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Evaluation Study of Kota Lama Semarang Revitalization

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ABSTRACT

Kota Lama Semarang area is one of the icons of Semarang City and a tourist destination with its own charm in which there are various old buildings from the Colonial era. The Kota Lama Semarang area has been revitalized since 2017 which aims to maintain and preserve existing buildings and improve the quality of the area. The Kota Lama Semarang area has now become a leading tourist destination in Semarang City after revitalization, but after revitalization there are still some problems left behind where it becomes a record of the success of revitalization. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the implementation of revitalization in the Kota Lama Semarang to show that the implementation of revitalization has not been fully successful. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. In general, the revitalization carried out in the Kota Lama Semarang Area has been successfully carried out and has a good impact from the social and tourism aspects which are reviewed from 4 points namely Urban Live Quality, Sustainable Urban Form and Structure, Capital / Asset Improvement, and Social and Economic. However, from the review there are still shortcomings, namely from the cultural and economic aspects where the revitalization carried out has less impact, especially for the community around the Kota Lama Semarang.

Keywords: Revitalization, Building, Cultural Heritage, Old City

ABSTRAK

Kawasan Kota Lama Semarang merupakan salah satu ikon Kota Semarang dan menjadi destinasi wisata dengan daya tariknya tersendiri yang di dalamnya terdapat berbagai bangunan-bangunan tua peninggalan era Kolonial. Kawasan Kota Lama Semarang telah dilakukan revitalisasi yang dilakukan sejak tahun 2017 yang bertujuan untuk menjaga dan memelihara kelestarian bangunan-bangunan yang ada serta meningkatkan kualitas wilayah tersebut. Kawasan Kota Lama Semarang saat ini telah menjadi destinasi wisata unggulan Kota Semarang setelah dilakukan revitalisasi, namun setelah dilakukan revitalisasi masih terdapat beberapa permasalahan yang tertinggal dimana hal tersebut menjadi catatan keberhasilan revitalisasi. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melakukan evaluasi terkait pelaksanaan revitalisasi di Kawasan Kota Lama Semarang untuk menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan revitalisasi belum sepenuhnya berhasil. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Secara umum revitalisasi yang dilakukan di Kawasan Kota Lama Semarang telah berhasil dilakukan dan berdampak baik dari aspek sosial dan pariwisata yang ditinjau dari 4 poin yaitu Urban Live Quality, Sustainable Urban Form and Structure, Capital/ Asset Improvement, dan Social and Economic. Namun, dari tinjauan tersebut masih terdapat kekurangan yaitu dari aspek budaya dan aspek ekonomi dimana revitalisasi yang dilakukan kurang berdampak baik terutama bagi masyarakat sekitar Kota Lama Semarang.

Kata Kunci: Revitalisasi, Bangunan, Cagar Budaya, Kota Lama



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1. Introduction

Kota Lama Semarang area is an area filled with several old buildings from the colonial era which is currently one of the icons of the city and a tourist attraction. Kota Lama Semarang area was originally the center of government and offices during the Dutch colonial era, so in the area there are many buildings that have historical value for the city of Semarang. Over time, the Kota Lama Semarang area functioned as a warehousing area (Prabowo and Harsritanto, 2018). The Kota Lama Semarang area at that time received less attention from the government, so that many old buildings were uninhabited and unmaintained and experienced physical damage where these conditions were very alarming and could also endanger the community.

Seeing the potential and condition of Kota Lama Semarang Area in that period and also the issuance of Semarang Mayor Decree No. 646/50/1992 concerning the Conservation of Ancient/Historic Buildings in the Municipality of Semarang, Semarang City began to pay attention to the existence of old buildings in Semarang, both from its physical condition and its environmental condition. Efforts made by the Semarang City government to preserve the existence of old buildings in the Kota Lama Semarang are by revitalizing the Old City Area. Revitalization by redeveloping an area is the main solution to overcome problems from a physical perspective, especially to overcome slum areas (Putra and Andriana, 2017). Area revitalization is also one way to rediscover the potential of an area or reactivate what an area already has in terms of socio-cultural, socio-cultural, and the physical side of the environment which is expected to be able to improve the quality of the area which has an impact on the quality of life of a city (Yarangga, Sitorus and Musfira, 2021). Revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang is a step taken to make the Kota Lama Semarang alive again by improving the physical condition of the buildings there, improving environmental, social and economic conditions to stimulate new activities in the area so that the Kota Lama Semarang becomes more alive. This is in accordance with what is said by Danisworo and Martokusumo (2002) that revitalization is an effort made to make alive an area that has died, increase the vitality of an area, and add things that previously did not exist either activities or buildings in an area. The purpose of the revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang area is also to balance between the preservation of the area and also the development of tourism in the Semarang City area. In line with this, Kendra (2024) explains the purpose of revitalizing the area with a design approach to create a balance between preservation and development.

