

**Alun-alun Yogyakarta:  
A Representative of Sustainable ‘Local South’ Public Space Which Is Influenced by  
Westernization**

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**Abstract**

When talking about Westernization in Global South Countries, one Venezuelan, Juan Pedro Posani on Zahn (2008) said that: ‘Our city is growing in different society. We cannot imitate the West, because the third world is different. Western prescription is a spectacular prescribe that does not meet with our needs. Therefore, let us fix our mistakes in the way we are, including the consequences of colonization. In the future, who knows, it could happen that we can teach the Western’. It is a very inspiring statement for Global South Communities. It is certainly true that one of the effects of comparative studies between Western and Southern is generating a limited thinking on planning. Sometimes, we are thinking that imitating Western Style is the best choice to solve the problems in Global South, although sometimes it is not the most appropriate approach to solve them. On the other hand, not all the Westernization creates un-appropriate approach. The history of Java shows that *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta as a civic square in front of the Yogyakarta Hadiningrat Palace is a sustainable public space although since the first time of establishment on 1755, was really influenced by Western Colonization. But lots of activities, old and new, still survive in this place now. Maybe it is because of the tight traditional local wisdom of Javanese Palace.

**Keywords:** local wisdom; westernization; resilience; imitating approach

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**INTRODUCTION**

Dutch Colonialism in Indonesia for thousands years ago created a new way of thinking, a new culture, and a new way of life for Indonesian people. Javanese people, especially Yogyakarta people, were a very loyal people with the Javanese traditional culture. The people had a tight bond with Palace of Yogyakarta Hadiningrat. This tight bond became the local wisdom that can be a strong defense for the Westernization penetration there.

Westernization is a process to influence or make familiar with the West customs, cultures, and practices (Collins English Digital Dictionary, 2012 cited on 24 April 2016). Westernization is like a Europeanization process (Wikipedia, 2016). Westernization became a part of Yogyakarta cultural because of Dutch Colonialism in Indonesia. Although cosmology was the main cultural root of Yogyakarta Hadiningrat establishment (Handinoto, 2015:ix), but the next steps of Dutch Colonialism, such as *Indisch* Town (Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century-1905), *Gemeente* Era (1905-1948), *Kota Praja* (1948-1964), also gave influences for this city and its activities.

**METHOD**

Regarding to the introduction above, the researcher would like to explore about the influence of Westernization on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta, and figure out the resilience pattern of traditional local wisdom that could banned the Westernization effect. In order to gain those aim, the objectives that would be implemented in this research are: 1) Tracing the history of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta; 2) Identifying the traditional local wisdom on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta; 3) Identifying Westernization on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta; 4) Analyzing impact of Westernization on traditional local wisdom; and then 5) Figure out the resilience pattern of traditional local wisdom on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta.

This research attempts to conduct qualitative methods, in order to capture the phenomena in this public space. This research need to understand the existing conditions and expectations about the real conditions that can reflect resilience aspect of traditional public space in facing Westernization.

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**DISCUSSION**

**Public Space in Westernization Era**

Public space is an open or non-open space that is could be accessed by public (Carr, 1992). Public space could be formed as a linier space such as street and a nodal space such as square (Krier on Carmona, 2003). Lots of public space theories are spreading from lots of perspectives: social, physical, and visual approach.


Whether, sustainable public space is a public space that is still survived in its activities and existence. Lots of public spaces in developing countries are facing with lots of forces, such as economic forces, political forces, and social changing activity forces. Not all traditional activities from the past could be survived and live until now, especially, when the public spaces have relationship with colonization and westernization.

Westernization or Europeanization is a process of society in adopting Western cultures in lots of areas (Wikipedia, cited on 2015). Westernization happened on many South Countries such as Turk, Iran, and Indonesia. In Turk, Westernization was being brought by Kemal Pasha Attaturk since Turk Revolution on 1923 (ridwanaz.com, cited on 2015). This westernization creates modernization in all aspects, new way of thinking, and new way of life. It changes Islamic and Asian style with Western style until now, especially because of part of Turk region joined with European Continent.

