

THE ROLES OF SCENERY IN DYNAMIC PLACEMAKING

Case: Sawah Cengklik Ricefields near Adi Soemarmo Airport

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ABSTRACT: *Among factors affecting the success of placemaking process is the visual quality which in certain context appear as scenery. This research investigates the role of scenery in the process of placemaking as occur along a road near a ricefield known as Sawah Cengklik. Situated close to Adi Soemarmo Airport, this place has particular visual attraction as people would like to spend the late afternoon time there from 3 to 6 pm. By observing the characteristics of the scenery and people's activities we may understand the placemaking process occurring quite spontaneously in Sawah Cengklik. The simple and common panorama of comprising of ricefield and sky becomes special as it has dynamic factors. During the late afternoon time when the sun is about to rest, the horizon in this place has a special charm as the sky is getting red and then dark. Moreover, the movement of aircrafts across the sky enhance the dynamics of the scenery. During that time people visit this place to stay, rest, meet friends, do exercise and have light meals while they enjoy the scenery from that open space between the road and the ricefield. People having good time in this place attract some street vendors, and in turn the presence of the street vendors attract more people. The conjunction between the resting time, cooling temperature, dramatic sunset and busy aircraft movements lend the dynamics of the placemaking process. This dynamic transforms the placeless location into a liveable and loveable place for many.*

Keywords: *airport, dynamics, placemaking, ricefield, scenery*

INTRODUCTION

Background

Placemaking, derived from the word "place" refers to an area that facilitates movement and can be directed or transformed into a specific location, where movement itself becomes a part of placemaking (Creswell, 2009). Placemaking is the process of turning spaces into places that attract people's attention through enjoyable and interactive activities, while also providing opportunities for social interaction (Ridwan, 2016). Placemaking involves three essential elements: activities, the physical environment observed through human activity, and meaning (Relph, 1976). A space becomes a place through the activities of the objects within it, often originating from public spaces.

In the last decade, placemaking gains importance among academicians and practitioners in variety of fields and disciplines. Amidst great diversities in the understanding and use of "placemaking", this term can be roughly defined as "an approach and a set of tools that puts the community front and centre of deciding how their place looks and how it functions" (Courage, 2021: 2) Therefore, placemaking is closely associated with "place", "community", and the "improvement".

Among the characteristics of place essential to improve in placemaking is the visual scenery. Scenery plays a vital role in placemaking by influencing the visual, emotional, and social aspects of a space. It shapes how people experience and connect with their environment, contributing to the overall identity, functionality, and desirability of a place.

Scenery often plays a substantial transformative role in community-based placemaking. When people spent regularly their time in a particular place, they often develop common visual experiences and interest as they observe common scenery. Shared visual experiences

may weave together the threads of culture, functionality, and human connection to create spaces that truly resonate with people.

Interesting phenomena can be observed in the rice field area to the west of Adi Soemarmo Airport locally known as Sawah Cengklik. Administratively, it is situated at the village of Cengklik, district of Ngemplak in the regency of Boyolali. This location is very accessible as it is on the corner of a junction connecting local streets.

Located on Mangu road, Sawah Cengklik has direct connection with some interesting places. This ricefield is 1.1 kilometers from to the west of the airport entrance. It is also only 1.2 kilometer away from the Cengklik Reservoir. This reservoir was built in 1926 – 1928 during the Colonial Era, primarily to irrigate sugar cane plantation. This sugar cane was processed in Colomadu Sugar Factory owned by Mangkunegaran Court. Currently, this reservoir distributes water for surrounding ricefields including Sawah Cengklik. It is also one of the major local tourist attraction to relax around the water body.

Some ten years ago, along this street and junction, some people started to stop by and spend some time to enjoy the panorama and atmosphere especially during late afternoon or sore. This moment was restful amidst the busy street,

As more people join to take some rest on their vehicle in these spots, vendors started to go to this place to sell some snacks, simple food and drinks. This location become more attractive ever since.

