

# CREATING PLACE IDENTITY THROUGH HISTORICAL ATMOSPHERE, CASE STUDY: *TOKO ROTI SUMBER HIDANGAN*

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**Abstract:** Braga is a famous commercial area since the Dutch-colonial era, located in a historical region of Bandung. Sumber Hidangan is one of commercial functions in Braga that preserves the authenticity of its design since its first operation in 1929. With the premises that the historical aspect holds an important role in creating place attachment; and that place attachment also contributes to creating place identity, this study aims to find out the role of physical elements in creating historical atmosphere in order to maintain the identities for visitors. The study is performed in qualitative framework, implementing a case study approach. The method focuses on periodic observations at the studied object by looking for traces as suggested by Gehl (2013, p.24). As a result, it is concluded that the authenticity of a place that is maintained properly inspires the users to protect the place as they protect their identity. Throughout several minor renovations, Sumber Hidangan has successfully maintained the identity by keeping the authenticity of historical atmosphere of the place.

**Keywords:** *Place attachment, Place-identity, Interior space, Historical atmosphere.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Located in the historical area of Dutch colonization in Bandung, Braga is very well known as a commercial street. Built in the early 1800s, it was previously named *Pedati weg* (Horse-cart street) as it was often passed by horse carts, connecting the main road *Groote Postweg* (now Asia Afrika street) and the coffee storage (now the City Hall) owned by one of important persons in the city (Kunto, 1985, p.296). The street was called *de meest Europeesche winkelstraat van Indie* or translated as “the most popular commercial street in the Netherlands-Hindis” (Kunto, 1985, p.300). The popularity of Braga Street was planned and is still preserved until today. Inspired by European architecture, Bandung become an example of a city with planning and design; the style of the Dutch-colonial also become an example to the other colonial city in Indonesia (Widodo, 2003).

One of commercial functions in Braga street existed since the Dutch colonization is the bread store (*toko roti*) Sumber Hidangan. Generally seen from the physical elements of the building, both its exterior and interior express a historical *memoir*. Through times that slightly transform the physical appearance of the buildings in Braga Street, Sumber Hidangan remains to stand firm in its original shapes and forms since its first operational service in 1929. Its approach to preserve the architectural style is seen as a uniqueness and translated into an authenticity of the building which represents a worth preserving architecture from the past. The *oldness* of the building itself becomes interesting to observe, especially since the physical design takes part as one of the values to assess a cultural heritage (Fitri, I., Ahmad, Y., and Ahmad, F., 2014).

The goal of this paper is to find out the architectural elements in Sumber Hidangan that create historical atmosphere, through which place attachment and place identity are developed. Through the authenticity of the architecture at Sumber Hidangan, this paper aims to discover how those elements create a sense of history. Within the framework of place attachment, this paper limits the discussion to the architectural physical elements which are visible by visitors, as those become the dominating factors seen at Sumber Hidangan. The result of this paper provides essential elements

for creating space atmosphere and such recommendations for the owners of heritage buildings in Bandung to support cultural heritage conservation in a form of design strategy.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 The concept of place attachment in creating place identity**

Place attachment is defined as a form of relation between people and the place which may come through a perception, functional needs, and emotional meanings (Bott, 2015; William, Stewart, and Kruger, 2013; Firouzmakan and Daneshpour, 2015). It focuses on how people can sense an emotional connection, capture what is good about the place and its symbolic relation. This attachment may occur in any scale of environment, either generalized as an area in an environment or specific as a place in a certain area. (Altman and Low, 1992; Lin and Lockwood, 2014). Along with place attachment, place identity also refers to people's bond with places which is formed by a set of place features that provide the place's distinctiveness and continuity in time (Lewicka, 2008).

It is determined by the physical components and the meaning and association developed between people and places (Ujang, 2012); often referring to emotional or symbolic bond (Anton and Lawrence, 2016) which makes a place unique (Ngesan and Zubir, 2015). Both of place attachment and place identity are related to the bonding between people and places involving emotional meanings. In a more specific relation, Ujang (2012) states that place attachment contributes to the making of place identity.

