

Optimizing the Function of Public Space in Makassar City: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract: Public space is one of the main facilities needed by urban communities, even as an iconic identity of the city. This paper examines the pattern of public space utilization at several locations in Makassar City in the sociology of space. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that the utilization of public spaces in Makassar city has not been maximized as ideally. Some of the causes include, among others, public spaces such as city parks that are less well maintained, changing the function of public areas into markets by the crowded street vendors, public spaces far from the city center, the rise of illegal parking attendants, and other factors. The increasing number of visitors to public spaces is actually an opportunity for their development. The challenge is whether or not the vision of urban planners and developers is representative of the needs of urban communities for public spaces. This is where the importance of an urban development strategy that involves various elements of society as owners and enjoyers of urban space.


1 INTRODUCTION


Urban communities (Belanche, Casaló, and Rubio 2021) and public spaces (Paris and Vettore 2024) are inseparable in daily life, especially on Saturdays and Sundays and other holidays. Even public spaces for certain categories become the choice of public visits at night, especially places that provide hangout facilities with a relaxed atmosphere. This is proof that public space is a vital need for urban communities, (Carmona 2019) especially for the purpose of relieving fatigue or tiredness after working all day or week. Such is the importance of public space, that many people are willing to spend their time in these public areas whether hanging out, discussing, exercising, or other activities. Some examples of public spaces that are favored by the community, such as: city parks, sidewalks, plazas, cafes, recreational parks, squares, sports fields, and others.


Cities in Indonesia, (Silver 2022) including Makassar, have long had public spaces with various forms and functions. The oldest public spaces in cities

are city parks, (Azevedo 2020) playgrounds, (Alexandrovna et al. 2020) amusement parks, (Sharma 2022) and sports fields (Dingle and Mallen 2021). Through parks with a cool space design by shady trees, it is an attraction for many people to enjoy the atmosphere while relaxing. Parks that provide places to sit and relax, presenting a comfortable and beautiful atmosphere so that it is used as a hangout. In addition, parks are always built as markers of historical events (Elhami Khorasani and Garlock 2017) or are spaces designed in such a way as to commemorate important events in the past. Thus, the dual function of a park is in addition to public space as well as a historical place, where for certain circles the purpose of visiting the place as well as retracing. For example, Macan Park which includes a statue that symbolizes the struggle of the *Laskar Harimau Indonesia* (Indonesian Tiger Warriors) and the Mandala Monument public space is a symbolic trace of the historical events of the seizure of West Irian (Herlina 2011).

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Public space in the form of parks in Makassar city, seems to still exist until now and even new parks have emerged with more modern designs and different objectives. Along with the times and social changes in society (Sanford 2017), today there are various new types of alternative public spaces that can be an alternative choice for the community. However, the presence of new public spaces that aim to meet the needs of the community, in reality, still causes problems, especially in optimizing their utilization. In fact, there is often mutual blame regarding the existence of public spaces (Li et al. 2023). On the one hand, the community often considers the government to be less concerned about the construction and development of urban public spaces. On the other hand, the government says that the community often lacks awareness of the ownership of public spaces so that they do not take good care of them. This is evident in several public space facilities that have been vandalized by irresponsible individuals.

The interesting thing about this study is that it wants to explore the factors that cause the less than optimal utilization of public space functions (Bunawardi, Suzuki, and Hiroki 2016) in Makassar city. This will serve as the basis for efforts to maximize its functions, including the basis for its development strategy. This study begins with a description of the profile of several public spaces by type and function as a tool to measure how effectively they are used. It then identifies the changes in the function of public spaces, both in terms of causes and implications. Referring to some of the causes of the non-optimal utilization of public space, the direction for the optimization strategy will be determined. Thus, representative public spaces (Carmona 2021) that are envisioned as vital facilities in the city become a reality and can be enjoyed by all levels of the Makassar city community.

