

Curating the City: Begandring Soerabaia and the Production of Public Space

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Subject Area: Community and Urban Studies

Abstract

This paper examines the role of the heritage community of Begandring Soerabaia in the production of public space employing Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space as a theoretical framework. Focusing on the "Parade Oud Soerabaja" photography exhibition held at Balai Pemuda Surabaya, the study explores how historical narratives and archival materials are mobilized to generate immersive, socially meaningful experiences. It argues that Begandring's initiatives—through cultural programming, community gatherings, and dialogic engagement—actively contribute to the transformation of urban heritage spaces into dynamic sites of memory, identity, and civic interaction. The exhibition is situated within Lefebvre's spatial triad, and this study highlights how Balai Pemuda functions as a living space shaped by historical continuity, cultural exchange, and communal agency. Finally, the paper emphasizes the significance of grassroots heritage activism in reconfiguring public spaces and preserving urban cultural memory.

Keywords: Urban Studies; Social Space; Heritage Community; Cultural Identity

Introduction

Surabaya has it all: bustling markets and tranquil parks. These public areas undoubtedly contribute to the city's vibrant atmosphere, ranging from trading areas such as Pasar Atom, Pasar Blauran, and Tunjungan Plaza to open areas such as Bungkul Park, Alun-alun, and Tugu Pahlawan. These public spaces in Surabaya represent the city's blend of modernity and tradition, offering opportunities for people and visitors to engage with local culture and enjoy a diverse range of activities. The city also holds many historical memories. They are a testament to a rich cultural heritage and a past that is diverse in its unique identity (Pamungkas et al., 2019; Pattaray & Efendi, 2020; Rojil Nugroho Bayu Aji et al., 2023). Consequently, the presence of cultural heritage communities in Surabaya is recognized as a pivotal factor in the preservation of the city's history and the assurance of future generations' capacity to appreciate its cultural distinctiveness. The city's cultural heritage is preserved, celebrated, and promoted through community activities that are dedicated to this end and

which encompass a wide range of forms, from colonial architecture to local traditional arts (Sa'ir et al., 2020; Wijayanti & Suryani, 2015).

As demonstrated in previous studies, the hypothetical production of public space is indicative of a complementary relationship between urban planning, community initiatives, and cultural influences represented by the community. A number of significant factors must be considered when analyzing the creation and evolution of public space in urban areas. (1) **Urban planning:** Surabaya City Government is an important actor in shaping the social space of the city through urban planning and development projects. Open parks, public squares, and recreational areas are purposely designed to encourage social interaction and community and civic engagement (Malik, 2018; Minanto, 2018). (2) **Community initiatives** are a key factor in the maintenance and sustainability of public spaces. Communities and local inhabitants frequently contribute ideas and innovations that play a crucial role in the preservation of these spaces. For instance, the organization of events on a local level, the facilitation of community service through the collaborative efforts of individuals or groups to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of accessibility and quality within designated areas, both within and across various levels of governance (Adiprasetyo & Saputra, 2017; Aji & Kausan, 2020; Al Dilwan et al., 2019; Crosby et al., 2024; Maela et al., n.d.). (3) **Cultural influences:** The production of public spaces is influenced by a diverse cultural heritage. Festivals, art exhibitions, and traditional performances are frequently hosted in public spaces, thereby creating opportunities for cultural exchange and community gatherings (Al-Fikri et al., 2023; Al-Shami et al., 2024; Rahma et al., n.d.).