In Iran, Westernization was being introduced by Mohammad Reza Pahlevi after World War II. He built modernization and support women active in public voting and public space. Although, at this time, Iran back to Islamic State, the independence of woman in public space is better rather than in another Islamic State.

In Indonesia, in the first time, westernization was being adopted by academic people, some bureaucratic people and Christian people. Westernization had impact on way of thinking and dress style. And now, westernization is adopted in education, media, and lots of aspects. But, Lombard on ‘Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya’ (1996) said that westernization in Indonesia does not destruct the traditional activities because it just influence specific persons not all people.

Table 1. Westernization on Dress Style in Indonesia

| Picture   | Explanation   |
|---|---|
|  | Traditional Dress for officials of Yogyakarta Palace for daily and evenly |



Westernization in dress style on Yogyakarta Palace. Sri Sultan HB VIII was sitting among his sons

Source: [http://satimterus.blogspot.com/ 2010\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://satimterus.blogspot.com/2010_10_01_archive.html);  
[http://sarastiana.blog.ugm.ac.id /2012/05 /18/hengkie-yang-tetap-merakay/](http://sarastiana.blog.ugm.ac.id/2012/05/18/hengkie-yang-tetap-merakay/)

In westernization era, public space became an important place to control the region and people, to celebrate the Western Country events, and to share the announcement. That was shown on case in Semarang, Indonesia on earlier 1900s. One Dutch Project on 1914 was the World Expo ‘Koloniale Tentoonstelling’ that was the world's first large-scale in Indonesia on Simpang Lima Area in Semarang.

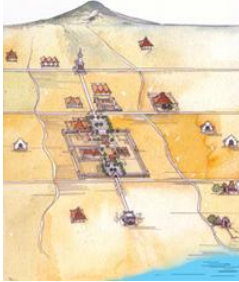



Fig.1. ‘Koloniale Tentoonstelling’ Exhibition in Semarang City  
 Source: [semarangtempodoele.blogspot.com](http://semarangtempodoele.blogspot.com)

**History and Local Wisdom of Alun-alun Yogyakarta**

*Keraton* Yogyakarta, a traditional palace which was built under Dutch Power based on Gianti Agreement on 1755. The structured plan showed the intervention of Western; although the history and cosmological theories have different statements (Wiryomartono, 1995). Mount Merapi - Obeliks (*Tugu*) – North Plaza (*Alun-alun Lor*) – Palace (*Keraton*) – South Plaza (*Alun-alun Kidul*) – South Ocean were planned in one imaginer line. In its development, the structure of Old Yogyakarta City was influence by Dutch and British, such as in important buildings near Yogyakarta Palace. They are Vredenburg Fort, Post Office, Post Road, Kotabaru (New City - Area for Dutch People), and so forth.




Table 2. Imaginer Axis of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta

| Picture   | Explanation   |
|---|---|
|  | The axis of Mount Merapi, Tugu, North <i>Alun-alun</i> , Palace, South <i>Alun-alun</i> , and South Sea (Hindia Ocean). The axis shows that two public spaces (North and South <i>Alun-alun</i> ) are important in City Plan. |
|  | Vredeburg Fort, an important building of Dutch Power which had functioned as a place to maintain the safety in area near Palace.  |

Source: gudegnet.com, cited on 2014;  
[http://www.tourjogja.com/foto/foto\\_photos/bentengverdeburg01.jpg](http://www.tourjogja.com/foto/foto_photos/bentengverdeburg01.jpg)

Talking about *Alun-alun*, it can be said that in every palace in Java Island has a big square which people called it as *Alun-alun*. The square is part of the palace which is a wide open space and located in front of and behind the palace. History of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta was started on 13 February 1755 after Gianti Agreement divided Mataram Kingdom into two regions: Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat in Yogyakarta and Surakarta Hadiningrat in Solo. The King of Yogyakarta built a new Palace with large 4000m square with two large squares which called as North *Alun-alun* in front of (in the Northern part of) the Palace and South *Alun-alun* in the back yard (in the Southern part of) the Palace (Handinoto (1992)). One year after the agreement, Sultan Hamengku Buwono I moved the Palace on Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Kingdom.

