

Harmonizing the Sacred and the Profane; Bringing Together Cultural Heritage and Pop-Culture in the Urban Sphere

1. Introduction

The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban and rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, significant development of an historic event ... the conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose.

- *The Venice Charter on International Restoration*, 1964

A city is the physical manifestation of human activities throughout time; it can be considered as a log-book of events that people dwell in. Certain settings within, or outside a city may contain evidence of historic events that help shape a city's identity and personality, and the ideals in its folk life. Therefore it is imperative that some urban settings be classified under urban heritage, conserved and maintained to keep the ideals alive against shifts in activity and values. Thus, on one hand we have 'continuity', and 'change' in the other. Perhaps 'change in continuity' is the theme that best suit this discussion.

Taman Bungkul (here on after referred to as Bungkul Park) began life as a kampung (urban village) in Surabaya named Desa Bungkul. It was once home to one of Surabaya's elders, Mbah Bungkul, known for his role in the spread of Islam in Surabaya, and East Java. The kampung was gradually torn-down, and completely erased by 1920, giving way to a prestigious Dutch elite residential development that is Darmo, leaving only the final resting place of Mbah Bungkul. Keeping the cemetery among high-class residential structures is considered as a form of respect towards Bungkul; the Dutch planners named the cemetery Boengkoel Park.

As a public space, Bungkul Park is never short of visitors and activities. Pilgrims from all over Indonesia visit Bungkul in large groups. During election periods, the park becomes a gathering spot for political parties and their devotees. It is also a very popular spot for hawkers.

Bungkul Park can be considered as Surabaya's *alun-alun* (city square). The park receives regular visits from people who would like to pay their respects to one of Surabaya's iconic figures (pilgrims). In an attempt to breathe new life into the park, Surabaya city authorities converted a section of the park into a skateboard/BMX arena, and added free wireless internet hotspots, providing cheap-and-cheerful recreational facility within the city. During weekends, usually on Saturday night, the park is a popular spot to host live pop music performances. The conversion brought revenue to some stakeholders, namely street food hawkers around the vicinity, and the city also received income from vehicle parking retribution. However, pilgrims visiting Bungkul Park to pay their respects to Mbah Bungkul claim that the conversion has defaced the park, reducing its sacred values.

The case of Bungkul Park is a unique case of friction between the sacred and the profane spaces within the urban sphere. This paper presents a preliminary study in an attempt to determine whether economic revenue is worth achieving by defacing one of Surabaya's cultural heritage sites through a thorough comparative study of similar cases across the globe, namely in Asia and Indonesia.

Is revenue a strong enough excuse to deface an iconic cultural heritage site? Do possibilities exist to mesh the sacred and the profane spaces in the urban environment? The answer perhaps lies within the city authorities' ability to formulate an inclusive urban strategy, and the successful application of 'change in continuity'.

2. Study Methodology

This study was carried out in Surabaya, the second-largest city in Indonesia, and targeted stakeholders directly affected by Bungkul Park, including informal sector traders, adjacent property owners, and visitors. Both formal and informal interviews were carried out to capture the diverse public opinion, while literature reviews were carried out to affirm the author's own perspectives and ideas.

