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Ruang sosial dan keberlanjutan desa wisata

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ABSTRACT

Tourism village development is often associated with economic growth and increasing tourist arrivals, while the social dimensions supporting tourism governance and community cohesion remain underexplored. This study examines the functions of social space in supporting community-based tourism sustainability in Cibuntu Tourism Village. A qualitative descriptive approach with a single holistic case study was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 participants selected using purposive and snowball sampling, complemented by direct observation and document analysis. Data were analysed thematically, with credibility enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and extended field observation. The findings identify five interconnected functions of social space: community welfare, participatory governance, conflict resolution, tourism benefit sharing, and tourism experience. These functions are reflected in collective acceptance of the closure of sand mining and relocation of sheep enclosures through deliberation, a homestay guest-allocation system to distribute tourism opportunities, and meaningful interactions between residents and tourists. The findings demonstrate that social space functions not merely as an arena of interaction but as a relational mechanism that strengthens social solidarity, trust, participation, social legitimacy, benefit sharing, and harmonious stakeholder relationships. Thus, the sustainability of Cibuntu Tourism Village depends not only on its tourism resources but also on the community's capacity to maintain and reproduce its social space amid tourism development.



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Introduction

Tourism is widely regarded as an activity that generates positive impacts for both tourists and local communities. In the past, most tourism studies primarily focused on the impacts of tourism on local residents. However, this shift in emphasis reflects broader changes within tourism studies, particularly due to the growing attention paid to tourist motivations. Tourism development based on the concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) positions the community as the central basis of decision-making. This implies that local communities hold the highest authority in determining tourism-related decisions. (Anstrand, 2006) explains that CBT represents a form of tourism that emphasises sustainability and harmonious interaction within and among communities. Within the management of these interactions, there exists a social sphere maintained by the community, through which social relationships are constructed and social structures are formed.

Nevertheless, tourism development also has the potential to generate changes in the structure and dynamics of community social space. The arrival of tourists, shifts in economic orientation, and increasing commercial activities may influence social interaction patterns, cultural values, and community solidarity (Cohen, 1988). If community social space weakens, tourism villages may experience social and cultural

degradation, including the decline of gotong royong (mutual cooperation), the loss of local cultural authenticity, and the emergence of conflicts of interest among stakeholders.

Social space provides a useful analytical lens for examining how community relationships are maintained, negotiated, and transformed within tourism village development. Rather than referring to a physical location, social space is understood in this study as a relational arena produced through interactions among individuals, community groups, institutions, and other actors. It conceptualises social space as a relational structure shaped by the distribution of different forms of capital, while subsequent studies emphasise its dynamic character as it is continuously reproduced through social practices and relationships (Katchanov & Shmatko, 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant to tourism villages because tourism development introduces new actors, economic relationships, institutional arrangements, and forms of interaction into an existing community structure.

In the context of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), the relevance of social space lies in its ability to explain how community participation is socially constructed and maintained. CBT positions local communities as active actors in tourism decision-making, resource management, and benefit distribution (Anstrand, 2006). However, community participation should not be understood solely as formal involvement in tourism institutions. It is also embedded in everyday social relationships through which residents communicate, negotiate interests, establish norms, develop trust, and collectively respond to changes associated with tourism development. Social space therefore provides an analytical bridge between the normative principles of CBT and the social processes through which those principles are enacted within a tourism village (Suansri et al., 2003).

In this study, social space is operationalised qualitatively through its observable manifestations in community life. The analysis focuses on seven interrelated dimensions: social interaction and communication; kinship and mutual trust; collective values and norms, including gotong royong; collective decision-making and deliberation; conflict resolution; sharing of tourism benefits; and interaction between local residents and tourists. These dimensions are not treated as independent variables or measured using a psychometric scale. Instead, they function as analytical categories for identifying and interpreting recurring social practices and relationships emerging from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. This approach allows social space to be examined empirically while retaining its relational and contextual character.

The analytical framework assumes that tourism development may both utilise and transform existing social relationships. The establishment of a tourism village can create new opportunities for cooperation, learning, economic exchange, and interaction with visitors, while simultaneously generating potential tensions associated with changing economic interests, resource use, and stakeholder relationships. Accordingly, the study does not assume that tourism development automatically strengthens social cohesion. Rather, it examines how existing social relationships are maintained, adapted, or renegotiated as tourism becomes increasingly embedded in community life.

This distinction is particularly important in rural communities, where changes associated with tourism may occur alongside broader processes of social and economic transformation. To distinguish tourism-related dynamics from general rural modernisation, this study focuses on social changes and practices that participants explicitly relate to the establishment and development of Cibuntu Tourism Village. Particular attention is given to changes in community participation, tourism-related decision-making, conflict resolution, benefit-sharing arrangements, and interactions between residents and tourists. The analysis therefore links observable social practices to the development of tourism rather than attributing all social changes occurring within the village to tourism.

The analytical framework is further informed by the social capital perspective, particularly the roles of trust, networks, and norms in facilitating collective action. In this framework, social capital explains the resources embedded within community relationships, while social space provides the relational arena in which these resources are activated and reproduced through social practices. The combination of these perspectives enables the study to examine not only whether community relationships exist, but also how those relationships function in the governance and sustainability of a tourism village.

Recent empirical studies have increasingly examined community-based tourism through the lenses of social capital, community participation, governance, empowerment, and sustainability. Studies in rural and tourism village contexts have demonstrated the importance of trust, networks, norms, collective action, and community participation in supporting tourism development and sustainability (Abdillah & Syaiful Bahri, 2026; Fauly & Wiloso, 2021; Prayitno et al., 2022; Suryandhani et al., 2023). Other studies have examined

the transformative effects of tourism on rural social space, demonstrating that tourism development can reconstruct social relationships and power structures within rural communities (Weng & Yang, 2020). Research on CBT has also shown that partnerships and interactions among tourism actors can create spaces for community empowerment and inclusion (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022).

However, these strands of research have largely examined social capital, community participation, governance, empowerment, and social-space transformation as related but analytically distinct phenomena. What remains insufficiently examined is how social space functions as a relational mechanism through which the resources of social capital are translated into everyday community-based tourism practices. In particular, limited attention has been given to how social space simultaneously facilitates community welfare, collective decision-making, conflict resolution, tourism benefit sharing, and resident tourist interaction within a tourism village. This gap is especially evident in research examining the internal social processes through which community-based tourism is sustained over time.