Table 3. History and Local Wisdom of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta

| Period    | History and Local Wisdom  | Picture  |
|-----------|---|--|
| 1755/1756 | <p><b>North <i>Alun-alun</i></b><br/>                     In the first time, North <i>Alun-alun</i> was located in inner part of Palace, because of surrounded by bamboo edge. North <i>Alun-alun</i> was surrounded by important buildings. The Southern part is Palace, the Western part is Mosque ‘Gede’ (Great), the Northern part is Bringharjo Market, and the Eastern part is ‘pekapalan’ (small pavilions) which were used by the regents to stay and rest when facing the Sultan / the King.</p> <p><b>South <i>Alun-alun</i></b><br/>                     South <i>Alun-alun</i> was located in the back of Palace. South square was made to change the atmosphere of the back Palace as like the front. The important buildings surrounded it are South ‘Siti Inggil’ and Elephant Istal.</p> <p>Local wisdom: Both <i>alun-alun</i> became the symbolic of Palace/King Power.</p> |  <p>North <i>Alun-alun</i> in the first time. Reference: gudegnet.com, 2014.</p>   |
| 1800-1945 | <p><i>Alun-alun</i> became a sacral space which has connected neighborhoods outside the Palace and the Palace. Although both of <i>Alun-alun</i> were the sacral spaces, both of them had a great function to be a space for Palace activities and ceremonies. Lots of rules about how to maintain the place and activities there were launched to citizens who want to enter both <i>Alun-alun</i>, such as: no slippers, no stick, and no umbrella when entered to those places.</p> <p>Local wisdom: Both <i>alun-alun</i> became the sacral places which were influenced by Javanese activities (Palace), Islamic activities (Palace and Mosque), and indirect Colonialism activities by placing Important Dutch Buildings such as: Vrederburg Fort, Post Office, Kota Baru Residential, ect.</p>   |  <p>Waringin trees on the North <i>Alun-alun</i> - circa 1857 - 1874. Reference: Tropenmuseum, 2014.</p>  <p>South <i>Alun-alun</i> in 1920. Source: <a href="http://sonofdawn.blogspot.de/2009/02/arti-simbolik-dari-bangunan-kraton.html">http://sonofdawn.blogspot.de/2009/02/arti-simbolik-dari-bangunan-kraton.html</a></p> |

After Indonesia Independence Day (After 1945) Both *Alun-alun* had extended function as place to gather community, public space, and lots of activities. Lots of activities outside the Palace ceremonies were held here, such as: 'Trihora' declaration, lots of exhibitions, parties' campaigns, *Ied* pray, and so forth. Tourism activities have been flourished after 1980s.

Local Wisdom: *Alun-alun* developed new function as public space gathering for people.

Now Both *Alun-alun* become the great public space and tourist attraction in Yogyakarta. Both of them are also still used by the Palace on special events. Lots of activities are held here. Activities which held by the Palace are: 'Sekaten' and other ceremonies. Activities by others are: music concerts, campaign, and so forth.

Local Wisdom: *Alun-alun* is getting richer in functions, not only as part of the Palace open space, public space, but also the place for tourist destination.



'Trihora' Declaration on November 1961 in Yogyakarta. Reference: belatanahair.org



'Sekaten' is a great exhibition annually. Source: antaranews.com, 2014

Source: Handinoto, 1992 etcetera.

