

From Societeit De Harmonie to the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia: The Transformation of a Building's Function in Semarang, 1906-1990

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji sejarah serta dinamika perkembangan *Societeit De Harmonie* di Semarang dalam kurun waktu 1906-1990. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis transformasi fungsi dan makna gedung tersebut dari masa kolonial hingga pasca kemerdekaan yaitu pada saat berubah menjadi Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang (GRIS). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah yaitu heuristik, verifikasi, interpretasi, dan historiografi dengan memanfaatkan sumber-sumber primer yaitu beberapa surat kabar kolonial yang diakses melalui *delpher* dan surat kabar nasional seperti Suara Merdeka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Societeit De Harmonie* merupakan suatu bentuk eksklusivitas masyarakat Eropa dan sebagai bentuk stratifikasi sosial pada masa kolonial. Pada pasca kemerdekaan kepemilikan dan fungsi berubah yang awalnya bersifat privat menjadi gedung publik dan dapat dimanfaatkan oleh masyarakat. Dalam perkembangannya, gedung GRIS mengalami kemunduran akibat konflik pengelolaan, perubahan kebijakan, serta menurunnya minat masyarakat.

Kata kunci: GRIS, *societeit de harmonie*, transformasi.

Abstract

This study examines the history and developmental dynamics of Societeit De Harmonie in Semarang from 1906 to 1990. The primary focus of this study is to analyze the transformation of the building's function and significance from the colonial era through the post-independence period, specifically when it became the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang (GRIS). This study employs historical methods, specifically heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography, utilizing primary sources such as colonial newspapers accessed via Delpher and national newspapers like Suara Merdeka. The findings reveal that Societeit De Harmonie served as a symbol of exclusivity within the European community and reflected social stratification during the colonial era. In the post-independence era, ownership and function shifted from a private building to a public one that the community could use. Over time, the GRIS building declined due to management conflicts, policy changes, and waning public interest.

Keywords: GRIS, *societeit de harmonie*, transformation.

INTRODUCTION

During the colonial period, the city of Semarang served as a testament to social dynamics closely tied to the existence of public buildings that reflected the structure of power and social stratification. This was supported by its role as a major economic and administrative center on the island of

Java. This led to the development of broader urban infrastructure, such as commercial office buildings, entertainment venues, and administrative buildings, which began to be constructed in the city center (Septiawan, 2022). These infrastructure advancements symbolized the increasingly modern social

life of the colonial community and served as hubs of economic and social activity.

European dominance over the city's administrative system also introduced an exclusive Western-style social culture aimed at strengthening bonds among Europeans. One custom that developed in Europe and was brought to Semarang was the practice of holding dance parties at every social gathering in clubhouses (Suara Merdeka, 1975).

These European customs could not be abandoned because they were integral to their daily lives. The activities undertaken to express them, such as musical performances, dance parties, and games of billiards and bridge, were maintained within the colonial environment (Alya Prastiti, 2025; Nordholt, 2005). To accommodate their exclusive activities, entertainment venues were built that became symbols of social stratification within colonial society (Elok, 2024). One such colonial entertainment venue built during that era was the Societeit De Harmonie, located in the heart of Semarang. Initially, the building was located in the Old Town, but due to various obstacles, it was eventually relocated to Bojong Street, now known as Pemuda Street.

After independence, the situation changed, and Societeit De Harmonie was renamed the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang (GRIS). GRIS is a complex of buildings that serves as a center for

entertainment and cultural activities in the city of Semarang. It is located at Jalan Pemuda No. 116 and stands on a 1.3-hectare plot of land. The building complex is equipped with facilities, including a cinema, the GRIS Foundation office, foundation staff housing, a food court, and a traditional arts performance hall used by the Ngesti Pandowo wayang orang troupe (Huwaidda & Sodik, Ibnu, 2019). This transformation reflects a shift in the space's meaning from an exclusive venue to a public space accessible to the broader community. Thus, the repurposing of this building reflects changes in power structures and socio-political orientations during the post-independence era. This research is worth examining because the Societeit De Harmonie did not merely provide entertainment but also reflected the social, cultural, and power dynamics of the colonial era.

