded contexts. It struggles to fully grasp the nuances of place identity, ritual practices, and metaphysical ties to land (Kaminer, 2024; Seamon, 2020). As a response to these shortcomings, planning scholarship has increasingly turned to interpretive frameworks rooted in human experience, notably phenomenology.

Phenomenology, originating from Edmund Husserl, emphasizes the importance of direct, lived experience, free from preconceived theoretical constructs (Alexander & Morton, 2007). Building on this, Martin Heidegger developed existential phenomenology, which shifts the focus from knowing the world to being in the world. Central to Heidegger's philosophy is the concept of Being-in-the-World, where human existence (or *Dasein*) is always already situated within a specific social, cultural, and spatial context (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger further introduces the notions of *Zuhandenes* space understood through practical engagement and *Vorhandenes* space observed as detached, objective reality. These concepts offer a rich interpretive lens through which traditional settlements can be understood not merely as physical configurations but as living environments charged with meaning and temporality (Dahlstrom, 2005; Hardiman, 2015a).

In indigenous settlements, spatial form is intimately linked with cosmological worldviews, collective rituals, and ecological ethics. Traditional architecture is not only shaped by climate and material availability but also by social norms, spiritual beliefs, and ancestral values (Norberg-

Schulz, 1985b). Similar insights have been identified globally, underscoring the universal relevance of existential spatiality. For example, in Scandinavia, the spatial practices of the Sámi people reflect a symbiotic relationship with seasonal rhythms, animal migration routes, and spiritual beliefs tied to the land; settlements are perceived not as fixed infrastructures but as fluid extensions of cultural cosmology (Lehtola, 2004). In both cases, space is not conceived as neutral or abstract but as a lived reality infused with memory, identity, and communal purpose (Seamon, 2018; C. J. Smith & Relph, 1978).

These international examples highlight that the disconnection between planning frameworks and local worldviews is not unique to Indonesia but is a broader concern in contexts where modernist planning tools fail to accommodate the richness of local ontology. What unites these diverse cases is a shared emphasis on dwelling not as physical shelter, but as a mode of meaningful existence (Heidegger & Hofstadter, 1971).

The AKUR Cigugur community in West Java, Indonesia, presents a compelling case for phenomenological inquiry. The community's customary values, rituals such as *Seren Taun*, and philosophy of *Pikukuh Tilu* articulate a worldview where space is not just inhabited but experienced existentially. Leadership within the community is not merely administrative but ontological it constitutes a mode of being that affirms cultural continuity, spiritual balance, and socio-ecological integration (Indratno *et al.*, 2022; Ma'mun, 2008).

This article positions existential phenomenology not just as a methodological choice but as an ontological foundation for culturally grounded planning. It argues for a shift away from instrumental rationality toward approaches that honor dwelling, temporality, and meaning-making (Norberg-Schulz, 1985a; Seamon, 2018). By engaging with the AKUR Cigugur community through the lens of *Dasein*, *Zuhandenes*, and *Vorhandenes*, this study aims to contribute a more human-centered model of settlement planning one that embraces the complexities of tradition, identity, and spatial authenticity.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method using a Heideggerian phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand human lived experience at a deep, ontological level of awareness (Qutoshi, 2018). In social research, phenomenology allows exploration of how individuals construct meaning from their experiences within the world (Tarozzi &

Mortari, 2010). Heidegger (1962) emphasizes that phenomenology is about “letting what is seen be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself,” so that a phenomenon is disclosed with authenticity through subjective meaning and lived temporality.

This study applies Heidegger’s existential phenomenology to explore the spatial experience and temporal continuity of the AKUR Cigugur community’s traditional settlement. The concept of Dasein, or being-in-the-world, is central, as human existence is always embedded within a specific socio-cultural and spatial environment (Dahlstrom, 2005; Williams, 2021). In this framework, a settlement is not simply a set of physical structures but a relational field where humans, nature, and meaning coexist.

To conceptualize how phenomena emerge and are experienced (Vorgriff), empirical findings were analyzed through the three core ontological categories in Heideggerian phenomenology: *Zuhandenes*, *Vorhandenes*, and *Dasein*. *Zuhandenes* captures the practical engagement with space how community members utilize, maintain, and ritualize spatial arrangements in daily life. *Vorhandenes* refers to the way the physical settlement is encountered as an object with symbolic and cultural significance. *Dasein* represents the existential dimension, in which rituals, memories, and spatial traditions are lived and reproduced through time

(Tarozzi & Mortari, 2010).

Temporality plays an essential role in this study, reflecting Heidegger’s notion that existence is always situated across a continuum of past, present, and future. In the AKUR community, time is not linear but cyclical and integrative rituals such as *Seren Taun*, along with daily spatial practices, embody cultural continuity by linking ancestral knowledge to present realities and future aspirations.

To explore these dimensions, the research employed a purposive sampling strategy, selecting individuals with strategic roles within the AKUR community. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Fieldwork was conducted between June 2021 and August 2022, including three intensive observation visits (February, April, and June 2022). A total of 14 informants were interviewed between March and July 2022. These included one *sesepuh* (elder), four *girang pangampih* (coordinators of wareh and functional domains), one *dewan panata ajaran* (customary doctrine advisor), one *panata hukum* (customary law advisor), one *panata pamarintahan* (customary governance advisor), three members of the *dewan panalinga* (customary central advisors), three ordinary community members, and one sub-district government official.

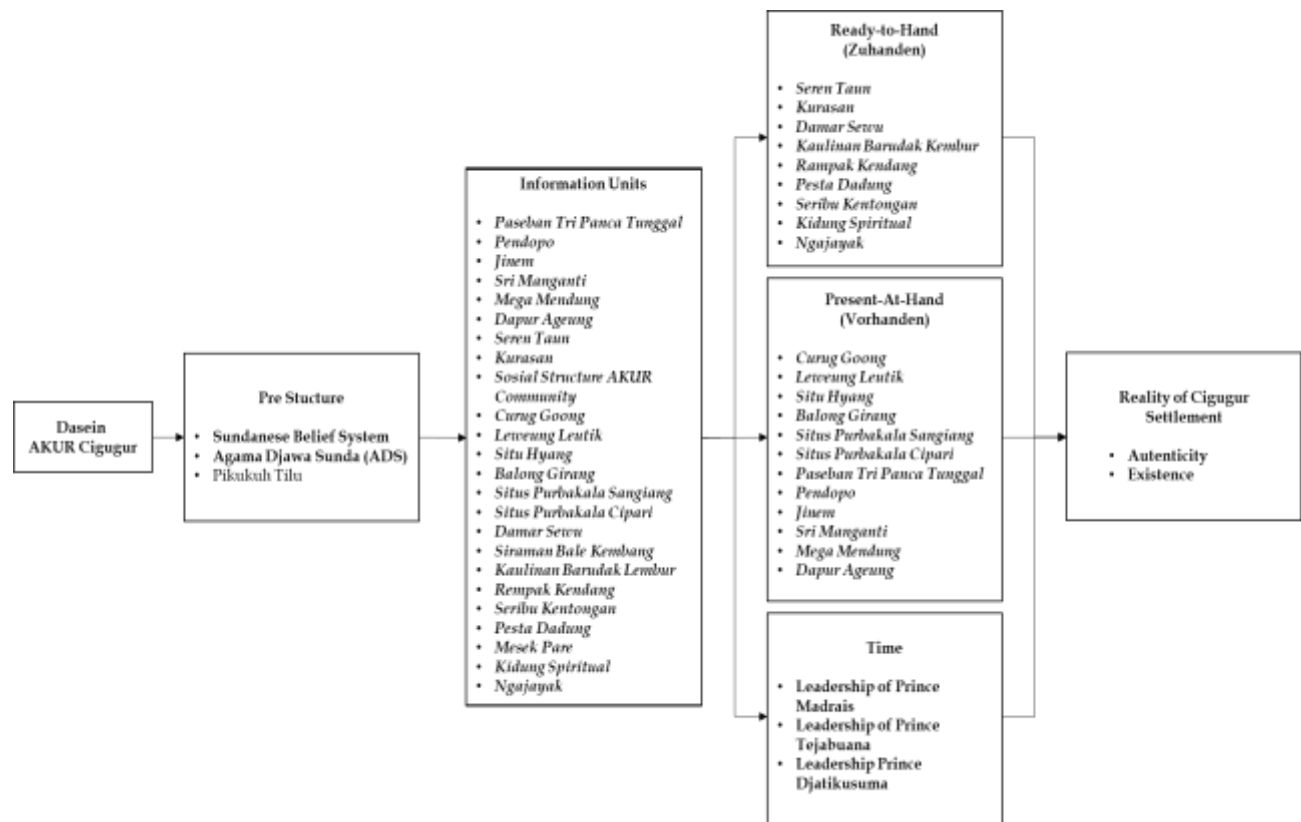


Figure 1: Research Mindset.