The revitalization of Kota Lama Semarang started in 2017 with the concept of "*Little Netherland*". Until now, the condition of Kota Lama Semarang is much better with the arrangement of the area that has been done so that it is visited by many people and the area is much more alive with various activities in it. However, the success of revitalization carried out in the Old Town of Semarang requires a review to see what problems arise after revitalization and to review whether the revitalization results are in accordance with the revitalization objectives and are beneficial to the surrounding community. This is one of the efforts to further improve the success of the revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang area.

1.1 Overview of Kota Lama Semarang

Kota Lama Semarang is a historical area in the city of Semarang which is also a relic of the Dutch colonial era, so in the area there are many old buildings that have historical value. The Kota Lama Semarang area was formed in 1678 which was actually a tribute to the VOC from Amangkurat II which then in 1708 built offices as the center of Dutch government and built the Vijfhoek fort as a Dutch military training center (Analisa, 2019).

According to Semarang City Regional Regulation Number 2 of 2020 concerning the Old City Site Building and Environmental Planning, the Kota Lama Semarang is a cultural heritage that is a historical legacy of the growth of Semarang City which contains high historical, aesthetic, scientific and cultural values and has good potential in economic and tourism midwives. The Kota Lama Semarang area has an area of approximately 35 hectares consisting of three villages, namely Bandarharjo village, Tanjung Mas village, and Purwodinatan village.

In 2017 the Kota Lama Semarang area was revitalized with the aim of reviving the area. The revitalization has the concept of "*Little Netherland*" which arranges the environment of the area and reuses old buildings from the Dutch Colonial era to be used for new functions so as to create new activities in the area.

Semarang's Old Town area is inhabited by many old historic buildings such as Blenduk Church, Marba Building, Marabunta Building, and Berok Bridge.



Figure 1: Historic Buildings in Kota Lama Semarang
Source: *archiplanet.org*, 2025

1.2 Potential of Kota Lama Semarang

The Kota Lama Semarang has the potential as an image of Semarang City, where the Old City Area was once the forerunner of the birth of Semarang City (Sari, Harani and Werdiningsih, 2017) . In addition, the Kota Lama Semarang area has enormous potential in the field of tourism. Currently, the Kota Lama Semarang area is one of the tourist destinations that is visited by many tourists in the city of Semarang. By presenting unique and historical old buildings and the environment of the area that is managed in such a way, it becomes a special attraction for tourists to come to the Kota Lama Semarang.

Kota Lama Semarang itself in 2015 has been designated as a tentative list world heritage site (WHS) by UNESCO (Firdausyah and Dewi, 2020) . Although it is still a tentative list, the Semarang local government is determined to make the Kota Lama Semarang Area a World Heritage Site (WHS) (Prabowo and Harsritanto, 2018) . With the inclusion of the Kota Lama Semarang Area to the WHS tentative list and the revitalization of the area in an effort to become a WHS, it certainly makes the Kota Lama Semarang Area more visited by tourists and this has a good impact on the community's economy.

1.3 Problems of Kota Lama Semarang

Revitalization in Kota Lama Semarang is in the form of improving the physical condition of buildings, improving road conditions, arranging pedestrian paths and adding street furniture in the area. According to Firdausyah and Dewi (2020) the revitalization of the Semarang City Region is essentially only limited to improvements in terms of infrastructure, so that the repair of buildings in the Old City is carried out individually by the owner of the building. The revitalization of the Old City Area with the aim of reviving the area was successful because the area became a famous tourist attraction in Semarang, but from this revitalization, problems arose due to the revitalization.