2 METHOD

This type of research is descriptive research that discusses the pattern of public space utilization in Makassar city with a sociology of space approach. The collection method is done through observation (Chen and Ng 2011), namely direct observation of the condition of public space facilities and community activities in several public spaces, especially every Sunday morning. In addition, interviews were also conducted with several visitors in the public space, to obtain data and information about the purpose of

visiting, the types of activities carried out, and what their responses were to the condition of the public space. Informants were selected purposively and snowball (Wildemuth 2016) with reference to the types of activities carried out and the facilities used. Document studies were also conducted to obtain data on the brief history of the establishment and development of a public space. Data analysis techniques are carried out through stages: (1) data reduction, which is to simplify, classify, and sort out data that is considered unnecessary and then discard it; (2) Data display, which is a systematic presentation of data to facilitate understanding; and (3) Conclusion and verification, which is trying to find the meaning of each data by looking for relationships, similarities, and differences as a basis for drawing conclusions (Ahmadin 2022).

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of research through direct observation of fiscal conditions and various community activities in several public spaces in Makassar city are quite adequate and are strongly supported by high public enthusiasm in utilizing them for various purposes. Similarly, the results of interviews with several visitors show that they really enjoy public space facilities in various activities (Soyinka, Adenle, and Abdul-Rahman 2021). It's just that the problem is that the utilization of public space is not yet optimal as its ideal function, so it is interesting to analyze some of the factors that cause it. To obtain a comprehensive description of the opportunities and challenges of optimizing the function of public space, this discussion begins with an overview of the condition of public space, then describes the forms of utilization (Carmona et al. 2019) as a measure of its functions, as well as the phenomenon of changes in the function of public space. An overview of the profile of public space, forms of utilization, and changes in its function is the basis for the preparation of strategies to optimize its function, as well as a vision for the future of public space (Haas and Mehaffy 2019) in urban areas.

3.1 Types and Functions of Public Spaces

Makassar, as one of the cities in Indonesia that applies the Smart City concept, certainly has a variety of public areas or representative public spaces that can be accessed by all levels of society. In fact, everyone who will visit this scattered city in eastern Indonesia,

will imagine being able to enjoy public spaces as a means of entertainment. Some of the public facilities that should ideally be available include: city parks, recreational parks, cafes, plazas, sidewalks, squares, sports fields, and others (Ahmadin 2024). Although several types of public spaces are available in Makassar city, this study only selects some of them to be studied in depth. Because the orientation of this study is to find a grand strategy for optimizing the function of public spaces (Menassa, Taylor, and Nelson 2013), the types of public spaces (Mantey and Kępkowicz 2018) that will be discussed are those that are in direct contact with city government policies. This is based on the assumption that urban development planners (Filion et al. 2015) have an important role in the process of optimizing the function of public space, in addition to the city community as its users.

One of Makassar's oldest and most iconic public spaces is Losari Beach. This public area, once popularly known as the world's longest restaurant, is located in the western part of Makassar city and stretches from north to south or vice versa. For at least three decades, between the 1970s and 1990s, Losari Beach was the most ideal hangout and relaxation spot visited by both newcomers to the city and the city's residents. The existence of the beach with the beauty of the waves and the breeze, which is famous for its *Pisang Epek* food menu, was once popularized by Elvi Sukaesih (Day and Piper 1995) in the title of her song "*Sumpah Benang Emas*" (Golden Thread Oath) created by Herman Tanjung. This traditionally characterized public space, then changed its shape after reclamation and now appears in a modern style with a change of name to Anjungan Pantai Losari. This modern design public space focuses on the view as a photo spot and even symbolically this space represents the existence of 4 main ethnicities namely: Makassar, Bugis, Mandar, and Toraja.

Another famous public space in Makassar is Taman Macan (Macan Park), located on Sultan Hasanuddin Street. The park, which is located behind the Makassar Mayor's Office (Prihatin et al. 2021), was established in 1985 and inaugurated by the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Menkopolhukam), Surono Reksodimedjo. In this park, a monument was erected that symbolizes the struggle of Makassar youth against the Dutch colonialists (Budiharso, Bakri, and Sujito 2023). This historical monument in the form of a Tiger statue, is a representation of the heroic story of *Laskar Harimau Indonesia*. The reason why this public area is popularly known as Macan Park is because the

people of Makassar prefer to call the tiger statue *Patung Macan*.

Other public spaces in the form of parks in Makassar city, such as: Fort Rotterdam Park, located on Ujung Pandang Street. This beautiful park is a choice of hangout place for young people while enjoying various juice drinks because there are seating facilities available. Even this park, which is fairly unique in appearance, is an interesting photo spot. A place that is no less interesting is Pattimura Park which is located not far from or next to Tiger Park. This not so large park is interesting because of its beautiful condition. In a slightly southern location again there is Maccini Sombala Park, which is located on Nuri Baru Street. Unlike the condition and appearance of other parks, Maccini Sombala Park has the concept of garden tourism.