Interview questions addressed the meaning of space in everyday life, the symbolic role of ritual in preserving identity, and how cultural values are negotiated across generations. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed manually using a thematic coding approach. Themes were derived inductively, following phenomenological reduction and meaning condensation, which allowed categories to emerge organically from the respondents' narratives. To ensure analytical rigor, thematic interpretations were discussed with two local cultural experts for validation (member checking), and observations were cross-referenced with ritual documentation for consistency.

The study also incorporated archival and documentation analysis as a key method to interpret the continuity of tradition over time. From February to August 2022, historical manuscripts, community records, customary law documents, and multimedia recordings of previous rituals were examined to track the community's evolving interpretations of space, time, and identity. This historical corpus supported the phenomenological analysis by providing temporal depth and cultural context to spatial experiences, in line with Heidegger's notion of historicity and authentic temporality.

Together, these methodological strategies provide a layered and situated understanding of how the AKUR Cigugur community experiences and constructs meaning in their customary settlement. The findings aim not only to reveal the depth of cultural and spatial knowledge held by indigenous actors but also to contribute to broader theoretical discussions about phenomenology, planning, and the lived ontology of place.

### **2.1. Research Process**

This research was conducted in two sequential stages between June 2021 and August 2022, focusing exclusively on the central AKUR Cigugur community in West Java. Although the AKUR customary system spans multiple regional branches (*wareh*), the study deliberately concentrated on the Cigugur core to maintain cultural specificity and analytical consistency in interpreting spatial and ritual practices.

The first stage, carried out from June to December 2021, focused on preparatory data collection and conceptual framing. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to explore key concepts in Heideggerian phenomenology particularly *Being-in-the-World*, *Dasein*, spatial authenticity, and temporality as well as broader academic discussions on indigenous settlements and ritual systems. In

August 2021, exploratory field observations were conducted to assess the settlement's morphology, spatial usage, and patterns of social interaction in everyday life. Initial interviews with customary leaders and community members were held to surface foundational values, ritual cycles, and embedded socio-cultural norms in spatial organization.

The second stage, from January to August 2022, involved intensive fieldwork, combining participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and archival research. Field visits in February, April, and June 2022 documented how space was inhabited, ritualized, and socially negotiated in both communal and domestic settings. The observations revealed how spatial configurations reflected both practical function and symbolic meaning, consistent with the community's metaphysical worldview.

In-depth interviews were conducted between March and July 2022 with a total of fourteen respondents, selected using a purposive sampling strategy aligned with the AKUR community's internal leadership and governance structures. The respondents spanned diverse roles, age groups, and domains of responsibility, providing a comprehensive cross-section of indigenous spatial consciousness. The profile is summarized in Table 1.

Interview themes included the interpretation of space in daily activities, the symbolic role of rituals in preserving collective identity, and the negotiation of tradition and modernity. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using phenomenological reduction and hermeneutic interpretation techniques.

A pivotal aspect of the fieldwork was the ethnographic observation of the annual *Seren Taun* ritual, conducted from July 15 to 22, 2022. This multi-day ceremonial event was documented comprehensively, from preparatory phases to the peak of the ritual procession. The observation illuminated how temporality, spirituality, and collective memory are materialized through spatial and performative configurations, serving as a medium for transmitting cultural resilience across generations.

To enrich the temporal perspective, archival research was conducted from February to August 2022. The documentation included historical manuscripts, community records, customary law texts, and audiovisual materials from previous *Seren Taun* ceremonies. These sources offered longitudinal insight into how traditional spatial practices have been preserved, adapted, and recontextualized over time. Viewed through Heideggerian lenses of

temporality and historicity, the archival corpus provided a deeper understanding of how past and future are ontologically tethered in the AKUR community's experience of space and tradition.

**Table 1: Research Respondent.**

Respondent Category	Number of Respondents	Estimated Age Range	Main Interview Topics
Sesepuh (Elder)	1 person	> 90	Core community values, indigenous philosophy, and spiritual continuity.
Girang Pangampih (Coordinators of wareh and functional domains)	4 persons	50 - 67	Coordination roles in customary structure, manuscript preservation, domestic organization, and implementation of rituals.
Dewan Panata Ajaran (Advisor on customary doctrine)	1 person	49	Interpretation of spiritual teachings, value transmission, and cultural norms.
Panata Hukum (Advisor on customary law)	1 person	53	Customary legal system, dispute resolution, and relation to formal law.
Panata Pamarintahan (Advisor on governance affairs)	1 person	40	Customary institutional governance and coordination with formal state systems.
Dewan Panalinga (Central community advisors)	3 persons	70 - 80	Strategic cultural and spiritual insights, sociocultural functions, and community leadership.
Ordinary Community Members	3 persons	53 -68	Everyday spatial practices, ritual engagement, and collective identity.

## 2.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, drawing on the interpretive principles of Van Manen (2014) and grounded in Heidegger's ontological framework. This approach enabled a systematic interpretation of the AKUR community's lived experiences particularly their spatial practices, ritual meanings, and temporal consciousness by emphasizing how individuals and communities construct meaning through their Being-in-the-World.

The analytic process consisted of three interrelated stages: phenomenological reduction, hermeneutic interpretation, and phenomenological narrative construction. In the first stage, phenomenological reduction, the researcher engaged

in reflective bracketing to suspend preconceived assumptions and foreground the raw lived experiences as expressed in field data. Audio recordings, observation notes, interview transcripts, and archival materials were carefully read and coded inductively. These were categorized thematically using Heidegger's ontological categories of *Zuhandenes* (ready-to-hand, referring to space used practically in daily life), *Vorhandenes* (present-at-hand, space as observed and symbolically interpreted), and *Dasein* (existence as lived and temporally situated). This classification helped to illuminate how community members engage with space functionally, symbolically, and existentially.

The second stage, hermeneutic interpretation, involved deeper reading and rereading of emergent themes in dialogue with Heideggerian concepts of existence, Being-in-the-World, and temporality. At this level, the researcher interpreted how spatial arrangements, ritual actions, and oral testimonies reflect the community's ontological orientation how space becomes imbued with ancestral memory, spiritual resonance, and ethical obligation across time. This stage also involved cross-referencing field data with archival sources to trace the historical continuity and cultural adaptation of settlement practices.

The third stage, phenomenological narrative construction, synthesized the analytical insights into rich, descriptive accounts that express the AKUR community's ways of dwelling, remembering, and anticipating within their settlement. These narratives highlight how spatial experience is not only material but also moral, symbolic, and cosmologically ordered. Through storytelling, metaphors, and participant reflections, the findings articulate a lived ontology rooted in cyclical temporality and cultural resilience.

Importantly, the analysis was strengthened through triangulation strategies, including member checking with local cultural informants and peer debriefing with researchers familiar with Sundanese customary systems. These validation methods helped ensure that the interpretation remained grounded in the community's own epistemological worldview.

This hermeneutic phenomenological analysis demonstrates that the AKUR settlement is not merely a physical environment but a lived place a constellation of culture, spirituality, governance, and identity shaped by temporal depth and communal intention. Heidegger's phenomenology, particularly his focus on *Dasein* and temporality, provided a powerful lens to explore how indigenous

communities such as AKUR sustain cultural meaning amidst ongoing social and ecological transformation.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1. *Being-in-the-World (Dasein)*

The concept of Dasein, as introduced by Heidegger (1962), refers to the unique mode of human existence that is always already embedded within a specific spatial, temporal, and cultural context. In this framework, humans are not detached observers of the world but are fundamentally “being-in-the-world” actively engaging with their environment in ways that shape both identity and meaning.

