Potential of Merdeka Square area as the gateway of Medan City

Harisdani DD*, Lindarto D and Suwantoro H

Architecture Department, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Almamater road, Universitas Sumatera Utara Main Campus, Medan, 20155

*Email: devin.defriza@usu.ac.id

Abstract. Medan City is a liaison between the city of North Sumatra and the main door of the railway line from Kuala Namu Airport that goes to Medan City at the Merdeka Square railway station in Medan. The Merdeka Square area has not been able to appear as a city gate or as a living room and showroom/etalage in the city of Medan. This research reveals the potential of Merdeka Square to make Merdeka Square a Medan city branding. Descriptively qualitative through the observation method and questionnaire, spatial analysis was carried out with reference to cultural, historical, environmental indicators revealing meaningful places that have the potential to design elements of city gates. The analysis revealed that city railway station, railway monument, main post office, hotel de Boer, BI Building, City Hall, Mandiri Building, Lonsum Building, Titi Gantung bridge as landmarks with distinctive architectural characters, historical narratives, strategic locations. While Merdeka Square and MerdekaWalk’s events become a city gate area. These elements must be integrated through linkage strategies in designing urban design by strengthening public transportation lines and integrating the concept of street and square will strengthen the identity of local locality. In its implementation, development activities that are identified as comprehensive activities involving the potential of local wisdom of local culture make the area of Merdeka Square Medan an identifiable Medan City Gate.

1. Introduction

As a province in Indonesia, Sumatera Utara already has an international and domestic air transportation hub, namely Kuala Namu International Airport. With the city of Medan as the provincial capital, it is developing towards a metropolitan city in Indonesia. Medan City is a city with comprehensive tourism industry facilities and infrastructure inviting foreign and domestic tourists. One of the important connecting entrances is the Kuala Namu Airport railway line to the core city of Medan which ends at the MerdekaSquare railway station. The Merdeka Square area is a city gate area for tourism trips to the hinterland city [1].

The concept of the city gate area in the Merdeka Square area in reality does not appear in the physical appearance or activities that take place in this place [2]. It has been recorded that several city railway station renovations have been carried out but did not show interesting profiles as a city gate. Irregular parking facilities, traffic jams, irregular sidewalks and pedestrian bridges, the absence of direction markers, the entrance to Merdeka Square that is not visible, and the presence of signage and advertisements that obscure the orientation of the area. This psychologically lacks comfort and characterizes a friendly and attractive city gate. The city gate has functioned as a city icon with a perception approach [3].
Through a series of regional image observations and qualitative descriptive analysis, this study aims to uncover the potential of the built environment to be displayed as an element forming city gates in order to increase the role of the Merdeka Square area not only as a city gate but as a living room and showroom. City Gate Merdeka Square can be an interesting icon in shaping the branding of the city of Medan. Disclosure of the potential of city architecture and architecture in this area can be used as a city tourist attraction with identity.

2. Literature review
Built environment elements that have the potential to become city icons include: city gate, city corridor and city hall. The city gate in the review as a city icon is an expression of the city's image. The community interpreted the image through a series of mental maps [4]. The mental map that forms the image of an urban area object is influenced by the element of identity, reading of the meaning of the city (identification of objects, uniqueness of the object), experience of the structure of the city or the structure of the city, influenced by intrinsic meaning (a person's description of the meaning of an object, the meaning of an object, the meaning of a subject-object, a feeling experienced). The image of the city is an understanding of meaning by observers of two components (identity and structure of the city) through dimensions: symbolic, function, experience, history, culture, politics. The form of the component can be a unique object, the object is immediately recognized, a new object that has a strong structure and identity [5]. A built environment that has strong attraction has the characteristics and identity that can be read immediately and recognized by the community is the formation of landmarks, paths, nodes, edges and districts.

The physical potential of the area along with the activities of the city community is an attraction for the arrival of someone in the area. In reviews of tourism, the attractiveness of places is formed by regional images and characters as presented in the 2007 World Trade Report (WTO) (Figure 1)[6].

![Figure 1. Attractiveness of places.](image_url)

The formation of city gates is achieved by uniting and managing the dimensions of existing local wisdom by revealing memorable images of the place, namely: cultural dimensions (language, local art, tribal identity, religious activities), historical dimensions (historical city area, urban architecture history), dimensions of natural wealth (interesting location, climate and landscape area)(Figure 2)[7][8]. From the literature review, there can be a meaningful place indicator that can potentially characterize the gate atmosphere. The indicator of the cultural dimension is the existence of typical local activities and architecture. The historical dimension indicator relates to the historical history of the place in the form of myths or legends. The environmental/nature dimension indicators are strategic location, comfort of local climate, local landscape design.
3. Method
The study was conducted to reveal the attractiveness of places on Merdeka Square in accordance with meaningful place character indicators (cultural, historical, environment) where the selection is based on an initial review of five sense of place elements, namely node, path, edge, landmark and district [9] with field observation methods and polls through questionnaire collecting memories (mapping experience). The analysis was carried out by qualitative descriptive method [10] and the review literature revealed the potential attraction of a place that could potentially support the formation at Merdeka Square as an iconic Medan city gate.