Concurrently, the present paper concentrates on Begandring Soerabaia's standpoint on the importance of public space production, as this intersects with their mission to preserve, celebrate, and share the diversity of the city's cultural heritage. The agenda set out by Begandring in representing the production of Surabaya's public space is constituted by a photography exhibition event held at Balai Pemuda Surabaya. The exhibition entitled "Parade Oud Soerabaja" utilizes a selection of historical photographs and archival material to create an immersive experience that guides visitors through a historical journey through the city of Surabaya. This paper employs Henri Lefebvre's theoretical framework on the study of public space production to analyze and evaluate the role of this exhibition in facilitating a deeper understanding of the concept of public space. The concept of social space, as delineated by Lefebvre in his seminal work "The Production of Space", encompasses not merely a physical entity but also a formation that is inextricably intertwined with social relations, practices, and meanings. As he stated that "The form of social spaces is encounter, assembly, simultaneity; everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their cooperation or through their conflicts." (Lefebvre et al., 1997)

Literature Review

In critical geography, the concepts of space and place have different interpretations. Space is associated with more abstract properties and is understood structurally—as in Lefebvre's theory above, while place refers to subjectively constructed experiences, identities, and values (Furia, 2022; Kinkaid, 2020). Thus, from Lefebvre's perspective, the dichotomy between space and place is less relevant because it focuses on the production of space that includes both material and social dimensions. Understanding these social dynamics

is crucial to analysing the urban environment and how spaces are controlled by society. This process takes place within a society where people not only have power but also practical understanding in everyday life, including practical political economy actions to make changes. The change in question will define the meaning of a space dynamically. The focus in Lefebvre's ideas is more on the social processes that occur in space compared to physical construction, where space is transformed over time through social struggles and power relations (Nadolny, 2015)(1997).

"Social space is a social product... The space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action... It is a means of control, and hence of domination, of power." (Lefebvre et al., 1997, p. 26)

The production of public space cannot be separated from the historical constructions that shape the social landscape of a city, and this is something that should always be considered when planning new developments. Basundoro's study from 2012 shows how the city was fragmented up based on ethnicity and social status during the colonial period. Ethnic settlements such as Chinesche Kamp and Arabische Kamp, as well as the existence of exclusive spaces such as Simpang Club (De Simpangsche Societeit / Balai Pemuda), are concrete examples of how colonial powers produced space in a hegemonic way. However, Basundoro also shows the existence of resistance and negotiation of space through social practices such as a counter soccer match by a cross-ethnic community (SIVB), indicating that colonial space is also an arena of conflict and transformation of meaning (Basundoro, n.d.) This dynamic can be observed in an urban context, where there will be a shift in the meaning of space according to the subjects who control, access, and represent it (Misoczky & Oliveira², 2018).

In his theory, The Conceptual Triad of Space (Lefebvre et al., 1997), Lefebvre categorizes space into three types: spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces. Spatial space refers to the real space experienced through human senses and projected through people's daily activities. He argues that activities such as walking, shopping, and interacting carry social significance and contribute to the reproduction of social relations. Meanwhile, representations of space include spaces that are designed and planned. In short, this concept relates to how space is depicted or symbolized through media such as language, images, maps, and others. These representations are not neutral; instead, they are shaped by power relations, social hierarchies, and prevailing ideologies, which influence the way space is understood and perceived. Finally, the representational type of space is how space is utilized and appropriated. Meaning the opposite of the previous type, representational space is the symbolic dimension of a space that is produced by certain social processes such as political power, gender, economics, and others. According to Lefebvre, social relations shape the way space is used. Furthermore, he emphasizes the role of power relations, class, and cultural meanings in shaping spatial practices. For example, space can be a place of resistance or domination, depending on who controls it and, again, how it is used (Althorpe & Horak, 2023; Purcell, 2014).

Space, as a concept, transcends the physical dimension to include a multifaceted understanding and approach that extends into the cognitive and social realms. These three sets of conceptualized spaces offer rich insights for the exploration of the complex interactions between the environment, individual perceptions, and societal structures. In the discussion, we will explain each aspect of the three sets of space concepts, analyze

their significance, and provide detailed examples of their application through representations in the enrichment of space by the Begandring Soerabaia community to explain its complexity.