The main problem in the Kota Lama Semarang after revitalization is the loss of historical authenticity of the Kota Lama Semarang because it does not pay attention to the preservation principle in the process. The addition of some street furniture elements in the Old Town is considered too deviant and not in accordance with the concept of the area, namely "Little Netherland" (Sonaesti and Purwanto, 2022) . It is considered only to beautify the area but does not pay attention to the historical value and authenticity of the Kota Lama Semarang area.



Figure 2. *Street Furniture* in Kota Lama Semarang
Source: www.bbc.com, 2025

Street furniture in the form of a charger box that resembles a telephone box and drinking fountain in Kota Lama Semarang is not in accordance with the history and concept of Kota Lama Semarang which is a relic of the Dutch colonial era while the two street furniture are more characteristic of cities in England.

Several previous studies have been conducted in the Kota Lama Semarang, one of which discusses the perception of tourists and experts on the revitalization that has been carried out in the Kota Lama Semarang. According to Putri and Sugiri (2022) it was explained that the revitalization carried out in the Kota Lama Semarang was able to increase the attractiveness of the area as a new tourism object based on the perceptions given by tourists and experts. From this research, it is also expected that the revitalization that has been carried out can be continued by paying attention to several things that are still lacking in the area to increase the attractiveness of the Kota Lama Semarang area. From the research that has been done, this research aims to record further as well as evaluate more deeply how the results and impacts caused by the revitalization in the Kota Lama Semarang in terms of urban design.

Pratama and Purwanto (2021) explains that there are several problems that exist in the Kota Lama Semarang area after revitalization that must be resolved immediately in order to increase the success of the revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang area, namely: 1.) Building ownership status, 2.) Vandalism, 3.) Congestion, 4.) Lack of parking area, 5.) Disharmony between the concept of the area and the DED, 6.) Implementation of DED infrastructure that fails in the field.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to discuss the evaluation of the revitalization results carried out in the Kota Lama Semarang area. The use of a descriptive approach with a descriptive method is based on this research is rationalistic exploratory research, where the research is conducted by exploring information from the community and the environment without determining the limit of variables. The purpose of using this approach is to capture and describe the existing situation in a natural way that will later be used to draw conclusions from the results obtained.

The main data obtained from direct observation at the research location, literature study and documentation by recording all things and activities that occur in the Kota Lama Semarang area. Other sources used in this research are from the internet, journals, and previous research on Kota Lama Semarang Area. The data that has been obtained is then analyzed to get a description of the area, a study on the physical, social, economic, and cultural aspects and how the potential of an area to become a quality area after revitalization. The research was conducted in Kota Lama Semarang Area, Semarang City.

3. Discussion

The revitalization of Kota Lama Semarang Area is a step taken by the local government as an effort to increase the vitality of the area so as to create an increase in the value of the location of the area. Revitalization of old areas through creative architectural design is a concept that emphasizes innovative approaches in repairing and reviving areas that have deteriorated or abandoned (Sitepu, 2024) . Revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang area one of the goals is to become a leading destination in the city

of Semarang. Buchori (2022) explains that after revitalization, the Kota Lama Semarang area has fulfilled the tourism components to become a leading tourist destination, namely: 1.) Attractions, where in the Kota Lama Semarang area the community is presented with cultural heritage buildings as a unique and interesting culture and can be learned from the historical side, 2.) Facilities, namely the Kota Lama Semarang area has been equipped with a variety of facilities that can be utilized by visitors such as *street furniture*, road access, public transportation, etc., 3.) Accessibility, Kota Lama Semarang Area is currently very easy to access where the city government provides public transportation in the form of Trans Semarang Bus to get to the Old Town Area and the Old Town Area is very close to Tawang Station so it is easily accessible for visitors from outside the city, 4.) Additional Services, which are all forms of additional facilities to support the convenience and comfort of visitors, namely the Kota Lama Semarang Area provides a Tourist Information Center that aims to get any information related to the Kota Lama Semarang Area for tourists. Improving the quality of a revitalization area is also in accordance with the purpose of revitalization of the area based on Regulation of the Minister of Public Works Number: 18/PRT/M/2010 on Guidelines for Area Revitalization, namely increasing the vitality of existing areas with urban interventions to be able to create economic growth and stability, connected to the city system, feasible to live in, social justice, and have cultural and environmental insight.

