Increasing Quality of Civic Place through Enhanced Square and Street Connectivity
(Case Study: Fatahillah Square at Jakarta's Old Town Area)

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Abstract

Jakarta’s public space has been developing much within the past five years. There have been many procurement, revitalisations, constructions and functional changes of public space, including: the developments of “Integrated Public Space” in residential areas and city centre alike, “Child-friendly Integrated Public Space”, city parks, and pedestrian area. As an addition to public facilities and streetscape, various kinds of urban public space infrastructures are made, such as: squares/plazas, parks and pedestrian space. These are designed to be more public-friendly, catering the needs of the young, old, children, and even disabled alike.

There are six foci in solving Jakarta’s public and civic place problems: ease of access, public transportation connectivity, pedestrian area, limited parking area, activity and exclusive public space. One case is the revitalisation of Fatahillah Square in Jakarta old town. As the oldest civic square, Fatahillah is developing as Jakarta itself grows older. It is developing in a sense that what used to be a civic and government centre is now an urban space used as recreational and socialising facility by the residents.

Fatahillah Square and its surrounding places have become a historical site that shapes Jakarta’s identity as a city. There have been many additions to their civic and commercial buildings such as commercial stores, museums, restaurants, and so forth. In an effort to improve the quality and convenience of the urban space there, new pedestrian spaces and streetscapes have been added within Fatahillah Square and its access points. Nonetheless, some common problems are still encountered. These include the limited parking space available, inconvenient accesses in some parts of the Square, poor management of the street vendors, and unsustainable connectivity between the Square and its surrounding areas. The purpose of this study is to formulate some important principles in order to improve Fatahillah Square’s quality as a historic civic place with its historic buildings and as a facility that can be enjoyed by Jakartans in general.

Keywords:
Quality of Civic Place, Square, Street, Connectivity, Old Town Area
Background and Context

The study of public spaces has been long debated by scholars, researchers, governments, politicians, private companies and professionals. Not only these studies discuss about the types, functions, and the criteria of a public space that is comfortable, safe, lively, and sustainable, they also include the variety of public spaces areas. Public spaces can be present in neighborhoods, office complexes, commercial areas, riversides, and in many other areas in the city, including the civic space in the city core.

Generally, a public space can be defined as a publicly owned land that is open and accessible to all members of a given community regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, and socio-economic level. In public spaces, communities can gather, engage in social, cultural, economic, politic activities, and express themselves.

“Public spaces are key elements of individual and social well-being, the places of a community’s collective life, expressions of the diversity of their common natural and cultural richness and a foundation of their identity” (Charter of Public Space, 2013).

As explained in Charter of Public Space (2013), which was adopted by UN-Habitat in 2014, the existence of public spaces is also a key element in the development of a city. However, not every public space is effective. Many spaces in the city, such as the gaps between buildings, poorly maintained transport stations or parks that are unsafe, abandoned lots, and many spaces, are considered as residues and thus cannot contribute to the well-being of a city or the communities within it. The existence of public places should serve a purpose. A public place should have its own history—a unique cultural and social identity that is defined by the way it is used and the people who use it. Aside from that, these public spaces should have a meaning for their communities and become urban places that can drive the social and economic value of a community (Project for Public Spaces/PPS, "Benefits Public Spaces", accessed 7 May, 2017).

The development of public places, be it streets, parks, or plazas/squares is booming in Jakarta, especially in the past five years. The public places in Jakarta were revitalized, repaired, rejuvenated, restored, converted, or built on empty, loose, or residual spaces. These public places exist almost all across Jakarta as child-friendly integrated public spaces, city or neighborhood parks/squares/plazas, pedestrian and riverside areas, and many more, making Jakarta a more public-friendly city, catering the needs of the young, old, children, and even disabled alike.