The present study addresses this gap by examining Cibuntu Tourism Village as a single holistic case. Rather than treating social space simply as a physical setting or as a consequence of tourism development, the study conceptualises it as a relational arena in which social capital including trust, kinship, norms, networks, and solidarity is activated, negotiated, and reproduced through tourism-related practices. The study therefore asks how social space is formed and how it functions in connecting community-based tourism with local governance, collective welfare, conflict management, benefit distribution, and tourism experience.

Research Statement

Throughout the development of Cibuntu into a tourism village, numerous achievements have been attained, including recognition at the international level. Cibuntu Tourism Village has undergone a transformation from an agriculture-based village into one oriented towards agro-tourism. Since being officially designated as a tourism village, the people of Cibuntu have continuously innovated by managing tourism through a CBT-based approach that still respects local culture, local wisdom, and the various forms of capital possessed by the village. In addition to natural, cultural, and economic capital, the people of Cibuntu also possess strong social capital that continues to be firmly upheld.

The fundamental factor underlying the success of Cibuntu Tourism Village development lies in the strength of its social bonds. These social bonds are generated through close kinship ties and strong leadership. Studies conducted by (Kashim & Zikri, 2024) demonstrate that kinship and leadership serve as driving forces encouraging community participation within tourism villages. However, the specific types of kinship (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Laila, 2025) and leadership (Kashim & Zikri, 2024) capable of mobilising tourism village development still require more in-depth conceptualisation. Previous studies conducted by (Arida & Pitanatri, 2023; Irawan, 2025a; Irawanto et al., 2025) discussed the importance of leadership in tourism village development; however, the processes through which social bonds are formed as a result of leadership approaches have not yet been adequately explored.

In addition to these social bonds, there also exists a social sphere that has been maintained across generations by the people of Cibuntu in sustaining community commitment up to the present day. This sphere functions as a communal space for expressing concerns, engaging in discussion, voicing disagreement, and conducting deliberation among residents, leaders, and other local figures. The existence of this fluid social space enables collective commitments and agreements to be implemented effectively.

Brainstorming sessions conducted with the people of Cibuntu indicated that social space functions as a channel for aspirations and discussion in the development of Cibuntu Tourism Village. Several important issues that can be addressed through this social space forum include concepts of quality of life, tourism experience, optimal decision-making, conflict resolution, kinship relations, concepts of dwelling and belonging, respect, and *sharing benefit*, both among community members and between residents and tourists.

Research Objectives

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to examine how social space is formed and how it contributes to supporting the sustainability of Cibuntu Tourism Village. This research analyses how the social space created through tourism village development fosters togetherness within village social bonds, ultimately causing tourists to feel as though they are “returning home”. Such feelings are examined from the perspective of local residents, based on expressions conveyed by tourists during their stay in the tourism village. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of social space and community-based tourism studies, while also offering practical benefits for the management of tourism villages that are more sustainable, participatory, and oriented towards strengthening local communities.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a single holistic case study design to examine the formation and functioning of social space within Cibuntu Tourism Village. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand social relationships, collective practices, decision-making processes, conflict resolution, benefit-sharing practices, and resident tourist interactions within their natural community context (Sugiyono, 2018). Rather than measuring social space as a quantitative construct, the study examined its empirical manifestations through the social practices and relationships reported and observed within the village.

The case was selected purposively because Cibuntu Tourism Village represents a community-based tourism destination in which tourism development has occurred alongside strong kinship relations, collective practices, local leadership, and community participation. The case therefore provided a relevant context for examining how social space is formed, maintained, and reproduced during tourism development.

Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was initially employed to identify individuals who possessed direct knowledge, experience, or involvement in the development and social practices of Cibuntu Tourism Village. The initial participants included actors with knowledge of village governance, tourism management, community development, and local social practices. Snowball sampling was subsequently used to identify additional participants who were considered knowledgeable about the social relationships and tourism development processes examined in this study.

A total of 10 participants were involved in the study. The adequacy of the participant number was considered in relation to the focused scope of the case, the relatively bounded community setting, and the depth of information obtained from participants with direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Rather than determining sample adequacy solely through numerical criteria, participant selection continued until the interviews generated sufficiently rich and recurrent information to address the analytical categories established in the study.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis (Yunus, 2010) : 1) First, direct observation was conducted to examine social practices and interactions occurring within the village. Particular attention was given to patterns of interaction among residents, collective activities, community meetings, tourism-related activities, interactions between residents and tourists, and practices reflecting mutual cooperation and social solidarity. Extended field observation conducted during the research period enabled the researchers to compare participants' accounts with observed practices; 2) Second, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 10 participants. The interviews explored the formation and development of Cibuntu Tourism Village, community participation, social relationships, kinship, trust, collective decision-making, conflict resolution, benefit sharing, and interactions between residents and tourists. Questions were adapted during the interview process to enable the researchers to explore emerging issues while maintaining consistency with the study objectives; and 3) Third, documentary data were examined to provide contextual and supporting evidence concerning the development and management of Cibuntu Tourism Village. Documentary materials were used to complement interview and observational data rather than being treated as independent evidence of participants' experiences.

Social space was treated as an analytical construct rather than as a physical location or a psychometric variable. Based on the conceptual framework and the empirical context of Cibuntu Tourism Village, social space was examined through eight interrelated manifestations: Social Welfare, Decision-Making, Conflict Resolution, Kinship Relations, Sharing Benefits, Creating Memorable Tourism Experiences, Creating Emotional Attachment to Cibuntu Village, and Creating Respect and Care. These dimensions served as analytical categories rather than predetermined quantitative variables. They provided an organising framework for identifying recurring social practices, relationships, meanings, and experiences emerging from the empirical data. The categories were subsequently refined when new patterns emerged during the analysis.

