

Adequate Public Space in Urban Area

Public Space Problem in Singapore and Phnom Penh

Rizka Fadila Muhammad¹, Revianto Budi Santosa²

^{1,2} Department of Architecture, Universitas Islam Indonesia

¹Surel: 18512159@students.uui.ac.id

Abstract: *Public space is a space that is open and accessible to anyone. People with any background, race, ethnicity meets in one place. Public space with a good design can create a better environment for the city and the people. In such a diverse city, public space can engage the community, for example, public space can be used for events that can bring togetherness of the city. Considering the main function of public space, there are some interesting place that people like to spend time and some place are not. Several factors may influence people to visit or not to visit the public space in their area. This analysis will be comparing the area public space to see if these public space already meet the criteria of good public space.*

Keywords: public space, urban area, Singapore, Phnom Penh.

INTRODUCTION

Among the busy roads and in between buildings in the city, people need a place to settle from their activity. A place that can bring joy to the user and should be accessible for every citizen regardless of personal circumstances.

Public space has an important role in society. In a city with diversity, public space can engage any community and bring togetherness of the city. (Jagannath, 2016). The deficiency of provisions for public spaces can have a big impact on the city, it can impede economic activities, pollute the environment, and decrease social stability and security (Kim, 2015).

Architects are an intentionally designed area for a public that is so-called 'public space' for public use in a variety of modes, but not all of them are truly public. From one viewpoint, it gives people the chance of social portrayal and boundless contact with outsiders or gather with their groups, and to determine their position in public society. At the same time, public spaces become a particular place where the monetarily advantaged, helped by government organs, broad communications, and expert "designers of space" (architects, urban planners, urban studies, designers) affect political, monetary, and social strength. The appearance of a public space that is too formal can actually fright people to use it because they feel they don't belong there. Therefore public spaces must embrace the concept of more welcoming and vibrant spaces for anyone.

Providing a public space can create prosperous, livable, and equitable cities in any country. The appearance of public space can be in any types, for example, representative spaces (most often a square built as a symbol of the prevailing social relations, monumental and geometrical form), traffic spaces (streets, separate vehicle and pedestrian traffic areas), commercial spaces (used for commercial purposes, bazaars), green spaces (recreational function, parkland), recreational spaces – squares (leisure-related purposes, often within

a residential zone) and town marketplaces (important urban areas created when a town was built or even earlier; in widely differing forms) (Micek & Staszewska, 2019). Public space in this case will be specified about parks or plazas. The challenge is to provide an adequate space to fulfill the role of public space in a city.

For this study, the case of the public spaces are the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore and Independence Monument in Phnom Penh which are both located in the urban area. Both the public area of the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore and the Independence Monument in Phnom Penh is located in the urban area but have totally different characteristics. One is located in the riverside area, far from the main street, and has plenty of trees for shading, while the other one is located in the middle of the street with a few big trees for shading. Among the local residences, either the park area of the Asian Civilisations Museum and the Independence Monument is quite popular for them.

Besides local residences, the public area is also quite often visited by tourists because both have interesting things to visit. Based on those characteristics, amongst these two public spaces, both of them will be compared by its quality on how the physical appearance or the provided facilities.

Problem Formulation

1. Does the public space in the area of Asian Civilisations Museum and the Independence Monument fulfill the criteria of good public space?
2. How do the two public spaces in the area of Asian Civilisations Museum and The Independence Monument achieve these criteria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A good public space has to have some characteristics to consider it good. Everybody may have different preferences about good public space, but actually, it has a measurement to estimate if the space is good enough. With or without realizing, over the time the establishment of public spaces gives impact to the society of admissible and adequate public space (Pedro, 2012). The result is we have some parameters to be considered for making a good public space.

A city that has structured space that overlaps with one another and has short travel distance can make people feel attracted to walk around (Gehl, 2010).

