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Research Paper

Conservation Policy of Visual Quality in Connecting Area Between Historical Areas

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Abstract

Alun-alun Contong, a historical area in Surabaya, connects popular historical areas via a tram line. Today, it features commercial buildings from the Dutch East Indies era, which is dominated by contemporary style. Therefore, historical appearances have become degraded and disconnected from their surrounding areas. Based on the case study, this research tries to construct specific historical conservation policies on connecting areas that have not been discussed before. The mixed method involves several tactics that involve two phases: assessment of the building facade element and serial vision analysis as an internal and external identification. The results show the visual quality condition and potential of an area between two historical areas as a modality of the Alun-alun Contong conservation policy. The research findings enable conservation policies to use this method at other locations to improve or restore connectivity, strengthen visual quality, and ensure the sustainability of the entire urban heritage area.

Keywords: connecting area; conservation policy; historical architecture conservation; urban heritage Area.

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1. Introduction

Surabaya, the second-largest city in Indonesia, has quickly transformed into a metropolitan city with the construction of tall buildings that are the easiest to see. On the other side, many people forget this modern city has a long history, not just celebrating Heroes' Day on November 10th every year. Unfortunately, the historical conservation in this city is not as massive as the construction of these tall buildings. One area that has potential historical value that not many people even know about is Alun-alun Contong, which was formerly the southern square and became part of the duchy or palace in Surabaya. This location has some invisible evidence of existing street names and heritage stories from each existing resident (Diana Alfi Nuraini, 2023). According to the Land Use Map of the Surabaya Government, this area is included in the historical area of Kampung Keraton. The main street in this area is Jalan Kramat Gantung, which has shops and some Dutch East Indies-style buildings dominated by contemporary-style buildings.

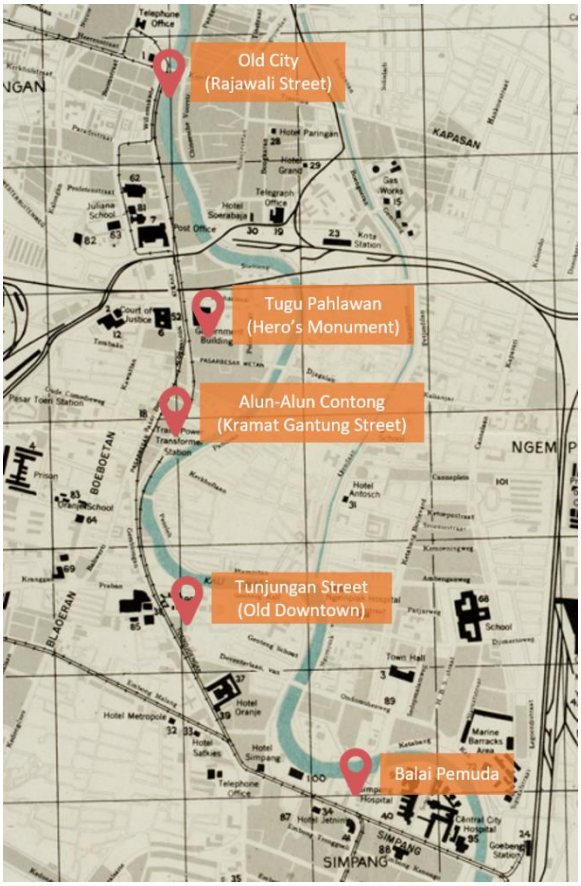

Figure 1. Tram Map and Current Historical Area Locations
Source: edited by authors from colonial architecture. eu

Alun-alun Contong is located between two historical areas that were previously known, the Tugu Pahlawan (hero's monument) area and Tunjungan Street. There is not much research specifically discussing the historical physical evidence of this area and how to conserve it. Existing research discusses future plans even though it refers to historical stories such as the one conducted by Diana Alfi Nuraini (2023). As a city that experienced development and was a center for trading activities during the colonial period (Crosby et al., 2024), the initial downtown (old city) of Surabaya was located in the Jembatan Merah area (Rajawali Street to Kembang Jepun Street). Along with the development of trade, Surabaya is experiencing rapid north-south development, where the north is the port side, and the south is for housing and plantation needs (Nugroho, 2023). In Figure 1, it is shown the route from the Jembatan Merah (Rajawali Street)-Tugu Pahlawan (hero's monument)-Alun-alun Contong (Kramat Gantung Street)-Tunjungan Street-the Balai Pemuda, which areas were once connected by tram lines in the early 1930s. If we look back at the actual condition of the Kramat Gantung road corridor, which is dominated by contemporary-style buildings, it is necessary to implement a specific conservation policy. Because most

