



ASLI QoL2015, Annual Serial Landmark International Conferences on Quality of Life
ASEAN-Turkey ASLI QoL2015
AicQoL2015Jakarta, Indonesia. AMER International Conference on Quality of Life
The Akmani Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia, 25-27 April 2015
“Quality of Life in the Built & Natural Environment 3”

Maimoon Palace Heritage District in Medan, Indonesia: What we preserve and why we preserve?

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Abstract

Preservation includes both tangible and intangible elements. In a historical tourism area, the identity of a place indicates a unique place and motivates preservation for it can support the quality of life by giving personal experiences and driving economic growth. Maimoon Palace Heritage District is a tourism area known as Medan city landmark whose landscape was formed during Dutch Indies period. By combining qualitative and quantitative method, this study aims to determine the preservation aspects based on place identity. The finding shows that preservation should include elements of historical buildings, historical stories, the experience of the past, and availability of public facilities to support the identity of the place.

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Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment- Behaviour Studies, Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia).

Keywords: Preservation; identity of place; Maimoon Palace heritage district; Medan city

1. Introduction

A heritage in a city plays a big role in creating the significance of the area while enhancing the society's quality of life. Ashworth (2007) stated that there is an identity in heritage place that is generated by the history where the

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identity becomes the heritage tourism attraction. Hence, the value of the identity must be included in heritage area planning. In heritage area that grows as a tourism destination, the spatial planning based on place identity even becomes more crucial. It is the main attraction of the area that can improve the tourists emotional and psychological reactions (Otto and Ritchie, 1996 in Ryan and Page, 2000). Thereby, it will produce tourists satisfaction and keep the tourism activities going.

Preservation lately has become the answer for maintaining the place identity, because it aims to keep the urban heritage and the sense of place in an area. With the rapid growing of modernization, the cities over the world need to keep their identity. On the other hand, preservation closely relates to the history of the place. The history becomes necessary for it can satisfy a variety of needs such as arts, tourism, esthetics, and recreation. In fact, these needs are some entertaining indicator that can improve the quality of life (Gregory et al., 2009 in Mohit, 2013) and bring the positive image of the area. Therefore, the effort of preservation is crucial to keep the memory of the history. The purpose of preservation are to teach people about their predecessor's history and culture, to give identity to a community, and to provide evidence of continuity between past, present, and future (Goodwin et al, 2009).

This study attempted to find the right act of preservation in Maimoon Palace Heritage District in Medan City; to discuss what elements that should be preserved and why we preserve. Therefore, this study can contribute a better planning for Medan City that shows its identity and improve the people quality of life.

2. Preservation based on place identity

Preservation can be interpreted as an attempt to preserve and maintain the heritage inheritance, both physical and non-physical. People usually describe it as an effort to maintain the architectural heritage and traditional environment exactly with the original state, without addition or subtraction of the esthetic value. Furthermore, some experts explain preservation can include a various process, from small repair, renovation, and even restoration. The preservation background and the condition of the objects later will influence the processes. In fact, preservation is not only connected with the physical elements of the building, but also non-physical elements. It is because the non-physical elements are also part of the physical elements and describe the place identity.

Communities nowadays have big enthusiasm in the preservation towards their heritage and history values (Grefe, 2004 in Azhari and Mohamed, 2012). People start to realize that preservation can fulfill so many needs such as arts, tourism, recreation, even improve the quality of life. For example, the building that brings distinctiveness and reflects the local people culture can advance the quality of life in the area (Willamso, Redford, Bennelss, 2003 in Sani and Mahasti, 2012). Without supervision and management of historical buildings, a city will lose its pattern and uniqueness (Idid, 1996 in Said et. al, 2013).

Said et al. (2013) stated that the effort of preservation becomes so important in revitalizing the cities and keeping its memories. Azhari and Mohamed (2012) also affirmed that the historical buildings preservation represent not only the energy, but also the community spirit and identity. That is why the place identity and sense of place motivated preservation where preservation effort should result in an area that expresses the cultural identity of people lived there.

Nowadays, place identity has been a common topic that discussed in many studies (Ginting, 2014). Some of the most familiar is Breakwell's theory that further developed by Twigger-Ross and Uzzel (in Ginting, 2014). The theory explained there are four principles forming the place identity, namely continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness. Self-esteem means a self-evaluation where one identifies himself. According Twigger-Ross et al. (2003), a person would be happy with a place when it has a physical symbol that maintain and create proud feeling. In fact, they would avoid a place that does not create their esteem. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's ability to work in physical environment and social situation. This aspect relates to human needs to control the environment (Belk, 1992 in Altman and Low, 1992). Another principle of identity is distinctiveness, namely the desire to maintain the diversity of others. Meanwhile, continuity is an inseparable aspect in forming identity because it contains elements of time. In this aspect, the main thing is not the physical character of the place. Moreover, the main thing is the values it contains, the stability espoused values and connectedness memories of a person (memory, nostalgia, and experience).

The identity of a place will produce something special that can be observed or internalized by visitors (Urry, 1994). The identity will be embedded in their minds and not just as commercial value, but directly affects a person

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