A place is generally described as a space which people have made meaningful (Creswell, 2004, p.7). The meaning is usually formed within a period of time while people experience the space. Thus, historical aspect becomes a very important as the designer is responsible for breathing new life into spaces with historical existing character (Coles and House, 2007, pg.16). Based on the process, people need to experience the place within a duration of time to create an attachment. The meaning and value of place itself, as well as how often the place is experienced determine how long the process takes place in a person (Ram, Bjork, and Weidenfeld, 2016). People who feel an attachment will see a place as an identity when the place becomes an extension of self, so they may see the place as a part of their beings. In accordance, Anton and Lawrence (2016) mentions that people who have a strong place attachment are more likely to show protectiveness towards the place. This means that place attachment may contribute to conservation and help preserve places which are considered historically valuable, with a purpose of protecting their identities (Lin and Lockwood, 2014).

Brown, Raymond, and Corcoran (2015) explains that place identity is associated to people's feelings towards a physical environment and a symbolical relation with a place. Rob Krier (1992, pg. 26) describes that the design of an architectural space can be observed through the technical elements within, which are visible through interior room as the smallest spatial unit. Therefore, physical elements in a place become very crucial. In discussing about an identity of a place that occurs in a building, the physical elements of the environment are limited to which are embedded in a building as exterior and interior spaces.

### **2.2 Physical Elements of Architectural Space**

Architecture is a broad designed environment that consists of spaces with meanings and functions. An interior space, as the smallest spatial unit, is commonly defined by ceiling, walls, and floor as fundamental elements (Ching, 2012, p.14, Krier, 2001, pg. 72), all of which have specific roles in creating the character of the architectural space.

The existence of walls in architecture creates visible space boundaries that explicitly differentiate between "here" and "there" or between "inside" and "outside", similar to floor which also defines the boundaries in more subtle ways, such as through the elevation or the pattern, whereas roof or ceiling speak about protection to the covered space. In addition, doors and windows function as

connectors between interior to the exterior space (Krier, 1992, pg.26). A step further from the interior, building facade becomes the other side of visual expression of a building which also created by physical elements.

Meanwhile, character of space in a building cannot be judged only by the interior enclosure which may define the size, the scale or the comfort based on the geometrical form. Other elements which are not less important than building enclosure are interior attributes, such as furniture and decorations, through which the cultural image can be formed through proportion, lighting, structure, the style of furniture, and other interior accessories (Krier, 1992, pg. 27; 2001, pg. 72; Ching, 2012, p.157). Textures, colors, forms and tonal of the physical elements are composed in such design manner in order to create a visual unity and aesthetic which emphasize the character and quality of space expressively (Smithies, 1981, pg. 6).

### 3. THE RESEARCH METHOD

This paper implements a case study approach as a part of qualitative framework, which will be discussed in analytical descriptive manner. The method focuses on periodic observations at the studied object by looking for traces as suggested by Gehl (2013, p.24). In order to capture the authenticity of the data collection, these following strategies are performed periodically during the research period in June-July 2016:

- Photography: as a very frequent strategy in data collecting method, photography is used for documenting physical elements of the studied object as an evident of the situational cases.
- Note-taking: alongside with photography, a tracking of physical and situational evidence are recorded verbally as a scratch journal.
- Interview: it is performed with a worker at the studied object who has been working for more than 30 years and is considered valid as resource or a living evidence.

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Authenticity of Sumber Hidangan



**Figure 1a and 1b.** the façade of Sumber Hidangan, Bandung.

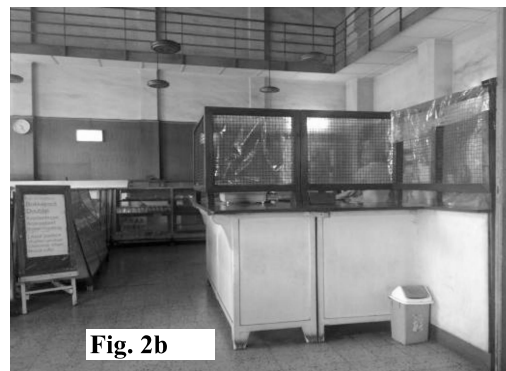
*Orderly rhythmical streamline on the façade before (left) and during (right) operational hours.*