Literature Review

Scenery significantly contributes to placemaking multiple ways. A enhancing aesthetic appeal, fostering social interaction, promoting well-being, supporting sustainability, and boosting economic vitality. Whether through natural landscapes or urban design, scenery creates visually engaging, emotionally resonant spaces that enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities.

As scenery appears on the vast horizon it becomes a common experience for many people staying in certain place. Scenery in this context participates in Creating a Sense of Place. It enhances the unique character of a place, whether through natural landscapes, architectural elements, or public art. Distinctive scenery creates a sense of identity, making spaces memorable and fostering community sense of belonging (Sepe, 2018).

In his seminal book *Public Places Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design*, Carmona (2021) discusses the role of aesthetics in urban design and the importance of visual quality in placemaking. In this case scenic views enhance the aesthetic quality of spaces, drawing people in and encouraging engagement. Beautiful landscapes and well-designed urban views provide visual stimulation and enjoyment.

Furthermore, scenic areas naturally become focal points for social interaction, where people come together to enjoy the environment, participate in activities, or simply relax. These spaces promote social cohesion and community engagement. Gehl (2010) highlights how visually appealing environments encourage social interaction and community life.

Access to scenic views, particularly natural landscapes, has been linked to reduced stress and improved mental health. The restorative power of nature helps individuals recover from mental fatigue and enhances overall well-being. Ulrich et al. (2020) confirms the positive effects of scenic natural views on mental health. By attracting locals and visitors, scenic places boost local economies. Iconic views and aesthetically pleasing landscapes draw people in, supporting local businesses and generating economic activity. It is closely related with the research of Ujang & Zakariya (2018) concerning the economic benefits of attractive public spaces and their role in tourism.

In deeper sense, scenic natural environments foster a sense of responsibility and care for the environment, encouraging sustainable behaviors and conservation efforts. Beatley (2016) in his book *Handbook of Biophilic City Planning and Design*. Island Press discusses how integrating nature into urban planning promotes sustainability and enhances the visual and emotional appeal of cities and places.

Placemaking relies on expressing unique spatial characteristics and understanding human behavior through behavior mapping.

Lynch (1960) introduced imageability, describing how people perceive places through paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Norberg-Schulz (1980) emphasized *genius loci*, the spirit of a place shaped by cultural and environmental aspects. Montgomery (1998) proposed a model integrating **form, activity, and meaning** to define urban character.

Whyte (1980) pioneered behavior mapping by observing movement, seating, and social interactions. Marcus & Francis (1997) categorized activities into **necessary, optional, and social**, aligning with Gehl's (2011) framework on urban life. Tuan (1977) introduced *topophilia*, highlighting emotional bonds with places.

Carmona (2015) stressed analyzing public spaces holistically, combining physical and social elements. Behavior mapping reveals user patterns, informing design strategies that enhance placemaking efforts.

Research Questions

With the objective to understand the roles of scenery in enhancing the process of placemaking this research proposes two questions:

1. How the special characteristics of the scenery in Sawah Cengklik attracts people to spend their time in this place, and
2. How the behavior in people's gathering enhances the process of placemaking in Sawah Cengklik

METHOD

This research employs qualitative descriptive method by taking into account the observed phenomena and describing them beyond the sensible facts to investigate relations between phenomena. Two primary phenomena to observe and discuss further are the characteristics of view near the ricefield, and the activities of the people visiting the place.

The study of the characteristics of the scenery in Sawah Cengklik is carried out by:

- a) Identifying key elements which may include natural features such as rivers, mountains, trees, plants, and animals; man-made features such as buildings, roads, bridges, and vehicles like cars, bikes and planes; as well as sky and weather such as sun, sky clouds, and rainbows. This observation is integrated with temporal aspects like time of the day and the schedule of people's activities.
- b) The identified key elements are studied further by analyzing the composition of the scenery. The composition is primarily understood in terms of figures and ground. Some sceneries may have some prominent figures serving as focal points, standing against layers of grounds including foreground, midground, and background.