In the context of the AKUR Cigugur community, Dasein is embodied through the lived experiences of individuals who continuously interact with their customary environment. This engagement is not limited to physical occupation of space but encompasses ritual practices, symbolic actions, and social relationships that are deeply rooted in ancestral values. For instance, daily interactions in communal spaces, participation in rituals such as Seren Taun, and adherence to the teachings of Prince Madrais illustrate how the community's identity is formed and sustained through spatial experience.

Such existential presence is also expressed through the ethical and spiritual orientation of the community, where individuals locate themselves within a cosmological worldview that integrates humanity, nature, and divinity. This reinforces the notion that settlement space in AKUR is not merely a physical setting but a lived, meaningful environment shaped by temporality, tradition, and ontological awareness (Norberg-Schulz, 1985b).

#### 3.2. *Sundanese Belief System*

Sundanese cosmology reflects the traditional understanding of the relationship between humans, nature, and the universe as a harmonious unity (Darsa, 2012). This view emphasizes the balance of coexistence with nature, making cultural and environmental conservation the main value (Herawati & Santoso, 2020; E. et al. Setiawan, 2018; Widianingsih & Prasetyo, 2021). In the book *Carita Parahyangan*, the concept of three universes, or three loka, is explained, namely swarga (the upper realm for gods and good spiritual beings), the earth (the middle realm for humans), and patala (the lower realm for creatures and evil spirits). In addition to the concept of Sundanese cosmology, there is the belief in the Sundanese Javanese Religion (ADS), which was founded by Prince Madrais, rooted in the struggle for national values, humanity, and

spirituality of the Kuningan people (Komarudin, 2017). Prince Madrais taught five main philosophical principles to his followers, **namely** 1) Percaya ka Gusti Sikang Sawiji-wiji (The One Godhead); 2) Ngaji Badan (introspection/retrospective); 3) Akur Rukun Jeung Sasama Bangsa (live in harmony with others); 4) Hirup Ulah Pisah ti Mufakat (prioritize deliberation for consensus); 5) Hirup Kudu Silih Tulungan (life must help each other) (Tendi, 2015).

Prince Madrais inspired the community through the teachings of Pikukuh Tilu (Ma'mun, 2008). Pikukuh Tilu is indeed the core of the teachings of the AKUR Cigugur Community, but there is a view that needs to be understood first before getting to know Pikukuh Tilu more deeply (Muttaqien, 2013). This view is the concept of the AKUR Community in knowing God, humans, and true humans. Pikukuh Tilu, as a guideline for achieving perfection in life, consists of three main things, namely 'ngaji badan,' 'tuhu mituhu kana tanah,' and 'madep ka ratu-raja 3-2-4-5 lilima 6' (Muttaqien, 2013). 'Ngaji badan' refers to an effort of self-introspection so that humans remain aware of their essence, as well as the existence of other entities in the universe that coexist with it (Ma'mun, 2008). Meanwhile, 'tuhu kana tanah' emphasizes the obligation to love and maintain the nation's identity as a form of human responsibility to the nation from which it originates. 'Madep ka ratu-raja 3-2-4-5 lilima 6,' refers to its average goal above 3, 2, 4, 5, and lilima 6, which means a) Ratu-raja 3: create, taste, and karsa, or “Sir, Feel, and Think”; b) Ratu-raja 2: the law of balance in life, or the existence of a pairing; c) Ratu-raja 4: the activity of a pair of hands and a pair of feet; d) Ratu-raja 5: called the five senses; e) Ratu-raja Lilima: the nature of the function of the senses means that although in the nature of our five senses we are the same, the characteristics of the nations are different from each other; f) Ratu-raja 6: the single form of the whole human being.

#### 3.3. *Present-at-Hand (Vorhanden)*

In Heideggerian phenomenology, *Vorhandenes*, or “present-at-hand,” refers to entities that are perceived as objectively existing in the world, yet are not immediately connected to human intentions or utilitarian functions (Heidegger, 1962). These entities are encountered not through active engagement, but through detached observation and contemplation. As such, they constitute the background of existence, becoming visible primarily when one assumes a reflective or theoretical stance (Dahlstrom, 2005; Okrent & Dreyfus, 1993).

Within the AKUR Cigugur community, the category of *Vorhandenes* encompasses a variety of

natural features such as rivers, hills, forests, climatic conditions, and notably, Mount Ciremai. While these elements are not engaged with on a daily functional basis, they carry deep symbolic and cultural resonance. For instance, Mount Ciremai is not cultivated or inhabited in the conventional sense, yet it is revered as a sacred landmark and spiritual axis within the community's cosmological worldview. It stands as a spatial marker of ancestral territory and is frequently invoked in oral histories, rituals, and religious narratives.

This orientation reflects a profound ontological relationship between the community and its natural surroundings. The environment is not regarded merely as a neutral backdrop but is understood as a spiritually infused reality that informs ethical behavior, ritual life, and spatial awareness. The reverence shown toward natural entities despite their limited functional use demonstrates an interpretive framework where nature is acknowledged as meaningful in itself, not solely as a resource (Hardiman, 2015a; Pallasmaa, 1996).

From a phenomenological standpoint, this aligns with Heidegger's distinction between *Zuhandenes* (ready-to-hand) and *Vorhandenes*. The latter emerges when the ordinary flow of practical action is

interrupted, prompting awareness of things as they are, free of immediate utility. In the AKUR context, this mode of relating to the environment reinforces the spiritual and temporal continuity of the community, wherein natural features are perceived as enduring witnesses of historical memory and cultural identity.

Thus, *Vorhandenes* within the AKUR settlement encapsulates both the physical presence of the natural world and its symbolic status as a site of ancestral memory and cosmological meaning. This understanding contributes to a more nuanced conception of indigenous spatial knowledge, where perception and reverence of the natural environment are integral to the ontological structure of place.

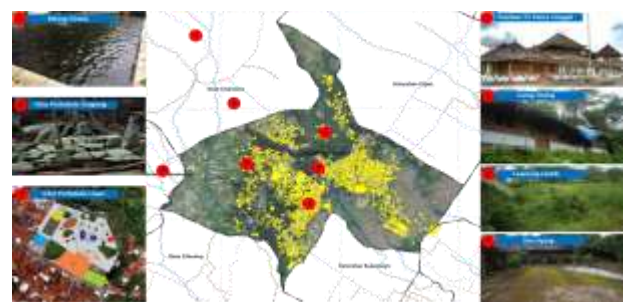








Figure 2: AKUR Cigugur's *Vorhandenes* Map.

Table 2: *Vorhandenes* in AKUR Cigugur.

Vorhandenes in AKUR Cigugur	Observation Results	Picture
Curug Goong	In <i>Curug Goong</i> , there was a phenomenon of stopping the eruption of Mount Ciremai, which was a manifestation of God's love for humans. The cessation of the eruption of Mount Ciremai was carried out by Prince Madrais and 200 of his followers. <i>Curug Goong</i> was once used as a family tomb for the AKUR community and is currently used as fertile agricultural land owned by the community (Hidayat & Marasabessy, 2017).	 Curug Goong
Leuweung Leutik	<i>Leuweung Leutik</i> is a sacred place for the AKUR community and was once the land of Prince Madrais, which was used as community agricultural land. This place should not be damaged, but in 2012, the local government created a 3.5-hectare city forest park. Currently, <i>Leuweung Leutik</i> is a water catchment area.	 Leuweung Leutik
Situ Hyang	<i>Situ Hyang</i> is a sacred place for the <i>dadung</i> party ritual and the <i>dadung</i> rope dance, which has the meaning of the importance of integrity and maintaining friendship between humans. The <i>dadung</i> party ritual is carried out by returning pests (rats, birds, and snails) to their habitat. This activity is meaningful to respect the lives of pests and ask that pests not return to the community's agricultural land (Alhamd, 2020).	 Ritual Place of <i>Dadung</i> Party Ceremony and Ritual Place of Disposal of Pests in <i>Situ Hyang</i>