The consideration of good public space includes the accessibility of the place. It can be the walkability, the connection with another place, or the universal design. Another point that can be looked at is the characteristics of the place. It can be the uniqueness, the memorable thing in that place, or the sense of importance about the place.

Referring to the picture below, there are four main keys to consider good public space, there are sociability, accessibility and linkage, comfort and image, and usage and activity. Each category has criteria of measurements or intangibles for the qualification of what makes a good place. Some points to highlight are sociability about how the look place, it can be welcoming, interactive, friendly, or cooperative. For the purpose of this research, the physical or visual features such as greeneries, sitting area, and pathway (accessibility) of a public space will be compared to match the criteria of good public space.

Correspondence: Rizka Fadila Muhammad
 Affiliation : Department of Architecture,
 Universitas Islam Indonesia
 E-mail: 18512159@students.uii.ac.id

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

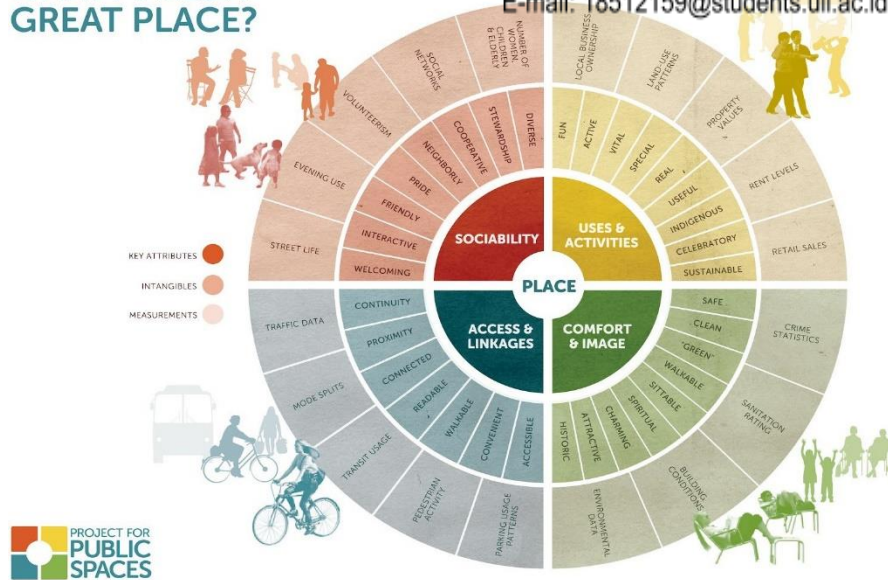


Figure 1. What makes a great place
 Source: www.pps.org

1. Accessibility

The accessibility of a public space usually is about direct pedestrian access to the public space. It is also about the connection to the surroundings. Accessibility required for all people regardless of the physical or mental impairment (Kozlova & Kozlov, 2018). Things that make people reluctant to come to a public space usually is a physical barrier. It can be a fence, time limitation or the presence of guards or the dominance of vehicles. The access can also be shown visually by symbolic elements of design that hints welcoming for people (Pedro, 2012).

Walkability of a place needs to be considered. What kind of activity can be done on the area, is the sidewalk wide enough for the activities. A pedestrian friendly area makes people feel comfortable in the area.

According to Guidelines for Building Construction Materials and Civil Engineering Indonesia, the ideal wide of the pedestrian lane based on the need for one person is 60 cm with an additional 15 cm of space to move without carrying objects, so that the total lane requirement for two pedestrians or two pedestrians passing by without contact is at least 150 cm. However, it can be dependent on the pedestrian flow. If the pedestrian flow is high, then the width of the pedestrian lane is at least 150 cm, if the pedestrian flow is moderate, the width can be 100 cm, and if the pedestrian flow is low, then the width is sufficient 50 cm. (Simantu, 2018).

With the requirement of the pedestrian lane, then we can calculate how much the width of the sidewalk needed in a place.