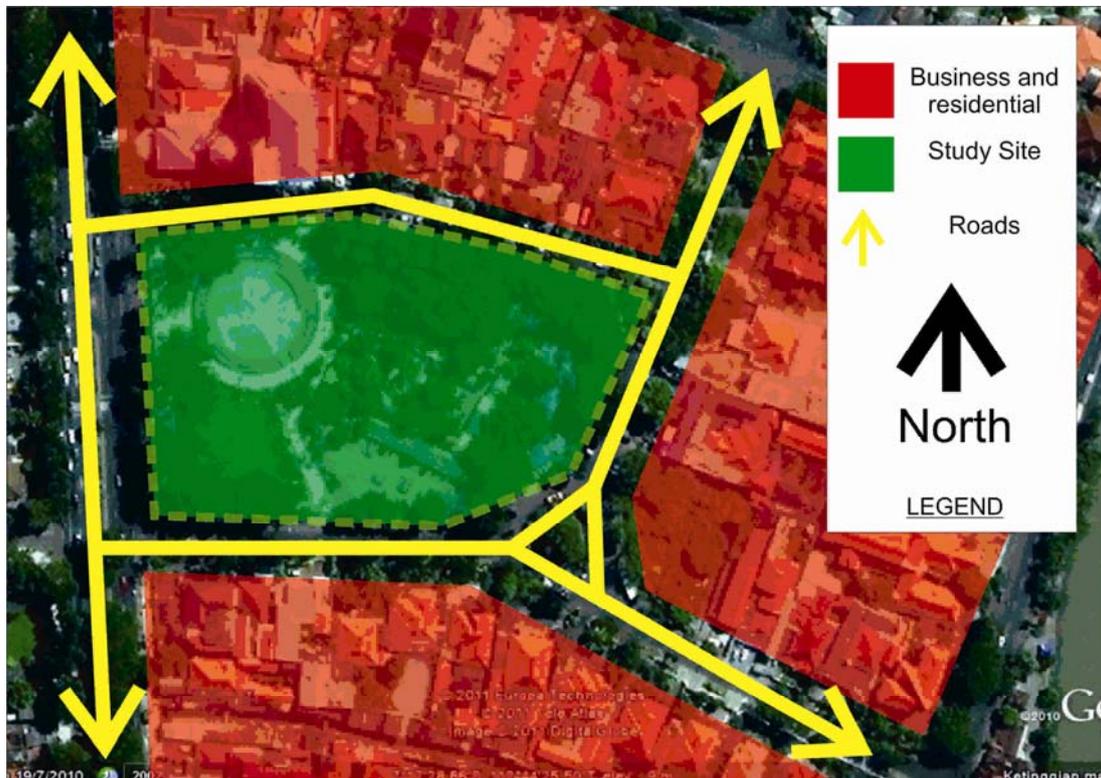


Figure 1 Study location

3. Bungkul (Re)Development



Figure 2 Map of Surabaya in the 1900s; Bungkul Park is highlighted with a yellow circle

As mentioned before, Bungkul Park began life as an urban village (kampung) named Desa Bungkul. Records of it can be found in maps of Surabaya as early as 1827 until early 1900s. Located east of Kalimas river, the kampung is bound by Marmoyo Road to the south, Adityawarman Road to the east, and Kampung Dinoyo to the north. There was also another kampung known as Desa Darmo to the north. Giving way to a prestigious elite Dutch residential development project, Darmo, Desa Bungkul was torn down by 1920. A spot of land was left behind as it happens to be the final resting place of Mbah Bungkul, thus named Boengkoel Park by Dutch planners.



Figure 3 Bungkul Park and its surroundings

Mbah Bungkul's story is somewhat vague. His name is recorded in Babad Ngampeldenta published in October 1901. This documentation is currently kept in the Jogjakarta Cultural Institution. Other records of Mbah Bungkul, Babad Risakipun Majapahit Wiwit Jumenengipun Prabu Majapahit Wekasan Dumugi Demak Pungkasan, are kept in the Reksopustoko Library, Surakarta. The late G.H. Von Faber, in his 1931 publication, Oud Soerabaja also mentioned little of Mbah Bungkul. Little is known about this historic figure, while records of him are debatable. It is best to just consider Mbah Bungkul simply as one of Surabaya's elders.



Figure 4 Bungkul Park main square

In 2007, plans were drawn up to revitalize Bungkul Park as part of Surabaya's park-development-program. There were talks about how the new development will have facilities for skateboard enthusiasts, a jogging track, and fountain. The then-mayor, Bambang D.H., even mentioned the possibility of developing Bungkul Park into a commercial area considering the (large) budget and planned facilities. During the many discussions between city authorities and representatives from the society, people voiced their concerns about how the project would ruin the park's setting, and commercializing it would attract only certain members of society and exclude other layers of society. There were also concerns of pilgrims being asked to pay retribution to access the park, and that will lead to the decline in Bungkul Park's number of visitors.



Figure 5 Bungkul attracts all layers of society

Bungkul Park attracts visitors from all layers of society, and all walks of life. Hawkers make good use of the park to earn income from selling coffee and snacks, wristwatches and other accessories, to providing a challenging game of 'win-in-3-turns-chess'. Children are also treated to a playground with swings and slides, while skaters and BMX enthusiasts may enjoy the challenging Skate-BMX-Park. Bungkul is also the place where bicycle enthusiasts gather every Sunday to enjoy Car-free Day. To top things off, live music is performed regularly on Saturday nights at 19:00. As though not wanting to miss out, gay and lesbian communities also like to get together in Bungkul Park.



Figure 6 Freestyle bikers and skaters practice regularly in Bungkul

4. Conflict & Resolution

Considering Bungkul Park's history and religious value, it is perhaps strange to find that live music is performed there regularly, even when the pilgrims are paying their respects to Mbah Bungkul. Most pilgrims admit to being annoyed by the blaring music resonating from the stage sound system. Some pilgrims are also disturbed by the gay and lesbian communities that like to gather in the park. To them, the existence of such communities within Bungkul vicinity is the biggest desecration to Bungkul Park's religious value.



