

# CITY'S ICONIC ARCHITECTURE AS DESIGNER'S REFERENCE FOR CREATING VISUAL IDENTITY; CASE-STUDY OF ICONIC BUILDINGS IN SEMARANG

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, the concept of place branding as a one of city/ district's marketing tool, has become more important. In Indonesia, this concept actually has historical root since 1959 when some of the cities and districts had been given position as autonomous region based on regulation no 1/ 1959. Initially the slogans or symbols of each cities and districts expressed as visual identity at that time. Currently, the complex symbols, as visual identity, have been used gradually change and evolve in simple form, refers to the visual heritage of the cities and districts; among of its is architectural/ building style. This article intends to show that cities' iconic architectures is useful for visual references to design a visual identity. It will show, as well, certain character that make a building/ architecture become iconic and recognisable by people. The method used to get general view/ opinion from people is polling. The result, through a series of stages of the poll, indicate that in Semarang the well known and become iconic buildings are public buildings. Even through formal simplification, these buildings are easily recognizable, so there is enough potential of the buildings facades that can be refer in design process of a visual identity.

**Keywords:** *Facade, Architecture, Visual reference, Identity, Design*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the concept of place branding, for cities or districts has become a very common thing. The most popular term in public is city branding, although something often branded is not a city but district or part of district. Therefore the neutral concept used in this article is place branding. It's caused by the needs of city/ district's in term of regional economic development (Yananda, et.al., 2014). Cities/ districts need to market itself for the shake of economic growth that the goal is its citizen welfare. In this context, place branding as a marketing device of a city/ district becomes important.

If we track from several fact and historical of its development, it can be said that the origin of *place branding* in Indonesia has existed since some of the cities/ districts had been given a position as autonomous region based on regulation no 1/ 1959 (Gov. of Rep. Indonesia, 1959). The slogans or visual symbols of each region actually are regional vision that should have to be achieved. That regional's symbols, as well, are not merely depict its natural resources, but once become visual statements of its ideals.

The visual symbols of the regions, in term of place branding, are visual identity at that time. In the next generation, despite these complex visual symbols of cities and districts, evolve a more simple or simplification form of visual identity that refers to well known heritage of the city or district. One of the heritage is the characteristic of a city / district's architectural style of the buildings.

This article intends to show that the city/ district's iconic architecture is useful as a reference for the design of the visual identity. It also demonstrated the certain character of a building / architecture, that become iconic and recognisable by people.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

I would like to clarify that the term iconic building/ architecture is borrowed from Charles Jencks. In the interview with John Jourden, as well on his articles, Jencks stated that up to 19th century, iconic building was marked by something monumental (Jencks, 2005, 2006). Currently, the production of iconic building is affected by the weakness of ideology and religion, in other hand there is passion remain about importance of landmark. Celebrity culture, plus globalized capitalism, and the art market's desire for the new, according to Jencks, contribute to what we call today iconic building/ architecture.

Pawitro, also Asrizal, state that iconic building is a concept that contain two key term; building and iconic. About this, some scholar agree that the concept points to the work of architecture or building which mark some place/ environment or represent certain time or age (Pawitro, 2012; Asrizal, et. al., 2015). According to Jencks and scholars afterwards, it is clear that the iconic things within a building or architecture are agreed by people. Therefore to determine which buildings in a city or district that have iconic value should be uncover people knowledge about buildings.

## 3. THE RESEARCH METHOD

A simple and common method used to get general opinion of people is poll method (Eriyanto, 1999). In general, the poll method conducted through four stages. First stages, set the goal of poll. In this study, the goal is to measure level of familiarity of buildings in Semarang.

Second, determine population and sample for polling. The spesific thing we need to know in this study is a proportion of the population by sex. So we can determine the sample of study by this formula;

$$N = (p \times q) \times \frac{Z^2}{E^2}$$

N is representing number of sample, while (p x q) is multiplication between the proportion of the male population (p) and female (q).  $Z^2$  is the square of the level of confidence and  $E^2$  are squared margin of error.

Third, set the type of information and time to conduct polling. In this study the type of information is the respon of sample people to the shown buildings. The final stage of the poll is data gathering.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Case Study of Current Semarang Visual Identity and the Iconic Building

Semarang, since 1990's is a city that started to grow lively with various festivals and creative industries. In this circumstances, a lot of marketing activities conducted. On of the visual reference used for visual identity of those activities is *Warak Ngendog*. *Warak Ngendog* is a mitological creature that have become mascot for *megengan* or *dugderan*, a public festival event in Semarang related to *Ramadhan* (Islamic feast seasson). It's form mixed from various beasts; dragon (it's head), buraq (abdomen) and horse (leg). (Diantika, 2015)

Warak Ngendog is so iconic, therefore many events use it as a reference in the visual identity (Figure 1). One could even say that Warak Ngendog become very saturated as visual identity.