of the buildings are not cultural heritage buildings, it is easy for them to gradually disappear (Bamert et al., 2016). One of the problems is that the old styles are not reused by the people, and this is related to the economic situation. In fact, higher building and restoration costs brought on by conservation legislation frequently result in a negative attitude toward history, which is seen as a barrier to satisfying necessities like restoring, maintaining, or modifying existing homes (Katapidi, 2023). Finally, the historical style began to be abandoned and will completely lose its functionality (Shukuri & Awang, 2014). Therefore, based on the Alun-alun Contong case study, this research tries to construct specific historical conservation policies on connecting areas that have not been discussed before.

In an urban conservation context, an effective heritage place benefits local economies, fosters a sense of identity, pride, and belonging among citizens, and helps preserve and safeguard heritage treasures (Lerario, 2022). One thing that influences the image of a place's identity is the visual impact of buildings, especially new ones. This is possible by making sure of the following: continuity of a site's functional function, continuity of the process of maintaining the space (i.e. continuity of the process of maintaining and arranging the social and physical space of a site), and continuity of the community's physical presence on the site (Poulios, 2014). Urban planners should consider preserving existing structures and changing facades (Serra et al., 2021). The facade is an important part because it is the face of the building that faces the street or the outside environment (Andarini, 2019). The facade of a building can be an image of a place, especially regarding the embedded history (Askaria et al., 2014). One of the easiest to see is the physical systems of the facade, such as the shape of doors, columns, wall materials, roofs, etc. Thus, the elements that make up the facade style can influence the conservation of an area (demolish). Therefore, contextualization plays an important role in making historical styles relevant for reuse. Inherited action “localization” refers to the scale of the action. These will be small local actions that will cumulatively enable the conservation of cultural heritage assets in the long term. By highlighting their historical roots and cultural heritages, a city can be justified in providing a unique cultural expression and manifestation of urban identity. Because it gives a city a distinct and important sense of identity, history, and culture, a heritage building can be a substantial asset to urban growth (Prabowo et al., 2023).

Methods in this research use locality uniqueness as the right strategy as a basis for future action choices so that conservation policy becomes more responsible (Mekonnen et al., 2022), especially by physical evidence on building facades. When architecture forms an area, conservation also concerns its scope so that the value of the area it contains remains intact. Zeayter and Mansour (2018) explained that preserving the built environment still often uses a one-dimensional approach that prioritizes the preservation of materials over the latest growth and modernization trends to make it sustainable. It is very important to improve the areas by identifying conditions more comprehensively, checking the remaining façade elements’ locality values, and seeing the flow and visual connectivity of the routes in these areas. Each area will support each other in connectivity, so the potential for sustainability on an urban scale will increase. Using facade elements, the results from internal and external object identification show the visual quality condition and potential of an area between two historical areas as a modality of the Alun-alun Contong conservation policy. Thus, these methodological research findings enable conservation policies to use this method at other locations to improve or restore connectivity, strengthen visual quality, and ensure the sustainability of the entire urban heritage areas.

2. Methods

Conservation in historical architecture not only preserves or maintains existing buildings but also repairs and restores depending on the condition of the buildings to keep the historical values embedded in them. Based on the ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) guidelines, general conservation divides conservation plan into two stages: understanding the place (history documentary evidence, object’s physical condition, and object's significance value) and making conservation policy & implementation (consequences and approval policies till the development of future use). As a methodological research (Lucas & Lucas, 2016), the method used is embedded in the conservation theory. In this study, a mixed methods approach was used, involving several tactics.

2.1 Understanding the place

2.1.1 Observation & Documentation

This phase focuses on exploring and recording information about the location. The researchers made observations to understand the conditions of both the physical environment and the conditions of user activity in the Kramat Gantung road corridor. The documentation is done by taking one-by-one photos of the front of the building to assess the building's details. Based on observation, there are 153 buildings in this road corridor.