In this regard, an analysis of relevant previous studies is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the changing functions and meanings of Societeit De Harmonie. Previous studies provide insights into how Societeit De Harmonie was interpreted differently across locations and time periods. The Societeit De Harmonie building has been the subject of various previous studies, though with diverse spatial foci, such as in Surakarta and Batavia. Research by (Artyas, 2017) and (Alya Prastiti, 2025) discusses the activities conducted at

Societeit De Harmonie, focusing on its historical development and the activities carried out there. Additionally, prior research was conducted by (Huwaidda & Sodik, Ibnu, 2019) and (Hikmah & Wijayati, 2025); both studies discuss one of the functions of the GRIS Building, namely as a venue for the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo performances and the Metropole Cinema, both of which are located within the GRIS Building complex.

The conversion of the Societeit De Harmonie into the GRIS Building was part of a government policy to transfer ownership of colonial assets to the state. As noted in a study (Galuh et al., 2022), a similar repurposing occurred at the Taman Sari complex, which was originally a private space for the Sultan's relatives and was later transformed into a public space. Although various studies have discussed the Societeit De Harmonie and the GRIS Building, no historical study has yet examined the Societeit De Harmonie's development and transformation into the GRIS Building. Previous research has generally only discussed the Cinema Building and the Ngesti Pandowo Wayang Orang troupe, which held activities at the GRIS Building or Societeit De Harmonie. These studies focused solely on artistic activities; therefore, this research will specifically examine the various social activities that took place in the building, as well as the historical process of the name change and the shift in the

building's function from Societeit De Harmonie to GRIS.

METHODS

This study employs the historical research method, a process for reconstructing past events in a scientific, structured, and systematic manner using historical sources (Kuntowijoyo, 1995). The historical method aims to gain an objective understanding of past events through the various stages of the historical research process. The process of collecting, testing, and interpreting historical sources is essential for constructing a historically accountable narrative (Abdurrahman, 2007; Gottschalk, 1975). The historical method comprises four stages: heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2003).

The first stage, the heuristic stage, is used to identify primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of newspapers obtained from Delpher and the Suara Merdeka print media archive. These newspapers are *De Locomotief*, *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, *De Nieuwsgier*, *Algemeen Indisch Dagblad*, *De Preangerbode*, and *Suara Merdeka*. Meanwhile, the secondary sources used consist of previous academic articles and books, including "Semarang Juwita" by Amen Budiman, "Semarang Sepanjang Jalan Kenangan" by Djawahir Muhammad,

and “Kota Semarang dalam Kenangan” by Jongkie Tio, which were accessed from the Central Java Provincial Library.

Second is the verification or source-criticism stage, which aims to test the authenticity of the data and the validity of the sources. In this stage, the data must undergo internal and external scrutiny to assess the authenticity and credibility of the sources, ensuring they can be scientifically substantiated (Sjamsuddin, 2020). Third is the interpretation stage, which is the process of interpreting the data obtained to establish connections between existing facts. Finally, the historiography stage involves organizing the research findings chronologically to create a systematic historical narrative that explains the transformation of the functions and ownership of the Societeit De Harmonie until it became the GRIS Building.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background of the establishment of Societeit De Harmonie

The custom of holding dance parties characterized social life among European communities; this tradition developed in Europe and was later brought to Semarang by the Dutch (Suara Merdeka, 1975). The first dance party was held at the residence of Dutch officials, specifically, the official residence of the Governor of the North and East Coasts of Java, located west of Berok Bridge (François Valentijn,

1724). During the festivities at that venue, a Domine, a Protestant minister from the Netherlands, was present to attend to the spiritual needs of the European community. Their presence at these parties was so enthusiastic that they seemed to forget their roles as clergymen (Suara Merdeka, 1975). At that time, the city of Semarang did not yet have a building designated for relaxation and entertainment for the European community; therefore, a “Societeit” was established to foster friendship among its visitors, particularly the European community. This Societeit was named Societeit Amicitia, a term derived from Latin meaning “Friendship.” The first Societeit Amicitia building was located on Mpu Tantular Street in front of Berok Bridge, which is now the Bank Mandiri building (Suara Merdeka, 1975).