The interview, observation, and documentary data were analysed using thematic analysis (Taguchi, 2018). The analytical procedure consisted of five interconnected stages : a) First, the researchers familiarised themselves with the data by repeatedly reading interview transcripts, observation records, and relevant documents. Second, initial codes were generated from statements and observations that were relevant to the research questions. Third, related codes were grouped into preliminary themes representing recurring patterns in the data. Fourth, the preliminary themes were reviewed by comparing them with the complete dataset to assess their internal coherence and their distinctiveness from other themes. Fifth, the themes were

defined and refined to ensure that each represented a meaningful dimension of social space within the Cibuntu context; and b) The analysis was iterative rather than strictly linear. Movement between transcripts, codes, themes, field observations, and documentary evidence allowed emerging interpretations to be continuously compared with the empirical evidence. This process resulted in the identification of internal and external dimensions of social space and their relationship with community welfare, tourism governance, conflict resolution, benefit sharing, and tourism experiences.

Several procedures were employed to strengthen the credibility of the findings: a) First, data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from interviews with direct observations and documentary evidence. This procedure enabled the researchers to identify areas of convergence and divergence between participants' accounts and observed social practices; b) Second, member checking was used to assess the accuracy of selected interpretations. Following the initial interpretation of the interview material, relevant findings were returned to participants for confirmation and clarification. Participants were given an opportunity to confirm whether the interpretation accurately reflected their experiences and to provide clarification where necessary; and c) Third, extended field observation provided an additional basis for assessing the consistency of participants' accounts with community practices observed in the field.

The study did not employ inter-coder reliability statistics such as Cohen's kappa because the analysis was conducted as a qualitative interpretive case study rather than as a multi-coder reliability study. Consequently, reliability was not established through statistical agreement between independent coders. Instead, the credibility of interpretation was supported through triangulation, member checking, iterative comparison of data and themes, and sustained engagement with the empirical context

Findings and Discussions

The Formation Process of Cibuntu Tourism Village

Cibuntu Village is located in Kuningan, West Java, Indonesia. The village lies to the south of Cirebon and in the eastern part of West Java Province. It covers a total area of 1,700 square kilometres and is situated at an altitude of 630 metres above sea level. Prior to 2012, Cibuntu Village was primarily known as an agricultural village, where most residents worked as farmers and sheep breeders. These accounts suggest that the people of Cibuntu have long valued education. Consequently, many residents migrated to other areas in search of better economic opportunities. Despite this, kinship ties and attachment to their homeland were maintained through the establishment of a migrant community organisation known as IWACI (*Ikatan Warga Cibuntu*). Through discussions within IWACI, an initiative emerged to develop Cibuntu as a tourism village.

The development initiative of Cibuntu Tourism Village gained further momentum when several village leaders engaged with a team from the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) of STP Trisakti. A range of programmes was subsequently designed to accelerate the realisation of the tourism village, which can broadly be categorised as follows:

Table 1. Identification of Potential and Design of Acceleration Program for Cibuntu Tourism Village

Component	Definition	Conditions	Challenges	Recommended Actions	Stakeholders
Tourist Attractions	Unique natural, cultural, or man-made features that attract visitors	Curug Gongseng waterfall; Cikahuripan spring; Kampung Kambing (Goat Village); Camping ground; Bamboo forest	Limited packaging and presentation of attractions	Identification of unique potentials; development of thematic tourism packages; tour guide training; internal discussions on tourism village development	Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group); Tourism village management; STP Trisakti
Accessibility	Ease of reaching the destination and accessing information	Adequate village roads; public transportation; directional signage	Poor road conditions in some areas; insufficient signage	Road improvement; development of transportation facilities; provision of clear signage; enhancement of internet access	Local government

Component	Definition	Conditions	Challenges	Recommended Actions	Stakeholders
Amenities	Supporting facilities that enhance tourist comfort	Food stalls; clean toilets; parking areas; information centre	limited internet access Inadequate public sanitation (MCK); sanitation issues; lack of waste bins	Provision of adequate sanitation facilities (MCK) and waste management infrastructure	Pokdarwis; Tourism village management; STP Trisakti
Ancillaries	Institutional support and human resources	Active Pokdarwis; MSMEs; women's groups (PKK); tour guides; village government; farmers	Limited human resource capacity	Capacity-building programmes (management and service); strengthening Pokdarwis; multi-stakeholder collaboration	Pokdarwis; Tourism village management; STP Trisakti; Tourism Office

Source: primary data (2025)

This collaboration accelerated the development process, culminating in a collective agreement to designate 17 February 2012 as the official founding date of Cibuntu Tourism Village. This sustained assistance has demonstrably contributed to the village's development, as evidenced by the numerous achievements it has attained. Among these, two stand out as particularly significant: the revival of the annual sedekah bumi tradition and the recognition of Cibuntu as an independent tourism village through a national award. In addition to these milestones, various other achievements further indicate that, over the course of its 13-year development, Cibuntu Tourism Village has successfully implemented the core principles of tourism village development.

The findings demonstrate that the development of Cibuntu Tourism Village was embedded within pre-existing social relationships and community resources rather than emerging solely from the introduction of tourism. Analysis of interview accounts, observations, and supporting documentation identified two interconnected dimensions of social space: internal social space, which concerns relationships and collective practices among Cibuntu residents, and external social space, which concerns interactions between residents and tourists or other visitors. Across these two dimensions, seven interrelated themes emerged: social space as a foundation for community welfare, collective decision-making, conflict resolution, kinship and solidarity, benefit sharing, memorable tourism experiences, and respect and emotional attachment between residents and visitors.

The transformation of Cibuntu from an agrarian village into a tourism village was preceded by social and human resources that had developed within the community before tourism became a major economic activity. The findings indicate that education was highly valued within the community and contributed to the emergence of residents who subsequently occupied professional positions, including teachers, school principals, and school supervisors. Although some educated residents migrated outside the village in search of economic opportunities, their attachment to Cibuntu was maintained through social networks, particularly IWACI (*Ikatan Warga Cibuntu*). These networks provided a channel through which residents living outside the village continued to exchange ideas and discuss the future development of their home village.

The development of Cibuntu as a tourism village therefore emerged through the interaction of local leadership, community members, and the wider Cibuntu social network. The findings indicate that tourism development was not simply an administrative decision but a collective process in which existing social and human capital was mobilised to identify tourism as an alternative pathway for village development. The decision to discontinue sand mining and relocate household sheep enclosures further demonstrates how village leadership and community relations were mobilised to respond to environmental, social, and economic concerns associated with the previous pattern of village development.

