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Socio-Economic Impact of The Existence of Educational Institutions in the Midst of Rural Communities: A Case Study of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School in Pambregan Hamlet, Trimulyo, Sleman, DIY

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ABSTRACT : This study aims to analyze the socio-economic impact of the existence of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School on the livelihoods of the community in Pambregan Hamlet, Trimulyo, Sleman, DIY, as well as to examine the pattern of relations that emerge between the educational institution and the villagers in the process of agrarian space transformation. The research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the management, field observations, and documentation studies, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The theoretical framework includes the production of space theory (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991),the concept of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004), the Powers of Exclusion framework (Hall et al., 2013), and the place attachment approach within the phenomenological tradition. This layered theoretical approach enables researchers to capture the complexity of power, economic, and social relations occurring at the research site.

The results show that the presence of De Britto's educational facilities reinforces the dynamics of urban sprawl that converts agrarian land into built-up land, in line with the peri-urban transformation pattern in Sleman Regency. However, De Britto consistently applies community integration mechanisms that prevent full social exclusion, including through prioritizing local workers, economic empowerment via canteen management by village women, granting access to building facilities for villagers' social activities, and utilizing the village context as a character-learning space for students. Field findings also indicate that the people of Pambregan Village are not entirely passive victims of urbanization pressure; rather, they actively seize available opportunities while maintaining their communal values. This pattern reflects a form of counter-exclusion to the logic of accumulation by dispossession commonly occurring in institutional expansion into rural areas. This study concludes that the socio-economic impact of educational institutions on rural communities is not univocal: agrarian space transformation and community inclusion can occur simultaneously, depending on the relational commitment of dominant actors toward local residents. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the literature on urban and rural agrarian studies in Indonesia, particularly in understanding how educational institutions can act as agents of transformation that are also inclusive.

KEYWORDS: Land use conversion, socio-economic impact, educational institution, public space.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, Yogyakarta has grown as a city known as the student city. This epithet carries consequences in terms of increasing land demand for educational facilities and infrastructure. This demand can no longer be met within the city boundaries, thus expanding into the peripheral areas, especially Sleman Regency. According to(Devi et al., 2020), the peri-urban area of Yogyakarta has undergone a fairly rapid spatial transformation. Within a decade, agricultural land in several districts of Sleman decreased by more than twenty percent due to conversion into built-up land, including for educational facilities. This phenomenon is not only occurring in Yogyakarta but is also experienced by many major cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, albeit with different local characteristics.

In contemporary agrarian studies, land is not viewed merely as a physical object. Land holds social, economic, and political values that determine people's livelihoods. Sirait (2015) explains that the process of land use conversion in Indonesia often creates patterns of inclusion and exclusion that disadvantage small farmers. (Alemu & Kombe, 2025)also find that urban expansion into rural areas, which they term urban sprawl, causes massive shrinkage of agricultural land. Farmers lose access to their livelihood sources as agricultural land is increasingly squeezed by new buildings. Furthermore, the social impacts of this process are often not directly visible but accumulate in the form of psychological pressure, loss of cultural identity, and weakening of solidarity networks among villagers.

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The research conducted by (Oka et al., 2025) specifically observes peri-urban dynamics in Sleman Regency. They note that agricultural land in Caturtunggal Village, for instance, shrank from more than eight hundred square kilometers in 2010 to only about two hundred seventy-five square kilometers in 2020. One of the main triggers is the establishment of various educational institutions. This figure shows how massive the pressure of land conversion is in the buffer zone of Yogyakarta city. Similar conditions also occur in Trimulyo Village, albeit on a slightly different scale. Pambregan Hamlet in Trimulyo Village, Sleman, shows exactly that picture. De Britto High School built a Natural Laboratory in the middle of the villagers' settlement. This building not only changes the physical form of the village but also creates pressure on the productive rice fields around it. Several plots of rice fields become squeezed by permanent buildings, their access narrows, and their productivity decreases. Alemu and Kombe (2025) call this condition land fragmentation and loss of access. Indirectly, such pressure encourages land owners to sell their land. The situation in Pambregan becomes more complicated due to the plan to build a public facility (Merah Putih Cooperative) on village land located right in front of the Natural Laboratory. This land was previously used for social purposes, for example as temporary shelter for villagers in need. Now, the land is being converted for a formal development program. (*Inclusion_Exclusion_and_Agrarian_Change*, n.d.) shows that exclusion of local communities often occurs through four pathways: regulation, market mechanisms, legitimation, and power. In the Pambregan case, spatial planning policies that change the function of village land limit villagers' access to assets they previously could use collectively.