4. Results and discussions
Disclosure of regional images is carried out by identifying and selecting potential local elements [11]. The area around the Merdeka Square area is also surrounded by historical buildings from the Dutch Colonial, which will add to the potential image of the city of Medan. The image of this historical area will be successful if the understanding or perception of the city users has been well studied [12]. In addition, historical buildings in this region can also be a landmark of Medan City, also influenced by psychological understanding and urban sociology by city users, including visitors/tourists [13], and will be a strengthening of memories of pleasant experiences (Figure 3) [14][15].

As an area in the center of Medan City, this Merdeka Square area has potential linkage from historical buildings around the area as well as adequate hotel facilities and public facilities. Community activities in the outer space carried out in this area can be seen as a variety of activities and symbolic and artistic artificial formations from the city of Medan. This means that this square as a city gate area is formed not through a formation or display of monuments or the form of a gapura.
The orientation towards the Merdeka Square area starts from the space in the railway station (Figure 4), which is directed to the left to the Titi Gantung bridge and Perniagaan culinary street as well as towards the front to the Merdeka Square. There are also attractive spots in ancient Dutch locomotive/railway monument (Figure 5), as an area or district that serves as the beginning of Medan's city gate.

![Figure 4. Potential of linkage in the Merdeka Square area, Medan City.](image1)

The next district in the series as a city gate in this area is the Medan city zero kilometer monument in front of the historical building of the Medan City Main Post Office and the legendary de Boer hotel (Figure 6), as a landmark and node that is often used by communities such as bicycle and pedestrian communities. The high interest of pedestrians in this area is influenced by the ease of use and the quantity and quality of public transportation that crosses this area such as public transportation, pedicab and buses [16]. The existence of pedestrian facilities as public facilities in this area is quite good seen as a path and edge of the area (Figure 7).

![Figure 5. Dutch locomotive/railway monument in the Merdeka Square area, Medan City.](image2)

![Figure 6. Potential of landmarks and nodes in the Merdeka Square area, Medan City.](image3)
The ease of access to important nodal-nodal above forms a linkage in the Merdeka Square area and develops into a city gate which initially focuses on the station area as a transportation hub and then has the potential to become more attractive by implementing inter nodal linkage models in an effort to achieve a Medan image self-identity. The tourist visit can be carried out with a local transport model using a decorated motorized tricycle in the city of Medan. The movement of productive economic activities in the MerdekaSquare area is in accordance with the concept that combines street and square along with interesting activities in strengthening the identity of local locality [17]. The results of the analysis of the meaningful places at Merdeka Square that have the potential to be used as city gates are summarized in the following table (Table 1)

Table 1. The analysis of meaningful place at Merdeka Square.

| Place                  | Cultural          | Historic         | Environment                      | Sense of Place |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| City Railway Station  | Event/architecture| legend           | Location/climate/landscape       | Landmark       |
| Locomotive Monument   | Architecture      | legend           | Landscape                        | Node           |
| Titi Gantung Bridge   | Event             | legend           | Location/climate/landscape       | District       |
| Main Post Office      | Architecture      | legend           | Location/Climate                 | Landmark/Node  |
| City Zero Monument    | Architecture      | legend           | Location/landscape               | Landmark       |
| Merdeka Walk          | Event             | Location landscape| Landscape                      | District       |
| Lonsum Building       | Event/architecture| legend           | Location/landscape               | Landmark       |
| Perniagaan Culinary St.| Event             | Location         | Location                         | District       |
| City Hall             | Event/architecture| legend           | Location                         | Landmark/Node  |
| BI Building           | Architecture      | legend           | Location                         | Landmark       |
| Hotel de Boer         | Event/architecture| legend           | Location                         | Landmark       |
| Mandiri Building      | Architecture      | legend           | Location                         | Node           |
| Merdeka Square        | Event             | Location         | Landscape                        | District       |

5. Conclusions
The idea of Medan City Branding in this review can be initiated through a series of meaningful places (landmark in the form of city railway station, railway monument, main post office, hotel de Boer, BI Building, City Hall, Mandiri Building, Lonsum Building, Titi Gantung bridge) and (event activities at Merdeka Square and MerdekaWalk) become a city gate area. These elements must be integrated through linkage strategies in designing urban design by strengthening public transportation lines and integrating the concept of street and square will strengthen the identity of local locality. In its implementation, development activities that are identified as comprehensive activities involving the potential of local wisdom of local culture make the area of Merdeka Square Medan an identifiable Medan City Gate.
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