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A Study of the Meaning of “Home” and Residential Preferences among Urban Nomads in Manado City: A Phenomenological Approach to Boarding-House Dwellings

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ABSTRACT



This study explores how urban nomads in Manado conceptualize “home” and choose where to live. Drawing on a qualitative, phenomenological approach, it analyzes primary data from surveys and student podcasts conducted in several boarding houses (Kos Rachmat and comparative cases), complemented by secondary literature on housing, urban change, and vernacular architecture. The findings show that, for urban nomads, home is not merely a physical dwelling but a dynamic emotional space: a temporary refuge that “absorbs fatigue,” a transitional shelter that provides comfort amid mobility, and a “second home” saturated with memory and identity. A spatial hierarchy of private, semi-public, and public zones shapes a hybrid culture that negotiates individual values (privacy and autonomy) with collective practices (mutual aid, everyday rituals, and informal conflict resolution). Residential preferences are strongly influenced by accessibility to campuses and city centers, perceived security supported by clear rules, the availability of basic infrastructure, and affordable rents that correspond to student and young-worker budgets. These insights deepen Amos Rapoport’s theory of house form and culture and offer practical recommendations for designing adaptive boarding houses and developing inclusive, sustainable urban policies in Manado.

INTRODUCTION

Manado City, the capital of North Sulawesi Province, is undergoing rapid urban transformation, characterized by the expansion of built-up areas, the development of new residential districts, and increasing demand for living spaces capable of responding to the continuously evolving dynamics of the city. This development is not limited to the city center but also extends to emerging growth areas such as Mapanget, which is positioned within spatial planning policies as a strategic area and a new development center of Manado City. Within this context, changes in the city’s spatial structure also influence residential patterns, particularly among groups requiring flexible, affordable housing located close to educational institutions, workplaces, and urban services.

Amid these changes, the phenomenon of urban nomads has emerged, referring to groups that include migrant students, young workers, remote workers, and other individuals characterized by high mobility and a tendency not to settle permanently over the long term. For these groups, home does not always take the form of a permanent dwelling but is often experienced through transitional spaces that allow them to continue their activities, establish routines, and maintain the continuity of everyday life. Boarding houses subsequently become one of the most relevant forms of accommodation because they offer a combination of flexibility, relatively affordable prices, and strategic locations near campuses and city centers.



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Nevertheless, viewing a boarding house merely as a place to sleep or as a functional temporary shelter would oversimplify the residential experiences of its occupants. In everyday practice, a boarding house also functions as a private space, transitional space, restorative space, and even social space where residents develop habits, feelings of security, memories, and forms of identification with place. A phenomenological perspective emphasizes that the meaning of dwelling is determined not only by the physical aspects of a building but also by the lived experiences that occur within it, including how individuals perceive comfort, attachment, orientation, and the condition of “being at home” within a domestic space that may be temporary.

The urgency of this study is further reinforced by contemporary changes in urban residential patterns, which demonstrate that rental housing, particularly boarding houses, has shifted from functioning merely as places for overnight stays toward transitional living spaces accommodating physical, emotional, and social needs simultaneously. For migrant students, young workers, or highly mobile residents, a boarding house becomes a place to rest, study, work, interact, and establish a new rhythm of life within a dynamic urban environment. Therefore, the experience of dwelling in a boarding house cannot be understood solely through rational measures such as price, facilities, and distance; it must also be interpreted as an existential experience associated with a sense of returning home, security, and the construction of the meaning of home.

To date, studies of boarding houses in Indonesia have generally focused more extensively on housing-selection factors such as rental prices, location, facilities, security, and functional comfort. Meanwhile, studies of the existential meaning of “home” among boarding-house residents, particularly within the context of urban nomads in a developing city such as Manado, remain relatively limited in the existing literature. This gap indicates that boarding houses have not been sufficiently examined as phenomenological spaces, that is, spaces that are not merely occupied but experienced, interpreted, and negotiated in everyday life by their residents.

This study is based on the assumption that the meaning of “home” for urban nomads is not necessarily synonymous with ownership of a permanent residence but can emerge within temporary accommodation as long as the space is capable of providing security, order, comfort, and opportunities for the construction of self-identity. In this context, an architectural phenomenological approach is relevant because it enables researchers to understand residents’ subjective experiences of boarding-house spaces, including how they interpret bedrooms, corridors, shared kitchens, terraces, and other spatial boundaries in everyday life. Furthermore, this approach helps explain how spatial hierarchies and cultures formed within boarding houses influence the residential preferences of urban nomads.

