Heritage and the change of meaning: Understanding the urban heritage in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstracts. The heritage of Yogyakarta is always situated in a dynamic environment. The conflicting situation is reflected by the ideological tensions during the creation of historical object in the past and the use of heritage in the present day. This issue leads to the underrated appreciation for the historical meaning. This article reveals the ideological process in the creation of heritage object and the recognition of meaning in the present day. The study uses literature study and in-depth interview to reveal the past and currently perceived meaning. This study provides a basis for understanding the change of meaning in heritage discourse.

1. Introduction
Heritage is meaningful not only because of physical uniqueness, but also the narratives embedded on it. The ideological conflicts in the past between the traditional and colonial rulers in Indonesia produce the narratives. The physical representations and narratives become a complete package of heritage.

In the pre-independence period, Yogyakarta grew as a traditional and colonial city \cite{1}. At that time, the traditional and colonial authorities represented hegemonies through the city design. In the present day, the monumental objects created in the past are appreciated as heritage, or the legacy of traditional court and colonial. The new meanings are embedded as the element of identity and economic commodity. The use in tourism industry becomes a government priority \cite{2,3}. This situation reflects the change of meaning is unavoidable. The former representations of authoritarian ideologies have become the current identity and pleasure attraction.

The change of meaning can be threatened with the over-commercialisation of heritage. In the contemporary society, heritage is used as a tourism commodity indicating the change of meaning. The heritage is not only meaningful for local people who understand the narratives, but also for visitors who seek the uniqueness. This phenomenon implies that the narratives are continuously created. The understanding of meaning change is important to anticipating the diminishing of historical and cultural narratives as warned by Fauque \cite{4}. He argues that the domination of economic utility can erode and loose the symbolical meanings of heritage.

Other issues also come as the consequence of urbanisation. Industrialisation and urbanisation is a typical conservation issue in an urban environment \cite{5}. Economic growth is also a potential problem that can erode heritage \cite{6}. Particularly in Yogyakarta, the conservation of heritage competes with the construction of commercial facilities \cite{7,8}. These situations take place because the society and the uses
of urban space continuously change. The people always connect heritage to the city function. Consequently, there is a bargain in maintaining the authentic meanings of heritage as the source of historical knowledge and the economic functions.

These issues raise a question about the meaning change of heritage in association with people’s perception. This research question is essential because heritage value is a form of social construction [9]. Therefore, this study used in-depth interviews to collect opinions about people’s collective memory and culture. This paper aims at introducing a new perspective in recognising heritage by exploring the historical and cultural meanings created in the past and present days.

This paper uses the city of Yogyakarta as the research location with a focus on the historic area of philosophical axis. This case study is located along Malioboro and Mangkubumi Streets. Yogyakarta is relevant case study because this city reflects the mix of traditional and colonial cities. The heritage sites are currently present side by side with the new growing area of the urban centre. Therefore, the area reflects the complexity of historical and cultural narratives, and the attachment of contemporary meanings.

This study offers an approach to the change of meanings by investigating the historical narrative from the past and the current perception of meanings. The first aspect is associated with the creation of memorable objects, or heritage, in the pre-independence period and the second aspect corresponds to people’s response to the presence of heritage. This study provides evidence that the current social milieu has changed the meanings; in term of the ideological intention of creating the city is currently perceived as history, identity and economic commodity. This new understanding is important to anticipate the ongoing process of meaning change and to preserve the authentic meanings of heritage.

2. Methodology
The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning change of historic are in Yogyakarta urban centre. The study contrasts the symbolic meanings of heritage in association with the pre-independence and post-independence situations. The study focus is the influence of socio-political situations on the meanings and how the current society recognised heritage.

The researcher used socio-semiotic as a relevant approach in connecting the meaning to the socio-political context of the society as argued by Gottdiener [10]. The use of this approach is appropriate to the investigation in a dynamic urban situation from the perspective of space users [4]. The use of people’s perception in exploring collective memories and experiences is also endorsed by Tweed and Sutherland [11], and Vecco [12]. As a qualitative research, the investigation focused on understanding the meaning constructed in the society as also argued by Fossey et al. [13]. The participant’s perception is essential because it reflects the interaction between participants and heritage sites. Therefore, the study used in-depth interview to investigate people’s perception regarding cultural meaning in the present day. The semi-structured interview was used to maintain flexibility as proposed by Legard et al. [14].