The revitalization of public places is also done in the area of Kota Tua, “Fatahillah Square”. Fatahillah Square is the oldest civic place in Jakarta and consists of the Main Square and other areas in which aged buildings from the Dutch era still stand. This area has gone through a couple of restorations, renovations, and revitalizations since it was first built in 1527. In 2013, a consortium—which consists of the central government, the provincial government of DKI Jakarta, municipalities, private sectors, and civil society—was formed for the development and revitalization of Kota Tua Fatahillah (Robertson, UNESCO Report 2014).

Besides the conservation of old buildings, the revitalization of Kota Tua lends itself to potentially becoming one of the world’s leading tourist destinations. With this in mind, Kota Tua still has several issues that should be considered, such as ease of access, public transportation
connectivity, the uncomfortable pedestrian area, limited parking area, and the scattered street vendors. Aside from that, the Fatahillah area also lacks integration with the squares, streets, and buildings in the vicinity. The development of this area is also uneven; the less-crowded area outside the main zone is underdeveloped, giving the impression that it is unsafe, especially at night. The sidewalks are packed with street vendors, causing discomfort for visitors who come to enjoy the historical heritage that is the Fatahillah Square.

With the context given above, this study will discuss about the main principles in evaluating the quality of a civic place as a purposeful and valuable place for its visitors. Included in this discussion will be the theoretical study of the attributes of a successful public space, in particular comfortable civic places that can be useful to everyone, including the disabled.

**Civic Place and The Quality of Civic Place**

A good design of a city and its spaces must at all times focus on the development of the humane dimension. A humane city— with carefully designed streets, pedestrian zones, square and parks (urban spaces)— creates pleasure for visitors and passers-by, as well as for those who live, work, shop, and play there every day (Richard Rogers’ Foreword in Cities for People, 2010). These urban areas serve as the heart, arteries, and lungs of the city that are vital to the city life. These urban spaces/civic spaces need to be transformed into great public/civic places that enrich the lives of its users, enhances its surrounding buildings and neighborhoods, provide a sense of character and a forum for public activities (PPS). This discussion will elaborate on the definition and quality of a civic place. As one of the urban spaces, a civic space becomes the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community (Carr, 1992), expresses and also conditions our public life, civic culture, and everyday discourse (Francis Tibbald, 2002). Civic places as the heart of the city provide settings for cultural and social activities, and serve as a place for democracy, collective memory, sociability, and can benefit cities economically. Aside from that, civic places can give identity to a city and its people as explained in Project for Public Spaces: "Great civic places provide a sense of community and a forum for public activity. They anchor downtowns, acting as foundations for healthy growth. All of these benefits add up to greater livability” (Project for Public Spaces/PPS).

Looking at various definitions of civic places, it can be concluded that studying the quality of a civic place is also studying the human activities done in it while also evaluating the quality of a civic place in general and the integration of the civic place with the streets and buildings surrounding it. In this discussion, a civic place area must be observed from the quality of its squares, streets/sidewalks, surrounding buildings, and the connectivity between all three.

According to numerous studies, an excellent public space is of three things: safe, comfortable, and vital (City of Saskatoon, Strategic Framework 2011). Meanwhile, according to Vikas Mehta in his book “The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space”, the criteria of public spaces (squares, parks, streets, etc.) and pedestrian zones include comfort, safety, and appeal. Each of these criteria needs to be examined even further. Comfort-wise, there are a few things that need to be evaluated, namely a) weather-bound comfort, b) physical comfort that affects various social activities, be it in the squares or on the pedestrian zones. This can be improved by placing benches, street furniture, and trees. Safety-wise: a) the diversity of land functions (various shops, restaurants, bars, and other functions other than housing complex,
anything that will bring the crowds in and have a social control), b) night illumination—the safety of the pedestrian zones at night, equipped with streetlights. As for appeal: a) an attractive and appealing environment such as lighting, plants, and building facades, b) events, programs, and enticing activities such as bazaars, street musicians, buskers, etc.