The activities of the people here have strong relations with the characteristics of the place and its scenery. Therefore, it is relevant to record and discuss the activities using people's centered behavior map. This type of map is a tool used to visually represent the movement patterns, interactions, and behaviors of people within a specific environment. This type of map is often used in urban planning, design, and behavioral studies to understand how people interact with their surroundings and each other. The researcher conducts direct observation by spending time observing people's behavior in Sawah Cengklik. He uses cameras, and manual recording to collect data on activities, movements and interactions.

People’s activities are further discussed using Jan Gehl’s (2011) three categories of outdoor activities in public spaces. The first type are “necessary activities” which people are obliged or forced to do, such as walking to school or workplace, or selling something in the public space for livelihood. The second type of activities is “optional activities,” which occur when there is a desire to participate in these activities, in favorable times and places. Being the third category, “social activities” occur when a group of people gather in a place and interact, intentionally or spontaneously. This category includes children playing, friends gathering, and passersby briefly chatting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Characteristics of the Scenery

The location to observe is the open space along Mangu road with the boundary as follows

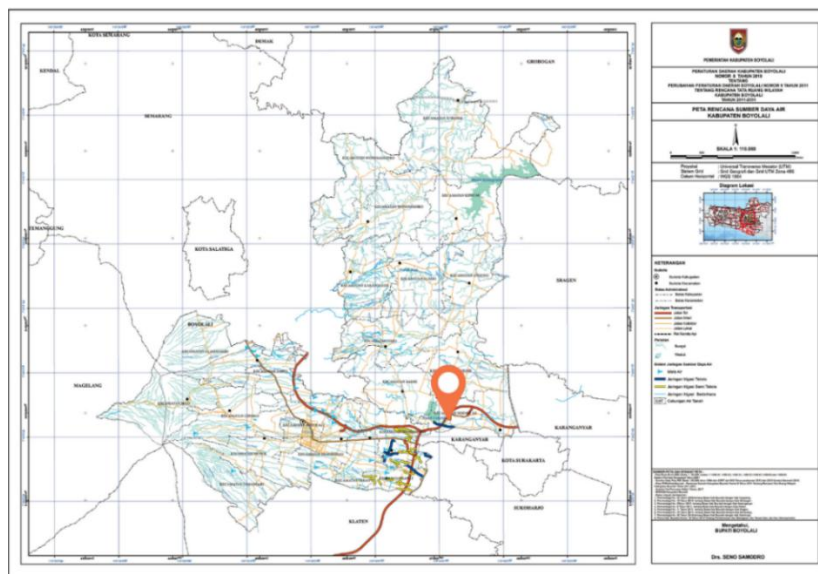


Figure 1 Location of Sawah Cengklik and surroundings
(source: ppid.bojolali.go.id)

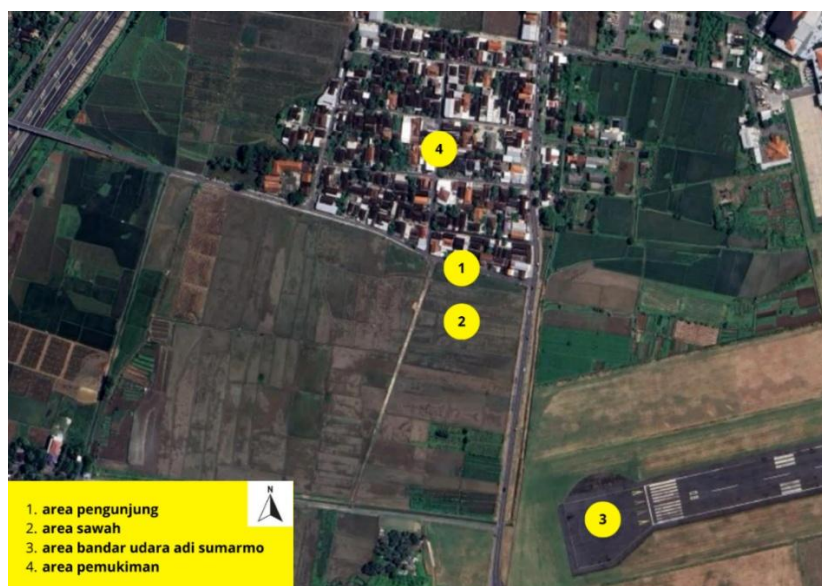


Figure 2 Boundary of the observed area
(source: googlemap accessed December, 2024)