Methodology

This research was conducted using a descriptive approach with a qualitative method. Firstly, an exploration and description of the activities of the Begandring Soerabaia community was obtained in depth. Secondly, the overall value of the subject's perception, way of thinking, working, and attitude towards the representation of public space was captured. The objective of the present study is to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter employing data collection processes. Such processes include interviews and observations as primary sources, and literature and documentation studies as secondary sources. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, a series of interviews were conducted with multiple active members of Begandring Soerabaia. The present author made specific observations during a visit to the Balai Pemuda Surabaya, the venue for the exhibition. Documentary research is conducted through the collation of literature about Begandring Soerabaia. This includes official community articles, scientific literature, and publications on news portals. Meanwhile, in conducting the analysis, this research uses the framework proposed by Henri Lefebvre, especially on the concept of social space production.

Result and Discussion

Balai Pemuda as a Social and Historical Medium

In "Writing on Cities" Lefebvre emphasizes that urban space is shaped by the ongoing process of urban modernization, which involves both social and spatial dimensions. This process is shaped by broader societal transformations, including urbanization and industrialization, which in turn impact the structure of employment, the delineation of social classes, and the economic values that are espoused (Lefebvre et al., 1996). Balai Pemuda is one of the numerous types of public spaces in Surabaya City, and it remains the most popular among the community. This building, which was designed by a Dutch architect, has the ideal proportions and ambiance to serve as a public space that is suitable for recreational activities and fostering community creativity (Ibrahim & Arfianti, 2025; Ullilazmy et al., 2022). It is evident that the functions of Balai Pemuda have undergone a process of diversification, which has effectively rendered the institution's former role as a tourism information center and public library redundant. Nonetheless, there is an ongoing commitment to the aesthetic enhancement of green spaces, with a view to aligning with contemporary societal expectations and ensuring the general well-being of individuals.

As stated by Rahmi, a student from Garut, who has attended and enjoyed various exhibition events held at Balai Pemuda on multiple occasions. In her estimation, the contemporary function of Balai Pemuda is agreeable and not tedious due to the prevalence of cultural arts events and a plethora of activities that can be undertaken. (Rahmi, 2022). Externally, the building is characterized by a meticulously curated collection of diminutive gardens, whilst internally, it boasts a variety of ornamental features such as fountain pools, contemporary art installations, and designated seating. This harmonious integration of aesthetic elements

offers visitors a unique vantage point from which to observe the dynamic energy of the metropolis whilst engaging in photographic endeavours. Furthermore, Balai Pemuda was selected due to the fact that its events are frequently held free of charge to the public. When compared to other venues, both are free but usually seem uncontrollable because they utilize road facilities.

Public space is constituted by a multifaceted network of relationships, hierarchies, and cultural practices, the interrelations of which collectively shape experiences and serve as an arena for collective expression, interaction, and the formation of identity in society. Balai Pemuda is an integral component of the urban fabric that has been meticulously crafted by urban planners. The function of the cultural center in question can be understood by considering the following: the location, accessibility, and integration of the center into the surrounding built environment. All of the aforementioned elements contribute to the center's function as a dynamic cultural center within the city. Consequently, it serves as a venue for community gatherings, cultural events, and political demonstrations, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and promoting community engagement. The architectural and management features of the Balai Pemuda are conducive to the facilitation of a broad spectrum of cultural, artistic, and community activities, thus playing a pivotal role in the shaping of social interaction and urban life. Therefore, it exerts a significant influence on social cohesion, mental health, and general well-being.

"City Hall represents a public institution, accessible to the general public. The utilisation of the public space environment of City Hall is recommended as a means of voicing opinions, concerns, and criticisms in a manner conducive to the participation in the democratic process." (an interview with Mr. Nanang from Begandring)