To capture the villagers' experiences in depth, this study uses a phenomenological approach. (Carlisle et al., 2026) shows that this approach is able to reveal how physical environmental changes affect people's attachment to their place of residence. (Ghorbanzadeh & Nordberg, 2024) adds that qualities such as tranquility, beauty, and uniqueness of a village can be lost when large-scale development enters rural areas. Through this analytical framework, this study seeks to understand how the Pambregan community perceives and interprets the presence of the De Britto Natural Laboratory and Study House on their social and economic lives.

From the social side, large-scale development in rural environments also alters patterns of inter-community relations. (Cahyani et al., 2025) found that suburbanization in Sleman and Bantul causes a shift in community interactions. Relationships that were once close and familial tend to become more transactional, based on economic calculations(Cahyani et al., 2025), also argues that interaction between rural and urban communities brings changes to traditional values, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), which are slowly replaced by more formal and individualistic patterns of relations. However, this study also finds that in Pambregan, communal values remain relatively preserved thanks to the inclusive policies of the school.

Economically, this study aims to capture two different sides. On one hand, there are difficulties faced by farmers because their rice fields are now squeezed by school buildings, making access roads narrow and irrigation disrupted, thus reducing harvest yields. On the other hand, this study also seeks to highlight the benefits for villagers who open small businesses (MSMEs). Based on the above description, this study formulates two research questions as follows: (1) What is the socio-economic impact of the existence of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School on the livelihoods of the Pambregan Hamlet community, particularly in terms of land use transformation, economic empowerment of villagers, and access to institutional facilities? (2) What pattern of relations emerges between the De Britto High School educational institution and the Pambregan Hamlet community — does it tend toward community integration or social exclusion in the process of agrarian space transformation in the area?

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theory of Production of Space and Urban Sprawl

The spatial transformation occurring in the peri-urban area of Yogyakarta, especially in Sleman Regency, cannot be understood merely as a physical change. Henri Lefebvre in his work *The Production of Space* (1991) offers a different perspective. According to Lefebvre, space is not an empty container or a natural formation; rather, it is socially produced through practices of power, economic interests, and social relations. Space always contains political content because it is created and managed by specific actors to achieve their goals. This view is highly relevant for analyzing the Pambregan case, where the presence of an educational institution has altered the spatial order previously dominated by agrarian logic.

Lefebvre distinguishes three dimensions of space: spatial practice (everyday spatial practices), representations of space (space represented by planners and authorities), and spaces of representation (lived space experienced and meaningfully inhabited by communities). In the context of Pambregan Hamlet, the agrarian space that once functioned as productive agricultural land and a living space for villagers was subsequently reproduced as an educational area through the construction of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School. This process is not neutral. There are economic and political interests behind it: the need for land for educational facilities, rising land prices, and the legitimation of development as progress.

Lefebvre's theory helps us see that land use change in Pambregan is not merely about conversion of function but also about who has the right to define space. Local government, the school, and capital owners tend to use representations of space: space is seen as a commodity, a location, or land that can be converted. Meanwhile, villagers live in spaces of representation: rice fields are not only places for farming but also sources of identity, ancestral heritage, and social spaces where they meet, cooperate, and celebrate life. Thus, the conflicts that arise are not always overt but often take the form of subtle yet impactful symbolic and economic pressures.