Based on this background, this study aims to:

1. Analyze the subjective meaning of “home” for urban nomads residing in boarding houses in Manado City;
2. Identify the spatial hierarchies and cultures formed within boarding-house dwellings; and
3. Reveal residents’ residential preferences and their implications for housing planning and housing policies in Manado City. Accordingly, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to research on the meaning of home and the phenomenology of dwelling while also offering practical input for the development of more adaptive and inclusive urban housing that responds to the needs of highly mobile populations in a developing city.

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical foundations: Amos Rapoport’s theory of house form and culture and the architectural phenomenology approach developed by Christian Norberg-Schulz, with philosophical foundations derived from Martin Heidegger. These two theoretical foundations were selected because they are capable of explaining housing not merely as a physical object but as a space containing cultural values, social structures, subjective experiences, and existential meanings for its occupants. Within the context of this study, boarding houses in Manado City are not understood merely as low-cost rental buildings but as transitional living spaces where urban nomads construct a sense of security, identity, social relationships, and residential preferences.

Conceptually, Rapoport’s theory helps interpret how the form and spatial organization of boarding houses constitute products of residents’ cultural needs, lifestyles, and social values. Meanwhile, architectural phenomenology helps explain how these spaces are experienced, interpreted, and lived in everyday life as part of the dwelling experience. By combining these two perspectives, the study can examine the relationship among physical, social, and symbolic dimensions in the formation of the meaning of “home” within boarding-house dwellings.

Amos Rapoport’s theory

Amos Rapoport is one of the important figures in environmental-behavior studies who emphasizes that the form of housing never emerges neutrally but is shaped by culture, ways of life, and social value systems. In *House Form and Culture*, Rapoport argues that house form is not merely the result of physical factors such as climate, technology, or materials but is a consequence of a broad range of sociocultural factors. In other words, a house reflects everyday patterns of life, family norms, social relationships, economic structures, and the worldview of a particular community.

This perspective is important because it positions the house as an expression of culture rather than merely a container for domestic activities. Rapoport also demonstrates that traditional and vernacular house forms are strongly influenced by how communities organize their lives, distribute social roles, and

define boundaries between private and shared spaces. Therefore, an analysis of boarding-house dwellings can examine not only building form but also spatial organization, the use of shared areas, patterns of privacy, and the ways in which residents personalize their rooms.

In his later work, *The Meaning of the Built Environment*, Rapoport emphasizes that the built environment functions as a system of nonverbal communication. Spatial layouts, room sizes, corridor positions, the presence of shared spaces, and personal decorations can communicate messages concerning identity, social relationships, hierarchy, and patterns of interaction within a residential environment. This perspective is highly relevant to research on boarding houses in Manado because boarding houses are not merely products of the low-cost housing market but spaces that are organized and used in distinctive ways by urban nomads according to their needs for mobility, privacy, efficiency, and social connectedness.

Within the context of urban nomads, Rapoport's theory helps explain that residential preferences are based not only on economic considerations but also on the compatibility between spatial form and residents' cultural ways of life. Rooms that can be personalized, corridors that enable spontaneous interaction, or boarding-house rules that provide a sense of security constitute aspects of spatial form that are culturally interpreted and selected. Thus, this theory provides a foundation for understanding boarding houses as house forms that reflect the temporary, flexible, and adaptive lifestyles of urban nomads.

Architectural Phenomenology approach

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach that seeks to understand human experience as it is directly experienced within the everyday lifeworld. In architecture, phenomenology is employed to examine how spaces are perceived, interpreted, and lived by people rather than merely how spaces are designed or technically function. This approach is important in housing research because the experience of dwelling is not solely related to the physical dimensions of space but also to atmosphere, security, memory, comfort, and attachment to place. Christian Norberg-Schulz is a central figure in architectural phenomenology, particularly through his works *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* and *The Concept of Dwelling*. According to Norberg-Schulz, people truly dwell when they are able to orient themselves within their environment and identify themselves with that place; in other words, when the environment is experienced as something meaningful. He refers to this condition as *dwelling*, an existential condition in which an individual does not merely reside physically but also obtains an existential foothold within their living environment.