The architectural layout of Balai Pemuda demonstrates an approach that is meticulous in its consideration of accessibility and functionality. The configuration of public spaces is intended to facilitate a wide range of events, including concerts, exhibitions, conferences, and workshops. The designs of these spaces are informed by principles of mass circulation, ensuring the efficient movement of individuals and materials. It is evident that the utilization of public spaces by the Begandring Soerabaia community in the context of the photographic exhibition and archive, "Parade Oud Soerabaja," has resulted in the manifestation of a cultural significance for the population of Surabaya, whose presence has been instrumental in cultivating a sense of identity and affiliation among the community members. Consequently, this has engendered a profound sense of pride in their cultural heritage. The exhibition provides a comprehensive exploration of Surabaya's historical journey through a curated selection of photographs, recordings, and historical archives. The immersive display elicits a multifaceted response, ranging from exhilaration to inspiration, nostalgia to introspection. For many individuals, this space functions as a medium for the articulation of personal experiences and the creation of collective memories, which often persist beyond the temporal boundaries of the event itself.

"From this event, Balai Pemuda can be regarded as a milieu that is significant in terms of fostering social and community relations. Indeed, it is a veritable connection that serves as a focal point for individuals who share similar interests and values, facilitating interaction and collaboration that

contributes to the maintenance of a social order in the city of Surabaya.” (an interview with Mr. Nanang from Begandring)

From an urban planning perspective, the physical dimension of space exerts a profound influence on the development of cities and communities, ultimately shaping the urban fabric. A range of factors is being investigated by researchers with a view to establishing how they affect mood, cognition, and social interaction. Among the factors under investigation are spatial layout, lighting, and colour. These insights are employed to conceptualise urban planning initiatives aimed at cultivating a sense of belonging and community among residents. The challenge for urban planners is to devise solutions that optimise the relationship between infrastructure, green spaces, and residential areas to create vibrant and liveable neighbourhoods. The street and neighbourhood layouts, as well as long-standing infrastructure policies, enacted by governments across Asia's major cities, are products of millennia of urban planning. During this time, physical space functioned not merely as a medium for movement but also as a conduit for cultural expression and social cohesion (Qi et al., 2024).

The exhibition materialized through the collaborative efforts of the Begandring Soerabaia Community and multiple institutions within the City of Surabaya. The array of contributors encompassed entities such as the Department of Culture, Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kota Surabaya, the Faculty of Humanities of Airlangga University, and the Roodebrug Soerabaia Community. The exhibition is comprised of a series of photographs that seek to underscore the profound heritage and distinguished history of Surabaya. In addition to an array of historical photographic collections, the exhibition features an installation of artefacts. These include but are not limited to, a variety of bicycle types, various railway services, shipping, and photographic apparatus of historical interest. Additionally, there is an archive display of city maps of Surabaya from 1677 to 1940, annotated with street names and historical places to facilitate visitor comprehension.

Community Gathering

Historically, Balai Pemuda functioned as the primary coordinating center for the community and served as a point of congregation for both residents and visitors. This phenomenon has been observed since the conception of the building, which was designed by the Dutch architect Westmaas in 1907. The association was originally named "De Simpangsche Societeit," which translates to "the elite gathering place for Europeans." (Adysti & Suryasari, 2011; Ibrahim & Arfianti, 2025; Ullilazmy et al., 2022). The building's architectural character is defined by a distinctive eclectic style, exhibiting a combination of Neo-Gothic, Renaissance, and Romanesque design elements. This structural embodiment of diverse architectural styles serves as a material and design environment that substantiates the value of Lefebvre's spatial practice. Subsequently, in 2015, the municipal government initiated a revitalization project with the objective of reconstructing its function and accessibility. The project entailed the establishment of a cultural centre, which comprised the Surabaya Art Building, the Exhibition Hall, and an area designated for skateboarding (De Yong et al., 2023). Nevertheless, it should be noted that these design features do not exclusively determine the meaning of the building; alternatively, they serve as a means of various social practices, such as those carried out by the Begandring Soerabaia community. This constitutes a direct application of Lefebvre's critique of conceived space (Lefebvre

et al., 1997). The government's involvement in space is evident through its initiatives involving revitalisation and infrastructure development. However, the true meaning of space is shaped by the social practices and experiences of the community.