2.1.2 Initial Object Assessment

In conducting an assessment of the 153 existing buildings, this research involved 20 architecture Master's students. The number of assessors has a percentage of more than 10% of the number of objects. Therefore, with a margin of error of 5%, the assessment results can be represented. The Master's students have qualified knowledge regarding advanced architectural styles that are tied to the context of historical buildings in Surabaya. The criteria for the assessment are based on the assessment heritage tools (Ornelas et al., 2023), namely physical-visual criteria of aesthetic considerations & original form, which may include originality of the overall building form style, period style suitability of the detailed ornaments/facade, and the look of material forming the facade elements age. Each assessor will give points from 1 to 4 to each building. The results of the assessment can be grouped into the appearance or building styles in this location. The criteria for scoring and grouping assessment scores are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Point Scoring

1 Poin	2 Poin	3 Poin	4 Poin
When the Historical style score is low	Doubt in assessing, but tend to assess the style of history is low	Doubt in assessing, but tend to assess the style of history is high	When the Historical style score is high

Table 2. Point Grouping

20-34 points	35-51 points	52-69 points	71-80 points
Group of Historical style score is low **(contemporary style)**	Group with an intermediate value that indicates intermediate style **(transition style)**		Group of Historical style score is high **(historical style)**
	*Group of transition styles with **low points***	*Group of transition styles with **high points***	

2.2 Conservation Policy & Implementation

2.2.1 Exploring Object History Locality Values

The conservation plan served as a catalyst for bringing attention to the region's unique architectural interest and its contribution to the character of the places, supporting earlier research on the significance of conservation policies to the promotion of architectural values in heritage sites (Margaryan, 2018). The unique and recurring visual value of buildings on a site can become the locality value of that site. The sample for each group is compared with cultural heritage buildings (officially by a team of government experts). The purpose of this comparison is to see the suitability of the system and investigate locality values that are maintained and used as the basis for development as much as possible. The object of comparison will refer to the elements forming the building facades on Rajawali Street and Tunjungan Street, two areas that are on the same lane as the historic areas, as shown in the map at the beginning.

2.2.2 Linkage of Research Objects in the Surrounding Area

This phase will discuss the follow-up of the in-depth information that has been obtained. In this phase, conservation development will use a serial vision analysis. The serial vision analysis will try to explore considerations and alternatives to create an appropriate sequence view of the historical city areas. The serial vision analysis can use photo crop data from Google Street View. According to Nugroho

et al. (2021), Google Street View can be used to assess road and infrastructure landscapes, architectural preservation, and the city, as well as to read the character of the architecture and the surrounding areas. The serial vision analysis also validates policy suitability based on previous historical legal values. There are five locations that can describe this large historical area, two of which are located before and after the Alun-alun Contong area. For each location, two Google Street View photos were taken, and these ten photos must be presented sequentially so that they have a flow. For information, the highway from Jalan Rajawali to Balai Pemuda has one-way traffic lanes. In each photo, it is necessary to identify the ratio: width of the road corridor, starting with the width of the yard in front of the building, the pedestrian paths, and the body of the road. The elevation on the left and right sides of the road needs to be listed as well. The area of view and what is on the road are obtained from these data. The width of the viewing area will affect how road users can enjoy and observe the building details along the road.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Physical Identity of Alun-alun Contong

Based on the assessment result in Figure 2, 3 groups of building styles were obtained. The contemporary-style building group consists of 52 buildings (34%). The transitional-style building group consists of 92 buildings (60%). This group of buildings will be divided into two sub-groups, namely the transitional sub-group, which tends to be historical in style, and the transitional sub-group, which tends to be contemporary in style. Finally, the historical style building group is nine buildings (6%). The shape of the facade in each group can be seen in Figure 2. In the historical style group, the buildings have several similar facade elements, such as the shape of the roof and its ornaments. In the contemporary-style building group, these buildings have things in common, such as not having detailed facade elements and tending to use plain materials.

Figure 2. Groups of Building Styles
Authors' Analysis

Figure 3. Distribution of Building Styles
Authors' Analysis

The distribution of these three groups in Figure 3 shows a complete image of this road corridor. In the figure, several historical-style buildings gather at one point (green colour), then the contemporary style (red colour) spreads out fairly evenly. Thus, the dominance of the transitional style (yellow colour) makes it difficult to describe the physical identity in this area. It can also be concluded that Alun-alun Contong does not have a historical style image or has been badly degraded. From the assessment, it was found that there was a dominance of transitional-style buildings. As seen in Table 3, transitional style buildings have a greater value of 42%, which tends to be contemporary-style, than tends to be in historical style, which is only 18%. Further, a detailed analysis of the elements that led to this trend will be further explained in the next section on historical contextualization.