Social Space within the Community of Cibuntu Tourism Village

Based on the analysis of the findings, the patterns of social space within the development of Cibuntu Village can be categorised into two major groups, namely internal social space and external social space. Internal social space refers to the sphere of social interaction among the residents of Cibuntu Village, whereas external

social space refers to the sphere of interaction between the residents of Cibuntu and outsiders, guests, or tourists in order to create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere within the village.

Internal Social Space

Social Space for Social Welfare

The development of Cibuntu Tourism Village has generated various economic opportunities for the local community. Tourism activities have encouraged residents to become involved in numerous business sectors, including homestay management, local culinary enterprises, the sale of MSME products, tour guiding services, local transportation provision, as well as cultural activities and traditional performances. Community involvement in these activities demonstrates that the social space formed within Cibuntu Village has succeeded in creating collective economic opportunities based on cooperation and community participation. This positive development has also provided residents with additional knowledge and understanding, as expressed by the following informant:

We have come to understand that serving guests and other people does not necessarily have to resemble the service provided in hotels. Simple daily meals are sufficient, as long as they are presented cleanly. We also do not need to serve guests in an overly formal manner; it is enough to treat them as distant relatives who come to visit (Awan).

In addition, the social space that has been maintained across generations continues to be reflected in forms of social care towards community members experiencing hardship, bereavement, or other collective mutual assistance practices. Whenever a resident of Cibuntu builds a house, other residents spontaneously provide assistance in the form of labour, financial support, food, or construction materials. This was revealed in the following statement:

If a resident is building a house, it is almost considered an obligation for us in Cibuntu to help and participate, whether through labour, food supplies, money, or useful materials. If the construction lasts more than one day, community members organise a schedule to provide assistance according to the agreed days. Likewise, contributions do not necessarily have to be given during the construction process itself, but may also be provided before or afterwards (Ibnu).

The findings show that internal social space contributes to community welfare through both tourism-related economic opportunities and established forms of mutual assistance. Tourism development has created opportunities for residents to participate in homestay management, local culinary activities, MSME production, guiding services, local transportation, cultural activities, and traditional performances. However, the significance of these opportunities extends beyond individual income generation. Tourism has also become a context through which residents acquire new knowledge and adapt existing social practices to accommodate visitors.

One important example concerns the way residents understand hospitality. Rather than adopting a formal hotel-service model, residents describe tourism hospitality as an extension of everyday social practices. Visitors are treated in a manner similar to distant relatives coming to visit the village. This indicates that tourism-related learning has been incorporated into existing community values rather than replacing them with externally imposed service practices.

The findings also reveal that mutual assistance remains embedded in everyday community life. When a resident builds a house, other residents contribute labour, food, money, or construction materials. When construction extends over several days, residents organise assistance schedules collectively. Such practices indicate that the social space supporting tourism development is connected to a broader system of community solidarity that exists beyond tourism activities.

Social Space in Decision-Making

Social space within the community of Cibuntu Tourism Village plays a significant role in decision-making processes related to the management and development of the tourism village. Social space functions not merely as an arena for interaction among residents, but also as a medium for communication, deliberation, and the formation of collective agreements in determining the direction of village development. Within the context of community-based tourism villages, collective decision-making represents an important indicator of strong social relations and local community participation. As expressed by one informant:

The decision-making process that has been implemented so far has been capable of creating a more participatory and inclusive tourism village governance system. Social space enables the community to build communication, strengthen cooperation, and create mutual understanding in managing the

development of village tourism. These conditions have become an important foundation for maintaining social harmony and the sustainability of Cibuntu Tourism Village (Awan).

This reality was further reflected in another informant's statement:

In fact, all village officials had already agreed to the proposal to establish a tourism village. However, to avoid debate regarding the transformation into a tourism village, we invited the community to attend an explanation session about tourism villages. I considered this meeting strategic in eliminating negative stigma surrounding tourism among certain members of the community (Mulyana)

Social space also functions as a mechanism for collective decision-making. Although village officials had reached an agreement regarding the establishment of Cibuntu as a tourism village, community engagement was considered necessary before implementation. Community meetings were therefore used to explain the concept of a tourism village and address concerns associated with tourism.

The findings indicate that these deliberative processes were important not merely for obtaining formal agreement, but for creating social legitimacy. Community members were provided with an opportunity to understand the proposed transformation, express concerns, and develop a shared understanding of the implications of tourism development. Decision-making therefore operated through both formal village institutions and informal social relationships.

This process demonstrates that participation in Cibuntu was not limited to membership in tourism organisations. Rather, participation occurred through communication, explanation, deliberation, and the development of collective acceptance. Social space consequently provided a mechanism through which formal tourism policies could be translated into socially legitimate community practices.

Social Space for Conflict Resolution

Social space within conflict resolution serves as a communication medium that strengthens community solidarity while preventing the escalation of social conflict. The people of Cibuntu Village have been able to maintain harmonious social relations through social mechanisms grounded in collective values and deliberation. Social space is reflected in community communication forums, village deliberations, mutual cooperation activities, and the involvement of community leaders in problem-solving processes. Whenever differences of opinion or potential conflicts arise among residents, the community tends to resolve them through dialogue and familial approaches.

Furthermore, community leaders play a role as social intermediaries in conflict resolution. They frequently act as mediators in resolving disputes among residents through persuasive approaches and deliberation. This demonstrates that social space within Cibuntu Village is not only formed informally through everyday interaction, but is also reinforced by local social structures and institutions that support social harmony. This was revealed through the following statement:

There were two things I did immediately after officially becoming the village head of Cibuntu. First, I continued the programme of relocating sheep pens that were still located around residential houses onto village land. Second, I closed the sand mining operations located near the village. Some residents opposed these policies because they felt that their interests were being disrupted. However, after several persuasive approaches, the entire community eventually understood the reasons behind these actions (Mulyana)

The findings further demonstrate that social space contributes to the prevention and resolution of community conflict. Two significant policies the closure of sand mining activities and the relocation of sheep enclosures from residential areas to village land initially generated resistance among some residents because the changes affected established interests and practices. Rather than allowing these disagreements to develop into prolonged conflict, the village leadership employed repeated persuasive communication and deliberation. The process eventually generated broader community acceptance of the policies. Community leaders therefore functioned not only as formal decision-makers but also as social intermediaries capable of communicating policy intentions and negotiating differences within the community.