On May 22, 1896, the Societeit Amicitia building was sold and renamed Societeit De Harmonie; its function remained the same as before, serving as a place of entertainment for the European community. After being renamed Societeit De Harmonie, the surrounding environment was deemed increasingly unsuitable. Its location on the riverbank caused discomfort, particularly the unpleasant odor emanating from salted-fish transport ships anchored nearby. These conditions led to a decline in visitor interest, especially among the European community, in the Societeit De Harmonie

building. In addition to environmental factors, the building's location was deemed less than strategic, so the members of Societeit De Harmonie sought a more representative location (Budiman, 1979).

In 1906, Societeit De Harmonie moved and established a new building on Jalan Bojong; subsequently, the former society building on Jalan Mpu Tantular was sold to the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM). Jalan Bojong is a street that stretches from the front of the Berok Bridge on Jalan Mpu Tantular to an open field now known as Tugu Muda, the symbol of the city of Semarang. The name derives from the Dutch phrase "boot jongen," meaning "ship's boys." This street is part of an area reflecting the progress of infrastructure and modernity on the island of Java, making it considered a more representative location for the new building as it is situated in the city center (Muhammad Djawahir, 1996).



Picture 1. Societeit De Harmonie Building
Source: Semarang Juwita Karya Amen
Budiman

The Societeit De Harmonie Building, which opened in 1909 with an official and lively celebration, was attended by the European community, particularly high-ranking Dutch officials. The series of events concluded with a musical performance and a dance party as a form of entertainment reflecting the social culture of the European community at that time (Muhammad Djawahir, 1996). On the evening of the event, Dutch and local officials were seen gathering at the white building widely known as Societeit De Harmonie along Bojong Street. Through these events, they established social connections while adapting to their new environment. In addition to serving as a club, Socoeteit De Harmonie also offered various other forms of entertainment, such as billiards and the newly introduced game of bridge (De Locomotief, 1936).

At the annual meeting of the Harmonie community, it was agreed to appoint J.E.V.I.A. Slors, the assistant resident of Semarang, as an honorary member of the Harmonie community. This appointment was made based on the approval of a proposal by members of the Harmonie community. In addition to discussing this matter, the annual meeting also addressed the arts events held at Societeit De Harmonie. The outcome of the meeting was that each community member would pay 5 guilders specifically for the Harmonie community membership budget and 2 guilders specifically for arts-

related activities (*Algemeen handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1938).

During the activities held at Societeit De Harmonie, there was no clear separation of funds between the Harmonie community and the arts division. Although 2 guilders had been allocated for artistic purposes, in practice, no such separation of funds was implemented, so the entire 7-guilder membership fee went into the Harmonie community's main treasury. From the funds collected, Harmonie members who had paid their dues retained the right to attend artistic events. This situation indicates a structural and financial interdependence between the two sectors. The arts program could not operate independently because the Harmonie community could not allocate a significant portion of its dues to sustain it. Conversely, the arts sector also lacks a sufficient financial foundation to organize activities independently without support from the Harmonie community. Thus, the relationship between the two is mutually dependent in both structural and financial aspects (*Algemeen handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1938).

The meeting also decided that Harmonie members who had resigned but had not yet moved out of the city of Semarang would be required to pay a fee of 10 guilders if they wished to rejoin Harmonie. The same provision applies to members who have left the city of Semarang and subsequently returned to

reside there but failed to re-register within one month; they are also required to pay a fee of 10 guilders if they wish to rejoin Societeit De Harmonie (*Algemeen handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1938). This policy demonstrates the community's efforts to maintain membership stability and ensure the organization's financial sustainability through clear and structured regulatory mechanisms.