The impact and benefits for the community of revitalization in Kota Lama Semarang can be viewed through 4 points of benefits of revitalization of the area, namely:

1. Urban Living Quality

The physical quality of the Kota Lama Semarang area has increased, this can be seen from the many buildings that were once empty and uninhabited have now been repaired and re-functioned for different functions to revive the area. In addition, the quality of life in the Kota Lama Semarang area has also improved, this can be seen from the image of the Old Town which has changed where in the 80s it was known as a gloomy and scary area, turning into a friendly and safe tourist area that is visited by many people.

2. Sustainable Urban Form and Structure

Revitalization in the Kota Lama Semarang is considered quite successful in reviving the area and creating various activities in it, but for the sustainability of the results of the revitalization there are still some notes that must be addressed. One of them is the use of paving materials on Jl. Garuda and Jl. Branjangan is not appropriate so there is a difference in material from before. The quality of the new material is considered poor because the paving material is not able to withstand the load of the road, causing the road surface to become bumpy and endangering road users (Sonaesti and Purwanto, 2022).

3. Capital/ Asset Improvement

Revitalization in the Kota Lama Semarang area is considered fit for purpose because it is able to increase the value of assets where revitalization is able to affect price changes. An example of a building with a price increase after revitalization is the Jiwasraya Building where the price increase reached 100% (Firdausyah and Dewi, 2020). The increase in land prices is also influenced by factors such as location, area and function of the building. According to Firdausyah and Dewi (2020) the increase in land prices after revitalization is in areas designated as commercial areas.

4. Social and Economic

Semarang's Old Town area is now a favorite tourist destination in the city. This is the result of the success of revitalization in the area. The success of revitalization in the Old City area has a good impact on social aspects, this can be seen from the increased interaction that occurs between communities in the area and the increased level of security in the area that makes visitors feel safe and comfortable. However, revitalization in the Kota Lama Semarang tends to have a negative impact on the economic aspect, especially for the natives of the Old City. Trifena and Dewi (2017) explained that the revitalization process affects the livelihood conditions and the ability of people to rent land. As for people who own businesses, the revitalization process has resulted in a significant decrease in income.

4. Conclusion

Revitalization carried out in the Kota Lama Semarang area has been successfully carried out from the social and tourism aspects. This is shown by the Kota Lama Semarang area which has become one of the community's favorite tourist destinations visited by many tourists both from within the country and abroad. In addition, the revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang is also able to create a new image where the Old

City area is now known as one of the friendly and safe areas for the community where previously it was known as a slum and gloomy area. However, the revitalization of Kota Lama Semarang did not have a good impact on the cultural and economic aspects of the community around Kota Lama. From the cultural aspect, the revitalization carried out in the Old City did not pay attention to the principle of conservation of the area by adding some elements that were not in accordance with the concept of the area at the beginning, thus eliminating the authenticity of the Old City area itself. From the economic aspect, the revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang has a negative impact, especially for the indigenous people who live in the Kota Lama Semarang. It affects the condition of people's livelihoods and a decrease in income from businesses conducted by the community in the Old City area.

To increase the positive impact for the community, revitalization of an area, especially those related to the preservation of cultural heritage buildings, should involve the Cultural Heritage Expert Team and academics in every process. This is done so that the revitalization process does not deviate from the authenticity of an area and in accordance with the principles of conservation. In addition, the local government must also be firm in making policies and strict in supervising the Kota Lama Semarang, so that the results of the revitalization of the Kota Lama Semarang can be sustainable so that future generations can see and enjoy. This study has recognized methodological limitations that make it impossible to measure the long-term impact of revitalization. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further studies with a more comprehensive and participatory approach to obtain a comprehensive picture of the impact of revitalization.

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, several new directions that can be the focus of further research to improve this study are by analyzing community participation in the revitalization process, this is to examine the extent to which local communities are involved in planning, implementing, and utilizing the results of regional revitalization. In addition, a city-to-city comparative study will be conducted to compare the revitalization of the Old City of Semarang with other cities in Indonesia and abroad that have similar characteristics to identify best practices.

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