Table 3. Building percentage in Transitional Styles (60%)

Contemporary style	Transitional styles tend to be contemporary in style	Transitional styles tend to be historical in style	Historical Style
34%	42% (62/153)	18% (30/153)	6%

3.2 Conservation Policy Based on Locality Values in Alun-alun Contong

The policy of using locally valuable facade elements to be replicated is a very easy and simple step for the community to do. Although the homogeneity of built structures and the distinctive "architectural" character of the area were valued, the local community is in some ways "forced" to keep them. Local communities will then demonstrate support and dedication to the conservation measures implemented and their ability to increase historical knowledge (Srivastava, 2015). In a comparison of nine historical-style buildings with cultural heritage buildings, evidence of the suitability of facade elements was found, as shown in Figure 4. First, from these comparisons, there is conformity in the shape and decoration of the roof, which is the variation in the shape of the gable roof and the roof windows (dormer). Second, it can be seen from the facade elements of second-floor windows, which, as a whole, are conformity with references in photos of other buildings. And third, the shape of the arched door with thickening on the edge. Because it is close to cultural heritage buildings, these façade elements can be of major local value to Alun-alun Contong.

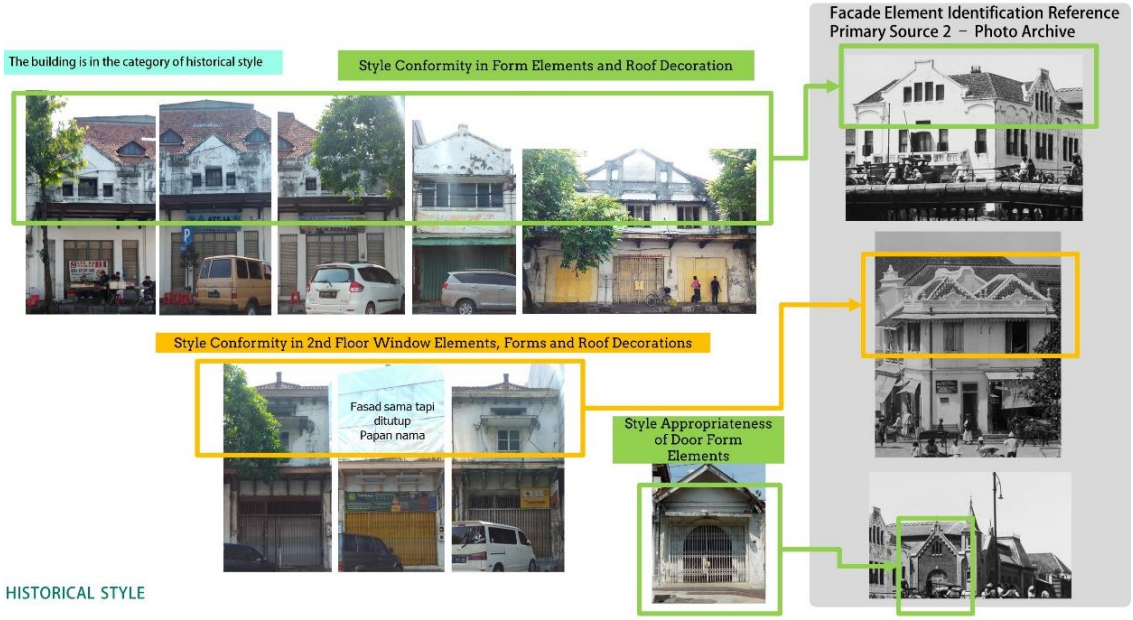

Figure 4. Comparison of Historical Style Group with Reference Buildings
Authors' analysis

Transitional-style buildings tend to be historical groups that have elements that are similar to the appearance of buildings of historical value. However, some parts are questionable, as shown in Figure 5. First, there is an adaptation of the shape and roof decoration where the roof visibility is hidden and looks flat with ornaments. Second, there is an adaptation of the outer space form (balcony) on the 2nd floor, which is also found in the building archives of acculturation from the Dutch East Indies style and the Chinese style. Meanwhile, the discrepancies are the balcony and roof elements that look flat with a railing on the top side. There are several small circular ventilations on the front side and a concrete canopy under the roof. These facade elements are compatible with the old buildings but are not cultural heritage. Therefore, these elements still have local values but are not the main thing.