The popularity of Societeit De Harmonie began to decline during the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945. During that period, many social institutions and Dutch colonial assets faced restrictions on their activities, changes in function, and were taken over by the Japanese military government. The Societeit De Harmonie building was subsequently repurposed as a Red Cross office. Meanwhile, some members of Harmonie were detained by the Japanese army, while others left the city of Semarang. Entering the post-independence period, the Indonesian government took the form of the United States of Indonesia (RIS), and efforts were made to reorganize Dutch colonial-era assets and buildings. In an effort to preserve the Societeit De Harmonie building, the Semarang City government formed the Fonds Gris committee, initiated by the then Mayor of Semarang, Hadisoebeno Sasroweroyo. Thus, the establishment of the Fonds Gris

committee aimed to manage assets that were no longer Dutch property but had not yet fully become the property of the Indonesian government. In this situation, Fonds Gris served as a temporary managing body tasked with securing the assets and clarifying their legal status regarding ownership of these colonial-era assets (Tio, 2001).

The Societeit De Harmonie building, whose ownership had been unclear, was finally taken over by the Fond Gris committee. At the time of the plan to take over the Societeit De Harmonie building by the Mayor of Semarang, Hadisoebeno Sasrowerdoyo, the Semarang City government did not yet have sufficient funds; however, through high spirits and a strong sense of cooperation under the motto “sepi ing pamrih rame ing gawe,” funds were successfully raised from contributions by the people of Semarang. The Fonds Gris committee eventually succeeded in handling the administrative and payment processes for the legal transfer of the building’s ownership in two installments. After it became the property of the City of Semarang, the Societeit De Harmonie building was renamed the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang, or GRIS (Muhammad Djawahir, 1996).

In 1950, after the goal of purchasing the building was achieved, the Fonds Gris committee was officially dissolved and subsequently renamed the

Gedung Rakyat Foundation. The management structure did not undergo significant changes, as its members remained the same as those of the Fonds Gris committee. During the construction and renovation of the building, Hadisoebeno Sosrowerdojo, chairman of the Yayasan Gedung Rakyat and the Yayasan Kesejahteraan Kota Semarang, provided an interest-free loan. The building was subsequently leased to the Ngesti Pandowo wayang orang troupe from Madiun, who had settled in Semarang. Hadisoebeno Sosrowerdojo also renovated the arts center and equipped it with adequate facilities (Muhammad Djawahir, 1996).

The Contribution of Societeit De Harmonie as a Center of Social and Cultural Activity

The existence of Societeit De Harmonie in the city of Semarang during the Dutch East Indies colonial period was not merely as a place of entertainment and a gathering spot for the European elite. Societeit De Harmonie also served as a symbol of social stratification, reinforcing the boundaries between the European community and the indigenous population. Various activities held there, such as dance parties, bridge games, musical performances, billiards, formal gatherings, and social discussions, represented the Western lifestyle upheld and shaped the social patterns of the

European-influenced colonial community in Semarang (De locomotief, 1927).

The Societeit De Harmonie association played a significant role in shaping the recreational culture of the European community in Semarang, particularly through activities such as wedloop. Wedloop refers to a running race, specifically horse racing, which was a form of entertainment and sport among the European elite. To support these activities, the European community established the Semarang Racing Club, which collaborated with the De Harmonie community. Under the established agreement, membership in the Semarang Racing Club was drawn from members of Societeit De Harmonie. With this provision, club members were granted the right to attend racing events and enter the gaming hall without the obligation to purchase tickets. This arrangement had implications for those who were not members of the Harmonie community; they had no opportunity to participate and were not introduced to the race participants during the event. Nevertheless, during the races, several spectators from the surrounding areas of Semarang attended to participate (De Locomotief, 1933a).