The concept of *genius loci*, or the "spirit of place," is central to Norberg-Schulz's thinking. A place is not understood merely as a geometrical space but as a space possessing a distinctive character capable of shaping human experiences of orientation, identity, and a sense of being in the world. In this study, this concept is highly relevant because a boarding house in Manado can become a meaningful place not because of its ownership

status but because of the everyday experiences created within it: returning to one's room, interacting in the corridor, engaging in activities in the shared kitchen, feeling secure behind a door, and personalizing the space to create a sense of "being at home."

For urban nomads, the experience of dwelling often exists in an in-between condition: they are neither fully settled nor entirely detached from the places they inhabit. In this situation, a boarding house becomes a transitional space that can develop from merely a temporary stop into a "fatigue absorber" or even a "second home" when residents establish rhythms of life, memories, and emotional bonds with the space. A phenomenological approach enables researchers to capture this transformation of meaning more deeply because its focus lies on residents lived experience of boarding-house spaces.

This phenomenological foundation is also reinforced by Martin Heidegger's thought, particularly the idea that humans do not merely exist within buildings but "dwell" as a way of being-in-the-world (*being-in-the-world*). From this perspective, a house is not merely a place of shelter but a place where people establish meaningful relationships with the surrounding world. Accordingly, this study views boarding-house dwellings as spaces that can contain existential value even though their nature is temporary and non-permanent.

Concept of spatial hierarchy and vernacular architecture

In addition to the theory of house form and culture and architectural phenomenology, this study also employs the concepts of spatial hierarchy and vernacular architecture to understand the spatial structure and patterns of adaptation within boarding-house dwellings. Paul Oliver explains that vernacular architecture consists of buildings that emerge from people's everyday needs and develop without the dominance of formally trained professional designers, and are therefore strongly influenced by local social, cultural, economic, and environmental contexts. In this sense, boarding houses can be understood as a form of urban vernacular architecture because they emerge from the actual needs of urban communities for flexible, economical, and accessible housing.

As an urban vernacular form, boarding houses demonstrate strong adaptive characteristics. Spatial forms, residential rules, the use of shared areas, and residents' ways of modifying their rooms demonstrate that boarding houses develop in response to the rapidly changing needs of urban life. This is consistent with Oliver's view that vernacular architecture is fundamentally constructed to fulfill needs rather than merely to satisfy formal aesthetic ideals.

The concept of spatial hierarchy is important for understanding how spaces within boarding houses are organized and interpreted. In general, boarding houses contain private, semi-public, and public spaces, each of which possesses different social and psychological functions. Bedrooms generally constitute the primary private spaces functioning as personal fortresses, while corridors, shared kitchens, and seating areas serve as semi-public spaces that facilitate interaction,

negotiation, and the development of social relationships among residents. Meanwhile, terraces, gates, or the front areas of buildings function as public spaces or thresholds connecting the boarding house with its external environment.

This spatial hierarchy is not merely a technical arrangement but also a structure of dwelling experience. The division among private, semi-public, and public spaces determines the extent to which residents can maintain privacy, establish social closeness, or feel secure within a temporary residential environment. In this study, this concept helps explain how experiences of boarding-house spaces form a hybrid culture, namely a mixture of individual needs for privacy and collective needs for social interaction and communal support.

Relevant previous studies

Previous studies indicate that issues of home, boarding houses, and residential mobility have been examined from various perspectives, although they remain dispersed across separate areas of focus. Prasetio, Sirait, and Hanafitri examine the meaning of boarding houses for migrant students and demonstrate that a boarding house can be understood not merely as temporary accommodation but also as a “place to return to” possessing emotional value. This finding is important as an initial basis for understanding that, in the context of educational migration, home is not necessarily synonymous with the original family home but can also be constructed within temporary residential spaces.

Gulo’s research places greater emphasis on financial and non-financial factors in decisions to choose boarding houses, including price, facilities, accessibility, and comfort. This study is useful for explaining the rational dimension of residential preferences but does not fully address the existential experience and meaning of home formed during the dwelling process. Meanwhile, Pramudya and colleagues and Kothari’s work demonstrate that digital-nomad trends and post-pandemic work mobility have encouraged demand for more flexible and adaptive housing forms that respond to mobile lifestyles.