The findings indicate that conflict resolution in Cibuntu relies substantially on existing social relationships and local legitimacy. Social space provides an arena in which disagreement can be expressed without necessarily becoming social division. The process illustrates how informal relationships, communication, and deliberation complement formal village governance.

Social Space in Kinship Relations

The people of Cibuntu Village possess close social relationships because most residents have lived together within a relatively homogeneous social environment characterised by strong kinship ties. This closeness creates mutual familiarity, trust, and assistance among residents. In daily life, kinship relations are reflected through mutual cooperation, social care, and community involvement in various collective activities, both social activities and tourism village development initiatives.

Social space based on kinship also contributes to maintaining social stability within the community. Whenever differences of opinion or potential conflicts emerge among residents, kinship relations become a medium that facilitates more peaceful and deliberative problem-solving processes. The community prioritises familial approaches and informal communication rather than open confrontation. This indicates that kinship relations function as a social mechanism that strengthens community cohesion. As one informant stated:

We welcome tourist guests in the same way that we welcome distant relatives who long to return home. There is no significant distance between us and the guests. We simply serve them according to the customary way our community receives visitors (Jojo)

Kinship represents another central dimension of internal social space in Cibuntu. Residents describe their relationships in terms of familiarity, mutual trust, and shared responsibility. These relationships are maintained through everyday interaction, collective activities, and mutual assistance.

Importantly, kinship also extends into the tourism experience. Residents describe their treatment of tourists through the metaphor of receiving a distant relative returning home. This illustrates how tourism hospitality is embedded within the community's existing social logic. Rather than creating an entirely new relationship between host and guest, tourism provides a new context in which established values of hospitality and social connectedness are expressed. The findings therefore indicate that kinship operates as more than a background characteristic of the village. It functions as a social resource that facilitates cooperation, reduces social distance, supports conflict management, and shapes the way tourists are incorporated into the social environment of the destination.

Social Space in Sharing Benefits

The culture of sharing in Cibuntu Village is reflected in community involvement in helping one another across various social and tourism-related activities. Residents who operate homestays, culinary businesses, or other tourism-related activities tend to support one another and share opportunities so that the economic benefits of tourism can be distributed more evenly. This condition indicates that the community is not solely oriented towards individual profit, but also possesses collective awareness regarding the importance of maintaining communal welfare within tourism village development. An informant explained:

We, the homestay owners, always follow the scheduling arranged by the tourism management group. Livelihood is already determined by God. So far, we are satisfied with the scheduling system that has been implemented. We refuse to promote our homestays through RedDoorz because it would disrupt the system that has been functioning well (Mulyana)

The findings identify benefit sharing as an important expression of collective social norms in tourism management. Homestay owners participate in a guest-allocation system organised by the tourism management group. Rather than independently competing for visitors, participating homestays follow an agreed scheduling mechanism intended to distribute tourism opportunities among residents.

The acceptance of this system reflects a collective understanding that tourism benefits should not be concentrated among a small number of individuals. Residents' reluctance to adopt external marketing arrangements that might disrupt the existing allocation system further indicates that social equilibrium is considered an important consideration in tourism management. Benefit sharing in Cibuntu therefore extends beyond the distribution of financial income. It represents a social arrangement through which economic opportunities are managed in accordance with community norms. The findings suggest that the sustainability of tourism activities is partly supported by the community's willingness to balance individual economic interests with collective welfare.

External Social Space

Social Space in Creating Memorable Tourism Experiences

Tourism experiences in Cibuntu Village are constructed through social activities that allow tourists to interact directly with the local community. Tourists not only enjoy natural scenery and tourism facilities, but also participate in various community activities such as farming activities, traditional culinary experiences, local

arts, cultural activities, and everyday village life. These interactions create more participatory tourism experiences and provide tourists with a deeper understanding of local cultural values and social life.

The hospitality of the people of Cibuntu represents one form of social space that significantly influences the quality of tourist experiences. The community's openness, culture of greeting one another, and acceptance of visitors create a comfortable and intimate social atmosphere. These conditions make tourists feel not merely like visitors, but as part of the village's social life during their stay. Warm social relations between the community and tourists become a distinctive attraction that differentiates tourism villages from conventional tourism destinations. One tourist expressed:

I was deeply touched when, on a rainy and cold morning, hot water had already been prepared for my bath. Even my own mother back in NTT had never done that for me. I was speechless and unable to say anything. That is how politely and thoughtfully the people of Cibuntu treated me (Nana)

The findings show that social space extends beyond relationships among residents to include interactions between the community and tourists. Tourists participate in agricultural activities, local culinary practices, cultural activities, traditional arts, and aspects of everyday village life. These interactions allow tourists to experience the destination through direct engagement with residents rather than through tourism attractions alone. Community hospitality emerged as a particularly important element of these experiences. Tourists described feeling personally cared for during their stay, including experiences in which residents anticipated their needs and provided assistance beyond formal tourism services. Such experiences generated emotional responses that extended beyond satisfaction with physical facilities.

The findings indicate that the social dimension of the destination is therefore an important component of the tourism experience. Tourists encounter not only the physical landscape and cultural attractions of Cibuntu, but also the relational qualities of village life. Social interaction consequently becomes part of the destination experience itself.

Social Space in Creating Emotional Attachment to Cibuntu Village

Social space within Cibuntu Tourism Village also influences the formation of tourists' revisit intentions. Within the context of community-based tourism villages, tourists' decisions to return are not solely influenced by the physical attractiveness of the destination, but also by the social experiences they gain through interaction with the local community. Warm social relations, community hospitality, and authentic cultural experiences become essential components in creating tourists' emotional attachment to the destination.

Tourism experiences in Cibuntu are built through direct interaction between tourists and local residents. Tourists not only enjoy tourism attractions, but also experience the friendly, open, and communal social atmosphere of village life. These interactions create more personal tourism experiences that differ significantly from mass tourism destinations. Consequently, tourists feel welcomed, accepted, and emotionally connected to the social environment of the tourism village.