Such processes of space production often trigger the phenomenon of urban sprawl. Alemu and Kombe (2025) define urban sprawl as the rapid, unplanned, and often uncontrolled physical expansion of urban areas into rural areas. Its impact is strongly felt on agricultural land. When new buildings such as schools, housing, or public facilities are erected in the middle of rice fields, productive land plots are cut off, access narrows, and productivity declines. In the Pambregan case, the rice fields located around the Natural Laboratory become squeezed. Access roads narrow, irrigation is disrupted, and gradually farmers feel they have no choice but to sell their land. This phenomenon also triggers the formation of urban enclaves in the middle of rural areas, creating sharp social and economic disparities.

Quantitatively, (Devi et al., 2020) notes that within a decade, agricultural land in several districts of Sleman decreased by more than 20 percent due to conversion into built-up land. This urban sprawl phenomenon not only changes spatial arrangements but also alters the social and economic

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relations of village communities. Space that was once open and used collectively is now fragmented, privatized, and beginning to lose its social function. A further consequence is an increase in the cost of living for villagers as basic necessities become more expensive along with the influx of urban lifestyles.

2.2 Theory of Accumulation by Dispossession and Agrarian Exclusion

The construction of educational infrastructure in the middle of residential areas can be analyzed using (Harvey, 2004) of accumulation by dispossession. This theory explains that capital accumulation is often carried out through the takeover of control over resources previously under the authority of local communities. In the Pambregan context, although the land is legally owned by De Britto, the pressure exerted by the physical buildings on surrounding agricultural land still creates indirect dispossession. Farmers lose optimal access because irrigation channels are cut off or farm access roads narrow, resulting in decreased productivity and increased production costs.

This aligns with the Powers of Exclusion framework developed by (Hall et al., 2013), in which exclusion of local communities occurs through four pathways: regulation, market mechanisms, legitimation, and power. In Pambregan, this exclusion manifests in two tangible forms:

1. Land Isolation: Rice field plots squeezed by permanent buildings, narrowing access, reducing productivity, and indirectly encouraging owners to sell their land.
2. Regulatory Exclusion: The conversion of village land that was previously used for villagers' social purposes (such as temporary shelter for those in need) into a formal development program that limits villagers' access to communal assets.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that exclusion is not always total. In some situations, local communities are still given limited or conditional access, which in the literature is referred to as partial exclusion. However, even partial exclusion can have long-term effects because it creates dependency and reduces the community's bargaining power.

2.3 Shift in Social Relations and Suburbanization

The impact of spatial transformation does not stop at physical and economic aspects. It seeps into social relations among community members. Research by Alya, Pramana, and Ni'mah (2025) on suburbanization in Sleman and Bantul found that the increasing integration of villages with urban dynamics has changed patterns of community interaction. Relationships that were once intimate, personal, and based on kinship tend to shift toward more transactional relationships grounded in economic calculations.

Village-city interaction brings changes to traditional values such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong). Gotong royong, once performed on the basis of solidarity and moral obligation, is now shifting toward more formal relationships, sometimes paid, or even abandoned because it is considered inefficient. Suburbanization, in this case, does not only move people and buildings but also transforms the social consciousness of rural communities. However, this study also finds that in Pambregan, some values of mutual cooperation persist due to joint activities facilitated by the school, such as community clean-up events or harvest festivals involving students and villagers.

2.4 Phenomenological Approach and Place Attachment

This study employs a phenomenological design to reveal the essence of the community's conscious experience of environmental change. This approach is effective for capturing place attachment – an individual's emotional bond with their place of residence. Place attachment is formed through long-term interaction between individuals and their physical and social environment, encompassing affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions.