The researcher investigated the case study using a time span comprised of the pre-independence or before 1945 and post-independence periods. The situation in the pre-independence period was analysed using data from historical document and research reports. The situation in the post-independence, or the time of research, was investigated using in-depth interviews. Through this way, the researcher is able to compare the historical and cultural narratives created in the two periods.

Regarding in-depth interviews, the study involved 19 participants including 3 persons from expert group and 16 from general public. The expert group was comprised of academics and culturist. Opinion from general public was used to validate the general comprehension about heritage and traditional philosophy. Although the general public were met accidently in public space, the researcher also used criterion sampling to recruit them, based on criteria:

- Adults (from different cohort, such as 20-30, 30-40 and above 40)
- Originally live in Yogyakarta (the participants have experienced the urban space for a long time and has been exposed to local tradition)
- The participants have particular interest in local culture and the city identity.
During interviews, two main questions were asked to trigger in-depth conversation. The questions are:

- How this site (or the heritage sites) means to you?
- How do you remember or believe the stories associated with this site (or the heritage sites)?

The answers revealed themes relevant to the topic. This paper explored narratives developed from the themes regarding the contemporary meanings of heritage in Yogyakarta.

3. Historical context
The city of Yogyakarta experienced the coincidence of classical and colonial periods. This city was founded through the initiation of Gayanti treaty by VOC [15]. This treaty aimed at separating conflicting parties in Mataram Kingdom. As the result, the Kingdom was divided into two smaller kingdoms: Ngayogyakarto Hadiningrat (the current Yogyakarta) and Surakarta (the current Solo). This situation suggests that the colonialist has contributed to the foundation of the kingdom since in the very beginning of Yogyakarta.

At that time the King of Yogyakarta had two political positions: as a traditional ruler and an opponent of colonialist. The role as a traditional ruler was represented through the cosmological concept of the city. The first King of Yogyakarta designed the city using two traditional cosmologies called philosophical axis and Catursagatra [16,17]. The physical representations of these cosmologies are depicted in Figure 1. The manifestation of the first cosmology was the alignment of a number of urban objects following the south-north axis. The objects were Panggung Krapyak monument, the Palace complex (Kraton) and Tugu Monument. These objects were located in the south, centre and north respectively. This cosmology symbolised a Javanese philosophy known as Manunggaling Kawula Gusti. This philosophy encouraged a unity between the leader and people. The position of Kraton in the central area emphasised this teaching. Behrend (1989) argued that this central position strengthened the role of kraton as imago mundi or the centre of universe. Therefore, the King or Sultan was a supreme leader in spiritual and political life.

The representation of Catursagatra was the configuration of Kraton, the Great Mosque, the northern traditional square or Alun-Alun Lor and Beringharjo Market (see Figure 1). This traditional configuration represented Memayu Hayuning Bawono [17]. This philosophy reflected a teaching about leadership in Javanese society on the basis of spirituality, culture and economy.

The antagonistic relationship between the court and colonialist was represented by colonial structures. The ancient Yogyakarta represented the “new Hindia city” in which the office of colonial authority was located near the court palace [1]. This spatial arrangement indicated the polarity of political power in the city. In 1765, the colonialist built a military fort across the colonial office [16]. Sultan reacted this construction by erecting forts surrounding Kraton. This situation made political tension between the court and colonialist more obvious.
The colonialist also introduced industrialisation and modernisation by constructing railways [19]. In 1887, the colonialist built railways crossing Malioboro Street. Kusno [20] argued that the position of railways symbolically neglected the wisdom of philosophical axis. Another form of modernisation was the present of Indische architecture [21]. A number of Dutch architects introduced this movement as an effort to combine the Western concept and local tradition [22]. This movement aimed at supporting colonialist economy through a good cooperation with the colonised society [23]. In other words, this movement represented the cultural strategy of colonialist to strengthen the imperialist supremacy.

4. Contemporary context and meanings

4.1 The initiation of cultural heritage and tourism
After the Republic of Indonesia gained its Independence in 1945, the new government developed the city. The urban planning was managed by the central government that initiated road extensions, new infrastructure and the development of educational area [19]. Hence, the city was projected as an educational centre. After 1985, the government introduced modern land uses in the city with Malioboro as commercial area surrounded by residential areas. Kraton was designated as cultural heritage area.