As a center of the city, civic places that encompass and surround public buildings also serve as the “front porches” of our public institutions—post office, museums, libraries, seats of government, and even jail. Therefore, the quality of the entire civic place area doesn’t only rely on the quality of the civic place/plaza/square itself, but also on four other criteria that are based on the historic location of the civic place with its aesthetic buildings of heritage, namely 1) the function and diversity of the buildings surrounding the civic place, 2) the uniqueness and identity of the civic place, 3) Destination and Discovery, and 4) the activities that will boost the success rate of the civic place as a lively public space (Carmona, 2010; Carr, 1992; Im Sik Cho, 2016).

The squares, pedestrian zones, and historical buildings that make up public spaces are intertwined in a sturdy integration system. Therefore the connectivity of all three should be regarded as an additional criterion that will further improve the quality of civic places as a whole. These criteria are 1) livelihood, 2) social interactions, 3) environmentally friendly design, 4) legibility and edges, 5) spatial variety, 6) accessibility, 7) connectivity, and 8) management and regulations (Carmona, 2010; Im Sik Cho, 2016, Srinaga, 2016).

A more comprehensive study of urban places’ quality (Im Sik Cho et al., 2016) puts forward three interconnected components. These components affect the quality of urban spaces, namely HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, and ORGWARE. HARDWARE refers to physical/spatial values (design values of space) which are 1) accessibility, 2) connectivity, 3) mobility means, 4) legibility and edges, 5) spatial variety, 6) environmentally friendly design, and 7) user comfort. SOFTWARE involves usages, social and perceptual values of urban spaces, which are 8) diversity and intensity of use, 9) social activities, and 10) identity. Finally, ORGWARE relates to operational and management aspects of public space which are 11) provision of amenities and services, 12) safety and security, and 13) management and regulations.

**Fatahillah Square as a Civic Place at Old Town Area of Jakarta**

Built in 1527, the Fatahillah Square is the oldest standing area and the first civic space in Jakarta that serves as the center of the Dutch government with its seats of government, jail, public space, etc. Today, Fatahillah Square and most of the buildings there have been converted. It has become the main area of the entire Kota Tua/old town area of Jakarta (refer to figure 1).
Kota Tua Jakarta is located in the Northern part of Jakarta, covering two sub-districts in the West Jakarta Municipality and one sub-district in the North Jakarta Municipality. The total area of Kota Tua is about 334 hectare, divided into two clusters that are based on the historical significance of city morphology and Old City “Batavia” boundaries of the past. The first cluster is the inside City Wall area (also known as Fort Jacatra), which consists of Core Zone and Support Zone—boasting many historical buildings and high tourism potential (UNESCO, 2014, refer to figure 2). The second cluster is the outside City Wall area, which was developed to protect and reconstruct characteristics of the building blocks and forming elements of Kota Tua.

Core Zone

In the 16th century, Jembatan Kota Intan was a harbor called Sunda Kelapa. In 1527 the name Sunda Kelapa was changed into Jayakarta. In 1619 the city of Jayakarta was destroyed and rebuilt as Batavia in which the central government was located, in the area which is known today as Taman Fatahillah. In 1942 during Japan’s regime, Batavia changed its name to Jakarta and many Dutch buildings were demolished. In 1972, the governor in power issued an official decree, declaring Kota Tua as a national heritage. Attempts of revitalizations have been made since the early 1990s, but Kota Tua keeps degrading as time goes (almost 70 percent of the buildings have fallen apart). Having been neglected, the area lacked public interest.

The Fatahillah Square that once served as the center of the government has now become a tourist attraction. On weekdays it attracts up to 2000-4000 visitors\(^1\) and on weekends the number can spike up to double the amount\(^2\). According to the government of DKI Jakarta, there have been 1,572,317 visitors recorded during January to August 2014; there is a 4.27% escalation from the last year\(^3\). The amount of visitors directly affects the activity of pedestrians, since this area is projected as a pedestrian zone. Considering this, there should have been more facilities provided for pedestrians for extra comfort and ease.