The hospitality of the community represents one of the forms of social space most strongly perceived by tourists during their stay in Cibuntu Village. The communicative, helpful, and open attitudes of residents generate positive social experiences. In many cases, tourists visit not merely to enjoy the destination itself, but also to experience the communal and familial atmosphere of village life. Such social experiences foster feelings of longing and encourage tourists to revisit the village.

Social Space in Creating Respect and Care

Within the daily life of Cibuntu Village, values of respect are reflected through mutual appreciation in social interactions. Residents maintain harmonious social relations by prioritising politeness, tolerance, and respect for differing opinions within community life. These conditions create a harmonious social atmosphere that enables the community to coexist and collaborate in various tourism village activities.

In addition to relationships among residents, values of respect are also reflected in interactions between the local community and tourists. The people of Cibuntu welcome tourists warmly and value their presence as part of the social activities of the tourism village. In turn, tourists are encouraged to respect local norms, culture, and customs during their visit. This reciprocal relationship creates positive social interaction and strengthens a more humanistic and authentic tourism experience.

The final theme concerns the relationship between social space, respect, and tourists' emotional attachment to Cibuntu. Respect operates reciprocally: residents are expected to welcome visitors with courtesy, while visitors are expected to respect local norms, culture, and community practices. The findings

suggest that this reciprocal relationship reduces the social distance between residents and tourists. Tourists are not positioned solely as consumers of tourism products, but are temporarily incorporated into the social environment of the village. This interaction can generate feelings of belonging, familiarity, and emotional attachment.

Several tourist experiences indicate that the warmth of social interaction contributed to feelings that Cibuntu was similar to a home or a place to which one might wish to return. The findings therefore suggest a relationship between the quality of social interaction, emotional attachment, and revisit intention. In this context, the attractiveness of Cibuntu is partly derived from the social experience created through relationships between residents and visitors.

The findings therefore suggest that social space is not an additional or peripheral element of tourism village development. Rather, it functions as a social mechanism through which community-based tourism is enacted and reproduced. Existing relationships and collective norms provide the basis for organising tourism activities, while tourism simultaneously creates new contexts in which these relationships are expressed and reinforced. The Cibuntu case consequently demonstrates that the sustainability of a tourism village depends not only on tourism resources and formal institutions, but also on the capacity of the community to maintain, adapt, and reproduce its social space as tourism develops.

The concept of social space is an abstract notion that has evolved within society and is frequently understood as a space for gathering and social interaction. Several scholars have also conceptualised social space as a virtual sphere in which various social issues and societal problems are discussed (Katchanov & Shmatko, 2024; Liu, 2024). Nevertheless, these scholars generally agree that social space functions as a forum for discussion and social engagement.

The findings demonstrate that social space in Cibuntu Tourism Village extends beyond a physical or symbolic arena of interaction. It operates as a relational mechanism through which community-based tourism is collectively organised, negotiated, and reproduced. Five functional dimensions emerged from the empirical analysis: community welfare, tourism governance, conflict resolution, economic benefit distribution, and tourism experience. These dimensions are interconnected rather than operating independently. Kinship, trust, collective norms, and communication provide the relational foundation through which residents participate in tourism, negotiate decisions, resolve disagreements, distribute tourism benefits, and interact with visitors. This finding extends the understanding of social space by positioning it not merely as a setting in which social relations occur, but as a mechanism through which community-based tourism becomes socially embedded.

The first function of social space concerns community welfare. The Cibuntu findings show that tourism generates economic opportunities through homestays, culinary activities, MSMEs, guiding services, transportation, cultural activities, and other tourism-related enterprises. However, the welfare function of social space cannot be reduced to additional household income. It also includes knowledge exchange, mutual assistance, social support, and the preservation of collective practices.

This finding is consistent with (Suyatna et al., 2024), whose study of Nglanggeran demonstrates that community-based tourism can contribute to poverty alleviation and social well-being through community-based mechanisms of collective resource governance. Similarly, research on rural tourism has demonstrated that community involvement can influence residents' life satisfaction through perceived benefits and trust in government. The Cibuntu case adds an important dimension to these findings by showing that welfare is also produced through non-economic social practices. Assistance to households, collective labour, food contributions, and mutual support during periods of difficulty indicate that tourism operates within an already existing social welfare system rather than creating an entirely new one.

This finding also resonates with (Zhang et al., 2021), who empirically demonstrated a relationship between community-based tourism and the formation of social capital as an important component of sociocultural sustainability. Their work indicates that tourism can contribute to the formation of social capital when residents perceive positive social consequences from tourism. In Cibuntu, however, the relationship appears to operate in both directions: pre-existing social capital facilitates tourism development, while tourism provides an additional context through which that social capital is reproduced. Thus, social space may be understood as a recursive welfare mechanism, in which existing social relationships support tourism and tourism subsequently reinforces those relationships.

The concept of social space according to Henri Lefebvre refers to the idea that space is not merely an empty physical container or geographical coordinate, but rather a dynamic social construction. Space is

created, transformed, and interpreted through human activities, interactions, power relations, and societal value systems. Within sociological studies, Lefebvre's understanding is further developed through the dialectic of three dimensions, commonly referred to as the triad of space, namely: a) Spatial Practice: the physical routines and everyday activities undertaken by individuals within a particular environment, such as daily travel routes or work routines; b) Representations of Space: space as conceptualised by planners, architects, or those in positions of authority, such as urban planning maps, zoning systems, or building regulations; and c) Representational Space: space as experienced and lived by its users, filled with symbols, meanings, and memories, such as specific corners of a town that function as gathering places for communities.

In the case of social space in Cibuntu, the community appears to possess a particularly strong representational space that has become an integral part of the village's historical identity. Through this social space, all forms of developmental capital natural, cultural, and social have been preserved and maintained sustainably.

The second dimension concerns governance. The Cibuntu findings indicate that important tourism decisions were not implemented exclusively through formal village institutions. Community meetings, explanation, deliberation, and informal communication were used to create social acceptance before major tourism-related policies were implemented. Social space therefore functions as a bridge between formal governance structures and community legitimacy.