Vorhandenes in AKUR Cigugur	Observation Results	Picture
Balong Girang	The spring and the Fish of the Gods, or <i>Balong Girang</i> , are one of the natural tourist attractions protected by the AKUR community. Water is one of the sources of human life, and the human form consists of water, fire, and wind. The Fish of the Gods is a tourist attraction as well as a witness to the formation of Cigugur Village. It was marked by the sudden discovery of water from within the earth, after Syekh Maulana Syarif Hidayatullah searched for a water source to perform ablution and ask for help from God.	 <p style="text-align: center;">Spring and Dewa Fish</p>
Sangiang Ancient Site	The <i>Sangiang</i> Ancient Site is one component of the AKUR community settlement system, which was previously used as a place of meditation by Prince Madrais. The Lingga Yoni and Nandi statues are artifacts found at the Sangiang Ancient Site.	 <p style="text-align: center;">Nandi and Lingga Yoni Statue</p>
Cipari Ancient Site	The Cipari Ancient Site is a cultural heritage area where megalithic objects such as terraced punden, stone chests, menhirs, bracelet meeting stones, dakons, stone axes, and others were found. The Cipari Ancient Site was discovered by Prince Djatikusuma in 1971, which signifies Prince Djatikusuma's great contribution to the development of science in Kuningan.	 <p style="text-align: center;">Cipari Ancient Site</p>
Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal	<i>Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal</i> is a sacred and central space for the AKUR Cigugur Community that depicts human values. There are Pendopo, Sri Manganti, Jinem, Mega Mendung, and Dapur Ageung rooms that have deep meanings in the process of human life.	 <p style="text-align: center;">Structure in Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal (Indratno <i>et al.</i>, 2020)</p>
Pendopo	<i>Pendopo</i> is a place to welcome guests, perform arts, and discuss activities in the paseban. In its meaning, the <i>Pendopo</i> space depicts a human condition that has been born in the realm of <i>Jinem</i> .	 <p style="text-align: center;">Paseban Pendopo Room</p>
Jinem	<i>Jinem</i> is a place for worship and community culture, such as praying together from various beliefs, and a place to celebrate Rama Sepuh's birthday. In its meaning, <i>Jinem</i> ( <i>Jinek/Panjinekan</i> ) is a place to strengthen the ego and human feelings based on human characteristics. There are symbols or characters of the 4 main elements, namely water, earth, wind, and fire, which are depicted in the Jinem room as a process of creation.	 <p style="text-align: center;">Jinem Room</p>

Vorhandenes in AKUR Cigugur	Observation Results	Picture
Sri Manganti	<p><i>Sri Manganti</i> is a room that functions as a place for discussion and internal meetings of the nuclear family. In addition, <i>Sri Mangantri</i> is often used as a place to receive guests in Paseban. <i>Sri Manganti</i> has a relationship with the <i>Pendopo</i>, <i>Jinem</i>, <i>Mega Mendung</i>, and <i>Dapur Ageung</i> rooms.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Sri Manganti Room</p>
Mega Mendung	<p><i>Mega Mendung</i> is a room that functions as a library and a place for deliberation. The elders hold deliberations in <i>Mega Mendung</i> to provide peace and solutions to problems. The <i>Mega Mendung</i> room is related to the <i>Pendopo</i>, <i>Jinem</i>, <i>Sri Manganti</i>, and <i>Dapur Ageung</i> rooms.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Mega Mendung Room</p>
Dapur Ageung	<p><i>Dapur Ageung</i> is a room that functions as a place for curation, or meditation, with a fire pit in the middle of the room. The fire pit is made of cement with four dragons in the four corners and a crown on top. It means that humans (crown) have the capacity to overcome the four elements of lust symbolized in earth, water, wind, and fire. <i>Dapur Ageung</i> has a relationship with the <i>Pendopo</i>, <i>Jinem</i>, <i>Mega Mendung</i>, and <i>Sri Manganti</i> rooms in the process of life to provide food.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Fireplace Stove in Dapur Ageung</p>

### 3.4. Ready-to-hand (Zuhaden)

In Heideggerian phenomenology, *Zuhandenes* (ready-to-hand) denotes tools, objects, and spaces that acquire meaning through their functional use in everyday life. These entities are not passively observed but are encountered through practical engagement, becoming integral to one's being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962). According to Heidegger, human existence is fundamentally oriented toward the world through action; thus, the significance of things arises not from abstract observation but from their embeddedness in purposeful activity (Hardiman, 2015b).

Within the context of the AKUR Cigugur community, *Zuhandenes* includes spatial, material, and symbolic components that are actively used in sustaining cultural, ritual, and social practices. These elements obtain their ontological significance through function in daily life and ceremonial expressions. Notable examples include the following

- **Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal:** This ceremonial structure functions as more than a physical building; it is the central site for communal decision-making, spiritual instruction, and cultural transmission. Its role is activated

through ritual gatherings and formal assemblies, thereby illustrating Heidegger's notion of ready-to-hand entities whose meaning is constituted through use.

- **Seren Taun Ceremony:** The annual *Seren Taun* ritual comprises a series of spatial and material arrangements, including sacred offerings, traditional musical instruments, ritual pathways, and performative acts. These components gain existential relevance only within the lived context of the ceremony, exemplifying *Zuhandenes* as tools that disclose their meaning through participatory engagement.
- **Kurasan:** The *Kurasan* a space or medium for ritual purification derives its significance not merely from physical form but from its function in facilitating spiritual cleansing and communal renewal. Its ontological status as ready-to-hand emerges from its role in structured ceremonial processes.
- **Customary Social Roles:** Although not material artifacts, roles such as *sesepuh* (elder), *girang pangampih* (customary coordinators), and other community functions serve as

institutional instruments through which cultural norms and social order are enacted. When these roles are performed in everyday contexts, they operate analogously to tools constituting a lived structure that organizes and sustains communal life.





These examples illustrate that Zuhandenes is not confined to tangible tools but encompasses all elements that acquire functional and existential meaning through human practice. The AKUR community's interaction with such elements underscores the phenomenological principle that

space and materiality are not neutral or passive but are animated by culturally embedded activities.

Through this lens, the built environment, ritual practices, and social organization of the AKUR settlement are not simply observed phenomena but are experienced as extensions of human intentionality and cultural continuity. The category of Zuhandenes thus provides a theoretical framework for understanding how space and objecthood are constituted through culturally grounded modes of dwelling.

**Table 3: Zuhandenes in AKUR Cigugur**

Zuhandenes in AKUR Cigugur	Observation Results	Picture
Seren Taun	<i>Seren Taun</i> is a traditional ceremony to commemorate the gratitude of the AKUR community to God for the gift of agricultural harvests, as well as an application of interaction between humans and nature. The Seren ceremony is identical to agricultural products because, since ancient times, Cigugur has been known as a producer of agricultural products. The series of Seren Taun activities is held in various locations, such as Situ Hyang as the location for the dadung party, Situ Paleben as the location for the raft competition, and Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal as the location where the Ngajayak process ends.	 Seren Taun
Kurasan	<i>Kurasan</i> is an activity of touching, draining (perfect sitting position with a sense of surrender), or meditating to get closer to God, and it is a complement to the teachings of Pikukuh Tilu. <i>Kurasan</i> is done twice a day (before going to bed and after waking up) in the <i>Dapur Ageung</i> room in the <i>Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal</i> . In <i>Kurasan</i> , a sense of feeling is practiced through breathing and self-reflection with the vision of those feelings while praying (Ma'mun, 2008).	-
Damar Sewu	<i>Damar Sewu</i> , or a thousand <i>Damar</i> , is the initial procession in the <i>Seren Taun</i> traditional ceremony held in front of the <i>Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal</i> . <i>Damar Sewu</i> begins with the lighting of a torch as a symbol of the start of the <i>Seren Taun</i> traditional ceremony series, which has the meaning of providing light to fellow creatures of God. The fire of the bamboo torch is channeled by horsemen towards a thousand <i>damar</i> along the four cardinal directions. <i>Damar Sewu</i> is held for 6 days as a symbol of the spirit that is passed down to each generation.	 Damar Sewu
Kaulinan Barudak Lembur	<i>Kaulinan Barudak Lembur</i> is a children's dance that depicts joy, togetherness, and the passion for playing traditional games. Traditional games, or <i>Kaulinan Barudak Lembur</i> , need to be preserved, such as <i>tokecang</i> , <i>oray-orayan</i> , <i>jaleuleu</i> , and singing regional songs.	 Kaulinan Barudak Lembur
Rampak Kendang	<i>Rampak Kendang</i> is one of the processions in the <i>Seren Taun</i> ceremony as a form of harmony between the AKUR community. <i>Rampak Kendang</i> is performed in the <i>Paseban</i> yard, where 10 people beat the <i>gendang</i> simultaneously. It delivers the meaning that differences do not hinder beautiful results if we unite (Caturwati <i>et al.</i> , 2020).	 Rampak Kendang