This area has gone through many attempts to be developed as a tourist attraction for pedestrians since 2006. In 2009, the sidewalks were starting to get widened. However, the street vendors and vehicles passing by inconvenienced the pedestrians. Finally in 2013, the area of Fatahillah was altogether closed for vehicles and became a pedestrian zone, only allowing vehicles to pass by certain routes. Even so, the rapid growth of Jakarta and the vicinity of Fatahillah caused traffic jams and made it harder to gain access to the main area and the

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\(^{1}\) Recorded by the government of DKI Jakarta.

\(^{2}\) According to the government of DKI Jakarta.

\(^{3}\) Recorded by the government of DKI Jakarta.
Fatahillah Square. On the other hand, the pedestrian zone in the Fatahillah area, while it is decently equipped, is not of good quality.

The main issue in the Fatahillah area is the transportation, which is dominated by vehicles, thus causing traffic jams throughout the week, day and night. It also affects the accessibility into the Square and the main area of Fatahillah. Another pressing issue is the setup of the street vendors, which dominated most of the sidewalk. This also creates some traffic in certain nodes, again inconveniencing the visitors. Aside from those, there are still some issues regarding quality: 1) Fatahillah Square, the streets/sidewalk, and their connections with the main road, 2) the integration of the square and the buildings surrounding it, and 3) a lively and inclusive area.

When talking about the quality of a civic place, its connection with the streets is inevitable, as it is a vital artery as well as a place where the existing transportation system can create a sense of community. This goes along with the statement: “The street is the river of life of the city, the place where we come together, the pathway to the center.” (William H. Whytein PPS, 1980). The matter of the integration of the square and the buildings surrounding it also cannot be disregarded, as they form a “Datum” which creates a visual attraction, particularly in a historical area such as Fatahillah. Furthermore, the discussion should touch on the subject of making the place more lively and inclusive so that everyone can enjoy the Fatahillah Square, the historical buildings, and the visual of the streets comfortably.

As an area specifically made for pedestrians, every issue regarding the attributes and evaluators specifically developed based on the context of Fatahillah Square must be evaluated with the viewshed pedestrian elements in mind (refer to figure 3) in order to improve the quality of Fatahillah civic place.

Figure 3: Elements of a Pedestrian Viewshed

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This discussion will consist of three parts, namely Fatahillah Square and Street connectivity, Square and Buildings, and livability and inclusiveness of Fatahillah area:

• **FATAHILLAH SQUARE and STREET CONNECTIVITY**

  The problem with Fatahillah Square is that it lacks of appropriate facility for visitors such as benches, street furniture, canopy of trees, etc. The comfort level of visitors in all weather should also receive extra attention. This is in accordance to Gehl’s research, an evaluation on the use of 28 urban spaces throughout Copenhagen in which 12 quality criteria concerning the pedestrian landscape were identified. It is divided into three sections dealing with protection, comfort, and delight (Annie Matan, 2016). Another issue regarding the Fatahillah area concerns pedestrians. As the main actors of the area, their comfort should be prioritized, but that is not the case. Their needs have been pushed aside. This is evident from the pedestrian zone that is used instead by other parties, minimizing the area that can actually be used by pedestrians (refer to figure........). The problem arising from the pedestrian zone itself is that of comfort such as traffic jams, certain packed spots, damaged sidewalks, lack of trees, and lack of street signs and lanes for bikers and people with disabilities. The accessibility to and from Fatahillah Square and the surrounding area is also lacking. Another issue has to do with traffic and low accessibility: the lack of parking spaces. In order to find a solution, the unsatisfactory street condition in some places and the discontinuity of the transportation mode in this area need to be brought into further discussion. The thresholds of Fatahillah, which often case are the most crowded and uncomfortable for pedestrians, is also a pressing issue that requires extra attention. From the existing problems, the are four parameters that can be used for evaluation in attempt to increase the quality of Fatahillah places, namely USER COMFORT, ACCESSIBILITY, MOBILITY MEANS, and CONNECTIVITY.