Figure 1: Various visual identity used *Warak Ngendog* as reference

In other side, Semarang has many heritage and valuable iconic buildings. Like other cities in the world, those buildings have exist for centuries, without affected by wars, revolution and major crisis (Halbwachs, 1950). This condition is indeed potential as a visual reference for the design of visual identity. The problem then is how to determine which the iconic buildings are common or well known by the people or the residents of the city of Semarang; in their natural appearance or when it was simplified by form. To answer this problems the simple random sampling poll have been conducted.

#### 4.2. Polling Result

The first stage of the poll, is determining which buildings that common and recognisable by people by collecting 40 buildings and grouped it into 4 function category due to the regulation no 28/ 2002 (Gov. of Rep. Indonesia, 2002). According to that regulation, there are 5 function category; 1) Socio-cultural Buildings, 2) Religious Buildings, 3) Commercial Buildings, 4) Special Purpose Buildings, dan 5) Residencial Buildings. From that 5 categories, only *Special Purpose Buildings* i.e. electricity generator plant, nuclear reactor, military facility and other restricted facility, is excluded for this study. Those building is excluded based on the assumson that in general, public have little or no access to its. Therefore in each 4 categories there are 10 picture of buildings included in the testing form.

The second stage, is testing out 40 buildings to the respondent. The number of respondents was taken through a simple random sample from a population in the four districts in the city center; North Semarang, Semarang Central, East and South Semarang Semarang. Through calculation formula as in the previous section, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, which the proportion by sex is 0.5, then the number of respondents was 92.5 people; rounded to 100 people.

To 100 respondents was showed photographs of 40 buildings in the testing-form to be recognized. The result is taken 10 buildings with the highest recognized level. The 10th recogniabile building describe as figure 2.

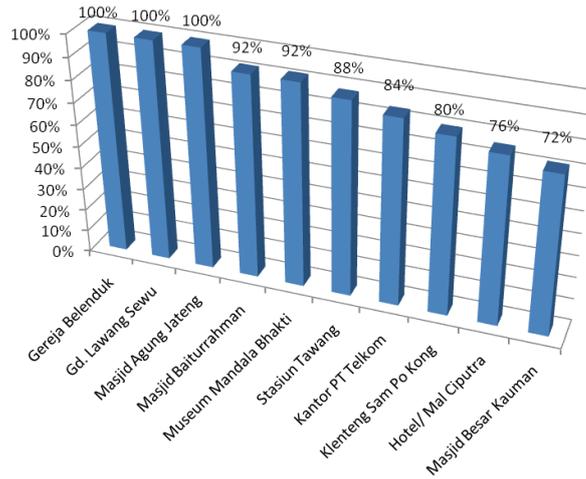


Figure 2: 10th Most Recognized Buildings in Semarang

The next step is redrawing the 10th most recognized building by its facade appearance as *line-drawing* colourless. The *line-drawing* pictures went to be second part testing form. Again, the same number of respondent taken randomly and showed the second part testing form. The result showed there are 4 building recognized by more than 75% respondents. They are, *Lawang Sewu* Building (97,47%), Provincial Great Mosque/ *Masjid Agung Jawa Tengah* (92,41%), Domed Church/ *Gereja Blenduk* (84,81%) and *Sam Po Kong* Temple (77,22%).



Figure 3: Four most recognized buildings identified by more than 75% respondents

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research result showed that the most recognized buildings in Semarang, and thus become iconic, according to the people, are buildings for public purposes. No other than those 10 most famous buildings belong to residential category. Usability by public is a factor that makes those buildings more recognizable than private used building; houses, other residential or private office/enterprise.

Secondly, from simplification of the facade, there are four buildings that have strong characteristic and most recognized by people; more than 75% recognize it. It means that there are enough potential characteristics of facade appearance of the buildings that can be useful for visual reference to a visual identity design. Nevertheless, it needs to be checked the relevance of visual identity with a specific activity of urban society. This is important because not all of the visual identity suitable for certain activities.

On the same topic, for advance research, the thing should be done is to investigate certain elements of the iconic buildings that has most recognisable and distinctive things. Therefore, the variations of elements obtained can enrich visual reference for the design of city's visual identity.

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