*Source: Personal Documentation (2016)*

#### *Building facade*

Starting from the exterior, Sumber Hidangan has different facade expressions depending on the operational activities of the store and at the pedestrian outside the building (see Fig. 1a and 1b). During the operational hours at 9.00AM to 3.00 PM and when the street is busy, most of the building facade is covered by the lines of paintings displayed by the sellers on the pavement, leaving the openings as accesses for entrances, daylight, and natural air circulation. That appearance is contrast to the real building facade as designed which can be seen clearly in the early morning before the store is open. The actual facade of Sumber Hidangan is dominated by

geometrical shapes of the windows and the doors, composing a monochromatic expression through the colors of the continuous building, walls under the canopy line, and the paint of the windows and doors. The proportion of the height and the length emphasizes the horizontal outlines, accentuated more clearly by the streamlines at the upper part and the continuous canopy along the length of the building. The composition of the lines, rectangular planes, and neutral colors in the exterior depict the movements of modern architecture (Khan, 2001:17). These composition give an orderly rhythmical accent that defines the area of Sumber Hidangan despites of the continuous building.



**Figure 2a and 2b** pastries area (Food Display)

*The monumental scale of the ceiling represents characteristics of space proportion of Dutch Colonization architecture.*

*Source: Personal Documentation (2016)*



**Figure 3a and 3b** historical atmosphere created by the style of the Dutch Colonization architecture.

*Source: Personal Documentation (2016)*

### *Ceiling*

Continuing to the interior, the height of the ceiling surprises the visitors once they get inside. It is felt that the scale of the space is rather big comparing to the normal scale of a one-storey building. Borrowing the “space scale” categorization by White (1975, p. 68), the interior space of Sumber Hidangan has a monumental scale which actually fits for a two-storey building (see Fig. 2a and 2b). This is also shown by the addition of maintenance lines at about half of the room’s height, which by space can accommodate well the movement of a working person. However, the proportion is kept balanced by the arrangement of suspended lamps as the only artificial lighting in the pastry area; whereas in the dining area, it is combined with some lamps installed directly on the ceiling in a linear pattern with a similar design to modern architecture in the early 1900s. The lamps are hung down from the ceiling to about half of the room’s height, suppressing the hugeness of the room. The ceiling itself is colored with white, but the paint has faded through times and due to the lack of maintenance. There are also only a few lamps used since the bread store is only open during the day and the room already receives a good amount of daylight. Nonetheless, this building still uses the same lamps as it was before in the early years of its operational. The condition of the lamps is undetectable, whether all lamps still function well or whether some are broken, but since the daylight has mainly supported the need of lighting, the existing hanging lamps take part mostly as an aesthetic element for the interior space.