The organization of cultural events and festivals in historic locations has been demonstrated to be an effective method of facilitating engagement with the city's cultural heritage among residents and visitors alike. These events serve to animate these spaces, fostering dynamic interactions between the physical environment, social practices and symbolic meanings. The concept of community gathering here is a significant representation of space, illustrating how spatial spaces are filled with social, cultural and emotional meaning. Consequently, these spaces alter into venues for dynamic interaction, communal experiences, and the formation of collective identity (De Yong et al., 2023; Nabila et al., 2023; Nadolny, 2015; Prabowo, n.d.). The Begandring Soerabaia's documentation and visual archive exhibition, entitled "Surabaya Lintas Masa," represents an exploration of the concept of space beyond its physical confines. This exhibition aims to foster a shared social space where individuals congregate to celebrate, engage in discussion, and provide mutual support. By transforming the former function of the Balai Pemuda into a vibrant and dynamic centre for cultural expression, the exhibition underscores the transformative capacity of architecture in contributing to the social and cultural life of a community.

The concept of public space as a catalyst for cultural sustainability will be realised through the development of a dynamic environment in which traditions, rituals and cultural practices are preserved and transmitted from one generation to the next. These activities reflect the perceived spatial routines and uses of space that are experienced by the community, often in ways that go beyond or deviate from the original purpose of the institution. Simultaneously, symbolic meanings are evoked by the site's layered historical memory, particularly its association with the 1945 Battle of Surabaya. This ongoing process of interpretation is actively maintained and perpetuated by the local community through cultural narratives and commemorative events. This lived space intersects and frequently clashes with the unwritten space. One example of this is the state's attempt to dedicate Balai Pemuda as a heritage tourism destination through digital initiatives such as an interactive spherical camera website (De Yong et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, Balai Pemuda does not merely adhere to the conventional, government-driven portrayals of heritage; rather, it also fosters the preservation and promotion of grassroots cultural practices, including theatre, exhibitions, and heritage storytelling. This duality renders the subject a particularly fertile site for the analysis of space production as a materially grounded, temporally negotiated, and symbolically contested process. This paper sets out the argument for how the built environment can be transformed into a meaningful, co-produced space. The community gathering is proposed to be defined as a spatial intervention. This is argued to be both an expression of collective culture and an act of spatial production that reshapes and re-signifies the building's role in Surabaya's civic infrastructure. Consequently, the Balai Pemuda can no longer be considered a static architectural relic; instead, it is a socially constructed space, subject to symbolically contested and politically negotiated processes in the urban landscape. In essence, community gatherings can be regarded as a form of spatial production, rather than merely a passive activity. This perspective aligns with Lefebvre's

advocacy for the right to the city, wherein citizens are recognised not only as users but also as active contributors to the production of urban space.

Cultural Exchange

The concept of cultural exchange is of particular significance in the context of the production and reproduction of public space. This perspective is informed by the theoretical framework developed by Henri Lefebvre, particularly his theory of the production of space (Lefebvre et al., 1997). As previously discussed, public space cannot be considered as static; rather, it is the result of evolving social, political and cultural interactions. The cultural initiatives undertaken by the Begandring Soerabaia community at Balai Pemuda Surabaya exemplify spatial practices that foster the creation of public spaces, thereby serving as a vibrant hub for active cultural exchange. As asserted by Sandercock (2006), the process of establishing peaceful intercultural coexistence at the level of the community and local governance will become a primary preoccupation for both citizens and urban professionals and politicians (Miles, 2007). It has been determined that a significant proportion of events that incorporate the city's public spaces, including exhibitions, competitions, and art performances, invariably constitute a medium for cultural interchange. The open-air exhibitions organised by Begandring Soerabaia involve numerous elements of social communities across the city, thereby facilitating the absorption and redeployment of cultural materials from the insights of one community to another. Cultural exchange represents a potent catalyst for innovation within the sphere of cultural exhibitions. Furthermore, it functions as a pivotal element in the overarching process of cultural identity formation and development, given its role in promoting both understanding and misalignment. In the context of urban cultural development, the enhancement of public spaces can function as a conduit for cultural exchange among the city's inhabitants, associated communities and broader societal segments, thereby facilitating a continuous process of definition, loss, reconstruction and renewal of the city's identity.