Currently, the urban planning of Yogyakarta is regulated by the Municipal Regulation number 1/2015. This regulation designates Malioboro and Mangkubumi areas as commercial zone, while Kraton and Vredeburg fort as tourism areas. In addition, the government also protects traditional and colonial buildings using the Heritage Act number 11/2010. Especially the philosophical axis, the government protects this heritage using the Provincial Regulation number 6/2012. Following the protection, the government also promotes the uses of heritage in education and economy. The government also endorses this axis as an international heritage by registered philosophical axis in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage in 2017 [24].

This situation reflects the role of government in endorsing local heritage in different platforms. In this sense, the government designates the memorable objects from the past as heritage and uses it for various purposes: the source of education, economy and identity [25]. The study found that the perceived meanings of heritage were associated with the uses of heritage. Currently, people recognise the physical
manifestations of local court and colonialist as the representations of culture, history, identity and economic commodity.

The cultural and historical potential of Yogyakarta has made the city as a popular tourist destination. The government designates Kraton and a number of colonial buildings as tourist sites [26,27]. However, the image as a tourist city has made Yogyakarta in a contestation with commercialisation. Participants disliked a situation when the traditional and historic buildings are overwhelmed by high-rised hotels, shopping centres and other modern buildings. Participant EM02 expressed this issue by asserting:

“The tall and modern buildings make us can no longer recognise the uniqueness of the city”.

4.2 Perceived traditional philosophies
All research participants recognise the elements of philosophical axis and Catursagatra. They are also able to mention the wisdoms. For example, the philosophical axis represents the harmony between human, nature and God; and Catursagatra symbolises kinship (kekeluargaan) and peaceful in social life. These philosophies are the cultural identity of Yogyakarta. The research participant (code GPF03) argued that:

“Yogyakarta as the city of philosophy has a philosophical axis. There is an imaginary axis, starting from the South Ocean to the Mount Merapi. The axis is comprised of Panggung Krapyak, Kraton and Tugu”.

In addition, another participant (GPM10) argued that the physical elements of philosophical axis and Catursagatra are a part of the cultural existence. It is the heart of Javanese culture (jantung budaya Jawa). Therefore, the presence of these symbols is essential to sustaining the culture. Participant GPF06 asserted that:

“If the historical and cultural symbols had disappeared, replaced by modernity, we might not have the images” …… “we would be oriented to foreign culture, forget the richness of Yogyakarta local culture”.

4.3 Collective memories as social value
Heritage also evokes memories about history associated with the classical and colonial periods. The majority of participants suggest that the presence of Kraton and other traditional buildings create an image about the ancient kingdom. On the other hand, the colonial structures remind people about the colonisation. This memory particularly evokes nationalism as argued by participant GPF03:

“The buildings (colonial buildings) represented our historical value that we had ever been colonised”…… “The buildings reflected the Indonesian fighting spirit (semangat juang) gaining the liberty. Moreover, Yogya had been the first capital of Indonesia. This made Yogyakarta special”.

These cultural and historical narratives correspond to the heritage values. Participants argue that they are proud of these values and resemble the identity of Yogyakarta and its society. The participants use some words to express the identity and pride, such as jati diri (identity), ciri khas (particularity), imej (image) and kebanggaan (pride). Participant GPM10 obviously asserted that:

“I feel proud of having an identity or particularity. This is my city, this is my culture, and this is the tradition inherited in a very long time across our generations. They (the outsiders / visitors) should know this”.

In addition to the historical and cultural values, the participants also mention the role of heritage in the inheritance. Participant GPF02 stated that:

“Cultural heritage (cagar budaya) is a concrete evidence of history”.

This statement emphasises the capacity of heritage to contain historical and cultural narratives, and deliver the meanings across generations. Without the heritage, people will gradually forget history.
The in-depth interviews suggest that the meaning is perceived differently than in the past. The next section discusses the change process of meanings.