2. Comfort and image

The comfort of a public space is shown visually by the greeneries and benches, safety, and cleanliness. This journal will emphasize the greeneries and benches in the public space. Greeneries and benches are most likely for the comfort of the space. Trees can give so many benefits to the surrounding and in this case, besides it can give shade or shelter, trees also can improve the landscape quality. Benches with trees for shading or in a convenient location, in general, are usually more preferable for people to sit in. Facilities for sitting are crucial if we want people to spend a long time in a public space.

Image of a public space also shown by visual, it is related to legibility. It means that the public space has clear signs or features that are visible on a network of routes (Kozlova & Kozlov, 2018). Legibility, in this case is reading an environment is a process that develops with acquiring spatial data or information from the surrounding (Koseoglu & Onder, 2011).

The legibility of a place means that people can easily recognize the place and have the option to associate them to one another. It can mean that legibility is a visual clarity of a place. Legibility is one of the important things in urban planning as it can affect how people will understand the space for them (Sohrabi, 2015, 45). For example, legibility can be a landmark or building facade that is easy to memorize.

METHODOLOGY

The research methods for this study will be conducted qualitatively by collecting some certain pieces of information. The data that will be collected will be analyzed by comparing two case studies.

The data collection was conducted by observation on August 2, 2019 in Asian Civilizations Museum, and August 6, 2019 in Independence Monument. The direct observation covers half of the public area and is observed visually. Later on, additional data collection was held through online observation as the time this paper was written.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore

Singapore in the urban planning area can be considered a pedestrian-friendly city as it accommodates decent sidewalks along the streets. There are so many public spaces in Singapore. In this case, it can be a plaza among the high rise buildings or a park in the riverside area.



Figure 2. Asian Civilisations Museum
Source: Google Maps

The Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore is located at 1 Empress Pl near the Anderson Bridge. It showcases much of Asia's artistic heritage and highlights the historical linkages between various Asian cultures. The area around this museum is considered a tourist attraction area. Behind this museum, there is the National Singapore Gallery and across the river, there are shopping malls and the iconic symbol of Singapore, Merlion Park.

The green area of this public space is continued from the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall to the Asian Civilisations Museum. For this study case, the area that will be compared is only the area in front of the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore.

From the accessibility aspect, the pathway is wide enough for the pedestrians. In certain areas where it has different levels of the ground, it has access for disabilities, and can be accessed by bicycle. The area is motorized vehicle free access around the public space area but still accessible from the main road.

In the open area, there is a park that accommodates pedestrians with an interesting view. The open area of the Asian Civilisations Museum has tourist attractions that are some big aluminum balls that are reflected like a mirror.

As for the image and comfort, this public area has many big trees that shade the area. The tree placement is not only on the side of the pathway, it also placed several trees in the middle of the green area. On the riverside area, there are several benches facing the Singapore River. Since the public space is not adjacent to the main road, the noise from the vehicle is not very audible. This makes this area have a calm atmosphere.



Figure 3. Benches in Asian Civilisations Museum public space
Source: Google Maps

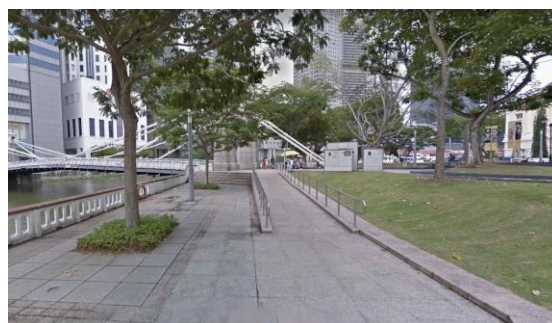


Figure 4. Difabel access in Asian Civilisations Museum public space
Source: Google Maps

The Independence Monument in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia has developed so many high concrete buildings that seem like dominating over the greeneries area. Life in the city of Phnom Penh is increasingly hard to bear as the lack of sufficient infrastructure to accommodate people, especially public space.



