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THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL ATTACHMENT IN THE DESIGNATION OF CONSERVATION AREAS IN INDONESIA IN THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

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Abstract

This research aims to define the extent to which historical attachment has played a role in the designation of conservation areas in post-colonial Indonesia. It conducts a case study of an area that has been designated as a historical city in Central Java, known as Parakan in Temanggung District. The research applies a qualitative method, using a narrative descriptive approach to describe the process of designation of a historical area in Parakan, Temanggung and interviewing some relevant respondents who have strong attachments to the history of the city.

Keywords: Historical Attachment, Designation, Conservation Area, Post-Colonial

Words Count: 2741 words

Introduction

One of the major issues in city centres generally and capital cities in particular is the existence of abandoned and unoccupied historical buildings and historical areas. Their existence interferes with the performance and the image of the city, although some become assets, as we know that historical buildings and historical areas are among the most significant heritage sites shaping the identity of a particular city. To address this issue, governments have been encouraged to preserve and conserve these old historical buildings and areas, not just to remind people of the past but also to educate future generations about history. As stated by Purwantiasning (2013), certain criteria are required to designate an area within a city as a conservation area. In particular, a conservation area should be designated by choosing an area which has local wisdom (Purwantiasning, 2013).

According to the literature, conservation can be defined as a concept that aims to manage a place or historical area, as well as historical objects such as buildings or monuments, by applying a particular treatment, and to preserve the values of such historical objects. The special and significant character of these historical objects (areas, buildings, monuments) should then become part of the identity of the city.

This research is based on previous studies related to conservation, and particularly architectural conservation. The researcher will try to uncover the phenomenon of historical attachment from individuals who are connected to historical buildings and areas as well as their experiences in space and time. Madgin (2013) argues that individuals' emotional values and sense of place (place attachment) play an important role in the designation of conservation areas. This research will develop Madgin's argument and examine these phenomena in relation to the conducted case study.

What is Historical Attachment?

The discussion of historical attachment will start by examining the etymology of the words "historical" and "attachment". The word "historical" comes from "history", which is related to chronological events from the past and requires evidence, which could be in the form of archives, documents and oral history from people who were alive in the period of interest. On the other hand, the word "attachment" comes from "attach" in the context of human behaviour. Attachment behaviour is connected to emotional bonding and affection towards something (a particular object). Ainsworth's theory of attachment explains that this kind of attachment develops through interaction with an object, either living or inanimate (Altman, 1992), which has a particular or special meaning for the individual. Furthermore, according to Durkin (1995), this attachment is usually supported and maintained by attachment behaviour. In this study, attachment will be related to the past and will be used as a method to designate something particular as a significant object for conservation. This historical attachment will involve emotional bonding from the past that persists until the present day or even into the future.

Referring to previous research, attachment could be related to the history of an object: in this case, an old, historical building or area. If the attachment is related to a place, then it becomes something special. Individuals could feel a sense of the atmosphere or experience of the space based on memory or individual interpretation. Historical buildings, or even historical areas that could be considered as places, will become important or significant when related to history or to the past. One thing that should be underlined in this theory of attachment is that such links to the past must be supported by evidence from, for example, archives, documentation or oral history from someone who can describe the past. This attachment is not just about memory of the past, as it is important to relate it to evidence. Historical attachment between one person and another is different, because it depends on people's perceptions and experiences when reading or interpreting historical archives and documentation. Someone could have a historical attachment either after learning about

the history of the building or the area or after hearing about the history from another person who has knowledge about the history of the site. This attachment will show the extent to which an individual's emotional bonding to the history of the past is related to a historical building or area, in particular (Purwantiasning et al., 2017).

Designation Of Conservation Area

According to the 1977 Civic Amenities Act, an area of conservation is defined as an area with (Purwantiasning et al., 2004):

- 1) Specific architectural character and interest;
- 2) Specific historical interest;
- 3) Eligible character to be improved and enhanced;
- 4) Eligible appearance to be preserved;
- 5) Eligible appearance to be enhanced.

Referring to Undang-Undang Tengah Cagar Budaya No. 11 Cagar Budaya Tahun 2010, Cagar Budaya or cultural heritage can be defined as immaterial cultural heritage in the form of cultural objects, heritage buildings, heritage structures, world heritage and cultural districts on land that needs to be preserved because it has important value for history, science, education, religion and/or culture through a setting process (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia, 2010).