5. Discussion

The study found that the local society still appreciates philosophical axis and Catursagatra as a part of traditional belief and mythology. This belief is fixed in the society and does not change through time. Assmann and Czaplicka [28] suggests this phenomenon as “cultural memory”. This kind belief and mythology connects different realities, the cosmos and city urban space, and keeps the metaphor alive [29]. This situation strengthens the symbols of traditional cosmologies as the main media of cultural teaching. These symbols are essential to local identity, as well as the spirituality and moral teaching in Javanese society [30] and across Indonesia archipelago [31]. The construction of identity runs in an illogical way constituting the recognition and implementation of moral and spiritual values of cultural symbols [32]. This leads to what is identified as Javanese and the territory of Java. Therefore, the urban space is meaningful for local people or the believers.

The study also found that the change of social milieu affects the meanings. There is a significant shift of political and social situations between the pre-independence and post-independence periods. In the earlier period, the court and local society are struggling in suppression of colonialist. The polarity of power produces antagonistic symbols. As the time changes, a new government rules the nation. In the new era, the central government recognises the monarchy as the particularity of Yogyakarta side by side with the democratic system of the Republic [33]. There is no more political tensions like in the past. The society currently recognises events in the past as history and the objects associated with the memories as heritage. The change of social agents contributes to social process that gives different ways in recognising and appreciating culture and history [34]. In this term, the government plays a central role in confirming the history and heritage. This action consequently influences the representations of heritage, promotion and the use of heritage. Although the study finds that the role of informal leaders also crucial for disseminating cultural values and traditional philosophy, the government’s campaign of heritage gives a wider effects through public policies.

A strong connection between heritage, culture and historical memories is evidenced through in-depth interviews. The recognition of heritage as identity makes the memories popular in the society. The local people of Yogyakarta cannot be separated from the symbol of traditional cosmologies and colonial structures. In this term, the historic sites connect the “chain of popular memories” that makes the city meaningful [35]. The fact that heritage is perceived as a “concrete evidence of history”, makes heritage a “historical urban reminders” [36]. The heritage become the medium of sharing collective history and common destiny [37]. In this sense, the physical representations of traditional cosmology and colonisation bind the society to the monarchy, tradition and the independence war. This kind of awareness gives a cultural perimeter to the city and society.

The image as tourist destination is another form of contemporary identity. The use of heritage as an economic potential is not a new idea as suggested by some scholars [38–40]. The current campaign of heritage tourism encourages the heritage conservation and associated development, such as tourist facilities and public space along Malioboro Street. This area currently becomes a melting point between local people, visitors, locality and globalisation (see Figure 2). Hayllar, Griffin and Edwards [41] argues this kind of place as “tourism precinct.”
The street corridors become a unique place through the sense of memory and traditional belief as suggested by Scannel and Gifford [42]. The traditional cosmologies and colonial heritage assemble a complete package of Yogyakarta heritage. The first requires the living tradition and belief in the society, while the latter needs a commemoration. These representations become the source of cultural and historical narratives that make heritage meaningful. The contemporary use of heritage as tourism commodity is unavoidable. Shepherd [43] warns this action can lead to the “cultural commodification”. It is a phenomenon when the economic transaction grows greater that the original interest in local tradition and history. It is also a situation when the locality is defeated by the globalisation represented by the mass production of heritage tourism.

The study endorses the recognition of the “genuine source” of locality as a principal strategy in maintaining the cultural and historical narratives, as well as the use of heritage in tourism industry. The study also proposes that the people’s perception is a potential tool in gauging the change of meaning. It is evidenced that the social and political situations contribute to the stability and change of meanings. Therefore, I suggest the current government and society to be aware of this phenomenon, especially in dealing with the intrusion of global symbols or modernity in a traditional and historic urban environment.

6. Conclusion
The historical and cultural narratives are primarily created in the pre-independence periods. The narratives are associated with political tensions between the traditional court and colonial authority. In this period, the two authorities use urban design and architecture to represent their political and cultural influences.

In the contemporary period, the physical representations of historical and cultural narratives are recognised as heritage. The findings from in-depth interviews reflect that the participants still recognise the historical and cultural narratives. The narrative about traditional philosophy is recognised as local wisdom and another is appreciated as history. In this term, the ideological tensions in the past have currently changed into history. The narratives contribute to the identity and nationalism. The interviews also suggest that the physical representation of heritage is important to the succession of historical and cultural narratives. The meaning change is made possible by the change of social agents. The case study demonstrates the authorities as a central agent in creating the symbols as the representations of their political intentions.

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