Figure 5. Independence Monument in Phnom Penh
Source: Author

In the heart of Phnom Penh City, there is a landmark that was built with Angkorian style attracts many tourists for its peculiar looking but unique style distinguishing it from all the buildings in the city. This particular public space is a park located in front of the landmark that seems to be famous among the locals. The location of this park is surrounded by many commercial buildings across the street.

The public space in this area is located across the Independence Monument of Cambodia. It is located in the middle of the busy road of Preah Suramarit Blvd. For the accessibility of the place, considering its location that is surrounded by main road, it is very accessible with vehicles. However, this park does not have particular access for disabilities. The pathway for pedestrians is very wide so people can move freely.

Seen by its physical features, this park has very spacious pavement for circulation with plants on the edges. It is not a very convenient place because the shade from the tree only covers the side area of this park, while in the middle of the park tends to be barren even though it has a lot of grass and shrubs.

Considering the location of the park, it has no barrier between the main road to the park. This situation affects the sound of motorized vehicles to the park so when the traffic is high, this area can get so loud by the vehicle sound.

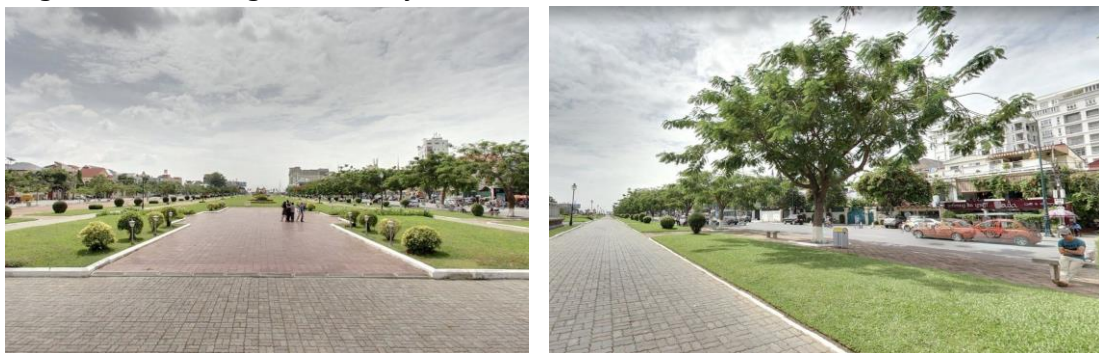


Figure 6 (Left) & 7 (Right). Green area and benches in Independence Monument
Source: Author

Table 1. Comparison of the criteria of good public space

Criteria of good public space	ACM Plaza	Independence Monument Plaza
Estimated Area	2600 m ²	33,400 m ²
Accessibility		
a) Direct Pedestrian Access	Have	Have
b) The absence of physical barrier	Doesn't have	Doesn't have
c) The absence of psychological barrier	Doesn't have	Doesn't have
d) Ramp for disabled	Have	Doesn't have
e) Width of the pedestrian lane	2.5 meters	6 meters
Comfort		
a) Number of trees	+ 30	+ 80
b) Placement of trees	Around the side and in the middle of the public space area	Around the side of the public space area
c) Characteristics of the tree	Big and wide canopy	Still small and narrow canopy, some have wide canopy
d) Existence of benches	Have, every 2 meters	Have, every 10 meters
e) Placement of benches	In front of the river, along the riverside	Near the roadside, only in some points
f) Vehicle noise	Mild	Loud

Source: Author

With the area around 2600 m², the area of Asian Civilisations Museum has direct pedestrian access and access for disabilities. It doesn't have any physical or psychological barrier. Meanwhile the area of Independence Monument Plaza also has direct pedestrian access but it isn't facilitated with ramps for disabled. But on the other side, Independence Monument Plaza has a wider pedestrian lane.

On the comfort comparison, the Asian Civilisation Museum has more shady trees and placed not only around the side, but also in the middle of the public space area. Compared to the Independence Monument Plaza, it has more trees and is placed only around the side.