Furthermore, according to Catanese and Snyder (1984), there are certain elements that encourage the preservation of history in the urban areas. These include, among others (Purwantiasning et al., 2004):

- The need to protect our heritage, in the sense that when remnants of the past are not protected, natural change processes will alter or even eliminate them. These remnants of the past are also seen to have educational value.
- The need to ensure variety in urban buildings, because preserving the past will prevent cities from becoming monotonous and homogenous places where every building looks the same. The preservation of buildings from different periods will ensure variation. This will contribute to the particular identity and character of the historical site, known as *genius loci*.
- Economically, historical buildings are also considered to increase in value if maintained properly and are therefore a good investment for a historical city.

In order to be designated as a conservation area, an area should have a significant character which has special value. The act of designating an area as a conservation area is aimed to strengthen its image and influence on the surrounding area, which is very meaningful to improve the quality and the image of the environment. The designation of a conservation area is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape, but has become an effective way to protect an open area whose character and appearance are related to its historic value, such as the material, the design form of the building, the pattern of the building mass, the spatial elements or the style of the building.

Referring to this research, the designation of a conservation area is not only related to the requirement of the local regulations, but is also connected to the needs of the local community. This is because the local community is the most significant object that will be affected by the direct impact of the activity of designation of the conservation area. Such designation will be relevant to the setting of the surrounding area as well as to the local community, which should be encouraged to participate in the process of designation of a

conservation area. This activity should describe how the places – particularly historical sites – could be experienced by local people who live and work there as well as by visitors, who will have a direct impact on the area. This impact should be related to the contribution to the area, particularly to its setting and appearance and the quality of life of the local community.

Post-Colonial Era

The term “post-colonial” has been used by historians since World War II to refer to all aspects related to the period after independence (freedom from colonial rule). Since the 1970s, the term “post-colonial” is not only used by historians but also in wider discussions of any cultural impacts from the colonization process, which refers to the cultural interaction between natives and invaders. Furthermore, this terminology has been used more generally to discuss anything related to the impact of European colonizers on the politics, literature, language and cultural experiences of local communities (Ashcroft, 2007). This term could be defined in simple terms as the period after colonial rule, but from a different perspective, it could be defined as a critique of colonial ideology, of the colonial dominance and indeed of Western culture.

The theory of post-colonialism could be used to describe the transformation of culture in Indonesia, encompassing all aspects related to art, such as architecture. It can be used to describe the transformation from the colonial and imperialist era to the post-colonial era. This approach is related to the perspectives and experience of individuals who criticize this transformation. The post-colonial era could be considered as a historical representation of all things related to the events in the past between natives (Indonesia) and invaders (European).

Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive qualitative study which applies a narrative descriptive method to describe the case study from both a physical and a non-physical perspective. Another approach that has been chosen is a hermeneutic method, which uses a perception and interpretation method with the local community to answer the research question.

Case Study: Parakan, Temanggung, Central Java, Indonesia

Parakan is located in the middle of Java Island, between two mountains: Sumbing and Sindoro. Parakan, as a suburban area of Indonesia with rice and tobacco fields, has been regarded as a rich area since the 18th century. These types of field are the most significant natural resources in Parakan.

Parakan has been chosen as a case study because this city has a significant history. This area has been inhabited since the 18th century and was once the most significant rice warehouse in Java. Since the end of the 18th century, tobacco has been grown as a commercial plant in this area and the local community has played a role in trading. As a result, Parakan became a commercial centre in North Kedu and the centre of trading activity. After the Diponegoro War, Parakan became the densest Chinese settlement in Central Java and grew rapidly to become a city.

Parakan has been regarded as a city with three cultures: the Javanese community, which consists of the native community and “pendherek” (followers of Pangeran Diponegoro); the Chinese community who came to Parakan many years ago; and the governing people from Holland. But after the Java War (1825-1830), Parakan was inhabited by the native community and more Chinese people who wanted to live there (Murtiyoso, 2016).

The roles of the local community remained the same until the 20th century. There are three significant roles in

the community: the native community, who work as farmers and carpenters; “pendherek” or followers who work as religious leaders (kyai), landlords and rice traders; and the Chinese community, who work as traders, especially tobacco traders.

Over time, Parakan has experienced significant physical and economic decline compared with surrounding cities. Its local government has been encouraged to restore it to its former glory through tourism by promoting its historical and cultural values. One of the most significant activities from the local community in collaboration with local government has been to propose Parakan as a heritage city, and the memorandum of understanding to this effect was declared and signed on 10th December 2015 by Bupati Temanggung and the Minister of Pekerjaan, Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat.