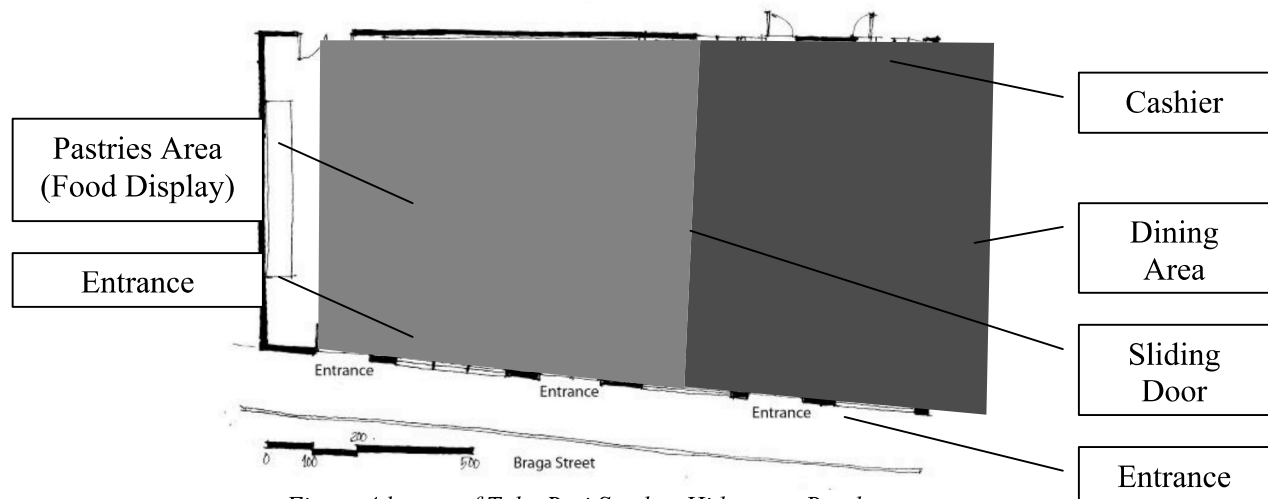


Figure 4 layout of Toko Roti Sumber Hidangan, Bandung  
Source: Personal Documentation (2016)

#### *Walls and enclosure*

Walls in general define the depth of interior space. The outer walls of the visitors' area frame the space into a long rectangular layout, which is divided considerably equally into two adjacent spaces by another wall and a big sliding door (see Figure 4). Technically, the sliding door takes charge in connecting or disconnecting pastry and dining areas and gives a possibility to Sumber Hidangan to keep operating as a pastry even when the dining area is closed. As a consequence to the high ceiling, the walls are also tall and treated with two different materials which part the surfaces into two different layers horizontally; white paint at the top level and wood panels at the bottom, all of which have looked old shabby. The application of wood panels in both pastry and dining areas creates a visual illustration that even though there are two different spaces serving for different purposes, they are wholly united in the same design theme (see Fig. 2 and Fig.3). The height from the floor is kept at the comfort level of sight. As for the shabbiness which comes from stained or peeled materials informs that the building is rather old and has not changed its materials in many years.

#### *Floor*

Since the entrances of Sumber Hidangan are located side by side to the pavement outside, the floor in the interior space can be experienced directly after the visitors step into the building. The elevation transition between the pavement and the floor is not significant and can be considered null, in which the convenience of the movement is maintained. Throughout the pastry and dining areas, the floor is also kept at the same elevation. This enables everyone in the room to circulate easily. The terrazzo used as the floor material is designed in one pattern which keeps the modesty of the room. Combined with the other simplicity of the ceiling and the walls it also creates a visual definition that the interior is spacious. The only significant transition is felt when the visitors need to use the toilet, which is accessible from the dining area. The floor is several steps below the main area, showing that service area has a lower meaning than the visitors' area. It means the building is designed with hierarchy as one of characteristics of classical architecture.

#### *Attributes and furniture*

Other than the basic elements that shape the space, there are furniture and physical attributes that contribute to the creation of a unique historical atmosphere of Braga in Sumber Hidangan. In the pastry area, the display racks are made of glass framed mostly in stainless steel in the visitors' space and some are in wood in the workers' space. Complemented with some old fashioned flour scales placed on the display and Dutch-written menu, the visitors are brought back to an atmosphere of the past time when Braga was still occupied by the Dutch colony. To support the natural daylight, there are some neon box on the wall showing the name of the store. The name is printed using a classic font which tells that this building has existed since many years ago. Meanwhile, the tables and the chairs in the dining area are all made in the same design and color. The tables express a simplicity yet formal of a dining space with the firm shape of square, arranged

diagonally throughout the room. Pairing the tables, the dining chairs are placed on each and every side of the square table. The chairs are all made of iron with using the combination of circle and some repeated zigzag lines as the design. Seen from the material surface, none of the tables and chairs that still appear flawless. Some scratches or some peeled off paint are easily found anywhere. In a contrary, rather than making the room look distasteful, the flawlessness is translated as an evident of how old the furniture are. Yet the most ultimate attribute which significantly speaks about the oldness of the building is the huge calculator machine at the cashier in the dining area. Amazingly, it still works well, and is still used properly.