In a broader context, studies of urban transformation and housing policies in Indonesia, such as those discussed by Kanakane et al., Rahmawati, and Peters, demonstrate that changes in urban structures, the development of new areas, and housing policies strongly influence the residential patterns of urban communities. These studies help explain that urban spatial dynamics generate demand for transitional housing forms capable of responding to the needs of highly mobile groups. Nevertheless, most of these studies continue to position housing within policy, spatial, or economic frameworks and have not specifically connected the lived experiences of urban nomads with the meaning of home at the micro-scale of everyday domestic space.

Based on these previous studies, there remains considerable potential for developing research at the intersection of the meaning of home, phenomenological dwelling experience,

spatial hierarchy, and residential preferences among urban nomads in boarding-house dwellings. This study positions itself within this intersection by placing boarding houses in Manado City as the locus for understanding how temporary spaces can function as homes that are emotionally, socially, and existentially meaningful.

Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework of this study is constructed through the integration of four principal elements: Rapoport’s theory of house form and culture, the phenomenology of dwelling developed by Norberg-Schulz and Heidegger, Oliver’s concept of vernacular architecture, and empirical findings from previous studies concerning boarding houses, urban mobility, and urban transformation in Indonesia. This integration is necessary because boarding-house dwellings cannot be understood through a single dimension alone. A boarding house constitutes a physical space, a social space, and a space of meaning formed through interactions among building form, patterns of spatial use, resident characteristics, and the urban context in which it is situated.

Within this framework, Rapoport is employed to interpret boarding houses as residential forms produced by the cultural needs and lifestyles of urban nomads. Norberg-Schulz and Heidegger are used to interpret the dwelling experience as a process through which place meaning, a sense of security, and identification with space are constructed. Oliver helps explain boarding houses as adaptive forms of urban vernacular architecture responding to everyday needs. Meanwhile, Indonesian empirical studies provide a basis for mapping residential-preference factors while simultaneously identifying a research gap concerning the existential meaning of home among boarding-house residents.

Operationally, this conceptual framework directs the analysis toward three primary research focuses. First, the subjective meaning of “home” experienced by boarding-house residents, whether as a temporary stop, a fatigue absorber, or a second home. Second, the spatial hierarchy and boarding-house culture formed through relationships among private, semi-public, and public spaces. Third, residential preferences emerging from the intersection of residents’ practical needs, emotional needs, and social experiences as urban nomads. Through this framework, the study is expected to produce a comprehensive interpretation of boarding houses as transitional spaces possessing architectural, social, and phenomenological value within the context of Manado City’s development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is an architectural study employing a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the meaning of “home” and residential preferences among urban nomads through boarding-house dwellings in Manado City. This methodology is designed to understand not only the physical aspects of

buildings but also the spatial experiences, spatial hierarchies, and cultural meanings formed within them.

Research design

This study employs an architectural phenomenological approach. This approach is appropriate for exploring residents lived experiences of residential spaces (*dwelling experience*) as subjectively perceived (Norberg-Schulz 1980). Phenomenology enables researchers to reveal the essence of the meaning of boarding-house spaces as dynamic “temporary homes,” encompassing physical, emotional, social, and cultural dimensions.

The research design is a multiple case study involving several representative boarding-house dwellings.

Research location and subjects

Research location: Boarding houses in the Pasar Karombasan area, Manado City (Kos Rachmat, Bapak Didi’s rental house, and other supporting cases). This location was selected because it represents a dense urban area with high accessibility to campuses and the city center.

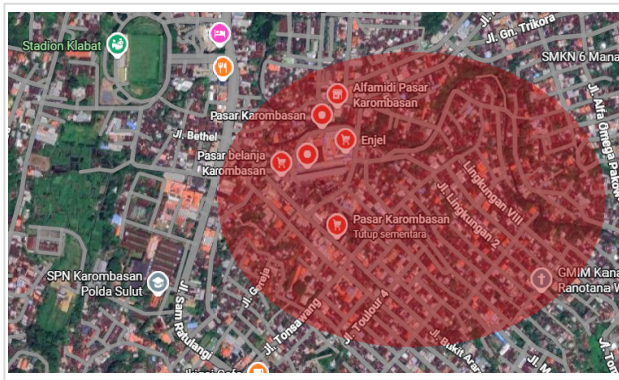


Figure 1. Research location

Research subjects: Boarding-house residents classified as urban nomads (migrant students, young workers, and new families) who have lived in the accommodation for a minimum of six months. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation.