Two unique parks can also be found in the city of Makassar, namely Indosat Park located on Slamet Riyadi Street (Immanuel 2020). This park is suitable for book lovers, where visitors can use the facilities to read books while enjoying the beauty of the park. In addition, many visitors also use Indosat Park as a place for discussions with their friends. In the eastern part of Makassar, there is also a public area (Arfanda et al. 2023) called Refleksi Park, located on Hertasing Street or around Tamalate and Toddopuli. Refleksi Park is named because it provides facilities in the form of a path that is deliberately made rocky, so that it can be used as a special therapy for the feet. In addition, in this place you can also enjoy the mainstay yellow rice menu and can watch or play soccer.

One more type of public space in the form of a park that is currently visited by many people is Pakui Sayang Park, located on A.P. Pettarani Street. This park functions as a sports facility (gymnastics, jogging track, tennis), entertainment facility (live music and various events), a relaxing place supported by seating and shady trees (Ahmadin 2023). The 1-hectare public area located in the Public Works Office (PU) complex was inaugurated by the governor of South Sulawesi, Syahrul Yasin Limpo (Raihan, Yakub, and Kambo 2023) on February 3, 2017. Not far from this park, there is also a public space in the form of a highway which is closed to motorized vehicles every Sunday. The area located on Boulevard Street is called Car Free Day (Zakaria and Pasra 2020), which opens at 06.00 until 10.00. Visitors can enjoy this public area as a means of: leisurely walking (Green 2009), cycling, jogging (Kostrzewska 2017), and also shopping (Oppewal and Timmermans 1999).

Especially for people who like Car Free Day type of public space, it can also be enjoyed on Jalan Jenderal Sudirman in the form of leisurely walking, jogging, gymnastics, and cycling activities. In this Car Free Day area, visitors can also enjoy the historical scenery of the Mandala Monument (Prihatin et al. 2021). In addition, the Car Free Day area can also be found in the Center Point of Indonesia (CPI) (Suhardi 2021) area, where this public space is very crowded, especially during holidays, namely Saturday and Sunday. Even on other days, CPI is also crowded, especially in the afternoon before sunset. Not far from this area can also be found public spaces such as: Lego-Lego (Yatmar et al. 2024), as well as religious attractions, namely Masjid 99 Kubah (the 99 Dome Mosque) (Rahmat, Suarni, and KHalid 2024) and the floating mosque on Losari beach, the Amirul Mukminin Mosque (Langkoek 2022).

The existence of functional public spaces can also be a forum for maintaining social cohesion (Schiefer and Van der Noll 2017) and emotional relationships among family, friends, business relations, coworkers, and others. Public spaces that provide facilities with a relaxed atmosphere, become a separate force in luring many people to use them for various purposes other than leisure and sports. On the other hand, public spaces promise economic prosperity (Alesina, Harnoss, and Rapoport 2016) in the form of the availability of facilities for selling to get financial benefits to fulfill life's needs. Thus, public space in the view of street vendors, is an important land to make a living by selling. In their view, the presence of public space remains important for urban communities, but in a vision of utilization with an economic dimension that is different from the general public.

3.2 Changes in the Meaning of Space

The meaning of public space is always measured by its function and utilization (Pasaogullari and Doratli 2004) by the community, so that if its function is reduced, its meaning will also decrease. The meaningfulness of a public space is at least seen from two important elements related to the experience created from the interaction process in the use by the community, namely passive engagement and active engagement. On that basis, the public space should be a representative space (De Wilde 2012) that supports the creation of interactive social communication (Hwang and Hughes 2000). Representative characteristics of public space include responsive, decorative, and meaningful (Carr et al. 1992). If we

refer to the basic assumptions about the existence of space in the sociological paradigm, then space must be seen as an entity that is not passive and always changing along with the dynamics of meaning given by the user community or the audience. Referring to this perspective, changes in the meaning and function of public spaces in Makassar city will be discussed.

