

# The Role of the Quality of Public Space in Supporting the Improvement of External Evaluation in the Central Surabaya Area

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**Abstract**— Nowadays, many cities are competing in creating their own image and identity regarding the improvement of the sustainable tourism sector. In addition, city identity has become an important issue in nowadays' urban planning and design sector. Many of these cities make their identity related to cultural heritage important for their city branding activities. This is done with the purposes of being able to increase sustainability for tourism, as well as driving and growing the local economy. This study discusses how the assessment of the public space's quality in the Balai Pemuda Surabaya building plays a role in increasing the external evaluation or attractiveness of the Central Surabaya according to visitors. This study uses a combined strategy, namely qualitative in taking interpretations from respondents and correlational with quantitative to validate the qualitative results. The result obtained from this study is that the public space, especially community open space, in the Balai Pemuda Surabaya building is considered by the public or visitors to be able to become a sustainable attraction for the Central Surabaya area. This is because apart from having historical value, it can also be used for community activities, such as recreation, sight seeing as well as being a place for various cultural festivals in the city of Surabaya.

**Keywords**— Public space, sustainability, external evaluation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has many backgrounds related to the history of independence and relics related to the colonialism era. In this regard, every island in Indonesia has their own story and cultural heritage. This study mainly discusses about the second largest metropolitan cities after Jakarta, namely the Surabaya City, which is also known as The City of Heroes. Surabaya has a lot of heritage and cultural buildings that are still standing since the colonialism era. Each heritage building usually has a public space that can be utilized by the community to gather, both in the past and present. There are several aspects that can be used to assess the quality of public space, such as accessibility, marking, identity, sociability, and others. This because if a public space has a good quality, it can make the public or visitors feel enjoy to visit. This will also increase the sustainability of tourism achieve the local economic growth of Surabaya, as well as becoming the characteristic and competitiveness from the other big cities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public space in general can be interpreted as a space that used to accommodate certain activities of the community. Public space reflects the local culture, characters, personality

of the community, fosters social interactions, and a sense of comfort or security. Public space has many types, according to (Carr et al., 1991), including street spaces, public parks, fields and plazas, memorial parks, markets, playgrounds, community open space, greenways, parkways, atriums, and waterfronts. In this study, the type of public space to be analyzed is the community open space in the Balai Pemuda Surabaya building.

In addition, the assessment of public space is based on the following points (Kozlova, 2018):

- a. Accessibility, refers to the access and use of public space for all circles of society.
- b. Security and comfort, refers to the degree of security of a person in public space.
- c. Readability of physical attributes, refers to the convenience of being oriented in public spaces, for example having a simple network of routes and intersections with unambiguous city signs and features.
- d. Sustainability, in this case, is the landscape arrangement which refers to the degree of creation of a friendly environmental situation and the fulfillment of needs without damaging the environment.
- e. Identity, refers to what extent does the space reflect local character and has a combination of functions, developmental forms, characteristics, colors, and materials that form its own identity in the general character of the area.
- f. Parking area
- g. Sociability, refers to the level of community involvement in the active life of the city and in the processes that occur in public spaces.

The assessment of public space's quality is then linked to aspects of external evaluation or attractiveness. This is in the form of perceived uniqueness and the special character of the city (Prohansky, 1983) (Lalli, 1992), or in another words, optimizing the distinctiveness of an area (Breakwell, 2015).

## III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to the intersubjective paradigm. According to (Groat & Wang, 2013), the intersubjective paradigm is an understanding of a socio-cultural relationship, which emphasizes value and meaning in framing research objectives and/or in interpreting the results. In architectural research, intersubjective paradigm is used to examine the

value and interpretation of the visitor’s attachment to space, including the physical environment and the community activities.

The strategy that used in this study is a combined strategy : dominant-less dominant. In this study, the dominant strategy focused on the qualitative approach, which is used to explain existing facts, circumstances, phenomena, and aspects as they’re in the research location. According to (Schostak, 2006) qualitative research is a study that directs attention to the interpretation of an individual, by emphasizing their values and experiences, including meaning, moments, and intimacy that has been experienced by the individual or society. Less dominant strategy focused on the correlational approach with quantitative data obtained based on the results of the questionnaire given to the respondents.