The equestrian community in Semarang officially adopted the name Wedloop Societeit Semarang for their association. As part of the inauguration ceremony, they organized a horse racing

event. The event took place at Societeit De Harmonie and was enlivened by a dance party during the inauguration. This celebration aimed to bring together the best racehorse communities in Java and to develop facilities in the racecourse area, including spectator stands and horse stables. The enthusiasm of the people of Semarang for the event was evident from the 1.000 guilder prize offered by N.I.S. My for the main event, while two other prizes of 750 guilders were also offered for the additional events (Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië, 1906).

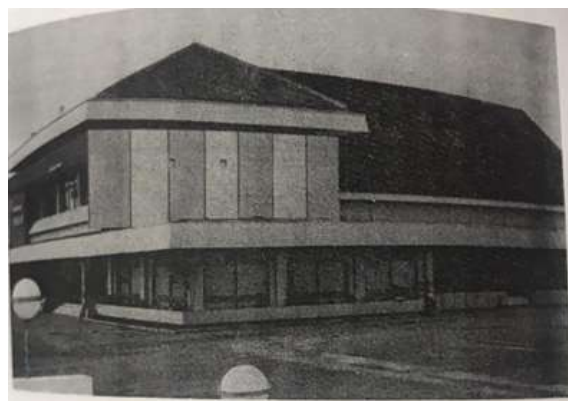
The Semarang Racing Club is a legally recognized organization; the Governor-General granted this status at the time. The association's articles of incorporation were valid for 25 years, beginning on May 30, 1930. The purpose of this association was to promote equestrian sports by organizing horse races (De Locomotief, 1930). Societeit De Harmonie played a vital role in sustaining horse racing in Semarang. During the summer, the Weedloop Sociëteit Semarang held a general meeting at the Societeit De Harmonie building to discuss the summer racing program; as a result of the meeting, it was decided to implement a lottery system funded by ticket sales. To conclude the racing season, a dinner party was held at Societeit De Harmonie, followed by a dance party (De Locomotief, 1931).

The existence of Societeit De Harmonie in Semarang not only reflected the lifestyle of the European community but also served as a vital space in shaping their culture and social life. In addition to horse racing, the game of bridge also gained popularity among the European community as a way to spend their leisure time. Bridge became particularly popular because it helps develop focus, strategy, logic, and skill. This game was played exclusively at Societeit De Harmonie, which directly signified social status, particularly among the European and the local elites who could play it (Istiqomah Nur Fitri, 2025). In 1933, a bridge tournament was held to bring together the Harmonie community team and the Semarang bridge club. The tournament took place at the Societeit De Harmonie building in Semarang. In that competition, the organizers presented a trophy as a token of appreciation to the winning team (Algemeen handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië, 1933; De Locomotief, 1933b).

The Role of the GRIS Building as a Center for Social and Cultural Activities

After the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the Societeit De Harmonie building had not yet become fully owned by the Semarang City Government, as its ownership status remained unclear. Therefore, the Mayor of Semarang established the Fonds Gris committee to

oversee the management of the Societeit De Harmonie building. Through this committee, the Societeit De Harmonie building was transferred to the ownership of the City Government of Semarang with financial support derived from contributions by the people of Semarang. On August 17, 1950, the GRIS building was officially opened to mark the completion of the takeover process and the change in its management system (Advertentie-blad, 1950). The Fonds Gris committee was subsequently dissolved and renamed the Gedung Rakyat Foundation, retaining the same board of directors. Over time, the building known as the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang (GRIS) became a public facility, serving as a hub for various social and cultural activities for the people of Semarang (Muhammad Djawahir, 1996).