Zuhandenes in AKUR Cigugur	Observation Results	Picture
Dadung Party	<i>The Dadung Party/Festival</i> is one of the <i>Seren Taun</i> processions, which functions as a thanksgiving event for the children of shepherds and farmers. "Dadung" means "rope," which is depicted by the chanting of diagrams and has the meaning of maintaining the sustainability of nature. Conservation and maintenance efforts are carried out by planting trees, along with the many plans to utilize objects that are considered protected areas by the AKUR Community.	 Dadung Party
A Thousand Kentongan	<i>A thousand kentongan</i> is a tradition that has a meaning for people to always be alert in living their lives. In the past, the <i>tong-tong</i> was used as a tool to warn of danger. The tradition of <i>a thousand kentongan</i> begins when the dadung party is finished with the pupuhu tradition and hitting the main kentongan, followed by sounding it simultaneously by a thousand residents. The kentongan is sounded while residents walk together from <i>Situ Hyang</i> to the <i>Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal</i> building to carry out the next procession.	 A Thousand Kentongan
Spiritual Song	Spiritual songs are held at night in the <i>Jinem</i> room in <i>Paseban</i> . Spiritual songs are intended to be prayed together for peace and are attended by people with various beliefs and backgrounds. This procession is carried out by starting with a prayer together addressed to God Almighty, so that differences in beliefs or backgrounds do not cause division between humans.	 Spiritual Song
Ngajayak	<i>Ngajayak</i> is a procession that has the meaning of receiving the results of God's grace, which is carried out by pounding rice by a pair of young men and women in <i>Paseban Taman Sari</i> . <i>Ngajayak</i> is the core procession and the peak of the <i>Seren Taun</i> traditional ceremony. The procession is identical to mixing and accompanying a pile of rice into the <i>Paseban</i> to then be pounded.	 Ngajayak

### 3.5. Temporality and the Experience of Time

Heidegger's concept of temporality emphasizes that human beings are fundamentally temporal entities. Unlike objects or animals, humans live in an awareness that integrates the past, present, and future into a unified existential experience. According to Heidegger (1962), time is not merely a sequential progression but a structural condition of human existence one that allows individuals to retain memory, act meaningfully in the present, and project themselves toward future possibilities.

In the AKUR Cigugur community, this existential structure of time is embedded in cultural practices, ritual traditions, and spatial arrangements. The temporal continuum is not abstract but concretely manifested in historical sites, ceremonial routines, and inherited values that shape everyday life. As Pallasmaa (1996) and Norberg-Schulz (1980) suggest, traditional settlements often serve as temporal anchors, enabling communities to dwell within their history while envisioning their future.

The teachings of Prince Madrais play a central role in shaping this temporal consciousness. His

philosophical orientation affirms an integrated relationship between humanity, nature, and the divine. This synthesis is enacted through practices such as communal cooperation (*gotong royong*), religious tolerance, and ritual expressions of gratitude, including the annual *Seren Taun* ceremony. These practices demonstrate that temporality in AKUR culture is not experienced as linear succession but as a cyclical and interconnected process linking cosmology, morality, and lived space.

In confronting the uncertainty of the future particularly the inevitability of death the AKUR community turns to a **spiritual-philosophical principle** *sampurna ning urip ning pati sejati*, which may be translated as "a complete life and a noble death." This principle resonates with Heidegger's (1962) notion of being-toward-death, where the anticipation of death serves to heighten the authenticity of one's existence in the present (Capobianco, 2010; Zimmerman, 1983).

At the individual level, this worldview promotes a mode of ethical and balanced living, encouraging members of the community to cultivate moral

character in both secular and spiritual domains. Life is understood not as a temporal fragment but as an ontological continuum that encompasses remembrance, action, and aspiration.

Thus, in the AKUR Cigugur context, time is not merely a framework for measurement but a lived

reality. It is experienced spatially, ritually, and symbolically allowing the community to maintain coherence between ancestral legacy and contemporary challenges and to orient themselves meaningfully within an unfolding historical trajectory.

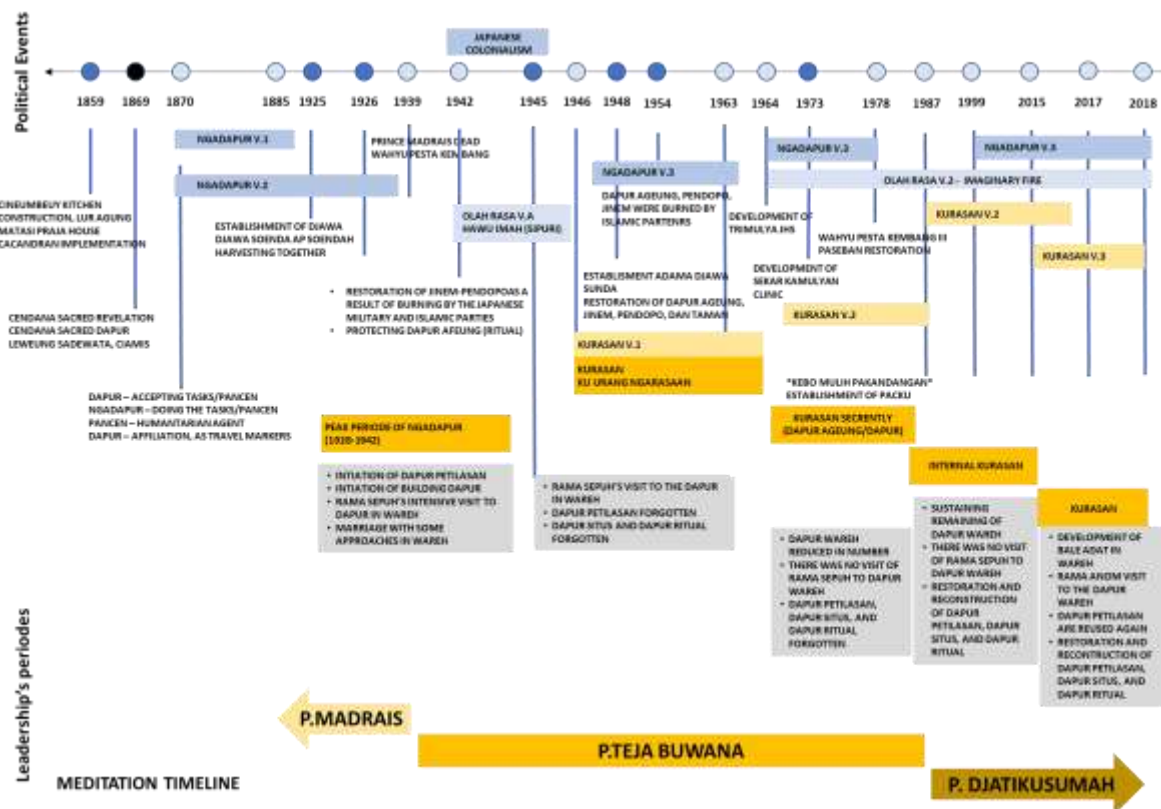


Figure 3: History of the AKUR Cigugur Community (Adisaputri & Widiastuti, 2015).