This research aspects assessed include the quality of public space based on the following points, including accessibility, sociability, identity, sustainability, physical attributes, and others. In addition, the tactics used in this study related to qualitative data collection were direct observation and visitors interviews. This study used purposive sampling with semi-structured interviews to facilitate respondents in finding problems more openly by seeking opinions. Furthermore, the data is reduced by using coding analysis to categorize the data and classify segments related to research questions, hypotheses, and certain constructs or themes. Then, the final results will be presented descriptively after the data validation process is carried out using triangulation analysis, based on the results from direct observations and interviews at the research location, crosschecked by the questionnaires to visitors, and then validated with the opinions of expert stakeholders as considerations.

#### IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The object used in this research is public space, especially community open space in Balai Pemuda Surabaya building. The choice of location is due to the fact that this building is still used until now and still maintains its original façade. In addition, there are also public space objects that are often used by the community to carry out various activities. Related to, this study aims to discuss the assessment given by visitors to the quality of public space based on the following aspects, including accessibility, sociability, identity, sustainability, physical attributes, and others.

The first discussion is the aspects of accessibility, where this public space is located at 15<sup>th</sup>, Gubernur Suryo street, Embong Kaliasin, Genteng, Central Surabaya. Based on the picture below (Figure 1), the public space is accessible by any public transportation modes, such as Surabaya buses and online vehicles, on foot, or private vehicles. In addition, the location of this public space is also strategic, which can be accessed from any main road since 1930 (Figure 2).

The second discussion is the aspects of security and visual comfort of public spaces. It can be seen in the picture below (Figure 3), that the safety and comfort are quite good. Where there is a guard at the entrance gate, and before entering the public space, visitors are asked to scan barcode using COVID19 mobile application named Peduli Lindungi. In

addition, the sidewalks also have good quality and spacious for the safety and comfort of visitors. Furthermore, the comfort and cleanliness of the public space is very good since there are trash cans in various corners of the public space so that there is no visible trash scattered.



Fig. 1. Accessibility to public space



Fig. 2. Balai Pemuda in 1930 (google image)



Fig. 3. Security and visual comfort

The third aspect is sustainability, in which the addition of new buildings must pay attention to the quality of the surrounding environment. The sustainability aspect of this public space is quite good, which doesn’t interfere the old façade and conformable with its surroundings. It can be seen in the picture below (Figure 4), that this public space is filled with elements of vegetation and water, which support the night atmosphere as well as the use of glass material for natural lighting during the day. In addition, the public space is also sustainable in the tourism sector because there are so many visitors coming.

The next aspect is the availability of parking lots. In this public space, as can be seen in the picture below (Figure 5), the availability of parking area is very limited. The area of



basement parking area is very narrow and there are many vehicles parked in front of the area of the road, which sometimes block the way of other transportation modes and disrupts the traffic.



Fig. 4. Sustainability of public space



Fig. 5. Parking area

Next, this study discusses the quality aspects of physical attributes. It can be seen from the picture below (Figure 6) that the marking of the public space location or the entrance gate is quite clear, which can be seen from the highway. In addition, the quality of the sidewalks is also quite good and there is difference between the materials used for the sidewalks and the other public space areas. Eventhough there are not many, several facilities are available for people with disabilities, for example the ramp for wheelchair users. However, it would be better if the attributes and facilities for disabilities are improved again by the government.



Fig. 6. Physical attributes

The sixth aspect discussed is identity. Starting with its history, this building was built around 1907, by architect Westmaes. This building was designed with a tropical-wet architectural approach with a romanic-colonial façade style (Figure 7).



Fig. 7. Façade Balai Pemuda (google image)

At that time, this building was called De Simpangsche Societeit, used as a meeting place for exclusive community of Dutch to having parties, dances, and other fun activities (Figure 8).



Fig. 8. De Simpangsche Societeit (Surabaya Story)

In 1945, this building was then taken over and used as a youth headquarters by Arek-arek Suroboyo. Furthermore, around 1979-1980, this building changed its name to Balai Pemuda, and used as a center for art and cultural appreciation activities to this day (Figure 9).



Fig. 9. Art exhibition in Balai Pemuda

Around 2011, this building suffered severe damage in almost all parts of the building after the fire incident (Figure 10). Then, the government of Surabaya carried out various kinds of conservation efforts to maintain the original façade as in the past (Figure 11).



Fig. 10. Fire incident in 2011 (Detik.com)



Fig. 11. Conservation of Balai Pemuda (Seputar Kota)

After doing the observations, author conducted interviews with some visitors about their interpretation and assessment of the quality of the existing public space, and the following results were obtained:

*“The access is quite easy, it can be seen from the main road, then the marking is also clear both day and night. The public space is quite interesting for recreation with family, because the façade of the building is still as good and original as it used to be. I usually visit this place, when there are exhibitions or certain events. There are also many facilities in a good condition, such as the spacious, comfortable, clean, and safe sidewalks. The only lack here is the minimum parking space in the basement, so visitors who bring the private vehicles sometimes need to park on the roadway and walk quietly far to get to this public space”* – Nia, 27 years old, private employees.