• **SQUARE and BUILDINGS**

  One of the main reasons people come to visit Taman Fatahillah is to enjoy the historical buildings in the area. These buildings and squares often become the object of photography. The location of the city park/Fatahillah Square is surrounded by museums cafe/restaurants, banks, office complexes, public and social service, seats of governments, and many more. Some of the historical buildings as a part of Dutch heritage are still in good care even until this day. These historical buildings give the Fatahillah area a unique identity as a historical old town. The existence of these buildings along with the square and streets complement each other to create a valuable range of view and destination for the visitors (figure 4). These buildings also serve as a background for cultural performances. Not only visitors can enjoy the existence of the square itself, but they can also grasp the historical buildings around it, be it exterior or interior, one by one or as a whole facade/edge which creates a great square enclosure (figure 5).

  Many activities take place in the square such as performances, picture-taking, leisurely walking or sitting while enjoying the atmosphere of the square, running, kids playing, and street vendors selling their goods. Meanwhile indoors, visitors can take a look around the museum,
work in the offices, take pictures, and set up exhibitions. The activities conducted in the square and all across the Fatahillah area all day long will attract a large amount of people, especially during social, cultural, and/or economic events (figure 6 and 7). Another prominent activity here is by the street vendors. Some of them are legal, but most of them aren’t. The relocation of street vendors is an essential task. Based on the issues bubbling from the integration of the square and the buildings surrounding it, the creation and the usage of this place by the visitors, thus this discussion can be boiled down to six basic aspects that should be evaluated for the sake of the comfort of the visitors in social, cultural, and economic interactions, and so that they can enjoy this civic place for community and democratic dialogue. The six aspects are **LEGIBILITY and EDGES, SPATIAL VARIETY, DIVERSITY and INTENSITY OF USE, SOCIAL ACTIVITY, ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, and IDENTITY.**

- **LIVELY and INCLUSIVE**

  Regarding the development and revitalization of the entire Kota Tua Fatahillah area, aside from dealing with the problems arising in the central area, other zones in the vicinity also need some level of development, for example the River Core Zone, the Dutch Drawbridge Core Zone, Harbour Core Zone, Street Vendor Core Zone/Market street core zone, etc (UNESCO, 2014). We have to create different activities in different core zones in order to cheer up other areas.

  The uneven distribution of activities and visitors in the square and core area of Fatahillah becomes the main cause of traffic jam and low accessibility, as well as discomfort for visitors, preventing them to get the full old town square experience. Furthermore, the development of the zones around the core of Fatahillah will even out the distribution of the activities as well as bringing the old town back to life, making it a tourist destination with a lively and comfortable civic place for the people. In order to achieve that, a strong conceptual master is needed to integrate the areas around Fatahillah square with the core. The potential for a lively Fatahillah area is strengthened when more people are invited to walk, bike, and stay in the city space of the whole Fatahillah district. The development of a comfortable, safe, and appealing pedestrian zone, as well as accessible for all people (all age, various socio-economic background and the disabled) with inclusive design, must be the main priority. The provision of amenities such as public toilets, benches, first aid centers, bus stops, a comfortable streetscape and many more also need to be taken care of in attempt to increase the quality of the Fatahillah district as the oldest, valuable civic place with the appeal of its historical buildings.

  The coordination and cooperation of the central government, local government, businessmen, street vendors, building office/tenants and the existing community is needed in order to maintain the integration and connectivity among them. The regulations for the street vendors, planning for upcoming activities, comfort, cleanliness, and safety in this place needs to be better coordinated. Looking at the current condition, the issues and the potential developments to come, it can be summed up to five evaluators that need to be concerned in order to make this place more lively and inclusive, namely **ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY DESIGN, INCLUSIVE DESIGN, SPECIFICATION of AMENITIES and SERVICES, SAFETY and SECURITY, and MANAGEMENT and REGULATION.**
Figure 4: Fatahilla Square core zone

Figure 5: Fatahilla Square Museum
Figure 6: Fatahillah Square

Figure 7: Streets Vendor & Activities around Fatahillah Square
Conclusion

In order to increase the quality, livability, and vitality of a public/civic space, the civic space needs to be transformed into a place that doesn’t only support the activities inside the square, but also one that pays attention to its accessibility, comfort, and safety of its visitors so that they can enjoy the entirety of the square, activities, and also the functions of the historical buildings around the civic place.

