LOCAL PERCEPTION OF A CONSERVATION HERITAGE AREA, A CASE STUDY OF THE DARMO RESIDENTIAL AREA, SURABAYA, INDONESIA

Erika Yuni Astuti

Graduate School URBANgrad, Faculty of Architecture, Technische Universitat Darmstadt, Darmstadt, Germany and School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia

Background

Historic residential area is one part of urban heritage that is difficult to be conserved due to large amount of buildings and large area. In the context of Indonesian cities, in this case Surabaya, the growth of the city has impacted on the old residential area1. The houses are located in the Arterial Street tend to change into commercial, and not the entire owners of the buildings follow the heritage regulation. There is highly competed land within the area. In this area, some listed heritage houses change. They could be converted into modern style houses and multi storey commercial building. It is important to involve the inhabitants in the urban heritage conservation program. This research is conducted in The Darmo area; one of the oldest planned residential areas in Indonesia that was developed in around 1940. Several old houses were built in periods 1920s2.

There has been little research attention focusing on conserving residential area. In the period between the 1900s and 1940s conservation concepts mainly focused on buildings. Recently, the conservation trend goes to the area, and an expanding reason for people heritage3. As an old part of city, it keeps citizen memories and has a function as amenities for the city, so that many scholars argue that it is important to conserve this area4.

1 Surabaya is the second largest city in Indonesia, the inhabitant is around 3 million people with 326 km² land area and 226 km² coastal area, with density 7.996 people/km², which consists of 31 District and 163 Sub District (www.surabaya.go.id accessed in 20.07.2015).
2 Surabaya layout of Darmo area has similarities with plans for South Amsterdam which were made by Berlage architect in 1915. Dutch architects at that time considered Indonesian cultural value in designing the area and houses. Darmo area was designed by Henri Mclaint Pont in 1914 (Hellen Jesup, 1985).
3 The reasons for conservation have been changed from physical value to social value, such as: psychological and historical values (Peter Larkham,1996)
4 The city is a “container” of memory and heritage area functions as an amenity of the city as stated by Spiro Kostoff in Derek Worthing and Stephen Bond pages 25. The argument is conserving the cities based on its significance.
This research aims to explore the inhabitants’ perception toward conservation of residential heritage area. In this research, the following factors are important to be considered: a social aspect, an economic aspect and motivational ideas. The social aspect refers to social network, how inhabitants interact with others, how this interaction affect in the conservation process. The economic aspect within this context implies to the inhabitants’ circumstance for conserving the buildings. The latest aspect, motivational ideas, is related to the sense of place, which is the motive for the inhabitants to preserve this area.

Inhabitants within the area are consisting of three categories: senior inhabitants, middle active persons and people who work in this area. For the first categories, they inherited the house from their parents, so inhabitant perceive their houses as a family house which need to be preserve. Due to the Indonesian cultural context, people usually cannot sell houses. Senior inhabitants view their houses as a fortune, who show more appreciation to the area than younger generation during the interview.

Research methods

This study is a part of my doctoral research project and the result presenting here is the preliminary result. The data are collected through semi structured questionnaires, which aims to describe inhabitant’s opinion. The advantage of a short questionnaire is like ice breaking to a deeper conversation, opening an opportunity to hear comments and challenges from the inhabitants. The answers are divided into five attitude scales: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and neither agree nor disagree. These answers are chosen to indicate the inhabitants’ preference, in order to get better understanding of the Darmo inhabitants’ opinion. The characteristic of interviewees are people who live in this area, owner of the houses and employees in commercial buildings. The field work was conducted in 2014, lasting three months, and has interviewed 64 respondents in total.

A new approach toward conserving heritage area

Urban heritage theories are based on western context that have been largely adapted to conserve other part of the world. Recently, a trend of reinventing eastern heritage preservation, through the Nara Document and the Hanoi Charter, is getting more significant and widely discussed among the scholars. One agenda of the latest ICOMOS conference in Florence, November 2014, discussed important element and context of the Nara document, exploring the western perspective view toward heritage which become more east, due to the similarity conception.

---

5 The Darmo area is selected to be conserved by Surabaya Municipality in 2003. The area consists of twenty four streets. In regulation 2008, there are six hundred buildings both houses and commercials listed as heritage buildings. The area was designed for residential area; in along with Surabaya economic growth, than the area became mixed function.
In the case of conserving the Darmo area, the modification of conceptual western conservation theories is necessary. Western policy in conserving heritage area has much advantage: incentive to the inhabitants, additional value and privilege living in heritage area\textsuperscript{6}.

From this approach, we can learn that, for a sustainable policy to a large area, it is important to draw the inhabitants’ resources. This policy cannot be easily transferred to the Darmo settlement case. For example, the heritage policy priority is first given to the single building\textsuperscript{7}, but the western conservation policy is built in the different context. The policy has clear regulation, an incentive and fine mechanism, which cannot be applied directly to the normal Indonesian city.