Data collection techniques

Data collection was conducted using techniques appropriate for architectural research:

1. Architectural Observation

Direct observation of building form, spatial hierarchy (private, semi-public, public), layout, lighting, ventilation, and residents’ personalization of space.

2. Visual Documentation

Photographs and sketches were used to illustrate architectural elements of the boarding houses.

3. Survey and Interviews

Structured surveys were conducted to investigate residential preferences (accessibility, security, price, and facilities).

4. In-Depth Interviews and Podcast Transcripts

In-depth interviews and podcast transcripts were used to reveal the subjective meaning of “home.”

Data analysis techniques

Data were analyzed thematically and inductively through an architectural approach as follows:

Transcription and repeated reading of raw data

This included interview/podcast transcripts and architectural observation notes.

Categorization

Themes were grouped into broader patterns: spatial hierarchy, meaning of home (fatigue absorber, second home), and residential preferences.

In-depth interpretation

Architectural findings were connected to the theoretical foundations (Rapoport on *house form and culture*, Norberg-Schulz on the phenomenology of place, and Oliver on *vernacular architecture*).

Triangulation

Architectural observation data, surveys, podcasts, and literature were combined to increase validity.

Member checking

Interpretations were confirmed with informants to ensure their consistency with the informants’ experiences.

Validity and reliability

Validity was maintained through data and methodological triangulation as well as an audit trail (documentation of the research process). Reliability was strengthened through a thick description of the architectural context of the boarding houses.

Research ethics

This study adhered to the ethical principles of architecture and social research: informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for the privacy of boarding-house residents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study generated three interconnected principal findings: (1) the structure of spatial hierarchy and everyday activity patterns in boarding-house dwellings, (2) the dwelling culture formed as a combination of privacy and collectivity, and (3) the meaning of “home” and residential preferences among urban nomads in Manado City. These findings were obtained through an integrated analysis of survey data, architectural observations, and interviews/podcasts with boarding-house residents.

Spatial Hierarchy in Boarding-House Dwellings

At all research locations, the spatial hierarchy of boarding-house dwellings was clearly and functionally evident while

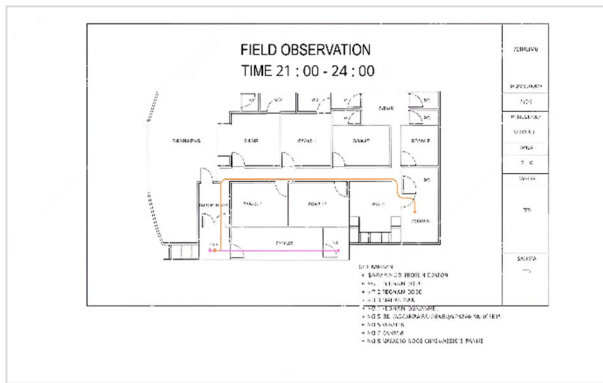


Figure 2. Activity patterns

In the morning, activities tend to be concentrated in bedrooms and service spaces (bathrooms and shared kitchens) as residents prepare for college or work. Corridors are used as the primary circulation routes, with brief interactions such as greetings or casual conversations among residents. Toward midday and afternoon, bedrooms again become spaces for individual activities (studying, working on laptops, and resting), while kitchens and corridors begin to accommodate cooking and shared meals among some residents.

At night, semi-public spaces become more active: corridors and shared kitchens are used for cooking, eating, conversing, or watching content together through mobile devices. Some residents continue to concentrate their activities within their rooms with the doors closed, indicating a strong need for privacy despite living in a communal boarding-house environment. This pattern demonstrates that boarding-house spaces undergo changes in functional intensity throughout the day while simultaneously reflecting the rhythms of urban nomadic life, which balance personal focus and social interaction.

Observational data demonstrate a clear and functional spatial hierarchy across all research locations:

1. Private Space: Bedrooms function as the “last fortress” protecting privacy. Residents frequently personalize their spaces with personal decorations, family photographs, posters (for example, the Bob Marley tapestry in Alan’s room), and personal belongings. At Kost Rachmat, privacy is stricter than in mixed-gender boarding houses such as Eben White.
2. Semi-Public Space: Corridors and shared kitchens constitute the primary transitional zones. At Rachmat, the corridor in front of the bedrooms is frequently used as a shared living area, creating unplanned interactions. However, this also results in sound leakage from private spaces.
3. Public Space: Terraces and gates function as boundaries with the external environment. All boarding houses enforce rules requiring doors to be locked and routine inspections by managers to ensure security.