### 3.5.1. The Past: The Foundations of Community Values and Identities

In Heidegger’s existential ontology, the past is not merely a chronological record of events that have ceased to exist; rather, it is a constitutive dimension of Dasein a foundational structure through which human beings interpret themselves and the world (Heidegger, 1962). Within the AKUR Cigugur community, the past continues to shape cultural values, communal identity, and socio-spiritual orientation.

The historical role of Prince Madrais serves as a cornerstone in this collective memory. The resistance of Prince Madrais against Dutch colonial hegemony in the late 19th century and subsequent exile between 1900 and 1908 are understood not simply as political acts but as expressions of ethical and spiritual resilience. Upon his return in 1924, Prince Madrais introduced teachings that synthesized ecological responsibility with spiritual devotion. The symbolic

narrative of halting the eruption of Mount Ciremai using gamelan instruments is not regarded merely as mythology but as a metaphorical articulation of harmony between human agency, cosmological order, and natural forces (I. Setiawan et al., 2020).

Similarly, the leadership of Prince Tejabuana (1946–1982) embodied principles of interreligious tolerance and political moderation. His participation in the Linggadjadi Agreement exemplifies the AKUR community’s historical commitment to peaceful negotiation and cultural diplomacy. These past events continue to inform the AKUR community’s ethical frameworks and spatial expressions of coexistence, making the past a living dimension of everyday life.

### 3.5.2. The Present: Action in the Reality of Life

In Heideggerian terms, the present (Gegenwart) represents the site of active engagement a moment where past influences converged with future projections to create the conditions for meaningful

action (Capobianco, 2010; Heidegger, 1962). For the AKUR community, the present is marked by dynamic negotiation with internal traditions and external socio-political challenges.

During the tenure of Prince Djatikusuma (1982–1999), the community experienced significant environmental and legal pressures, including land disputes and water resource degradation. These challenges necessitated structural and ritual adjustments. For instance, the Seren Taun ceremony traditionally held as a communal expression of gratitude and cosmic alignment was temporarily suspended due to public health concerns, and later revived with renewed significance in 1999.

In recent decades, additional complexities have arisen. The reclassification of Mount Ciremai as a national park in 2014 imposed new restrictions on land use, while the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted communal gatherings and ritual continuity. Nevertheless, the AKUR community responded with adaptive strategies, such as domestic ritual practices and reinterpretations of customary symbols. These responses exemplify Dasein's capacity for reinterpretation and situated agency amid modernity (Harman, 2007).

Such ongoing processes affirm that the AKUR community actively inhabits the present not as a static temporality, but as a generative arena for sustaining identity, ethics, and spatial integrity.

### 3.5.3. *The Future: Hope and Anticipation*

In Heidegger's framework, the future (Zukunft) is understood not as a detached timeframe but as a horizon of existential possibilities an orientation toward being-possible that informs present intentionality (Heidegger, 1962). This anticipatory structure (Vorlaufen) allows communities to act with foresight and moral commitment. For the AKUR Cigugur community, the future represents both a challenge and a promise. Grounded in the philosophical ethos of sampurna ning urip ning pati sejati (the pursuit of a complete life and a dignified death), the community articulates a vision of sustainability that integrates traditional wisdom with contemporary needs. This includes the preservation of ritual knowledge, environmental stewardship, intergenerational transmission of values, and continued negotiation with state and global forces.

Their outlook is neither utopian nor fatalistic but grounded in a lived recognition of the necessity to balance spiritual depth with ecological and social adaptability. This forward-looking stance exemplifies Heidegger's notion of authentic temporality, wherein the future is not anticipated as

mere chronology but as a field for existential fulfillment (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Zimmerman, 1983).

By embodying this temporal orientation, the AKUR community affirms its role as a living tradition one that evolves without severing its ontological roots, and that projects its existence into the future with conscious intention and cultural coherence.

### 3.6. *Harmony of Tradition and Modernity*

The AKUR Cigugur community embodies the philosophical principle of *tapa di nagara*, which signifies the capacity of an individual to live harmoniously within a collective society without forsaking their ethnic identity and historical values (Indrawardana, 2014). This principle articulates a form of cultural resilience, wherein adaptation to contemporary contexts does not necessitate the abandonment of traditional epistemologies. In line with Heidegger's existential phenomenology, human existence is never isolated but always constituted in relational terms through coexistence with others, or *Mitsein* (Heidegger, 1962; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016).

This notion of being-with-others is institutionalized in the AKUR community's customary leadership system. Members are not merely passive recipients of traditional authority but active participants in decision-making processes, embodying a lived experience of interconnectedness through deliberation, ritual engagement, and communal responsibilities. This collective modality serves as an ontological response to contemporary ecological and social challenges, positioning indigenous epistemologies as viable frameworks for sustainable futures (Fauzi, M. A et al., 2025). One notable spatial articulation of this philosophy is the Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal, a ritual-communal space functioning as a liminal domain within the community. As posited by Turner (1982), liminality represents a transitional phase within the social structure, enabling the temporary suspension of normative roles to facilitate transformation. Norberg-Schulz (1985b) extends this interpretation by emphasizing the role of spatial references in shaping existential orientation. Within the AKUR context, the Paseban serves as a ceremonial site during rituals such as Seren Taun, where community members experience a heightened awareness of temporality connecting the ancestral past, lived present, and aspirational future. This spatial-temporal convergence reinforces their collective identity and ontological belonging (J. Smith et al., 2020; Tarigan et

al., 2022).

The settlement structure of the AKUR community demonstrates a dialectic between collective and private spaces, embodying Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* as the essence of being human within a social configuration. As argued by Norberg-Schulz (1985b), dwelling involves more than the occupation of physical structures it comprises the integration of personal and communal spatialities that generate meaningful places. The Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal functions as the symbolic and operational center of collective life, while individual homes articulate personal identities within the broader cultural system. This spatial synthesis promotes solidarity, social cohesion, and shared cultural expression. Westin (2022) underscores that engagement with shared spatial environments stimulates social interaction, enhances mutual recognition, and fosters communal resilience.

Despite their embeddedness in tradition, the AKUR community also exemplifies what Heidegger refers to as *Eigenlichkeit*, or authenticity. This concept denotes the capacity of individuals and communities to affirm their essential being amid changing social conditions without succumbing to external conformity (Heidegger, 1962). The AKUR community's ability to evolve in response to modern developments without compromising their foundational values illustrates this authentic mode of existence. Their cultural pillars include the pursuit of a true self (*jati diri sejati*), the embodiment of human character (*tatakrama manusia*), and the realization of national identity (*jati diri bangsa*) as ontological anchors of human-environment balance (Norberg-Schulz, 1985b).

This authenticity is expressed in inclusive cultural practices, such as the symbolic accommodation of peripheral or marginalized groups within traditional rituals like *Seren Taun*. These practices reflect an ethic of coexistence and environmental stewardship, affirming social harmony while maintaining ecological sustainability (Patel *et al.*, 2023). Within the AKUR context, cultural education not only preserves ritual continuity but also enables the reinterpretation of ancestral values within contemporary societal frameworks.

#### 4. EXISTENCE OF SETTLEMENT SPACES

In existential phenomenology, a settlement space is not merely a physical location but a lived world a meaningful environment constructed through daily human interactions and cultural engagement (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). In the AKUR Cigugur settlement, space is experienced existentially; it is not

only seen but lived, as individuals project themselves into the world through their activities, symbols, and rituals. This perspective aligns with Heidegger's concept of *Being-in-the-World*, where meaning arises through relational experience rather than abstract observation. As Heidegger (1962) notes, humans derive meaning through lived experience "letting what is seen be seen from itself" which is realized through the categories of *Zuhandenes* (ready-to-hand) and *Vorhandenes* (present-at-hand). In AKUR Cigugur, these concepts are embodied in traditional spatial practices, where tools, places, and rituals do not exist in isolation but within an ontological unity of function, memory, and belonging. Customary spaces, such as the Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal, illustrate this fusion of physical structure and existential meaning. While functionally serving as a hall for communal deliberation and ritual practice, its deeper significance lies in how it mediates the community's ontological relationship with nature, spirituality, and historical continuity (Djواهرian, 2017). During the *Seren Taun* ceremony, for instance, this space becomes an axis of temporal and spiritual convergence linking ancestral memory with present engagement and future continuity.