The major problem within conserving heritage area in the Indonesian cities is competing land for commercial purpose to the housing purpose\textsuperscript{8}. Two others residential heritage cases in Jakarta and Bandung are also facing this problem. Due to the city growth, the residential area became closer to the city centre, the houses in the area need to compete to commercial buildings.

\textsuperscript{6} The Western models of conservation need an adjustment to be implemented to the community with very different cultural tradition (Derek Worthing and Stephen Bond 2008, pp. 57).
\textsuperscript{7} Surabaya Heritage Regulation 2005 has listed important buildings and areas.
\textsuperscript{8} An illustration of competing land in the city center, the hotel build around 2010.
The building changes into modern can be seen as adaptability toward current activity of the inhabitants, in order to survive toward Surabaya economic growth. The trend shows that the building that has been changes into modern tend that can better survive compare to the original one.

Those Darmo inhabitants mentioned that the main challenges for them are land and building taxation. Conserving heritage area often seen as an unrealistic program by many scholars, because it does not fit to current city economic growth. Escalating price of land in city forces inhabitants to sell their old buildings. Then the questions are: which conditions, what kind of scheme, and which supporting regulation are relevant for Surabaya city?

Inhabitants’ perception of the heritage area

Conservation criteria in Surabaya city are based on historical values that, indicated by context and ages, the heritage object should be minimum fifty years old. The second criteria are architectural value, which indicates by aesthetique and uniqueness⁹. Within the Darmo area, a benchmarking is valued firstly by rareness compared to other area in Surabaya, a grid pattern. Surabaya’s traditional settlement has organic form. The second aspect of rareness is considered for unique architecture type, compared to typical traditional and common type of Surabaya houses (see figure 2 one house in the Darmo area). In the third aspect of historical value, the area has special significance, such as, served as locus of the battle of Indonesian’s independence war in 1945.

In figure 2, we can see the house in the right side is deteriorated, as an example of natural process of changing in the Darmo area. The abandoned buildings in the area are a motivation for the Surabaya municipality to conserve the rest old buildings. According to the author’s records during the fieldwork, there are around 10% of buildings deteriorated from the 600 listed by the Surabaya municipality. Than the question arises is, why inhabitants abandoned their building, just simply lack of funding for maintenance? Or a lack of awareness toward the old building, and what are inhabitant’s opinion?

Inhabitants have showed high appreciation during the interview. They perceived designated area as it will bring positive impact. But they also worried about difficulties to sell their houses. The inhabitants seemly also faced a challenge to conserve their buildings. Then they asked compensation for the Darmo area designation: what kind of positive impact to them. In order to gain positive image of conserving process, a benefit toward the inhabitants need to be formulated. Value that is perceived by people is important, because it is part of sustainability managing of the area¹⁰.

⁹ Surabaya Municipality set urban heritage criteria for conservation of buildings and sites criteria in 2003.
¹⁰ A process of assessment of a place should follow the procedure: Firstly, the identification and assessment of the overall and particular values embodied in and represented on the site. Secondly, an evaluation of what aspects and elements of the site contribute to the overall significance of the place (Derek Worthing and Stephen Bond, 2007).
Fig. 2. One example of mixed function house in the Darmo Area

Fig. 3. One example of residential house in the Darmo Area
A listed process conducted by the Surabaya municipality is seen as a program without benefit for the Darmo inhabitants. This first attempt to list building is a start of inventory data, but then it is not yet improved, because the priority was given to other single heritage buildings which were considered more important compare to residential scale heritage.

There are several types of these old housings, not all has very unique architectural significance. However, it does not reduce the Darmo inhabitants’ interest toward their old buildings. I argue that this expression can be explained from tradition, a culture of honouring ancestor houses. To this extent, it is different from western conservation, which ideas are based on used value\textsuperscript{11}.

**Sense of place and rootedness**

The sense of place, generate inhabitants’ motivation to keep the area. Most household inhabitants have showed a high appreciation to the Darmo area; they perceived the area with social value\textsuperscript{12}. Throughout the interview, inhabitants express their proud as inhabitants of the Darmo area, due to the unique character of the area. Most of them are the second generation, owning the houses since 1950. They mentioned trees, wide road of street, cleanliness, and facility like large open space (Fig. 4-5). In those newly built houses, these facilities cannot be found anymore. In comparison to a newer residential in Surabaya city, the Darmo area has wider open space, old vegetations and walk ability. Family value also perceived as very important for the inhabitants. They perceived their houses as objects that need to be kept.

A question “What do you appreciate from the Darmo area?” From this feature in the Darmo area: a) Cleanliness and sidewalk, b) Garden or open space as recreational area, c) Trees for Sun shading. These tree features in the Darmo area are highly appreciated.