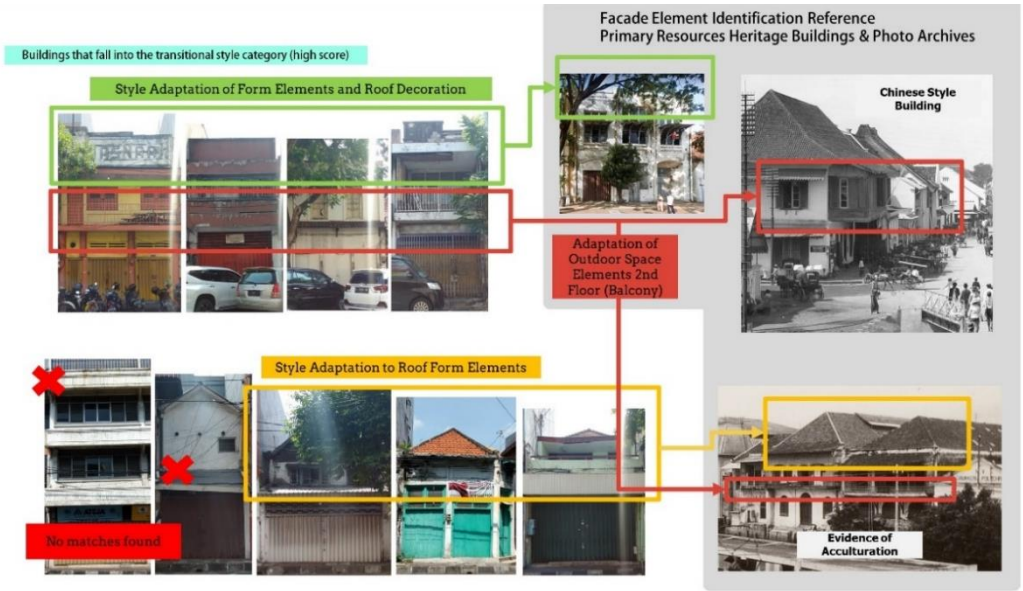

Figure 5. Comparison of Transitional Styles Tend to be Historical in style with Reference Building
Authors' analysis

Transitional-style buildings tend to be contemporary groups which look like new buildings even though they could be trying to adapt elements from the old buildings. From several buildings in this sub-group, some evidences of conformity or not was found, as shown in Figure 6. In a comparison of buildings in this category with cultural heritage buildings, adaptations are made. First, the shape and decorative elements of the roof, such as a gable roof with ornaments. Second, there is an adaptation of the arch/arcade beam elements. Third, there is also a roof replication with hidden visibility, and it looks flat with ornamentation. The irregularities that emerge in this third comparison include the shape of the roof, which had a gap from the 3rd floor, the shape of the windows and openings on the 2nd floor, as well as the presence of pillars and ornaments that did not match. In the last part, there seems to be a phenomenon of trying to replicate historical styles but misunderstanding the local historical context. Therefore, it looks more like the European classic style and moves away from the main local values.