Due to the location of the plaza, the noise level in these two areas is also different. The Asian Civilisation Museum located not really close to the main road, therefore, the noise from the vehicle is still mild. On the other hand, the Independence Monument Plaza is located surrounded by the main road, therefore, the noise level in this area is high.

Therefore, based on the comparison table above, Asian Civilisations Museum has already met the criteria of accessibility and comfort as a public space. In comparison with that, the Independence Monument Plaza also met the criteria of accessibility but not for disabled, and it still has to overtake the criteria of comfort.

A public space is a space for anybody, so in the placemaking process, it is important to appoint a good quality of a space to maximize the place function. By achieving these criteria, a public space can be more lively and it gives a good impression of the city.

CONCLUSION

To achieve good public space in an area, it needs more than the attractiveness of the place to attract people to come. There are several factors that influence them to come, such as accessibility and comfort of the place. The Asian Civilisation Museum already achieves the accessible and comfort criteria by having direct pedestrian access and access for disabled. The number of trees is less but it has a wide canopy to shade a wider area, resulting in a cool ambience around the plaza. It also provides benches along the riverside area.

The Independence Monument plaza already achieves some of the criteria such as having direct pedestrian access, however, it does not have ramps for disabled access. It also has plenty of trees, however, the trees only cover the side area of the plaza. The plaza also provided benches on the side, but it only had a few of them at some points.

The presence of physical barriers such as fences or psychological barriers such as operational hours can be the thing to restrict people from coming. It is good that both places do not have neither physical nor psychological barriers. For suggestion, when designing a plaza for everyone, we have to pay attention to the other aspect to create an adequate public space that everyone can enjoy.

REFERENCES

- Berry, L., Koski, J., Verkuijl, C., Strambo, C., & Piggot, G. (2019). *Making Space: How Public Participation Shapes Environmental Decision-Making*. (Rep.). Stockholm Environment Institute. doi:10.2307/resrep2299390
- Garcia-Domenech, S. (2015). Urban Aesthetics and Social Function of Actual Public Space: A Desirable Balance. *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, 10(4), 54-65. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24873541>
- Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for People*. Island Press. Washington, D.C.
- Jagannath, T. (2016, Aug 23). The Importance of Public Space. *Interviews and Articles on Art & Public Spaces*. <https://medium.com/interviews-and-articles-on-art-public-spaces/the-importance-of-public-spaces-5bb49ba6c000>
- Kim, S. (2015, march 30). Public spaces - not a "nice to have" but a basic need for cities. *Public spaces - not a "nice to have" but a basic need for cities*. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/public-spaces-not-nice-have-basic-need-cities>

- Koseoglu, E., & Onder, D. E. (2011). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Subjective and Objective Dimensions of Spatial Legibility, 30, 1191 – 1195. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042811020568>
- Kozlova, Ludmila & Kozlov, Valery. (2018). Ten quality criteria of the public spaces in a large city. *MATEC Web of Conferences*. 212. 04012. 10.1051/mateconf/201821204012.
- Micek, M., CDFMR, & Staszewska, S., CDFMR. (2019). Urban and Rural Public Spaces: Development Issues and Qualitative Assessment, *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 45(45), 75-93. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2478/bog-2019-0025>
- Pedro, Gomes. FACTORS OF GOOD PUBLIC SPACE USE. XIII Coloquio Ibérico de Geografía. *Respuestas de la Geografía Ibérica a la crisis actual*, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Oct 2012, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. pp.608-618. halshs-01422747
- Simantu. (2018, February 26). Perencanaan teknis fasilitas pejalan kaki. PEDOMAN Bahan Konstruksi Bangunan dan Rekayasa Sipil. https://simantu.pu.go.id/personal/img-post/197812092006042004/post/20190313135241_F_Pedoman_Fasilitas_Pejalan_Kaki.pdf
- Sohrabi, M. (2015). Special Issue on New Trends in Architecture, Civil Engineering, and Urban Studies. Analysis of the Place of Outdoor Architecture in the Legibility of Spaces, 3, 44-54. <http://www.european-science.com>