Some important principles in order to improve Fatahillah Square’s quality as a historic civic place are as follows:

- **To Enhance Quality of Square and Streets Connectivity:**

  The focal points here are visitors’ comfort level in the square, the connectivity of Fatahillah Square and its vicinity, the variety and locations of public transportation to and from Fatahillah Square and parking lots, and the comfort level of pedestrians and bikers as they go around the square and the surrounding buildings. Some efforts can be made in order to improve some aspects, namely:

  - **User comfort** such as how comfortable visitors are with the weather, shade & sunlight, etc.
  - **Accessibility** pays attention to pedestrian access points, the square’s thresholds, and prioritizing the pedestrians, etc.
  - **Mobility means** such as walkability and Bicycle-friendly Design, public transport, Drop-off and Taxi/Bus Stands, parking area, etc.
  - **Connectivity** such as public transportation connectivity, movement patterns, node connectivity, sightlines and way-finding, etc.

- **To Improve the Integration of Square and Buildings:**

  The focal point here is how comfortable the visitors are as they enjoy a leisurely stroll around the square and its historical buildings, and also taking full advantage of the streets furniture while absorbing the beauty of the historical buildings/old town as well as the activities taking place in it. This can be done by improving some aspects, namely:

  - **Legibility and Edges** such as: a clear spatial layout, a visually rich and active buildings edges, the existence of visual landmarks, focal point of activity that can be seen from the access into the area and also the permeability of this area.
  - **Spatial variety** such as the existence of sub-spaces for different activities and providing a spatial experience for the visitors, spatial ability that has capacity to adopt temporary programs, spaces with flexible layouts to create a spatial arrangement and various conditions.
Diversity & Intensity of Use such as diversity of activities within the Square, choice of activities around Fatahillah square, mix uses (space and buildings), etc.

Social Activities such as the provision of a good and various seating amenities, creating intimate places and exposure, etc.

Economic Activity such as the arrangement of street vendors both inside and outside the square, time management for vending and other activities done around the square and in nearby buildings as to improve the economy of Fatahillah area while maintaining the size of crowd.

Identity (historical image and character) such as fixing the image and character of the area by restoring or preserving the historical buildings and the cultural heritage in the area, preserving and improving the existing historic and symbolic value, as well as the unique buildings/natural features in Fatahillah such as cannons, museums, etc., and increasing the number of art and cultural programs.

- **To Increase Liveliness and Inclusiveness of the Whole Fatahillah Area:**

  The main focus here is to keep the Fatahillah area thriving while at the same time keeping it inclusive for everyone from every socio-economic background and even for the disabled. Aside from increasing the quality of the square, the rearranging of the pedestrian area and the surrounding buildings, another important aspect is the management and regulation that needs to be applied in order to create a more comfortable area that can be visited and enjoyed whether by Jakartans in general or local and international tourists. Some principles to note are:

  Environmentally Friendly Design such as streetscape arrangement, street furniture, streetlights and landscape around the square, pedestrian zones, and vehicle routes.

  Inclusive design such as the provision of special lanes for the disabled, street signs for the disabled, bike lanes, comfortable bus stops, comfortable sidewalks, etc.

  Specification of Amenities & Services such as the provision of clean public toilets, first aid centre, lighting arrangements, street signs, information centres, and other facilities and amenities.

  Safety & Security such as preventing the event of accidents and crimes, the provision of zebra crosses, lane dividers, and features designed to avoid injuries, etc.

  Management & Regulations such as applicable regulations especially regarding street vendors, which may cause traffic and discomfort for visitors, time and event management, etc.

  It is expected by evaluating based on the 15 attributes that serve as the principles of success and good quality of a historical site like Fatahillah that a suggestion might emerge to increase the quality of Fatahillah Square as a historical civic square with its historical buildings that hopefully can be enjoyed by Jakartans, local and international tourists.
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