**Architectural value**

This aspect, the appreciation of value, is one of the important theses of this research. It is not yet applied, but in theoretical perspective, it has shown an early awareness of the inhabitants into heritage issue. There is a debate to reconsider if the value is still relevant as a base of raising conservation of urban heritage. The concept of value is not given much consideration in urban heritage policy studies.

\textsuperscript{11} Conservation value within the Vienna charter basically for an object or site in Europe, for other places context, an contextual discussion is needed (Dennis Rodwell 2006, John Pendlebury 2008). The ideas putting people as tools for conservation are based an assumption that linking the social interest internal the inhabitants are a useful approach (Worthing and Bond, 2007).

\textsuperscript{12} Social value implied to the benefit of social cohesion and grup identity (Derek Worthing and Stephen Bond, pp. 66). The Darmo settlement inhabitants are upper middle class citizens in Surabaya city. Surabaya citizen know the area as an elite class settlement. In comparison to residential heritage area in UK “most people do not live in a conservation area, and most residential conservation areas cover areas of relatively expensive and architecturally superior middle-class housing” (Pendlebury, 2009, pp. 125).
PART 2. Perception of the Past

Fig. 4. Appreciation toward the area

Fig. 5. Inhabitant's perception of architectural values
This field even more get critic into inapplicable into the field of urban policy\textsuperscript{13}. The statement has raised attention scholar particularly to the field of intangible heritage. And then why it should be related to the residential area context? Until now, the object of built heritage in the past got its physically tangible value like the building age, historical value, beauty and uniqueness. Inhabitants were asked about “What do you appreciate in your building?” Inhabitants have shown an appreciation to the architectural values; most of them perceived their building has quality of aesthetic and unique (90\%) respondent answer strongly agree and agree. I argue that this perception of aesthetic toward mixed local and non-local architecture can be seen as a motivation for conserving heritage area.

The value of age tends to be a debatable fact. The consensus of how old an object can be conserve are vary from one to one, depending on the context. In Surabaya city, the appreciation by minimum 50 years old is based on cultural value that in translation “an object after 50 has a soul that need to be appreciated”\textsuperscript{14}. Inhabitants also perceived that their old buildings in this case need to be honoured, which is an interesting finding. A different perceptual to an old object can be explained within cultural context of Indonesian people.

In the scope of Indonesian built heritage research, a focus toward inhabitants’ perception should be considered. So far, local planners consider more into regulation of the physical appearance, but the root problem of the conservation issue has not been yet paid enough attention. In 2012, one heritage activist of Bandung city was raising question in a conference in Bandung “why always only architect and planner discuss about what it should be, not what people want and need”. In fact, urban heritage policy then resulted in a piling document, not yet successful actions and implementations in Indonesian cities. There is a growing awareness of urban heritage in Indonesian scholars that they must concern about sustainability and management in this type of residential heritage.

From the concept of heritage to the application of people’s perception, how to design an interpretation within the Darmo inhabitants, the process can be explained as below: taking the inhabitants need into account, investigating problem within the Darmo heritage area and adapting with the current function as a mixed area\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{13} The implementation of the research value in solving urban heritage conservation problem need further work (John Pendlebury, 2009).

\textsuperscript{14} One of Surabaya heritage expert mentioned traditional philosophy for appreciation of old building after 50 years. It seems like an adaptation process from international value of conservation which then becomes a new interpretation into the local context. On the other hand there is a raising movement of conservation of Modern architecture, for conserving relatively new architectural objects done by DOCOMOMO and the Getty Institute.

\textsuperscript{15} The Surabaya heritage area should not rely on subsidies from the municipality, a scheme of heritage funding needs to be designed (Johan Silas, 2014).
Conclusion and Discussion

This research is based on interdisciplinary approach to get better understanding of the problem within the built heritage area. Inhabitants perceived the mixed heritage architecture as their own, an appreciation also expressed toward a perception value of building. They perceive the buildings with additional value of uniqueness, aesthetic and age. These aspects are formed through internal value embedded through tradition: a deep sense of rootedness and social network.

As the discussion above, it shows that inhabitants in the Darmo area perceive that the residential area are worth to be conserve due to the function such as the city amenities, attribute of the shady environment, advantage of large scale of houses and sun shading in the roof. The Darmo area functioned as an oasis to the Surabaya city. A better understanding of inhabitant’s awareness will contribute to the successful conservation program. From this case study, it shows that the inhabitants have internal cultural attachment as motivation for conserving the area. Policy in heritage preservation in the scale of city needs to consider the inhabitants needs.
Acknowledgements

This research is funded by Directorate of Higher Education – Indonesian Ministry of Research and Technology. I do express gratitude to IPID4all Program and Faculty of Architecture TU Darmstadt for the support. I thank to Laboratory for Housing and Human Settlement – Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS) for support during the field work, and Architectural Design Research SAPPK ITB for support and opportunity to continue my research in urban heritage conservation.