In this case, Begandring Soerabaia operates as a cultural intermediary, facilitating the cohesion of diverse social communities from Surabaya through the medium of historical narratives, archival visualisations, and vivid depictions of local culture. This phenomenon not only fosters a space for interaction, but also enables a process of appropriation and recontextualization of diverse cultural values. The utilisation of the metaphor of a dimensional version of a 'history book' serves to illustrate the function of these spaces. It is proposed that such environments offer the public opportunities to learn and appreciate diverse cultures and traditions through the exhibition of historical photographs and archives. The concept of Begandring Soerabaia encapsulates an experience and understanding where history is rendered vivid through a variety of means and activities. The notion of cultural exchange in the creation of a public space, involving interactions between communities and their members, fosters an appreciation that public spaces mirror the cultural diversity of their users. The exhibitions, collaborative events, workshops and public discussions organized by Begandring Soerabaia provide opportunities for various cultural groups as well as multicultural communities to present their perspectives on subjects such as thoughts, cultural practices, preferences and even needs. Cross-cultural collaborations that bring together practitioners from a variety of backgrounds are known to produce innovative public spaces that integrate different strands of cultural traditions. This further reinforces the notion of public spaces that are capable of reaching a more extensive audience.

Celebrating diversity has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for fostering social cohesion and engendering a sense of pride in individuals' local communities. Furthermore, cultural exchanges in public spaces have been shown to enhance cultural awareness. In accordance with the perspective of Deardorff (2006), the notion of cultural awareness is predicated on a reflective understanding of cultural differences, serving as the foundation for intercultural competence. Through interactions within the context of workshops, deliberations, and public performances at Balai Pemuda, individuals are introduced to diverse historical narratives and cultural practices, thereby facilitating enhanced comprehension and the abatement of prejudice and uncertainty (Aelbrecht & Stevens, n.d.; Deardorff, 2006; Knipprath, 2023; Van Assche et al., 2023). The concept of urban identity is not solely determined by physical architecture or official narratives; rather, it is also influenced by social practices and cultural interactions that transpire within public spaces. As Nanang Purwono has asserted: The basis of the action is the conviction that historical public values and memories must be preserved—this statement is indicative of Begandring's praxis with regard to their orientation towards the act of memorialization in public spaces.

By integrating elements of cultural exchange, public spaces can be transformed into dynamic environments that reflect the rich cultural heritage of a region. This can be achieved through community actions that encourage inclusivity, understanding of cultural uniformity, and respectful behaviour. Today, Balai Pemuda has evolved into a vibrant nexus of cultural activities, serving as a venue for events such as art exhibitions, theatrical performances, musical concerts, and community workshops. These activities have been found to effect significant change within the physical space, transforming it into a dynamic arena of cultural expression. Indeed, analysis of the data has revealed that different groups come together to share and celebrate their heritage. For instance, Begandring's cultural exhibition serves to illustrate the continuity and evolution of cultural practices, thereby bridging the perceived gap between past and present. Balai Pemuda's function as a community centre serves to highlight its significance as a venue for democratic participation and community development. Furthermore, the community's physical presence at these events serves to reinforce the building's function as a democratic space, facilitating cultural exchange and social interaction. In a Lefebvrian framework, this pertains to the concept of representational spaces, defined as physical or psychological domains that are imbued with layers of symbolism, collective memory and social imagination. These spaces serve as reflections of both past and present, as articulated by Lefebvre (Lefebvre et al., 1997). Begandring facilitates the formation of spatial meanings through interactive and open spatial practices, allowing for the reflection and articulation of cultural identities.