(Ghorbanzadeh & Nordberg, 2024) emphasizes that qualities such as tranquility, beauty, and uniqueness of a village (sense of place) can be disturbed or lost due to large-scale development in rural areas. Furthermore, Sandi and Sudaryono (2024) show that physical environmental change directly affects the meaning of space, activity patterns, and the community's adaptive capacity in facing the transformation of their living space. Using phenomenology, researchers can explore how Pambregan villagers subjectively experience the presence of the school building, student noise, vehicle traffic, and changes in the village landscape. These experiences cannot be measured quantitatively but are crucial to the psychological and social well-being of the villagers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The qualitative approach was chosen so that researchers can understand social phenomena deeply and comprehensively, in accordance with the conditions of communities in peripheral areas undergoing a transition period. The phenomenological design is used to reveal the essence of the conscious experiences of the Pambregan Hamlet community regarding the presence of the De Britto Natural Laboratory. The researchers aim to understand how villagers feel, interpret, and live their daily lives amidst a village that is beginning to transform into an educational area bustling with newcomers. In this study, the researcher acts as the primary instrument as well as a participant observer who strives not to interfere with villagers' daily lives.

3.2 Research Location

The research was conducted in Pambregan Hamlet, Trimulyo Village, Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. This location was chosen purposively because it is a peri-urban area experiencing strong spatial urbanization dynamics, as identified by (Devi et al., 2020) and (Oka et al., 2025). This hamlet represents the phenomenon of a village changing into an urban area due to the expansion of educational institutions into a previously agrarian area. In addition, the location's easy accessibility from Yogyakarta city center facilitated the ongoing data collection process.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

First, in-depth interviews. This interview is the primary technique to explore villagers' narratives and feelings. Informants were selected purposively, namely native villagers who interact directly with or are affected by the construction of the Natural Laboratory. A total of 12 informants were interviewed, consisting of 5 farmers whose land borders the school area, 3 canteen-managing mothers, 2 village officials, and 2 representatives from the De Britto High School management.

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Second, open observation. Researchers directly observed the physical condition of the area, access routes used by students, villagers' MSME activities, and ongoing social interaction patterns in the village's public spaces. Observations were conducted on weekdays and weekends to capture different activity variations.

Third, documentation study. Researchers collected secondary data from the village office or documents related to the history of land use, including village land and villagers' land that has undergone functional change. Collected documents included village spatial plans, old photographs, and oral historical records written by local community leaders.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model from (Qualitative-Data-Analysis, n.d.), which consists of three stages. Data reduction was carried out by summarizing and focusing data on important matters such as villagers' perceptions of noise, economic benefits from the institution's presence, and ways they maintain social closeness. Data presentation was done in the form of narrative descriptions and descriptive tables so that patterns of socio-economic transformation of the community become clear. Conclusion drawing was done by seeking meaning from each villager's story to conclude how the construction of this institution affects their living space. To ensure data validity, the researchers used source triangulation and member checking – i.e., reconfirming findings with key informants.

RESULTS

Based on in-depth interviews with the management of the De Britto High School Study House, field observations, and documentation studies in Pambregan Hamlet, several main findings were discovered that illustrate the pattern of socio-economic impact of the existence of these educational facilities amidst the village community.

4.1 Continuous Land Ownership and Management. The land and buildings of the Study House have always been owned by De Britto. After the previous management period under the name Kanisius was deemed less successful, De Britto took over management independently and developed it into a comprehensive educational facility. This transfer of management took place without open conflict with villagers, although there were initial concerns about changes in the village atmosphere.

4.2 Transformation of Land Function from Agrarian to Educational. Pambregan Hamlet, previously a quiet rice-field area, has now become a busy and widely known area due to the presence of the Natural Laboratory and Study House. This change reflects the pattern of urban sprawl that drives the conversion of agricultural land into built-up land. Several farmers complained about irrigation channels blocked by building construction, as well as the increasingly narrow access roads to their rice fields.

4.3 Priority for Local Workers. Residents of Pambregan Hamlet received priority as workers during the construction process, ranging from manual laborers to project team members. This policy is a deliberate form of economic inclusion by the institution. According to one resident's testimony, almost 80% of the manual labor at the initial construction stage came from the local hamlet.