Based on the results of interviews with several visitors to public spaces in Makassar city, the purpose of their visit can be divided into several categories based on their reasons or recognition: (1) regular visitors, namely users of public spaces who attend every Saturday or Sunday and carry out their activities. They are gymnastics and jogging enthusiasts, both those who are members of a community and those who are independent as well as those who enjoy a relaxed atmosphere while hanging out; (2) incidental or non-regular visitors, namely those who use public spaces as a spare time filler and not the main purpose. They are photo/video enthusiasts (including content creators) who focus on the function of public spaces as photo spots alone; (3) mobilized visitors, namely visitors who come because they want to attend an event or competition that offers prizes; and (4) trial visitors, namely those who take advantage of the function of public spaces just for sightseeing without the main purpose, for example invited by friends or curious because they want to prove themselves after getting information about a public space.

The condition of these public spaces, both physical and atmospheric, can change at any time, so that their meaning and function also change. In addition, the decline in the quality of the function of a public space is also caused by the availability of new public spaces that offer similar or perhaps more varied functions, so that the choice of many people switches to spaces with a new appearance. In fact, these new public spaces are often located close to the center of dense settlements in Makassar city, making them easier and faster to access. New public spaces in Makassar city are also supported by a strategic location, which is not far from other public facilities, such as near shopping centers or densely populated housing complexes.

Changes in the meaning of space (Carmona 2015) are also caused by factors in the way of perceiving a space, for example, only considering it as a place to take pictures and making the location background a complementary element of its aesthetics. In this condition, the meaning of space slowly decreases (Lee 2021) because the repeated action of visiting similar photo or video objects will cause boredom. On the other hand, for visitors who focus on the

condition/situation of the object with the target of attention on the activities that take place in that place tend to survive and always interpret public space with a variety of values attached to it (Lofland 2017).

An example of the results of research on changes in the meaning and function of public space (Reyes 2016) in Makassar city is the Car Free Day area located on Boulevard Street (Arfanda et al. 2023). This public area was inaugurated by the Deputy Governor of South Sulawesi Province, Agus Arifin Nu'mang on April 25, 2017. The purpose of its establishment is to facilitate the needs of the city community such as sports and a relaxed atmosphere in the morning. In its development, the Car Free Day area shows more and more interest from visitors, but ironically, the condition seems to turn into a market as a traditional shopping center (Ujang 2014). The number of sellers/traders has increased without any control from the government, causing the conditions to be chaotic and look crowded like a night market. Finally, the function of public space is diminishing, especially as a means of exercise and a place to enjoy relaxing conditions (Li et al. 2021).

3.3 Optimization Strategy for Public Space Utilization

In terms of opportunities, the optimization of the utilization of public space functions (Eriawan and Setiawati 2017) in Makassar City is very possible to do seen from several supporting factors. *First*, public spaces in various types such as: city parks, highways, plazas, cafes, and others as a place to hang out to fill spare time, sports, or to hold events in the form and condition of adequate facilities. *Second*, the number of visitors based on direct observation at several points of public space locations shows a very large and very dense number, especially in the Panakkukang Boulevard Car Free Day area, Pakui Sayang Park at the PU Complex on A.P. Pettarani Street (Usman, Rusli, and Hudain 2024), Jenderal Sudirman Road in the Mandala Monument area (Putra, Ariana, and Suteja 2024), Losari Beachfront (Irafany et al. 2020), Lego-lego, and the Center Point of Indonesia area. *Third*, access to each public space is very easy and free so that it can be enjoyed by all levels of society. Simply pay parking (Said and Syafey 2021) levies with cheap and non-binding rates, everyone can enjoy the facilities and atmosphere in various public areas. *Fourth*, from the aspect of comfort, the situation of public spaces is quite good, such as in several city parks that are designed beautifully and have shady trees that can create a sense of comfort to sit back and relax and do

activities in the area. Similarly, sports facilities are available, both for gymnastics, jogging, leisurely walks, (Latham 2015) and other types.