**These spatial practices in the AKUR community manifest across five existential layers** (1) natural and artificial forms, (2) human existence, (3) temporal dimensions (*waktos*), (4) ethical principles (*Pikukuh Tilu*), and (5) authenticity of the self (*sampurna ning urip ning pati sejati*). These layers are not experienced separately but as an interrelated whole, as noted by Norberg-Schulz (1985b), wherein the meaning of place emerges from the dynamic interplay between individuals, collectives, and their spatial environment. One notable example is the *leuweung leutik* (sacred small forest), which functions not only as a water conservation area but also as a sacred ecological space. Through its use and symbolic integration, it becomes *Zuhanden* ready-to-hand as part of ritual life, spiritual practice, and ecological ethics. In this way, spatial sustainability is intimately linked with spiritual consciousness, echoing Paci's (2020) assertion that "spiritual values are the precondition of sustainable dwelling."



Figure 4: Authenticity of AKUR Cigugur Settlement

## *Space.*

### **4.1. Life: Self and Evolution**

The AKUR settlement's architecture especially the Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal reflects the dialectical relationship between structure and spirit. It serves not only as a site for leadership and communal gatherings but also as an existential space where historical memory and social order converge. As Heidegger (1962) suggests, being is realized through engagement with the world; leadership, in this sense, is not positional authority but an active being-with-others (Mitsein), enacted through responsibility, ritual, and spiritual alignment.

This understanding resonates with indigenous settlements elsewhere. For example, in Scandinavian Sámi communities, the concept of Siida (collective land use) incorporates similar ontological principles of relational space, ancestral continuity, and spiritual obligation (Sara, 2009). Likewise, Japanese satoyama landscapes integrate ecological balance, community rituals, and seasonal rhythms in a spatial framework shaped by existential values (Indrawan et al., 2014; Takeuchi et al., 2003). These comparisons show that the AKUR experience, while locally grounded, shares ontological foundations with global indigenous practices rooted in phenomenological ecology.

As Djavaherian (2017) argues, traditional buildings become "intermediaries of meaning" when they reflect communal values. In the AKUR context, architecture acts not only as memory-preserving infrastructure but also as a symbolic expression of humanity's place within the cosmos. Hence, dwelling is more than occupation it is existence in harmony with the natural and spiritual order.

### **4.2. Authenticity: National and Human**

Authenticity, in Heideggerian terms, refers to a mode of existence where individuals recognize their finitude and live deliberately, guided by existential awareness (Eigenlichkeit) (Heidegger, 1962). In the AKUR community, authenticity is materialized through the preservation of cultural values, spiritual traditions, and ecological responsibilities. The Seren Taun ritual becomes a manifestation of this existential authenticity linking people with their past, land, ancestors, and each other through ethical and spatial continuity.

As Seamon (2020) emphasizes, place-ballets recurring spatial patterns of action embody authenticity when they are repeated with meaning and intention. The AKUR's ritual practices, ecological conservation (especially of leuweung

leutik), and symbolic leadership roles demonstrate this integrative patterning of space and action.

National authenticity in the AKUR sense does not emerge through political ideology but through cultural continuity and environmental stewardship. The forest (leuweung leutik) represents both ecological resilience and identity preservation. This understanding of national space aligns with Norberg-Schulz's (1985b) view of authentic places as those that integrate collective memory, natural structure, and meaningful action.

Educational transmission such as teaching gamelan to younger generations not only preserves cultural form but also ensures the existential transmission of values. As Steiner & Reisinger (2006) suggest, existential authenticity requires not only tradition but also the courage to be, meaning a proactive engagement with tradition in the face of change.

Moreover, this perspective is not unique to Indonesia. Similar themes appear in Ainu indigenous education in Japan, where ritual music and ecological practices are used to sustain cultural identity (Jacob et al., 2015), and in First Nations architecture in Canada, where built environments express cosmology and political resistance (Refiti et al., 2024).

### **4.3. Time: Dimension and Life Experience**

In Heideggerian phenomenology, time is not conceived merely as a sequence of chronological moments but as an existential dimension that frames human understanding of being (Heidegger, 1962). For Heidegger, temporality constitutes the horizon for the projection of existence, whereby past, present, and future are interwoven into a meaningful structure that shapes human life.

Within the AKUR Cigugur community, time (waktos) is perceived not as an abstract construct but as a lived dimension embedded in ritual, landscape, and memory. The tradition of Sejarah Taun exemplifies this temporal layering, functioning as a ritualized reflection that connects ancestral heritage to present enactment and future aspirations. The ritual is not merely commemorative; it reanimates existential values through daily practices, reinforcing spatial continuity and cultural resilience.

According to Pallasmaa (1996), the lived experience of architecture is inherently temporal, where memory and anticipation interact to give meaning to space. Similarly, Pernecky & Jamal (2010) argue that spatial authenticity can only be achieved through existential time, wherein historical memory and present intentionality converge.

In practical terms, this temporal consciousness is

expressed in the sustainability of traditional spaces such as the leuweung leutik (sacred forest) and Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal which retain their function and meaning through generational adaptation. Pedroli *et al.* (2007) emphasize that the management of cultural landscapes must go beyond physical preservation, requiring active community engagement to maintain inherited symbolic values.

This temporal integration is not unique to the AKUR context. In Japanese Satoyama systems, for instance, the concept of *ma* the interval between times and spaces reflects a similar synthesis of environmental rhythm and human ritual (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2003). Likewise, in Sámi communities in Scandinavia, seasonal migration and ceremonial cycles structure existential understandings of land, time, and belonging (Sara, 2009). These examples support the proposition that traditional settlements encode temporality not only as memory but also as an ontological structure of spatial meaning.

**4.4. The Pinnacle of Existence: Self-Authenticity**

In Heidegger’s existential ontology, authenticity (*Eigenlichkeit*) represents a mode of being in which individuals confront their finitude and live with conscious awareness of their existence and responsibility (Heidegger, 1962). This mode of being involves an active choice to engage the world meaningfully, resisting inauthentic conformity and embracing personal and communal truth.

In the AKUR Cigugur community, authentic existence is cultivated through the integration of spiritual, ecological, and social dimensions. The principle of *Pikukuh Tilu* comprising ethics of compassion, language, culture, and respectful conduct serves as a moral and ontological compass, guiding community members toward a harmonious life that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges (Sodikin, 2022).

This form of existential authenticity does not reject change but filters it through cultural principles. As Steiner & Reisinger (2006) explain, existential authenticity arises not from superficial preservation but from the lived enactment of values that maintain continuity with a community’s foundational worldview.

In spatial terms, this authenticity is realized through ritual performance, such as the *Seren Taun* ceremony, which embodies the collective consciousness of ancestry, ecological interdependence, and metaphysical purpose. Through such practices, the community maintains ontological coherence and resists the fragmentation of modern identity.

Comparable models exist globally. In Canadian First Nations settlements, built environments such as longhouses and gathering halls serve as architectural expressions of collective memory and spiritual continuity (Perkins, 2006). In Ainu traditions in Japan, the integration of daily practice with mythological cosmology sustains cultural identity despite systemic marginalization (Jacob *et al.*, 2015). These cases affirm that self-authenticity, as understood in Heideggerian terms, can be both individually transformative and communally sustaining when enacted through spatial and ritual forms.

Thus, in the context of AKUR Cigugur, the pinnacle of existence is not defined solely by survival or material sustainability but by an authentic mode of being where traditional ethics guide contemporary adaptation and where spatial, spiritual, and social elements converge in a meaningful, ongoing enactment of identity.