4.4 Economic Empowerment through Canteen Management. Seven mothers from Pambregan Hamlet were entrusted to manage the canteen independently to meet the food needs of students and guests. There is also a plan to provide hospitality training (table manners) for the canteen managers to improve service standards as building operations develop. The net profits from the canteen belong entirely to the managers, without any deduction by the school.

4.5 Villagers' Access to Building Facilities. Pambregan villagers are given special privileges to use the building facilities for social purposes such as weddings and other village events. This policy emphasizes that villagers are treated as part of the community entitled to enjoy the benefits of the facility. At least three times a year, the school hall is used for village meetings or thanksgiving events.

4.6 Character Education Function for Students. The Study House is designed as a "natural laboratory" that bridges the social gap between De Britto students — mostly from the urban upper-middle economic class — and the lives of villagers. Students are directed to participate in farming, fishing, and goat rearing practices, while also learning to socialize, understand local etiquette, and build disciplined and hard-working character through direct interaction with Pambregan villagers. This program is welcomed positively by villagers because they feel appreciated as "life teachers" for the students.

DISCUSSION

5.1 Socio-Economic Impact of the Existence of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School on the Pambregan Hamlet Community

The findings of this study indicate that the existence of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School in Pambregan Hamlet produces a complex and layered pattern of socio-economic impact. On one hand, the construction of these educational facilities reinforces the dynamics of urban sprawl that transform agricultural land functions, as identified by Alemu and Kombe (2025). On the other hand, the results of in-depth interviews with the management reveal the existence of community integration mechanisms that actively attempt to mitigate social exclusion against Pambregan Hamlet villagers. Through Lefebvre's (1991) production of space framework, the transformation of Pambregan Hamlet from an agrarian area to an educational area can be read as a process of redefining space by institutional actors: when rice fields that were once spaces of representation — living space, identity, and social heritage of villagers — are converted following the representation of space dominated by educational and developmental logic. This process is not neutral, because behind it lie interests, power, and authority that determine who has the right to define the function of space.

From the perspective of ownership history, the land and buildings that now constitute the Study House have always been the property of De Britto. After the previous management period under the name Kanisius was considered less successful, De Britto took over management independently, developing it into a comprehensive educational facility. This continuity of ownership is relevant within Lefebvre's (1991) analytical framework of space production: the conversion of agrarian land into educational facilities is not merely a physical change, but a process of redefining space by

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an institutional actor that has authority over that land. However, what distinguishes the Pambregan case from many other cases of land conversion elsewhere is the conscious effort to maintain a space for dialogue and negotiation with villagers.

5.2 Pattern of Relations between Educational Institution and Pambregan Hamlet Community:

Between Community Integration and Agrarian Exclusion

What is interesting from the interview findings is De Britto's institutional response to the potential for agrarian exclusion as conceptualized by (Hall et al., 2013). Within the Powers of Exclusion framework, exclusion of local communities can occur through four pathways: regulation, market mechanisms, legitimation, and power. The potential for exclusion through pathways of power and legitimation is very real in this case, given that De Britto has full authority over the land and is able to determine who gains access to the economic opportunities created. Furthermore, this pattern can also be analyzed using the concept of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004), which explains that capital accumulation often occurs through the takeover of control over resources previously under local community authority. However, the interview findings show that De Britto consciously chose not to allow the exclusion mechanism to work fully. Instead of letting Pambregan villagers be marginalized from the development process, De Britto explicitly prioritized local villagers as workers in the construction project, from manual laborers to project team members. This policy aligns with the argument (*Inclusion_Exclusion_and_Agrarian_Change*, n.d.) that the impact of land conversion on local communities is largely determined by how dominant actors manage power relations with the surrounding community.

From the aspect of economic empowerment, the interview findings show that seven mothers from Pambregan Hamlet are entrusted to manage the canteen independently to serve the food needs of students and guests. This pattern reflects an economic inclusion strategy that places local villagers as active economic actors, not merely passive beneficiaries. Furthermore, there is a plan to provide hospitality training (table manners) for these canteen managers, indicating a planned effort to enhance human resource capacity. In Pambregan, economic integration is designed so that villagers have a real productive role. This differs from corporate social responsibility (CSR) models that are often charitable and unsustainable.