Picture 2. GRIS Building
Source: Semarang Juwita by Amen Budiman

In August 1951, the management of the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang (GRIS) began planning the construction of an arts center within the GRIS complex with a construction budget of Rp212.000;

however, due to various factors, the budget increased to Rp350.000. The funds raised came from the Mayor of Semarang, Hadisoebeno Sosrowerdojo, who provided an interest-free loan of Rp200.000. Additionally, funds were sourced from the City Pension Fund, which provided a loan of Rp200.000 with interest, and from the Midden-Java Freemason Council, which contributed Rp6.000. The arts hall was finally completed in 1953, measuring 45 meters long by 18 meters wide; however, 13 meters of the hall's space were reduced to accommodate the stage, the orchestra pit (for the gamelan), dressing rooms, and restrooms. The building was subsequently leased to the Ngesti Pandowo wayang orang troupe. The official opening of this arts center took place on April 17, 1953, attended by officials and other guests. Meanwhile, the Ngesti Pandowo wayang orang troupe performed their first show, presenting the play Partokromo at the event (De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad, 1953).

After the construction of the arts center was completed, the main GRIS building was repurposed into a popular movie theater in Semarang called Bioskop Metropole, managed by the GRIS Building Foundation. Bioskop Metropole was one of nine movie theaters in Semarang. It ranked fourth in terms of revenue, with gross earnings reaching Rp174.870, a figure that continued to rise. At that time,

cinema was not yet widely popular among the public because most of the films screened were from abroad. This was because Indonesian film production was still limited, so there were not yet many local films available for screening (De Locomotief, 1954a). On May 20, 1954, an inauguration ceremony was held to rename the Metropole Cinema Building to the GRIS Cinema Building. The renaming of the building was intended to commemorate National Awakening Day. The inauguration event was enlivened by a screening of the Italian film "Behind Closed Shutters". Additionally, it featured a wayang orang (human puppet) performance telling the story of "Tuan Tanah" (De Locomotief, 1954a).

The GRIS Building management holds regular meetings to discuss the theater's finances. The meeting report indicated that the GRIS Cinema Building was used for various activities approximately 45 times. Foundation maintenance is performed routinely; according to the financial report, revenue totaled Rp64.635.70, while total expenses reached Rp83.397.30. This indicates that the foundation incurred a deficit of Rp18.761.60. Additionally, the financial report also mentions funds received from creditors amounting to Rp224.756.87, with the remaining balance totaling Rp979.833.50, a balance in the Bank of Japan of Rp149.250.99, and income from

the cinema of Rp824.200, for a total of Rp150.075.19 (De Locomotief, 1954b).

As a public space, the GRIS Building played a role in activities in the city of Semarang; for example, on October 15, 1954, a commemoration of the Five-Day Battle of Semarang against Japan was held there. The commemoration took place at the GRIS Building and was attended by war veterans, civilians, military personnel, organizations, and political parties. The event also provided moral and material support to the victims families (De Locomotief, 1954c). GRIS Building was also used as a venue for political activities, including a meeting of the Indonesian National Party (PNI). The meeting was organized by members of the PNI's West Semarang and Central Semarang branches to discuss internal party issues (De Locomotief, 1954d). A meeting of the Semarang branch of the Indonesian Teachers' Association (PGRI) was also held at the GRIS Building, featuring exhibitions officially opened by the Mayor of Semarang (De Locomotief, 1954e). So many meetings were held at the GRIS Building that even President Soekarno attended, including the fifth congress of the Indonesian Doctors Association (IDI). The congress lasted for 5 days, from December 19 to December 23, 1954 (De Locomotief, 1954f).

Over time, the GRIS Building did not always function smoothly, as various issues arose in its management and the

execution of activities. One such instance occurred during a commemoration event for Dr. Muwardi, a prominent figure in the national movement, held at the GRIS Building on November 26, 1955. Dr. Muwardi was known as a pioneer of the scouting movement during the Dutch East Indies period and as the leader of the Barisan Banteng in Surakarta during the revolution. The commemoration was also attended by President Soekarno and his entourage (De Preangerbode, 1955). In planning the event, the organizing committee intended to display a portrait of Dr. Muwardi inside the building as a sign of respect; however, the Secretariat of the Coordinating Committee for National Unity in West Semarang rejected the plan, urging that the display not proceed. This objection was based on concerns about potential backlash from other parties, given that the GRIS Building belongs to the public, not to a specific party or organization. Furthermore, the placement of the photo was seen as potentially sparking similar demands from other groups to honor their respective figures. In fact, the opponents argued that Dr. Muwardi's contributions were not on par with those of national figures such as Prince Diponegoro and Imam Bonjol (De Locomotief, 1955; De nieuwsgier, 1955).