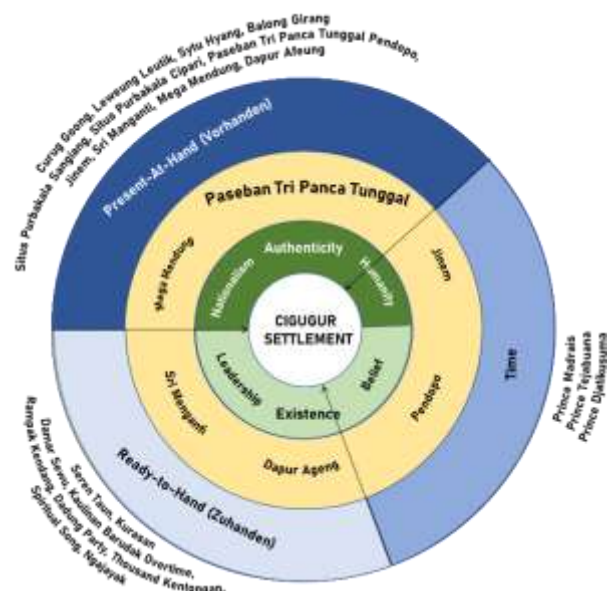


Figure 5: Structure of the Reality of AKUR Cigugur Community Space.

**5. EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AS PLANNING ONTOLOGY**

Martin Heidegger’s existential phenomenology provides a profound ontological foundation for understanding spatial experience in planning. Central to this philosophy is the notion of *Dasein* the human being as “being-there” whose existence is fundamentally situated within a world that is interpreted and experienced spatially (Heidegger, 1962). In this view, space is not an abstract container but a lived domain of meaning. Planning, then, is not merely technical or visual; it becomes an ontological

endeavor grounded in the way humans dwell, remember, anticipate, and act.

Heidegger extends beyond the epistemological framework proposed by Edmund Husserl. While Husserl's transcendental phenomenology focuses on how phenomena appear to consciousness (i.e., the structure of experience), Heidegger's approach is ontological, emphasizing why and how human existence is intrinsically linked to space. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) posits that space must be understood through lived rising experience, as an extension of human temporality and care (Sorge).

This existential orientation has important implications for planning. As noted by Nascimento Souto (2019) and Whittemore (2014), spatial design should not be based solely on technical or functional criteria but must incorporate the experiential dimensions of space its atmosphere, memory, identity, and intersubjective meaning. Norberg-Schulz (1985b) similarly emphasizes that authentic architecture must reflect "the existential foothold of man" within space.

Authenticity, therefore, becomes a critical axis in existentially informed spatial planning. For Heidegger, authentic space resonates with the needs, values, and practices of its inhabitants, whereas inauthentic space fails to engage the lived world, often prioritizing visual form or economic efficiency at the expense of ontological relevance (Goulding et al., 2018; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Authenticity is achieved not only through form but also through meaningful engagement spaces that support social rituals, spiritual practices, and cultural memory.

A practical illustration of this can be drawn from traditional settlements such as the AKUR Cigugur community, where ceremonial spaces like Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal serve not merely as built environments but as active mediators of collective identity and temporality. Similarly, in Japanese *machiya* districts, space is organized to support intergenerational co-living and seasonal rituals, fostering a continuity between past and future (Takeuchi et al., 2003). In Norwegian Sámi tent settlements, the circular configuration of space aligns with seasonal migration and spiritual cosmology, illustrating how built form emerges from existential rhythm (Bjørklund, 1990; Sara, 2009).

These cases contrast with modernist or functionalist planning, which often results in spatial alienation. When public spaces are designed without reference to social use or symbolic meaning focusing purely on aesthetics or economic return they become present-at-hand (*Vorhandenes*) rather than ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenes*) in Heideggerian terms. That is,

they exist passively rather than being integrated into the lived practices of the community (Hardiman, 2015a; Heidegger, 1962).

Temporality also plays a pivotal role in existential spatial planning. Humans, as temporal beings, relate to space not in static terms but as a becoming an unfolding continuum of memory, presence, and anticipation (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Pedroli et al. (2007) argue that landscape planning must embrace this temporality by accommodating historical depth while remaining adaptable to future transformations. Spatial strategies rooted in Heideggerian thought thus reject fixed zoning models and instead favor dynamic frameworks that respect dwelling as a temporal and cultural act.

Additionally, existential planning must incorporate intersubjectivity the dialogical relationships between different agents involved in space-making. Heidegger's emphasis on *Mitsein* (being-with) calls for inclusive design processes, where community members, planners, and cultural stewards participate in shaping the spatial order (J. Smith et al., 2020). It is echoed in indigenous settlement planning frameworks, where participatory rituals often constitute acts of spatial formation, such as in Maori *marae*-based planning in New Zealand or Ainu ceremonial spaces in Hokkaido (Jacob et al., 2015; Kawharu, 2000).

In conclusion, existential phenomenology offers a rigorous alternative to technocratic models of spatial planning. It situates planning within the ontological realm of human existence, where space is a lived, symbolic, and temporal phenomenon. Designing space under this paradigm requires not only technical knowledge but also philosophical attentiveness to how communities dwell, remember, and evolve. Such an approach fosters spatial authenticity, cultural continuity, and deeper social sustainability core imperatives in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the AKUR Cigugur community represents an existential settlement in which space is not merely a physical construct but a lived and meaningful landscape shaped by traditional leadership, spiritual beliefs, nationalism, and a deep sense of humanity. These elements collectively constitute the foundation of spatial authenticity within the community's lifeworld.

Utilizing a Heideggerian phenomenological framework, the research illustrates how the spatial experience of the community emerges through the

interplay of *Zuhandenes* (readiness-to-hand), *Vorhandenes* (presence-at-hand), and *Dasein* (being-there). These existential categories elucidate the dynamic interrelation between material space, cultural practice, and ontological meaning. Traditional leadership, in this context, functions not only as an administrative entity but also as a cultural and spiritual custodian that preserves the equilibrium between social, ecological, and cosmological dimensions.

The temporality of existence past, present, and future is experienced as a continuum of cultural becoming. The past serves as a source of inherited wisdom, the present embodies actions embedded in communal life, and the future is anticipated through the philosophy of *sampurna ning urip ning pati sejati*, emphasizing sustainable spiritual and ethical existence. The AKUR community's approach to nationalism reflects an inclusive ethos rooted in heritage and openness, enabling cultural preservation amid socio-environmental transformation.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of existential phenomenology as a critical ontological lens for settlement planning. It challenges dominant positivist and technocratic planning paradigms by advocating for a more human-centered, culturally embedded, and temporally conscious approach. This study aligns with and expands upon the work of Norberg-Schulz (1985b), Pallasmaa (1996), Nascimento Souto (2019), and Whittemore (2014), who emphasize that spatial identity arises from the embodied and symbolic experiences of place rather than abstract design

principles alone.

Practically, the findings offer planners and policymakers insights into culturally responsive and community-based planning strategies that prioritize social resilience, ecological balance, and cultural continuity. Spatial configurations such as *Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal*, *leuweung leutik*, and ceremonial structures function not merely as built environments but as relational spaces that reinforce collective memory and ethical spatial behavior. Conservation strategies that acknowledge the ontological role of indigenous cosmologies can lead to more adaptive and culturally sustainable land-use policies.

This study represents an early application of Heideggerian existential phenomenology in the context of indigenous settlement planning in Southeast Asia. However, its insights have broader applicability. Future comparative research should extend this approach to other indigenous contexts such as *Toraja*, *Wae Rebo* (Flores), and *Subak* (Bali) in Indonesia, as well as to international cases such as the *Sámi* settlements of Scandinavia, the *Machiya* townhouses of Japan, and the *Maori* landscape ethics of New Zealand. Such comparative analyses would help refine the universality and contextual variation of existential planning principles.

Further research is also encouraged to integrate spatial analysis and mixed-methods approaches to examine the scalability of these cultural adaptation strategies. Moreover, a deeper investigation into the ontological significance of indigenous leadership and spiritual cosmologies is critical, as they represent the epistemic core of decision-making and long-term sustainability for traditional communities.

**Acknowledgements:** This research was funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (DIKTI) and supported by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) Universitas Islam Bandung (Unisba) under the Multi-Year Research Contract Scheme for Applied Higher Education Excellence Research, Contract Number: 180/B.04/Rek/IX/2021. The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to DIKTI and LPPM Unisba for their financial support and continuous guidance throughout the course.

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