Furthermore, the author asked questions related to what considered by the visitors to be characteristics of the uniqueness and attractiveness of the public space at Balai Pemuda, and the following results were obtained:

*“This public space has historical value, besides that the Balai Pemuda building is also iconic, which can be used for education and tourism. Next, maybe the government can organize various cultural festivals to mark public spaces and the heritage tourism sector”* – Nia, 27 years old, private employees.

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, it was found that according to the visitors, public space at Balai Pemuda have easy accessibility as well as fairly good comfort. According to the respondents, the public space’s also very attractive, especially when it’s used for community activities, such as exhibitions or other festivals. The public space also still has the identity from the past since it maintains its original façade. This will later become a sustainable tourist attraction that can increase the local economy of Surabaya. The quality of the existing physical attributes is quite good, from the use of materials on sidewalks, marking, and the existence of several facilities for people with disabilities. However, this public space has drawbacks in the parking area, which is only provided in the basement and at the front of the building, and often interfere the traffic.

After collecting qualitative data, the next step is to discuss the quantitative data obtained based on the results of the questionnaire as follows, that all respondents have visited the public space of the Balai Pemuda Surabaya building. The gender of the most respondents was 57.1% female and 42.9% male (Figure 12). Furthermore, the majority of respondents were 23-28 years old with 42.9% (Figure 13). A total of 57.1% of respondents live in Surabaya and surrounding areas as much as 85.7% (Figure 14). Most of the respondents, namely 57.1% visited 1-2 times, 28.6% visited 3-4 times, and 14.3% visited more than 5 times (Figure 15). Some of the activities that respondents often do when visiting Balai Pemuda are enjoying the atmosphere, attending events, and learning stories and history (Figure 16). A total of 57.1% of respondents visiting Balai Pemuda together with friends (Figure 17). Furthermore, respondents were asked to rank the aspects of public space from the most to least important, and the results were obtained in the following order: identity, physical attributes and facilities, sociability, sustainability, security and visual comfort, accessibility, and parking area. After that, respondents were asked to give an assessment starting from the aspect of accessibility, resulted in as many as 85.7% of respondents felt that the accessibility of the public space is very good. Furthermore, related to security and visual comfort, as many as 57.1% of respondents rated the quality as very good. Not only that, as many as 71.4% of respondents considered that the sustainability aspect of the public space is very good. A total of 51.7% of respondents also considered that the public space has a very good identity. In the aspects of sociability, as many as 42.9% of respondents considered it is quite good. And the last related to the parking area, where as many as 57.2% of respondents assess the quality and

availability of the parking area is still very lacking.