This finding is strongly supported by recent empirical research on tourism villages. (Faully & Wiloso, 2021), for example, found that norms, trust, and networks were central to the development of community-based tourism in Kauman Kidul. (Suryandhani et al., 2023) similarly demonstrated that social capital is associated with collective action in tourism village development, while research in Turi District found that tourism villages function as collectively managed assets supported by strong social relations, local institutions, bridging networks, and leadership. Research on rural tourism leadership in Yogyakarta (Irawan, 2025b) further confirms that leadership operates within broader social-capital structures and is important for sustaining community tourism activities.

The Cibuntu case extends these findings by showing that social space provides the arena in which social capital is converted into governance practice. Trust alone does not produce governance; it becomes consequential when expressed through communication, deliberation, collective agreement, and acceptance of decisions. Recent research on adaptive governance in Indonesian tourism villages similarly identifies social networks and perceived community power as important contributors to adaptive capacity, although trust in government and reciprocity did not show direct effects in that study. This difference is analytically important. In Cibuntu, trust appears to operate less as an isolated determinant of tourism sustainability and more as part of a broader relational system involving kinship, leadership, deliberation, and local legitimacy.

The governance function of social space therefore suggests that CBT should not be evaluated solely by the presence of formal participation mechanisms. A village may have a tourism committee, village regulations, or formal participation structures without necessarily possessing strong social governance. What distinguishes Cibuntu is the integration of formal institutions with informal social relations. This finding is consistent with recent work showing that community participation, governance, and institutional capacity are central to sustainable tourism village management (Alfrojems & Anugrahin, 2019).

The existence of social space within tourism village communities appears to align closely with the principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT). CBT requires harmony between tourism activities and the preservation of cultural, social, and environmental sustainability. This form of tourism is managed and owned by the community for the benefit of the community, while simultaneously enabling tourists to increase their awareness and understanding of local communities and their ways of life. Consequently, CBT differs significantly from mass tourism (Suansri et al., 2003). Furthermore, CBT represents a tourism development model based on the assumption that tourism should emerge from an awareness of community values and needs in order to create tourism that is more beneficial to local initiatives, opportunities, and community welfare. CBT is not a tourism business designed primarily to maximise profits for investors; rather, it is more closely associated with the social and environmental impacts of tourism upon local communities and environmental resources.

The third dimension concerns conflict resolution. The Cibuntu findings show that the closure of sand mining and the relocation of sheep enclosures generated resistance because the policies affected established economic and social interests. Nevertheless, conflict did not escalate into prolonged social division. Repeated

communication, persuasive approaches, and deliberation enabled the community to gradually accept the policies.

This finding is particularly relevant because CBT does not automatically eliminate conflict. Community-based tourism brings together actors with different interests, resources, and levels of power. Research on the Pindul Cave tourism area demonstrates that tourism development can generate land and institutional conflicts among landowners, Pokdarwis, and village institutions, requiring governance mechanisms for conflict management (Hashilah et al., 2026). Likewise, recent work on inclusive tourism in Bira Village indicates that tourism participation can remain fragmented across social and institutional levels, demonstrating that community-based approaches do not necessarily guarantee inclusive governance (Irwan & Zaman, 2026).

The Cibuntu findings therefore contribute to the literature by highlighting social space as a conflict-processing mechanism. Conflict is not necessarily absent; rather, disagreement can be incorporated into an established social process through which competing interests are communicated and negotiated. Community leaders play an important role because their legitimacy allows them to mediate between formal policy objectives and residents' interests. In this respect, social space functions as a form of informal institutional infrastructure that complements formal governance. This interpretation also helps refine the application of Bourdieu's concept of social space. Social space is not simply a harmonious field of relationships. It contains differences in interests, positions, and forms of capital. What appears as social cohesion in Cibuntu is therefore not the absence of contestation, but the community's capacity to process contestation without destroying collective relationships. This represents an important distinction between social cohesion and social homogeneity.

In addition to functioning as a medium of interaction and social cohesion that fulfils the spiritual, emotional, and social needs of local communities, social space also creates a similar atmosphere for visiting tourists. The findings of this study indicate that social space influences at least eight psychographic aspects of both residents and tourists. This is consistent with the findings of (Putri et al., 2023) who identified social space as a centre of interaction and a medium for cultural preservation where local communities and tourists intermingle. The implications of such interaction include the creation of memorable tourism experiences, feelings of belonging and "coming home", and greater respect towards village life.

The fourth dimension concerns the distribution of tourism benefits. The Cibuntu homestay scheduling system demonstrates a collective arrangement through which tourism opportunities are distributed among participating households. Residents' willingness to follow the scheduling mechanism, and their reluctance to adopt external marketing arrangements that might disrupt it, indicate that economic behaviour is influenced by collective norms and social expectations. This finding corresponds closely with empirical research on benefit sharing in rural tourism. Study of (Greblikaitė, 2017) found that benefit sharing is multidimensional and that combinations of sharing facilities, culture, environmental resources, and development ideas can contribute to residents' subjective well-being. The Cibuntu case adds to this literature by demonstrating that benefit sharing can function as a social norm and governance mechanism, rather than simply as an economic distribution formula.

The finding also resonates with research on community-based tourism governance, which emphasises equitable benefit distribution as a condition for sustaining community participation. Recent research on Bandar Kidul Ikat Weaving Tourism Village (Fatima & Hardjati, 2025) found that social capital positively influences community governance and tourism sustainability, while research in Wonokitri links community participation with tourism village management and sustainability (Lestari et al., 2025). However, Cibuntu demonstrates a distinctive form of economic rationality. Residents do not appear to reject economic opportunities; rather, they seek to balance individual economic interests with collective distribution. The community's preference for the existing homestay allocation system suggests that social equilibrium may be valued alongside economic maximisation. This is particularly significant for CBT because excessive competition among residents may weaken the very social relationships upon which community-based tourism depends. The implication is that benefit sharing should not be understood simply as an outcome of CBT. It can also be regarded as an institutionalised expression of social space, where norms, trust, and kinship shape the way economic opportunities are allocated.