Culture Formed within boarding houses

The dwelling culture within boarding houses is dynamic and contextual and demonstrates a combination of individual and collective orientations. At the individual level, residents extensively use their bedrooms for personal activities: studying, working, resting, or simply being alone. The use of headphones, closing bedroom doors, and arranging belongings according to personal preferences constitute strategies for maintaining privacy and managing their mental space amid the density of the boarding-house environment.

At the collective level, an “open-door” culture is particularly evident at Kost Rachmat, where residents rarely lock their doors while inside their rooms. This practice reflects a high level of trust among residents and facilitates spontaneous interaction in the corridors. Mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) occurs through sharing food, holding keys for one another, helping residents who become ill, or cooperating in maintaining the cleanliness of shared spaces. Daily rituals such as queuing for bathrooms and sharing schedules for using the communal kitchen further strengthen social bonds and a sense of togetherness.

Everyday conflicts, such as issues involving noise or cleanliness, are generally handled through informal negotiation and tolerance rather than rigid formal sanctions. This makes the boarding-house atmosphere more fluid and adaptive, although it can occasionally produce minor tensions depending on residents’ maturity in managing differences. Compared with several women-only boarding houses in the Karombasan area, mixed-gender boarding houses such as Rachmat tend to have a more open culture but are also more susceptible to noise and disorder.

This culture demonstrates a hybrid pattern: on the one hand, residents require privacy and independence; on the other hand, they rely on the boarding-house social network as a form of support and as a means of maintaining a sense of “not being alone” in a city away from home. This hybrid pattern constitutes one of the important characteristics of urban-nomad dwelling in boarding-house environments.

Meaning of “Home” and Residential Preferences

The meaning of “home” among boarding-house residents in Manado emerges at several levels, demonstrating that home is not perceived as a single category. The first layer is its functional meaning as a temporary stop, which is dominant among residents with highly demanding schedules. For these residents, the boarding house is a place to sleep, shower, and store belongings, with relatively limited emotional attachment.

The second layer is the boarding house as a “fatigue absorber,” namely a transitional space that helps residents release the burdens of urban activities and the pressures of study or work without making them feel lonely. In this meaning, the boarding house provides a combination of private space for rest and shared space for interaction, allowing residents to restore their energy while maintaining social networks.

The third layer is the boarding house as a “second home,” namely a place for constructing memories, identity, and emotional attachment. Room personalization, daily routines, proximity to fellow residents, and the sense of security created by boarding-house rules and patterns of interaction make some residents feel that they are “coming home” when they return to the boarding house. The boarding house is no longer merely a temporary residence but becomes a space that provides a sense of belonging and continuity in their lives in Manado.

Residential preferences among urban nomads are formed through the intersection of practical considerations and these meanings. Survey and podcast findings demonstrate that the principal factors in selecting a boarding house include: a strategic location near Sam Ratulangi University and the city center, security supported by clear rules and routine checks, the availability of basic facilities (water, electricity, WiFi, and a shared kitchen), and affordable prices corresponding to the circumstances of students and young workers. However, beyond these practical factors, the experience of feeling comfortable, accepted, and “at home” plays an important role in the decision to remain in a particular boarding house.

Comparison of Spatial Hierarchies among the Cases

Observations and interviews demonstrate that spatial hierarchies across different boarding houses follow consistent patterns but emphasize different characteristics according to the residents’ profiles. At Kost Rachmat (19 rooms, mixed-gender), the bedroom functions as the principal private space with a high degree of personalization, while the corridor and shared kitchen constitute highly active semi-public spaces. The terrace and gate function as public spaces with strict access control through locking rules and managerial monitoring.

At Kost Putri (women-only), the spatial hierarchy is stricter, with stronger emphasis on bedroom privacy. Bedroom doors tend to remain closed more frequently, while parking areas and terraces often change function into “shared living rooms.” This pattern is positive for building familiarity and social closeness but can also create sound leakage from private spaces into semi-public spaces. Meanwhile, in a rental house such as Bapak Didi’s house, the spatial hierarchy tends to be more family-oriented: the living room and terrace function as the principal public spaces, while bedrooms and the family room constitute more structured private layers.