Education

Heritage activists frequently employ spaces as a medium for the dissemination of knowledge regarding the significance of heritage preservation to the general public, thereby facilitating the dissemination of their passion to a broader audience. Balai Pemuda is regarded as both a historical building and a public space; it is empowered by the Begandring Soerabaia not only as a static relic of the past but as a dynamic arena for community engagement and historical awareness. The present study draws upon Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production to argue for the conceptualization of Balai Pemuda as a space for educational outreach

action. The program's role is to facilitate the co-construction of memory, identity, and urban citizenship through its public programs. It is evident that the subjects harbour a profound sense of identity with regard to the social space in question, a sentiment that is underpinned by a sense of belonging and pride. They perceive the social space as an embodiment of the distinct character of Surabaya City, a locale in which the very essence of the city's identity is firmly rooted.

In general, heritage preservation communities play an important role in activating urban spaces as an educational medium and participatory arena, with a view to building historical awareness and local identity (Al-Zein, 2022; Greaves et al., 2023; Middleton, 2017; Tahalea & Novianti, 2023). A case study of Begandring Soerabaia demonstrates the utilisation of Balai Pemuda—a colonial era historical building situated in the heart of Surabaya—as a site for both architectural heritage and living space, a practice which is sustained through social interactions. As argued by Henri Lefebvre that space is never neutral or static; it is the result of changing social relations (Lefebvre et al., 1997). In this particular instance, the concept of Balai Pemuda transcends mere conceptualisation as a space designed by urban planners or regulated by heritage legislation, signifying instead a site that has been imbued with life through the agency of its residents. This community's reinterpretation of the space is facilitated by memory-based activities, performing arts and historical education, collectively serving to reinforce the sense of identity and belonging.

This assertion is supported by empirical evidence from case studies of notable counter-memory practices, including the Kowloon Walled City (Kong, n.d.), the Interference Archive (Gordon et al., 2016), and the Interference Archive's role as a counter-institution (Hoyer & MacPhee, 2017). The visual archives of these communities, when curated and exhibited, serve as effective counter-memory practices. Visual archives serve to reintroduce marginalised histories into public discourse and educational practices, thereby challenging the dominance of state-driven historiography. The implementation of such practices has been demonstrated to yield a dual benefit, both in terms of the effective utilisation of space and the cultivation of a reflective and democratic understanding of spatial dynamics. This process reflects the representational dimension of space as highlighted by Lefebvre, wherein the concept of space assumes the role of a medium for symbolic expression that responds to the historical experience and identity of local communities. Thus, Balai Pemuda functions not only as a cultural locus that strengthens citizens' sense of belonging to their city, but also as a symbol of Surabaya's distinctive identity, which is locally often associated with the egalitarian and militant character of arek Suroboyo.

Additionally, the production of space by the community can be interpreted as a form of spatial appropriation. This is defined as the reclaiming of space by citizens from the hegemony of state power and capital. As has been observed by scholars within the discipline of postcolonial urban studies by Watson (2015) and Simone (2004). In many cities in the Global South, there is often a tension between formal spatial logics and the spatial practices of citizens. In this specific context, Begandring Soerabaia does not pursue the enhancement of Balai Pemuda through physical development initiatives. Instead, it engages in the production of symbols and the activation of participation, thereby altering the prevailing signification of Balai Pemuda. This constitutes a form of resistance to heritage narratives that are frequently co-opted by commercial agendas or depoliticised, nostalgic aesthetics. In contrast, the community establishes cultural heritage as a medium for

critical reflection on the city's history and a foundation for the cultivation of civic awareness, emphasising the social and political underpinnings of urban identity.

Thus, Balai Pemuda does not only function as a repository of memory, but as an arena for the reproduction of social space that allows for the articulation of identity, citizenship, and the right to the city—a concept that Lefebvre also championed in his notion of the right to the city. In the specific case of Surabaya, this practice demonstrates that cultural heritage can act as a point of intersection between past and present, between material and symbolic spaces, and between official history and citizen history.