The Decline of the GRIS Building

In 1955, the GRIS Building was very popular in Semarang; it served as a

rehearsal space for 70 arts groups. In 1975, the GRIS Building Foundation issued a new regulation requiring the arts groups occupying the building to begin paying rent. This decision led many groups to withdraw, leaving only 12, until eventually only one remained: the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo. This decision prompted Muhammad Mustich, chairman of Commission E of the Semarang City Council, to express concern about the fate of the Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo group, which was the sole source of pride for the people of Semarang and whose survival was now threatened (Suara Merdeka, 1993).

The Semarang City Government has addressed the issue of rent for the GRIS Building by assisting in the renovation of the Ngesti Pandowo performing arts center. The assistance amounts to Rp900.000; in addition, the Governor of Central Java has contributed Rp10.000.000, and sponsors have contributed Rp10.000.000. The funds were distributed through the GRIS Building Foundation. The commission chair urged the GRIS Foundation to reduce the rental costs for the Ngesti Pandowo Wayang Orang performance. The local government also expressed its willingness to grant tax relief on ticket sales to Ngesti Pandowo to support the preservation of this traditional art form (Suara Merdeka, 1982).

On December 4, 1986, the Metropole cinema building, located within

the GRIS Building complex, was closed pursuant to a decision issued by the Semarang District Court. This decision referred to the case that the Semarang District Court had just adjourned. A notice dated December 4, 1986, is still displayed at the cinema building, stating that the cinema space was subsequently returned to its owner, the GRIS Foundation, by order of the Chief Judge of the Semarang District Court in accordance with the Supreme Court's directive. This case involved a civil dispute between PT Ki Ageng Sigih and the GRIS Foundation. PT Ki Ageng Sigih is a legal entity that has been granted a 10-year contract for the GRIS Building, owned by another party. In this case, PT Ki Ageng Sigih is the defendant, while the GRIS Foundation, as the building's owner, is the plaintiff (Suara Merdeka, 1987b).

The dispute between PT Ki Ageng Sigih and the GRIS Foundation began when a 10-year management cooperation contract expired. Still, the PT Ki Ageng Sigih party did not immediately return the building to its owner, the GRIS Foundation. After several court hearings, the Semarang District Court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, the GRIS Foundation. The defendant then filed an appeal with the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, the building was fully taken over by the GRIS Foundation while awaiting the outcome of the appeal. As a result of this appeal, all activities within the GRIS Building complex

ceased; several employees were temporarily laid off. The GRIS Foundation is not responsible for the employees' situation, as it knows them and considers them the responsibility of PT Ki Ageng Sigih. The GRIS Foundation plans to change the building management system so that it is not managed longer by a single party, but by three different parties, making it more effective, as each can focus on managing a specific business unit, such as the cinema, billiards hall, and cafeteria (Suara Merdeka, 1987a).

Soegeng Haryanto, Director of PT Ki Ageng Sigih, stated that he has evidence to refute the GRIS Foundation's allegations that his company violated their cooperation agreement. The evidence lies in the work contract, which specifies that the 10-year contract term applies only if building repairs are performed; however, in reality, PT Ki Ageng Sigih had to undertake a complete renovation because the building's condition at the time was no longer suitable for use. The construction costs ballooned to 140 million, double the original estimate. PT Ki Ageng Sigih argues that proceeding with the execution does not align with the Supreme Court's guidance, which prioritizes resolution through amicable means. Furthermore, the company felt aggrieved because its request for a stay of execution and its earlier filing of a defense through legal counsel did not

receive an appropriate response (Suara Merdeka, 1987b).