#### **4.2 Creating historical atmosphere through architectural physical elements**

In previous discussion, it is seen how physical elements of space and its attributes are presented in the style of Dutch Colonization architecture which evoke an attachment between the visitors and the place. As people enter the room, the height of the ceiling, textured with linear stripes, resembles one of characteristics of Dutch-colonial building in Bandung. The high ceiling is technically designed to help adjust the room temperature inside the building in a level of comfort, so that the visitors will still feel pleasant without air conditioning. Arranged together with the walls and the floors that form a clear geometrical layout, it also creates a monumental effect in the interior which is familiar to be found in colonial heritage buildings. The decaying white color on the top of walls fits in harmony with the color of the ceiling; and the shabby brown color of the wood panels on the walls matches the color and the pattern of the floor. The decaying materials and the authenticity of the Dutch colonization architecture style enhance the historical ambience in both pastry and dining areas, and the same level of floor elevation keeps both areas in spatial unity.

Numerous windows and doors facing to the street side on the West are beneficial not only to give visual and spatial continuity between interior and pedestrian, but also to give a possibility of natural light penetrating into the interior space. The natural light illuminates the textures, colors, and shape of the materials, offering different spatial experiences inside the room. Meanwhile in the interior space, the historical atmosphere is strongly built by the *shabby-ness* of the furniture and the significant old fashioned interior attributes, such as the flour scales and the giant calculator machine. In addition, the spreaded aroma of the pastries in the room also contributes to the creation of space atmosphere. Although it is not a visual element, but it comes from a physical element, considering that pastry is a physical form inside an interior space. Blended with the scent of the old furniture, it emphasizes the historical atmosphere of Sumber Hidangan.

Other elements in the interior which are indirectly physical are the workers who are visibly seen by the visitors. There are only a few of them who have a direct interaction with visitors, whilst the rest are working with their own duties in the same space. Unlike cafes and modern eateries who play background music, the noise in Sumber Hidangan comes from the working noise of the bakers and the other workers behind the display racks. Since the workers are visible to the visitors, it is easily observed that most of them are people in the age of retirement. Not only the old look of the furniture, but the old look of people who are there permanent but passively also supports the harmony in creating historical atmosphere.

Besides historical building or culinary enthusiasts, people who generally come to Sumber Hidangan are long-term customers who came are introduced to the place by their parents who inherit this knowledge previously from their parents too. The visitors who would return to the store shows that there is a bond with the place. People may also sense the place attachment of place easily at their first visit to Sumber Hidangan after they read or hear a background story about the place. Visitors, especially those who are derived from Bandung, can find their emotional connection with Sumber Hidangan easier as they can recognize the symbolic meaning of Braga as part of Bandung's history. The place attachment arises from its uniqueness, reflecting as the identity within the visitors and the staff. Unconsciously, the place-bond between visitors and Sumber Hidangan also emerges because of the presence and the interactions with some staff who serve them directly.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Through the case study in Sumber Hidangan, the discussion indicates the importance of physical elements in shaping place attachment. The arrangement of walls, floor, and ceiling defines an architectural style which depicts the style of Dutch-colonization, representing an architecture of Indonesia's past time. The characteristic of physical elements created historical atmosphere and enhance sense of attachment associated with people's feelings of place. The attachment is form as the result of a symbolic meaning and the significance of place atmosphere to the users. Gradually, the place attachment contributes to form place identity.

Sumber Hidangan, is one of successful places in maintaining its identity through historical atmosphere of Braga. It is found that the attachment is also formed by the authenticity of physical attributes, including the employees and the selling products that fill the space. The importance of these attributes create a distinctive improvement towards atmosphere of place. Thus, the place identity, is understood by visitors as the existence of their identity so that the place becomes a part of their identity. It may encourage people in an attempt to minimize the place change through protectiveness. Therefore, It can be concluded that place attachment creates a mutualism cycle which results to an effort of conservation to keep the authenticity of place atmosphere. Furthermore, the place identity will be one of important factors in creating place attachment.

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