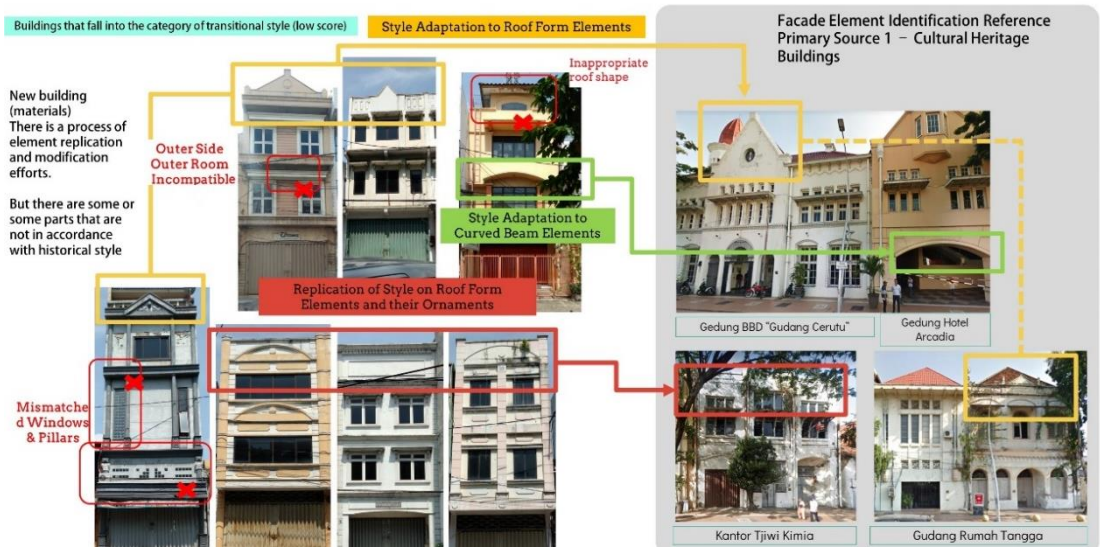

Figure 6. Comparison of Transitional Styles Tend to be Contemporary in Style with Reference Building
Authors' analysis

From the identification of the facade elements, locality values can be found in the Alun-alun Contong at different levels. There have been attempts to mimic and adapt historical styles, but the execution has deviated from the historical styles that are appropriate for the context of the location. Therefore, the future new buildings can be inspired by elements forming the facade from buildings in historical style groups (Figure 4) as a priority reference, and the transitional style tends to be a historical group (Figure 5) as a secondary reference. Existing buildings with a full contemporary style can be renovated by referring to the historical context of the reference facade element buildings.

3.3 Conservation Policy of Visual Quality in Connecting Area in Alun-alun Contong

Connectivity is not only something tangible in the form of the movement of individuals and populations but also has an intangible dimension, including cultural heritage. Cultural heritage connection in the landscape is normally constituted of complexes of components (e.g., buildings, vegetation elements, patches with different land use) and their spatial structure and juxtapositions (e.g., traditional village systems) (Angelstam et al., 2013). The connection of the landscape or place is the key component to making heritage trails. A corridor must be continuous and highly connected (Levin et al., 2013); however, there is not much research that specifically addresses connectivity issues when looking at cultural heritage trails. Nevertheless, this allows people to create their own experience of a place and make connections between individuals (nodes or stops), landscapes, and communities within the space of the trail and along the journey (Boyd, 2017). Heritage trails often develop from linear paths with different types at various geographic sizes that define routes connecting important items of an area's heritage. Cultural heritage trails can either be planned paths or routes that have evolved naturally. The terms "trail," "route," and "corridor" are frequently used interchangeably even though each has a more detailed definition (Li et al., 2021).

Based on the conservation policy of the Alun-alun Contong building in the previous section, which requires it to be inspired by elements of the historical style, it is necessary to investigate the extent of its modification. Table 4 shows that the five locations in this large area have different road widths and distances between roads and buildings. For several points that have cultural heritage buildings, the viewing area in front of the building is wider. However, Alun-alun Contong has different conditions. The ratio of the width of the narrow road corridor and the condition of parking vehicles on the shoulder of the road make the viewing area narrow. There is activity on the shoulder of the road because the building is actively functioning commercially and slows down vehicle lanes. This condition makes the driver focus not on the surrounding buildings but on the caution of other road users. From the series of existing buildings, it can be seen that only Alun-alun Contong has buildings that are not historical in style, and the road width is narrow. With this condition, existing road users will not focus on one building at a time because they only see it at a glance. Moreover, the lower side of the building is covered by a parking car, so only the top of the building can be seen.

Table 4. Serial Vision Analysis

Area	1st Streetview Photo	2nd Streetview Photo
1. Rajawali Street /Initial Surabaya Downtown		
	Left Side Building Height: **3 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **0 m – 2 m – 10 m – 2 m – 0 m** Right Side Building Height: **10 m**	Left Side Building Height: **± 9 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **0 m – 2 m – 12 m – 2 m – 0 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 8 m**
The 1st area has a wide road space ratio. Historical-style buildings or cultural heritage can be seen clearly. It is possible to drive slowly and pay attention only to buildings to the left or right.		
2. Tugu Pahlawan (Hero's Monument)		
	Left Side Building Height: **± 6 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **0 m – 2 m – 30 m – 2 m – 2 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 9 m**	Left Side Building Height: **± 9 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **25 m – 4 m – 30 m – 8 m – 0 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 6 m**
The 2nd area has a very wide road space ratio. Historical-style buildings or cultural heritage can be seen clearly. It is possible to drive slowly and pay attention to the buildings on the left and right.		
3. Alun-alun Contong		
	Left Side Building Height: **± 12 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **0 m – 2 m – 12 m – 2 m – 0 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 12 m**	Left Side Building Height: **± 10 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **0 m – 2 m – 12 m – 2 m – 0 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 12 m**