Table 1. Comparison of Subjects

Aspect	Kost Rachmat (mixed)	Kos Putri	Bapak Didi’s rental house / other
Spatial hierarchy	Strong private bedrooms; highly active semi-public corridors and shared kitchen	Stricter bedroom privacy; terraces and parking areas often become shared living rooms	Generally, more family-oriented, with the living room and terrace as the principal public spaces
Door culture	“Open-door” culture, high level of trust; spontaneous interaction in corridors	Doors are more frequently closed; more orderly, with more structured interaction	Greater family regulation; interaction depends on relationships among residents
Dominant meaning of “home”	Fatigue absorber and second home; strong room personalization (decorations, photographs)	Fatigue absorber and safe space; rules support a sense of protection	Tends to function as a second home for new families; combination of functional and emotional dimensions
Key residential preferences	Location near campus, access to the city, comfortable shared spaces	Security, privacy, clear rules, proximity to facilities	Price and contract flexibility, proximity to social networks

The findings regarding spatial hierarchy and spatial culture can be described as follows:

- Kost Rachmat: strong private bedrooms, highly active corridors and kitchen; open-door culture and high levels of spontaneous interaction; the boarding house is often interpreted as a fatigue absorber and second home, with a preference for locations near campuses and comfortable shared spaces.
- Kos Putri: bedroom privacy is more strongly maintained, with terraces and parking areas functioning as shared living rooms; doors are more frequently closed, and the culture is more orderly and structured; the boarding house is interpreted as a safe space and fatigue absorber, with emphasis on security, privacy, and clear rules.
- Family rental house: the spatial hierarchy more closely resembles that of a family home; the meaning of home tends to combine functional and emotional aspects for new families, with preferences concerning price, contract flexibility, and proximity to social networks.

This comparison demonstrates that the form and spatial organization of boarding houses/rental houses directly influence how residents interpret home and construct residential preferences.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, this study confirms that boarding houses in Manado can be understood as adaptive forms of urban vernacular architecture responding to the needs of nomadic populations. The form and spatial organization of boarding houses reflect residents’ lifestyles oriented toward mobility, efficiency, and a combination of privacy and collectivity, consistent with the view that house form constitutes an expression of culture rather than merely a response to physical factors.

Findings concerning spatial hierarchy and open-door culture support the idea that boarding-house spaces become arenas for negotiating individual and collective needs, thereby generating a hybrid culture that combines values of independence with

mutual assistance (*gotong royong*). At the same time, the layered meanings of home (temporary stop, fatigue absorber, and second home) reinforce the phenomenological approach, which views dwelling as a dynamic experience shaped by routines, security, memory, and the character of place.

Practically, the findings demonstrate that boarding houses with clear rules, comfortable shared spaces, and adaptive spatial hierarchies tend to be more desirable among urban nomads. Therefore, several design guidelines can be formulated as recommendations for boarding-house developers, urban designers, and local governments:

Flexible spatial hierarchy: bedrooms with improved sound insulation, multifunctional corridors, and terraces functioning as buffer zones that reduce sound leakage while supporting interaction.

- Personalization and identity: bedroom and private-space designs that enable residents to personalize their spaces without disrupting the building structure, thereby supporting the development of a sense of a second home.
- Hybrid culture: provision of shared spaces that support communal activities and mutual assistance while continuing to respect the privacy boundaries of bedrooms.
- Human-centered security: surveillance systems and boarding-house rules that are transparent and mutually agreed upon rather than merely constituting one-way control by management.
- Location and accessibility: development of boarding houses in peri-urban areas near campuses and city facilities, supported by adequate basic infrastructure.
- Sustainable co-living model: integration of adaptive boarding-house accommodation into the development of areas such as Mapanget as part of urban policies that are inclusive of highly mobile populations.

These guidelines demonstrate that viewing boarding houses as social infrastructure for urban nomads, rather than merely as low-cost rental units, can help improve residents' quality of life while supporting a direction of Manado's urban development that is more responsive to mobility dynamics and the meaning of home in contemporary urban life.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the meaning of "home" for urban nomads residing in boarding houses in Manado City is layered and dynamic and is formed through everyday experiences within a boarding-house spatial hierarchy consisting of private, semi-public, and public spaces. For some residents, the boarding house is functionally understood as a temporary stop; for others, it functions as a "fatigue absorber" that alleviates the pressures of urban activities; and for many residents, the boarding house transforms into a "second home" filled with memories, identity, and a sense of security.