The condition of the GRIS building began to deteriorate when the GRIS Foundation suffered financial losses; this was reflected in a decline in the number of visitors attending cultural performances or going to the cinema, as a result of changing public tastes and the emergence of modern forms of entertainment that made GRIS less competitive. Ngesti Pandowo was unable to pay the building rent of Rp900.000 per year due to the decline in building rent windling revenue (Suara Merdeka, 1990b). On January 18, 1990, the GRIS Foundation finally terminated its partnership with Ngesti Pandowo by issuing Decision No. 018/SG/GK/1/90, stating that the partnership was no longer harmonious and that Ngesti Pandowo was expected to vacate the GRIS Building (Suara Merdeka, 1990a). The issuance of this decision (SK) drew reactions from artists and cultural figures in Semarang, leading to opposition that eventually resulted in a dispute between the two parties. The policy aimed to allow the foundation to regain control of the building previously used by Ngesti Pandowo, as the structure was to be repurposed for other uses and undergo renovations (Huwaidda & Sodik, Ibnu, 2019).

The GRIS Foundation's decision to terminate its collaboration with Ngesti Pandowo was also driven by efforts to

support the program of Semarang Mayor H. Iman Soeparto, who designated the Taman Budaya Raden Saleh (TBRs) as the center for arts and culture in the city of Semarang. According to the government's plan, once the construction of TBRs was completed, Ngesti Pandowo would move to that location; however, within the TBRs complex, there was already another wayang orang group that had been there previously, namely, the Wahyu Budoyo wayang orang troupe, which was ultimately asked to leave by the management to make room for Ngesti Pandowo (Suara Merdeka, 1990c). This situation subsequently complicated the conflict between the GRIS Foundation, Ngesti Pandowo, and the local government. In this case, the government acted as a mediator by resolving the issue through mediation and investigating the building's ownership status from 1990 to 1996. As a result, the building was declared the property of the GRIS Foundation, so Ngesti Pandowo had to leave the GRIS Building (Suara Merdeka, 1990b).

CONCLUSION

The Societeit De Harmonie building was a symbol of the exclusivity of the European community in Semarang, serving as a hub for the sociocultural activities of the European colonial era. This building reflected the lifestyle and social stratification of the European community,

which set them apart from other ethnic groups and even the indigenous population. Various activities such as dance parties, musical performances, billiards, and horseback riding demonstrate that this building represented a Western lifestyle. After Indonesia's independence, significant changes occurred regarding the building and the Fonds GRIS committee, which was supported by the Semarang community; the Societeit De Harmonie de was repurposed as the Gedung Rakyat Indonesia Semarang (GRIS). This transformation marked a shift in function from a colonial private space to a public space accessible to all citizens for social gatherings, entertainment, the arts, and political activities.

Over time, the GRIS Building came to serve as a hub for community activities, such as performances of the Ngesti Pandowo wayang orang (live puppet theater), which was extremely popular at the time in Semarang and remains one of the city's preserved traditional art forms. The GRIS Building is a complex that also houses a cinema, the Metropole Theater commonly known as the GRIS Cinema. This demonstrates that the GRIS Building served as a space for social interaction that strengthened the culture and daily life of Semarang's community in the post-independence period. The continued functionality of the GRIS Building was not without its share of conflicts and

challenges, such as financial management issues, leasing policies, conflicts among management parties, and legal disputes that undermined the stability of the building's use. These disputes caused TLD Building to begin experiencing operational declines, leading to the issuance of an Orang Ngesti Pandowo order to have the GRIS, which in turn led to a decline in public interest as the building fell into disrepair. Thus, the transformation from Societeit De Harmonie to the GRIS Building reflects Semarang social activity and cultural dynamics, underscoring the importance of effective management to ensure the building's function as a community activity center remains sustainable.

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