The 3rd area has a narrow path space ratio. The buildings just seem tall and close. The body of the road is used on one side for car parking. Impossible to drive slowly, and can only take a glance/partial view of buildings to the left or right.

4. Tunjungan Street		
	Left Side Building Height: **± 12 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **2 m – 2 m – 12 m – 2 m – 2 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 6 m**	Left Side Building Height: **± 6 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **0 m – 2 m – 12 m – 2 m – 2 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 6 m**

The 4th area has a wide road space ratio. Historical-style buildings or cultural heritage can be seen clearly. It is possible to drive slowly and pay attention only to buildings to the left or right.

5. Balai Pemuda		
	Left Side Building Height: **± 9 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **8 m – 3 m – 20 m – 3 m – 12 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 8 m**	Left Side Building Height: **± 9 m** Ratio: Building Yard-Sidewalk-The Road-Sidewalk-Building Yard **12 m – 3 m – 20 m – 3 m – 3 m** Right Side Building Height: **± 8 m**

The 5th area has a very wide road space ratio. Historical-style buildings or cultural heritage can be seen clearly. It is possible to drive slowly and pay attention to the buildings on the left and right.

If we look at the serial vision analysis in Alun-alun, duplication of facade elements is appropriate and can create a connection with the flow of the grand area. This is appropriate for Alun-alun Contong, which does not appear to have a historical image. The serial vision analysis also explains that observations of road users in Alun-alun Contong are fast or not focused on detail facade elements. The sustainable conservation policy in Alun-alun Contong is to adapt the façade elements or directly duplicate them in future new buildings. Identical facade elements can be used repeatedly in several buildings. Although it results in similar buildings, this is not a problem due to the condition of the serial observations. The most important thing is a policy that can indirectly restrict the use of elements that do not fit the context. It will also not burden and force building owners, and avoid disharmonious mixing of elements. A unified image of a large area will be formed as a result of changes and improvements to building facade elements in Alun-alun Contong. This policy-planning-based conservation effort that targets broader groups has an important cultural, physical, social, spatial, and economic basis but is not an apolitical effort (Matthews & Grant-Smith, 2017).

Conclusion

Alun-alun Contong does not have an identity as a historical area because only around 6% of the area has a historical style. With the dominance of contemporary style, the conservation policy is to restore each existing building so that this area is connected to the grand historical area. Buildings in the historical-style group must be preserved and serve as a reference for future new buildings or less historical-style buildings. They can adapt façade elements by directly duplicating them. Although similar buildings will

emerge, this is not a problem as Alun-alun Contong tends to be more quickly seen by road users. Identical and repeated facade elements on many buildings will be easy to enjoy and make the image of this area stronger and more connected. This will be an easy way, but it pays attention to the historical sustainability of the city. It ensures the historical features can be in harmony with current needs and conditions. Urban policy planning based on historical conservation targets community groups to easily participate in creating a sustainable city in terms of visual history and can increase economic value.

From this case study, connecting areas between historical areas require a special strategy in conservation policies to create connectivity and an overall city image. Internal identification is needed to understand the capital of a conserved area. There are many ways to shape an image of an area. One of the easiest is the physical element forming the facade. External analysis using serial vision to see conditions and an overview of large areas. It is also necessary for the validity and suitability of policies based on this capital to be more relevant. The tactics used in this research can be directly applied or elaborated with other tactics in policy development at other locations or research. The study also explains whether architectural analysis can be used in formulating urban policies.

Limitation

The limitation of this research is the focus on engaging with the physical elements of the facade. In addition to the physical elements on a building's facade, there are spatial elements (space-forming) and stylistic elements (meaning-forming). Future research can elaborate on several other elements that form the face of a building. In addition, factors in front of or outside the building, such as street furniture, can also be factors in strengthening the collective identity and sense of ownership.

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