In vast open area of Sawah Cengklik, most of the people visiting this place spent their time by enjoying scenery to the west. In this direction, people observe some elements. . First, is the ricefield as the foreground. With no vertical object interrupt the vastness of the agricultural field, this space can be understood as foreground. Above this field is the sky spread in the entire space acting as background for the scenery. In between these two elements of the panorama, a horizon is stretched separating as well as connecting the earth and the heaven.



Figure 3 View of open area of Sawah Cengklik

These three parts of the scenery are ever changing along the time. Being a large background the sky change according to the weather and time of the day. Weather may give the color blue of the clear sky, the color grey of the cloudy and occasionally colorful rainbows appear. The west is particularly appealing direction since people may observe sunset during comfortable late afternoon. As the foreground, the ricefield change its color according to the agricultural cycle. It appears green when the rice plants grow in maturity, and change into golden yellow when approaching harvesting time. The middle ground as represented by the horizon is dominated by lush greeneries. Big trees stand close one another in rows creating a dense line separating the upper and lower realms of the sky and the ground.

No outstanding building or large natural figure appear in this scenery. Instead, many very dynamic ever-moving objects can be observed crossing the vast sky. These are aeroplanes on their way landing to or taking off from the runway of the Airport. With high frequency of movement, these aeroplanes always appear on the background.



Figure 4 View of plane landing

The Characteristics of the Activities

Based on the results of observations, interviews and questionnaires, several activities were obtained which were often carried out by visitors in the Adi Sumarmo rice field area, namely:

a. Necessary Activities

The main activity in the Adi Sumarmo rice field area is culinary or street vendors who sell in the area, almost every day there are always street vendors who sell from 3 to 6 pm. These street vendors come to sell snacks, simple meals, refreshments and drinks. They are peddlers finding livelihood in place where people most likely come and buy.



Figure 5 Street vendors

The presence of street vendors are in reciprocal with the visit of this place. With some people started to spend their time on the road shoulder to enjoy the scenery, few peddlars follow trying to get customers in this location. Street vendors in turn attract more people to visit and enjoy the place.

b. Optional Activities

Optional activities are primarily carried out by people visiting this place, including a variety of activities depending on the interest, age, grouping and other preferences. Observations in Sawah Cengklik show that people are there with main activities to enjoying the view (30%), hanging out and sitting (49%), having meals and snacks (13%) and doing light exercise (8%). All of them are conducted along the road shoulders.



Figure 6 Pic left(A person is enjoying the view), pic right (Some people are jogging)

c. Social Activities

For Gehl (2011) social activities can be understood as the resultant of the necessary and optional activities. While some youths enjoying meals, for instance, they gather with their peers and interact with the street vendors. Families spending good times on late afternoon with some other people they are acquainted with.



Figure 7 People are socializing

CONCLUSION

From the observed evidence and the discussion above we may arrive at the conclusion to respond to the two research questions. First, the elements comprising the scenery in Sawah Cengklik are relatively simple, with no distinctive features or prominent figures. However, the combination between the sunset atmosphere and the travelling aeroplanes across the sky create a special conjunctions forming a dynamic scenery gradually changing as the sun set accompanied by fastly moving aircrafts. These special dynamic series of scenery attract people to stop, rest, and enjoy the panorama with natural and man-made environment. Street vendors are attracted by visitor and further attract more visitors.

Placemaking in this case appear as very dynamic processes, in the appearance, the realisations as well as the attachments of people to a particular place. In this dynamic, road shoulder which belongs to the category of non-place by Mark Auge (1995) with no history and community transform into a vivid, attractive and loveable place.

This research are conducted in a very limited time and location. It is advisable to observe more intensively during a longer period, as well as to extend the scope to include Adi Soemarmo Airport and Cengklik Reservoir to have a more comprehensive understanding.

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