Figure 7 Couples in Bungkul Park

At some point, the religious community (PCNU) brought forth a number of recommendations to city authorities concerning Bungkul Park's future:

1. PCNU requests authorities to revitalize and treat Bungkul Park, and the immediate surroundings as a sacred urban space;
2. The Parks' revitalization should be included as part of the Surabaya Urban Master Plan revision;
3. Bungkul Park's revitalization should also be considered to be included in the Regional Monetary Plan (APBD) to ensure its proper planning and funding;
4. The Regional House of Representatives should supervise the revitalization project from the very beginning to the end;
5. Maintain Bungkul Park's existence and image as a religious, family park, and ban all non-religious activities from the park;

6. City authorities should involve PCNU throughout the Bungkul Park revitalization planning and development process.

In a separate occasion, a prominent city official announced the installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in vital parts of the park, covering areas that are most likely to be used for immoral activities. To back up the newly installed cameras, the city authorities also deployed ten security personnel to patrol the park regularly.



Figure 8 Wardens patrol the park regularly

So far, there has also been an agreement between park authorities and event organizers to schedule events in a way that live performances will not disturb the religious activities that pilgrims partake in. Generally, live performances will have to pause during prayer times. However, sometimes park authorities will suddenly revoke event organizers' permits without the latter's consent.

Waktu Sholat	
Surabaya, Indonesia	
Shubuh	: 04:19
Terbit	: 5:28
Dhuhr	: 11:27
Ashr	: 14:49
Maghrib	: 17:33
Isya	: 18:42
Kiblat: 24° di kanan Barat (arah matahari jam 15:37)	

Figure 9 Surabaya prayer times

5. The Need to Manage and Plan the Conservation of Cultural Built Heritage (CBH) and Cultural Heritage (CH)

There are three aspects that determine the public space character (Carmona, et al., 2008):

1. Key elements of public space, or 'kit of parts': if taken apart, morphologically, public space consists of four major components: Buildings, Landscape (soft and hard), infrastructure, and uses;
2. Certain characteristics of public space or the 'qualities' that public space possesses: being aware of the 'kit of parts' is nothing without knowing how the four components correlate to each other to maximize the qualities of public space. Copenhagen-based

architect, Jan Gehl, characterized outdoor activities into three categories: necessary activities, optional activities, and resultant activities;

3. Socio-economic and physical-spatial context, or the 'context for action'.

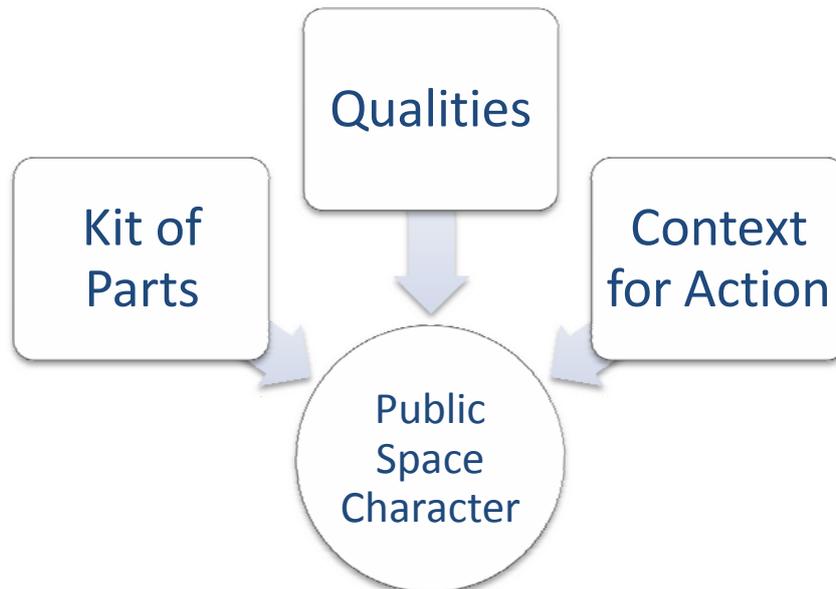


Figure 10 The three dimensions of Public Space Character

Kit of Parts

Morphologically, public space consists of four major components: Buildings, Landscape, infrastructure, and uses. The key component that needs to be discussed here is 'uses'. Before its revitalization, Bungkul Park was a cemetery with an open field that was used to conduct religious ceremonies.