Figure 1. Location of Parakan in Central Java Source: Murtiyoso (2016)



Figure 2. Map of Parakan Source: Murtiyoso (2016)

The designation of Parakan as a heritage city is not based solely on the existence of historical buildings within the area as tangible heritage sites, but also on the value of its tradition and culture as forms of intangible heritage. One valuable artefact that has existed since the colonial era is the bamboo runcing: a traditional weapon used by Indonesian soldiers in the colonial era. It has become a significant object in the history and

culture of Parakan, which was known as the City of the Bamboo Runcing. The local community is very proud of the bamboo runcing and its history. It was introduced to Indonesian soldiers by the religionist K.H. Subkhi and became the traditional weapon of Indonesia. This historical aspect has led to emotional bonding and affection for this hero as a pioneer of the Bamboo Runcing. All members of the community of Parakan, whether native Indonesians, the Chinese community or “pendherek” or followers of Pangeran Diponegoro and their great-grand-children, have this historical attachment.



Figure 3. Map of Parakan in the Colonial Period (19th - 20th century) Source: KITLV Collection (2015)

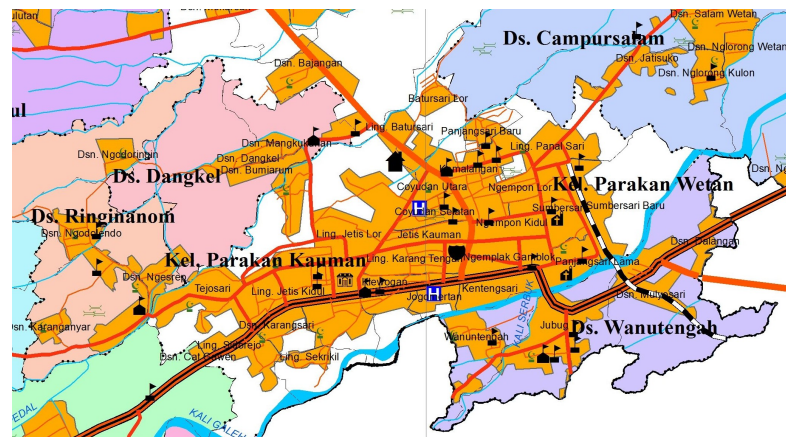


Figure 4. Administrative Map of Parakan in the Colonial Period (19th - 20th century) Source: Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah Kabupaten Temanggung (2015)

The process of designation of Parakan as a conservation area involved not only local government and the general community, but also members of the native community, the Chinese community, “pendherek” and academics. This designation came about not only because Parakan has a significant character and performance, but also because of its significant historical attachment with its community, especially in relation to the colonial era. The community of Parakan still has this attachment to the present day, and hopefully it will be sustained in the future for the next generation. This will help Parakan to become a sustainable historical and heritage city for Indonesia generally and Central Java in particular.

The above discussion has demonstrated that the role of historical attachment of the community, particularly Parakan’s people, is very significant and extremely important in the process of decision-making for the designation of a conservation area. This attachment should be maintained not just for the present day, but also for the future and for the next generation.



Figure 5a and 5b. Condition of the Railway Station in Parakan in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods. Source: <https://jejakbocahilang.wordpress.com/2016/10/28/parakan-kota-pusaka-di-temanggung-jawa-tengah/>, accessed 12th March 2017



Figure 6a and 6b. The religionist and pioneer of the Bamboo Runcing, K.H. Subkhi, Kyai Bambu Runcing, National Hero of Indonesia and son of one of the soldiers of Pangeran Diponegoro. Source: <https://fahmialinh.wordpress.com/2015/04/18/mbah-subkhi/>, accessed 12th March 2017

Conclusion

This research has discussed the importance of the role of historical attachment in the designation of conservation areas. Attachment to a place/ area or building which represents a particular period in history will have a significant role in decision-making, particularly with regard to conservation issues. Individuals' emotional values are important considerations in the decision-making process, particularly in this case pertaining to the designation of a conservation area. The significance of a historical site will affect individuals' perceptions or interpretations, leading to strong place attachments. These individual historical attachments will confer authenticity on an area or object that deserves to be conserved. The community of Parakan have showed their attachment to the history of Parakan, the researchers have found through the interview during the observation. Their historical attachment has been shown from their involvement during the designation of Parakan as a Heritage City. The process of the designation itself has involved many parties particularly the local community from academics, historians as well as local government.

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Captions of Visual Materials:

Figure 1. Location of Parakan in Central Java

Source: Murtiyoso (2016)

Figure 2. Map of Parakan

Source: Murtiyoso (2016)

Figure 3. Map of Parakan in the Colonial Period (19th - 20th century)

Source: KITLV Collection (2015)

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