Cultural heritage preservation communities frequently utilise public spaces as educational instruments to disseminate historical awareness and establish collective identity. Begandring Soerabaia has transformed Balai Pemuda into an unconventional educational environment, thereby establishing a connection between local history and the city's residents. From a critical pedagogy perspective, a space such as Balai Pemuda is not merely a location where activities are conducted, but rather a site for learning, where the educational process occurs in informal, participatory and contextual ways. This concept is further reinforced by Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of spatial production, which conceptualises space as the consequence of social practices rather than merely as a physical entity or a consequence of urban planning policies. In this instance, Balai Pemuda is reproduced as a public educational space that combines three distinct dimensions: material (architecture and location), symbolic (history and memory), and social (citizen interaction and participation).

The establishment of a learning space that fosters critical awareness of local history and urban identity is facilitated through a variety of activities including, but not limited to, historical tours, dramatisations of past events, workshops, and open discussions. This process stands a close resemblance to Lefebvre's concept of "lived space," defined as a space experienced directly and imbued with meaning by its users. The prevailing history education model in this community is not predicated on the dissemination of institutional narratives, but rather, it is an emergent phenomenon that materialises from the dynamic interplay between citizens and the physical environment, artefacts, and communal discourses. This pedagogical paradigm, as articulated by Paulo Freire, can be conceptualised as a dialogical process. This learning process is derived from the interactions between people and their environment, encompassing both artifacts and spaces, as well as collective narratives. As Freire asserted, authentic education is realised through dialogues that are problem-driven and firmly grounded in real-life experiences. These dialogues, which occur within the field of culture circles, initiate a process of reflection that centres upon themes of local generativists (Rotaru, 2017). This approach enables learners to assume an active role in shaping their own historical understanding, rather than passively receiving information.

In the context of a postcolonial city such as Surabaya, this kind of public space also functions as a medium for citizen education regarding the right to the city. The community's actions demonstrate not only an engagement with the past, but also a capacity to claim space for educational and cultural purposes in the present. Therefore, it can be concluded that Balai Pemuda is not merely a cultural heritage site, but also a pedagogical arena where historical values, citizenship and local identity are developed collectively. This finding indicates that education can occur beyond the confines of formal institutions, but rather, it can be

cultivated organically within communities that reclaim spaces for themselves. This phenomenon contributes to an understanding of education as an integral part of the urban learning ecology.

Conclusion

In accordance with the findings of previous studies, this paper reinforces the argument through an agenda that identifies the representation of the Begandring community's public space as evidenced by the Balai Pemuda basement, which demonstrates the production values of public space with its concrete description as a community gathering, cultural exchanges, and an educational setting. Balai Pemuda is regarded as a symbol of collective memory and identity for the people of Surabaya. The building and its activities are closely related to the city's social and cultural narratives, which function as repositories of communal memories and experiences. The significance of Balai Pemuda as a site for the Begandring Soerabaia community cannot be overstated. It is a location where pivotal moments in the lives of its members take place, encompassing cultural festivals and significant personal events. This emotional and historical affiliation enhances the significance of the space, thereby establishing it as a fundamental component of the city's identity.

As demonstrated by the initiatives of heritage communities such as Begandring Soerabaia, heritage urban spaces encompass not only physical artefacts but also demonstrate the capacity to revitalise public spaces in a manner that aligns with contemporary societal needs. These spaces function as venues for congregation, facilitate cultural exchange, and offer educational programmes, thereby serving as a means to reinforce collective memory and historical significance.

The production of social space in Surabaya is therefore a multifaceted process, encompassing numerous elements that reflect the city's cultural diversity and the evolving needs of its residents. This process is predicated on a combination of meticulous planning, active community participation, and the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. In summary, Begandring Soerabaia plays an active role in the creation of public space through its commitment to the preservation of the city's historical assets, while concurrently providing cultural and educational experiences to these locations. The dedication of these individuals plays a significant role in preserving the authenticity and exclusivity of these spaces, effectively transforming them into vibrant centers of social interaction and community engagement.

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