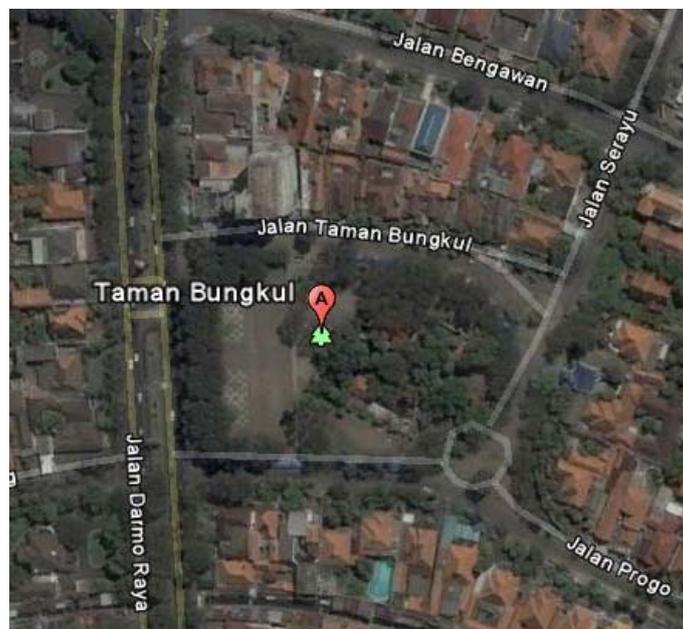


Figure 11 Bungkul Park up until 2002

There were no fancy features attributed to the park; no wireless internet access, no skate park, no drinking fountains, and no playground for the younger children. The park was dark, and often used for immoral activities by certain members of society. Because of this, the

revitalization project was initialized. However, considering the park's history, converting the park into a skater's paradise can be considered as a very brave, if not, strange decision.

Qualities

It is difficult to ignore the fact that Bungkul Park's location, Darmo, has shifted from an elite residential area to a prime business and residential area thus affecting all three activity categories: necessary, optional, and resultant activities.

1. Necessary activities: Raya Darmo road is now a part of Surabaya's main spine, connecting the city center with the neighboring regency, Sidoarjo. From a quiet, elite neighborhood, Darmo is now bustling with people engaging in business and retail activities;
2. The range of optional activities has expanded ever since the Bungkul Park redevelopment. People can now choose to watch the world go by from the park, or enjoy the skate park and children's playground;
3. The result of the park's revitalization is obvious: the park now receives more and more visitors, and generates a certain amount of revenue from taxes collected from authorized hawkers and on-street-parking. The project has successfully provided a cheap-and-cheerful form of urban entertainment for the masses.

Context for Action

With Bungkul Park receiving more visitors, the opportunities to attract new informal businesses are great. More informal businesses mean more chances for the unemployed, thus it can be said that the Bungkul Park revitalization project will indirectly help reduce unemployment.

As the park houses both sacred and profane activities, the level of community engagement within the park is enormous as Bungkul becomes a public space where everything is basically there.

From an historic point of view, Bungkul Park was built to conserve the final resting places of historic figures such as Ratu Kamboja, Ratu Campa, Tumenggung Jayengrono, and Ki Ageng Supo/Empu Supo/Mbah Bungkul. Planning and designing the park is a tremendous task that must pay attention towards pilgrims' ease-of-access, safety and security, comfort to their activities. The fact that the park's development failed to accommodate the pilgrims, and tend to lean towards the general public only, can be considered as "severing the ties" with Bungkul Park's history and religious value. Ideally, Bungkul Park should have been developed into a place that accommodates religious tourism activities, catering more to pilgrims' requirements, while still able to accommodate the general public as well.

6. Conclusion

Though certain layers of society insisted on reconverting Bungkul Park into a religious, family park, free from any profane activities, the opportunity to harmonize the sacred and the profane within the urban sphere still exists. With proper management, and some minor changes, there need not be a re-revitalization. The minor changes that can be suggested are as follows:

Improved lighting

Bungkul was known to be one of those shady spots in the urban environment. Ever since its revitalization, the park has become brighter, more welcome to society. There are, however, some spots in the park vicinity that are still dark, and favorable spots for immoral activities. Some added lighting will certainly improve the park's setting, minimize any opportunity for its visitors to engage in any immoral activities, and improve park security.

Closed-circuit Television (CCTV)

When properly utilized, CCTV cameras can be a big boost to park security. As mentioned before, there have been attempts to improve park security by installing CCTV cameras on strategic spots in Bungkul Park. More cameras can be placed in other, perhaps less strategic spots to maximize the coverage.

Security Wardens and Place Managers

It was mentioned earlier, that security wardens will patrol the park regularly at designated times. Another approach to improve park security would be to appoint a Place Manager, or a Park Manager, rather than just rely on the City Park and Cleansing Department.

By keeping in mind the 'change in continuity' theme, Bungkul Park can emerge as a unique example of adaptation, and symbolize the existence of sacred and profane activities within the urban sphere.

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