The spatial hierarchy of boarding houses, bedrooms as the core of privacy, corridors and kitchens as semi-public spaces for interaction, and terraces and gates as public spaces, has been shown to constitute an important structure shaping activity patterns and dwelling culture. Within this structure, a hybrid culture develops that combines individual orientations (privacy and independence) and collective orientations (mutual assistance, open-door culture, and informal conflict management), thereby enabling the boarding house to function as a space for learning to live together for urban nomads.

Residents' residential preferences are determined not only by practical factors such as strategic locations near campuses and city centers, security supported by clear rules, basic facilities (water, electricity, WiFi, and shared kitchens), and affordable prices but also by the ability of boarding houses to provide a sense of comfort, acceptance, and "being at home." From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the view that the form and organization of housing constitute expressions of residents' cultural lifestyles while affirming the relevance of architectural phenomenology for interpreting the meaning of home in transitional housing such as boarding houses.

Recommendations

Boarding-House Housing Models that Balance Privacy and Social Interaction

Boarding-house managers and developers are advised to design bedrooms as comfortable and relatively sound-insulated private spaces, while corridors, shared kitchens, and terraces should be organized as semi-public spaces that support interaction without disturbing residents' tranquility. A clear and adaptive spatial hierarchy will help urban-nomad residents find a balance between the need for solitude and the need to establish social networks.

Support for Spatial Personalization

Bedroom interior designs should provide opportunities for residents to personalize their accommodation, for example, through flexibility in furniture arrangement and designated areas for personal decoration. Personalization has been shown to be one of the ways residents construct the meaning of a second home and strengthen their sense of belonging to a boarding house even when their residential status is temporary.

Management of Hybrid Culture in Boarding Houses

Boarding-house managers need to develop management rules and practices that recognize the existence of a hybrid culture, strong privacy alongside mutual assistance, by providing clear guidelines concerning the use of shared spaces, quiet hours, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts through dialogue. This approach will maintain a warm and communal boarding-house atmosphere without sacrificing comfort.

Recommendations for urban infrastructure and areas

Improvement of Basic Infrastructure and Security in Urban Areas
Local governments and policymakers are advised to strengthen basic infrastructure in peri-urban areas that constitute major locations for boarding houses, including transportation access,

stable water and electricity networks, and digital connectivity. Environmental security through street lighting, clear neighbourhood rules, and support from local authorities is also important for fostering a sense of security among urban nomads.

Recognition of Boarding Houses as Part of the City's Social Infrastructure

Boarding-house accommodation should be viewed as an integral component of Manado City's social infrastructure that supports the lives of students, young workers, and highly mobile groups. This recognition can be realized through regulations that protect residents and encourage minimum standards for adequate housing without restricting the flexibility of vernacular and adaptive boarding-house forms.

Integration of the Nomadic Perspective into urban planning

Integration of the Nomadic Perspective into Urban Planning Documents

Manado City's planning documents and spatial policies should integrate the needs of urban nomads, for example, by incorporating adaptive rental housing, co-living, and boarding houses as planned elements rather than forms that merely develop spontaneously. This is important so that the development of new areas such as Mapanget is not oriented solely toward permanent housing but also provides space for transitional housing that is meaningful for highly mobile groups.

Development of Sustainable Co-Living Models

As a follow-up, governments and developers can explore co-living models that combine the flexibility of boarding houses with more standardized residential-space quality while considering spatial hierarchy, functional shared spaces, and community-management mechanisms. This model has the potential to become a housing solution that supports the quality of life of urban nomads while remaining consistent with the direction of sustainable urban development.

Future research agenda

Mixed-Methods Approach and Expansion of Research Locations
Future research is recommended to employ a mixed-methods approach involving a larger sample and more diverse boarding-house locations, including boarding houses in peri-urban areas and city centers. Combining qualitative and quantitative data will enable a more precise mapping of the relationships among spatial form, boarding-house culture, the meaning of home, and the residential preferences of urban nomads.

Comparative Studies across Cities and Housing Types

Comparative studies across cities in Indonesia and among different housing types (boarding houses, rental houses, rental

apartments, and co-living) can enrich the understanding of how urban contexts and local policies influence the ways in which communities construct the meaning of home within transitional housing. Such studies will help formulate more inclusive urban housing models that are sensitive to the dynamics of population mobility.

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