In the practical development of social space within tourism villages, the findings indicate that social space in Cibuntu facilitates the formation of social welfare through both economic and non-economic opportunities. Using the principles of CBT, these findings strongly correspond with the idea that CBT emphasises tourism that considers and prioritises socio-cultural and environmental sustainability, managed

and owned by communities for the benefit of communities themselves (Anstrand, 2006). Social space creates processes of social learning within the community. Informants explained that local residents gained new understandings regarding tourism services without losing their local cultural identity. Tourists are treated as “distant relatives” visiting the village, rather than as formal guests in a hotel setting. These findings indicate that social space enables communities to adapt tourism activities without abandoning the social and cultural values that have long characterised village life.

Such practices represent one of the distinctive characteristics of “Indonesian hospitality”, which is deeply rooted in local traditions and communal philosophies. Grounded in ancestral values such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and tamu adalah raja (“guests are kings”), these concepts emphasise profound respect, welcoming visitors as extended family members, and sharing indigenous heritage (IWGIA, 2025)

The fifth dimension concerns the external social space created through interaction between residents and tourists. The findings indicate that tourists' experiences in Cibuntu are shaped not only by natural attractions, accommodation, and tourism activities, but also by interpersonal relationships with residents. Hospitality, personal attention, respect, and the treatment of tourists as distant relatives contribute to experiences that tourists perceive as meaningful and emotionally distinctive. This finding is consistent with empirical studies of memorable tourism experiences in tourism villages. Research in Penglipuran found that memorable tourism experience influences tourist satisfaction, while satisfaction subsequently contributes to revisit intention (Silitonga & Wirawan, 2026). Research in Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village similarly examines memorable experiences associated with local food and heritage tourism in relation to revisit and recommendation intentions (Hidayat et al., 2023). Evidence from Batulayang Tourism Village also links memorable tourism experience with tourist loyalty, including revisit and recommendation intentions (Abdillah & Syaiful Bahri, 2026).

The Cibuntu findings extend this literature by identifying social interaction itself as a component of the memorable experience. The experience does not arise exclusively from the consumption of an attraction; it emerges through the relationship between host and guest. This is consistent with research showing that community cultural development can strengthen belonging, community capacity, and commitment, while also supporting more sustainable forms of community-based tourism. The Cibuntu case therefore suggests that the external social space of a tourism village can temporarily incorporate visitors into the social life of the destination. The metaphor used by residents that tourists are treated like distant relatives returning home is analytically significant. It indicates that hospitality is not merely a service behaviour but a culturally embedded social practice. This may explain why tourists experience Cibuntu not simply as a place to visit, but as a place associated with emotional comfort and belonging.

Strong kinship relations in Cibuntu Village generate mutual trust and social solidarity among residents. Community members treat tourists as though they were members of their own family, thereby creating warmer and more authentic social interactions. Such kinship-based social space strengthens community social identity while simultaneously functioning as a tourism attraction grounded in social experience. Moreover, the findings reveal the existence of a sharing benefit system in homestay management through guest scheduling coordinated by the tourism village management group. This system is accepted by the community because it is perceived as creating a fairer distribution of economic benefits. The community's rejection of external marketing systems such as RedDoorz demonstrates that residents prioritise social balance over individual economic competition.

Tourism experiences are shaped not only by tourism attractions, but also by the warm social interactions between tourists and local residents. Tourists' emotional responses after being treated with genuine care demonstrate that emotional experience constitutes an important dimension of tourism experiences in Cibuntu Village. Within this context, social space becomes a mechanism for creating tourists' emotional attachment to the destination. Tourists not only experience the destination physically, but also engage in authentic social experiences. This, in turn, strengthens the likelihood of revisit intention. According to (Cohen, 1988) authenticity in tourism is formed through social and cultural experiences directly encountered by tourists. The findings in Cibuntu Village indicate that such authenticity emerges from the strength and natural character of the community's social relationships.

This integrated interpretation is consistent with empirical evidence showing that social capital, community participation, governance, and tourism sustainability are closely interconnected. Studies in Kauman Kidul, Turi, Gunungsari, Bangelan, and other Indonesian tourism villages demonstrate different relationships among social capital, collective action, leadership, participation, and sustainable tourism. Research in Nglangeran further illustrates how inter-organisational collaboration initiated by local

communities can contribute to the sustainability of community-based rural tourism. However, the Cibuntu findings suggest that these relationships can be conceptually integrated through social space. Social capital describes the resources embedded in relationships, whereas social space describes the relational arena and processes through which those resources are activated, negotiated, and reproduced. CBT provides the institutional and normative context in which these processes become relevant to tourism development.

Conclusions

This study concludes that social space functions as an important relational mechanism in the development and governance of Cibuntu Tourism Village. Based on thematic analysis of interviews with 10 participants, direct observation, and documentary analysis, five interconnected functions of social space were identified: supporting community welfare, facilitating participatory tourism governance, enabling conflict resolution, promoting equitable benefit distribution, and shaping memorable tourism experiences. Social space enables mutual assistance, knowledge exchange, collective decision-making, and negotiation of differences, demonstrating that social cohesion is reflected not in the absence of conflict but in the community's capacity to manage differences while maintaining social relationships. The homestay allocation system further illustrates how trust, fairness, and collective norms mediate the distribution of tourism opportunities, while hospitality and resident tourist interaction contribute to memorable experiences and emotional attachment to the destination. Overall, social space serves as a social foundation through which community-based tourism is enacted and embedded in everyday village life by connecting social capital including kinship, trust, norms, solidarity, and social networks with tourism governance, welfare, conflict management, benefit sharing, and resident tourist interaction. Thus, social space is not merely a setting for tourism activities but a relational mechanism that supports the development and reproduction of community-based tourism. The use of multiple data sources, member checking, and extended field observation strengthened the credibility of these findings; however, their contextual nature should be acknowledged, and the findings do not establish causal relationships between social space and tourism sustainability. Practically, Cibuntu should maintain equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, preserve a balance among economic, socio-cultural, and environmental development, and strengthen existing social spaces to prevent excessive competition and preserve the village's social character. Local governments may also consider Cibuntu as a model for tourism village development grounded in social space, community social capital, local culture, and participation rather than economic growth alone. Future research should examine the influence of social space on tourist loyalty, cultural sustainability, community leadership, and social resilience, as well as conduct comparative studies across tourism villages to identify how different forms of social space affect the governance and sustainability of community-based tourism.

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