The availability of various alternative choices of public spaces in Makassar city, the large number of visitors, easy and free access, and the availability of comfortable situations, especially in various city parks, (Ummeh and Toshio 2017) are very good opportunities for efforts to optimize the use of their functions. However, there are still some obstacles as well as challenges to optimizing its utilization, such as: (1) For the case of several public spaces of the city park type, it shows that there is still a lack of public awareness (visitors) in maintaining or caring for supporting facilities so that at some points the location appears to be damaged and no longer functioning. This means that the sense of ownership of public space among the city community is still very lacking, so there are still frequent acts of "destruction" carried out by irresponsible individuals; (2) Efforts to maintain and develop the quality of services and facilities from the organizers including the government are still less serious and not optimal, so there seems to be indifference to the condition of the damaged facilities; (3) The culture of hanging out has not fully become a necessity as well as a characteristic of urban society, especially for visitors to city parks, so that the function of the park is more dominant for the purposes of taking pictures and video content only; (4) The characteristics of visitors are still many of them just follow along and try because they are invited by friends or family, so that the function of public space is not a vital need for them, and (5) specifically for the condition of public space for the Car Free Day area, it seems that there has been a fundamental change from its ideal function where the reality shows that the condition has changed drastically into a market or traditional shopping center.

In addition to the five obstacles to optimizing the utilization of public space functions (Hetyorini and Ekawati 2022) in Makassar city, there is one thing that is also not important, namely the lack of distribution of public spaces at fixed locations, causing their function to be less than optimal. For example, the unavailability of public areas with conditions similar to Car Free Day (Masiol et al. 2014) in other places in Makassar city, causing community activities to be centered at one point only so that visitors overflow and trigger traffic congestion and parking problems (Barone et al. 2014). Similarly, activities that are centered on public space conditions in the Center Point of Indonesia area, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, cause problems, especially

triggering congestion for access to and from the location.

Referring to several opportunities and challenges for optimizing the utilization of public space functions (Jens and Gregg 2021) in Makassar city, there are several things that need to be a common concern. *First*, public spaces in the form of city parks should be designed to be places that provide a sense of comfort for visitors, so that efforts are needed to improve the aspects of supporting facilities. In addition, each park needs an iconic character (Engelbart and Krech 2016) so that it becomes an attraction for visitors and even if possible there is a suggestion box for users as a reference for its development. *Second*, at every certain point in Makassar city, especially in densely populated areas, a representative public area or public space (Sochacka, Rzeszotarska-Palka, and Nowak 2022) should be built so that it can be used by people who live in the surrounding location as an alternative choice. This can reduce the possibility of accumulating visitors in one public space (Renaud et al. 2017) at a certain point which can trigger traffic congestion. *Third*, public space development policies (Carmona 2019) in Makassar city should be based on the needs of the community (Chitrakar 2016), so that the development or development planning process must involve or at least be in accordance with the aspirations of the city community as users of public space (Anderson et al. 2017).

Community involvement in determining the vision for urban development (Park et al. 2013) and spatial planning (Zhou et al. 2017) is very important in relation to the existence of public spaces. The density of settlements in Makassar city is a problem for the ownership of public spaces, such as simple examples of hangout places or sports facilities. As a result, we often find many children using the street as a location to play football and other play activities. This is where the importance of the government regarding what type of public needs (Carr et al. 2007) they want and ideally available in the city and easily accessible.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research, it is concluded that in terms of the availability of public spaces in various forms in Makassar City, there is actually a great opportunity to develop them. This is supported by the fact that the number of visitors to public spaces in the capital of South Sulawesi province is fairly large, especially on work holidays. It's just that the

challenges and obstacles include: the city government lacks concern for the maintenance of existing public spaces. In addition, this obstacle is also exacerbated by the lack of awareness of citizens to care for the facilities available in public spaces. Evidently, some corners of public spaces tend to be vandalized by irresponsible people and ironically there has been no effort to repair them from the management. In addition, the problem of developing the function and utilization of public spaces is also caused by the dysfunction of space from the public area as a place to relax into a "market" characterized by very many sellers and tends to be chaotic. The constraints of public space utilization are also caused by the uneven availability of representative public spaces and instead are still concentrated in certain locations far from the main settlement centers. The concentration of public spaces at certain points in Makassar city causes congestion, especially during holidays because of the access of large numbers of visitors at the same time. The phenomenon of congestion and the number of visitors to these public spaces, in turn, creates an uncomfortable situation. Finally, the characteristics of public spaces that ideally create a sense of comfort for visitors to relax, actually create the opposite atmosphere that is less enjoyable.

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