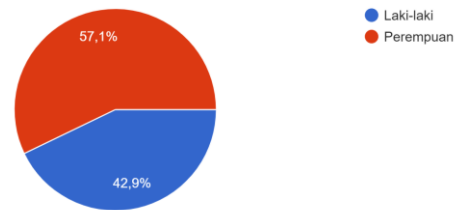


Fig. 12. Gender of the respondents

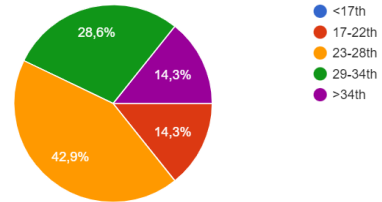


Fig. 13. Age of the respondents

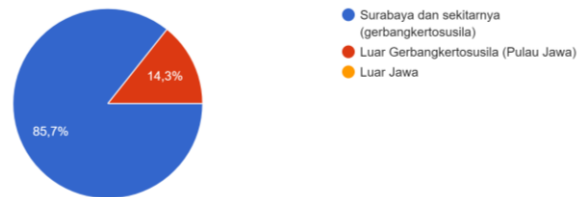


Fig. 14. Domicile of the respondents

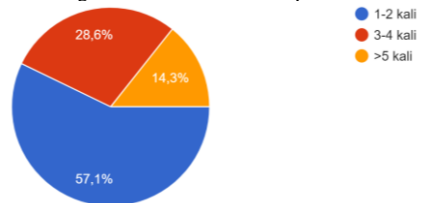


Fig. 15. Visit intensity of the respondents

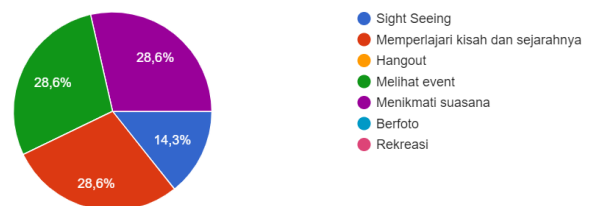


Fig. 16. Respondents' activities

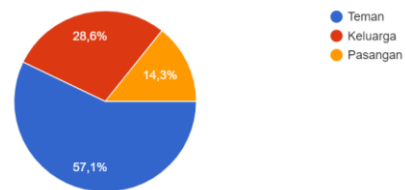


Fig.17. Respondents' partner

Then, respondents were asked to provide answers related to what are the attractions of the Balai Pemuda public space. It was found that 42.9% of respondents answered the classic atmosphere and others at a percentage of 14.3% the attraction was seen as a place for recreation, study, history, watching special events, and the existence of city library (Figure 18). In addition, according to respondents, public spaces look very

attractive for travelling and doing various activities at night, with a percentage of 71.4% (Figure 19). Lastly, respondents were asked assess how attractive Balai Pemuda’s public space would be if it’s used as tourist site, and 71.4% of respondents answered that they were very attractive.

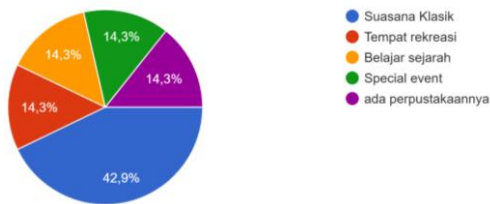


Fig. 18. Attractiveness

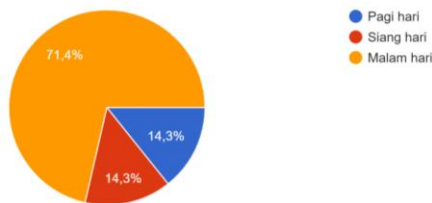


Fig. 19. Interested time

Based on the results that have been obtained, the data is then categorized using coding analysis as follows:

TABLE I. Coding Analysis

Keywords	Categorize
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegetation</li> <li>- Pedestrian ways</li> <li>- Transportation</li> <li>- Street space</li> <li>- Parking area</li> <li>- Accessibility</li> <li>- Marking for general public and persons with disabilities</li> </ul>	Public Space Physical Element
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building façade</li> <li>- Old city</li> <li>- Memorable</li> <li>- Iconic</li> <li>- Attraction or tourism potential</li> </ul>	Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Historical building</li> <li>- Classic/colonial atmosphere</li> <li>- Physical or existing settings</li> <li>- Historical value</li> <li>- Cultural value</li> <li>- Festival or special events</li> <li>- Recreational facilities</li> <li>- Potential for economic growth</li> </ul>	Visitor’s Interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sight seeing</li> <li>- Recreation</li> </ul>	Community Activities

### V. CONCLUSION

Balai Pemuda was a colonial heritage site that now can be used as a creative public space and become one of the tourist attractions in Surabaya. Hopefully, it can be used properly as

it intended functions. In accordance with the Surabaya City Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2005 concerning in the preservation of cultural heritage buildings and/or environments, it aims to maintain the authenticity of cultural heritage buildings and/or environments in the public interest so that people can gain benefits from the cultural heritage.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the public space at Balai Pemuda has a good identity. In terms of physical attributes, marking, and facilities are quite clear and can be seen clearly from the road. The public space can also be used by the community for various community activities to cultural festivals. This is also appropriate based on the results of the questionnaire given, that according to respondents, the important aspects that must be considered in the public space are the identity and quality of facilities or physical attributes. Not only that, after being validated based on expert stakeholder interviews, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the facilities, markings for people with disabilities, and visitors parking area in the researched public space still need to be improved.

Furthermore, if it is related to the attractiveness or external evaluation aspect which is a character or characteristic, the conclusion based on the results of observations and interviews is that the public space has characteristics and has the potential as a tourist spot. Not only that, the public space is also very iconic, has strong historical and cultural values, and shows the colonial style. Based on the results of the questionnaire, according to respondents, it would be better if the public space organizing more attractive cultural festivals or other special events as well as involving community participation, so that can increase the value of tourism and branding of Surabaya as well as improving the local economy. This is also supported by expert stakeholders, that Surabaya should increase the number of festivals held in public heritage spaces and involving the participation of the community.

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