Pambregan villagers are also given special privileges in using building facilities, including permission to use them for weddings or other village events. Access to this institutional physical space is a form of sharing of space that, both symbolically and practically, emphasizes the position of villagers as part of the community entitled to the benefits of the facility. Within Lefebvre's framework (1991), this can be read as an effort to preserve elements of spaces of representation for villagers, amidst the dominance of representations of space by the educational institution. This finding is also relevant in the context of suburbanization identified by Alya, Pramana, and Ni'mah (2025): if suburbanization generally encourages a shift from communal to transactional relations, then the policy of granting access to building facilities serves as a buffer that maintains communal space. Traditional values such as mutual cooperation are potentially eroded by village-city integration; De Britto's policy of providing social access to villagers is one institutional way to preserve those communal values so that they are not entirely replaced by more formal and individualistic patterns of relations.

From the perspective of character education, the placement of the Study House in Pambregan Hamlet contains a pedagogical dimension that deliberately uses the village context as a learning space. De Britto students, mostly from the urban upper-middle economic class, are directed to learn farming, fishing, and goat rearing directly in the "natural laboratory." They are also trained to socialize, understand local etiquette, and learn discipline and hard work through direct interaction with villagers. Through the phenomenological approach used in this study, this process can be understood as the formation of place attachment — emotional bonding to the place they inhabit and experience (Carlisle et al., 2026). (Ghorbanzadeh & Nordberg, 2024)emphasizes that a strong sense of place is formed through direct engagement with the environment and community; when students engage in agrarian practices and interact with villagers, the village is not merely a location for activities but becomes a personally meaningful space. Sandi and Sudaryono (2024) add that spatial attachment is also formed through collective narratives built together: the lived experience of coexistence between students and Pambregan villagers creates shared memories that strengthen both parties' sense of belonging to the village.

Overall, the case of Pambregan Hamlet shows that the socio-economic impact of the presence of educational institutions amidst rural communities is not univocal. There is a tension between the logic of spatial expansion inherent in large-scale educational facility development and the community integration efforts consciously carried out by De Britto. These findings confirm the argument of Ratnasari, Siscawati, and Soetjipto (2020) (*Multi-LayeredExclusionsofWomenHeadsofHouseholdsoverLand*, n.d.) that the exclusion or inclusion of local communities in the development process is very much determined by the mechanisms of power relations, legitimation, and regulation exercised by dominant actors. Nevertheless, this study also shows that consistent institutional commitment to empowering local villagers can create a more equitable pattern of relations, even though agrarian space transformation continues.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the existence of the Natural Laboratory and Study House of De Britto High School in Pambregan Hamlet creates a non-univocal and complex pattern of socio-economic impact. Spatially, the construction of these educational facilities reinforces the dynamics of urban sprawl that transform agrarian land functions in the peri-urban area of Sleman, in line with Lefebvre's production of space framework and Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession. However, De Britto consistently applies community integration mechanisms that prevent full social exclusion, including through prioritizing local workers, economic empowerment via canteen management, granting access to building facilities for village social activities, and utilizing the village context as a character-learning space for students.

These findings confirm that the inclusion or exclusion of local communities in the development process is strongly determined by the mechanisms of power relations, legitimation, and regulation exercised by dominant actors. Consistent institutional commitment to empowering villagers can create a more equitable pattern of relations, even though agrarian space transformation continues. For future research, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted from a broader villager perspective, including groups of farmers directly affected by land fragmentation. From a policy perspective, local governments need to formulate spatial planning regulations that require educational institutions expanding into rural areas to include community empowerment programs as part of development permits. This study also opens opportunities for comparative studies with

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other educational institution cases in different peri-urban areas, to see whether the counter-exclusion pattern found in Pambregan is unique or replicable.

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