### Impact of Westernization on Traditional Local Wisdom of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta

Local wisdom on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta is very tight but dynamic. Tight local wisdom because have correlation with Palace activity, but dynamic because of compromise with time developing. In the first time of *Alun-alun* establishment, Dutch could not intervened activities here because of indirect rule to control people and activities in Yogyakarta State (See Figure 2). Yogyakarta Palace had a special power to run the governance and control the people activities, but obliged to follow Dutch rule in authority, such as a person who became the King and rule about number of shoulders. On the other hand, Dutch was not interfere traditional activities on Palace, *Alun-alun*, Great Mosque, and etcetera.

Regarding to this condition, lots of traditional activities on Palace and *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta had have continue since the first time until now, although some of them disappeared, changed, and developed.

Both of *Alun-alun* have sustainable activities. Sustainable activities on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta are activities that had happened in the past and still live until now, although with lots modifications following the time developing.

In the past, the North *Alun-alun*, there was used for various purposes such as 'Sodoran', 'Rampogan' (hunting tiger), training for soldiers, ceremonies, 'pepe' 'sunbathing' to be heard and get the attention of the Sultan (The King) in order to get justice from the King. In ancient times, North *Alun-alun* was sacred territory where not just anyone allowed entering it. There are rules that must be adhered to if you want to enter it, for example, should not use vehicles, no boots, no sandals, no stick, and no umbrella. This is done as a form of homage to the King Ngayogyakarta Palace.

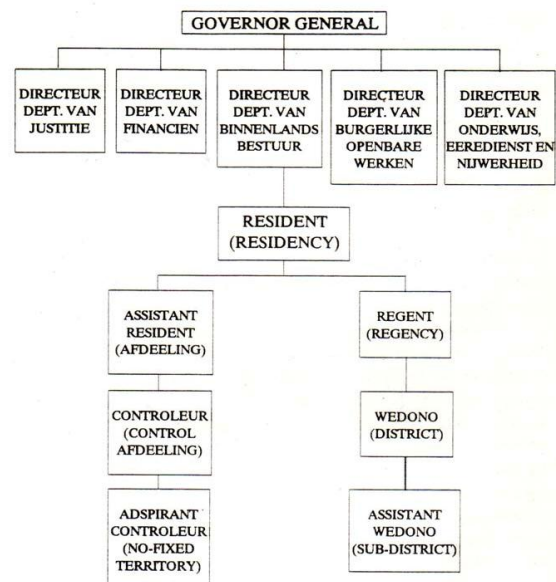





Fig 2. Indirect rule of Dutch Colonialization in Indonesia until 1920s. This condition could banned Westernization impacted on community activities because no direct control from Dutch power to community. At that time, westernization just impacted to Dutch officials and few of people. Source: Handinoto, 1992



Fig.3. 'Rampogan' 1833 on North *Alun alun* Surakarta. This activity also happened in North *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta. Source: M.C. Ricklefs, 2002 on Space/Scope Projects, cited on 2014

Now, new activities on North *Alun-alun* happen daily, weekly, evenly, and annually. North *Alun-alun* becomes a public space for community, a recreation area, a place for tourist attraction such as Place of Palace/Yogyakarta Cultural activities. Meanwhile, in special time, North *Alun-alun* becomes a place for music concert, *Ied Pray* and ‘*Sekaten*’.


Table 4. Users and Activities on North *Alun-alun*

| Picture  | Explanation  |
|--|--|
|   | Parking area on North <i>Alun-alun</i> on 2013. Now, the parking area is relocated on Ngabean Park Area. |
|   | Recreation activity on North <i>Alun-alun</i> .  |
|  | <i>Ied Pray</i> on North <i>Alun-alun</i> Yogyakarta.  |

Source: sorotjogja.com, 2013; bas0ri.blogspot.com, 2013; Kedaulatan Rakyat, 2014.

Whereas, after Indonesia Independence day, in South *Alun-alun*, there was abandonment for long time until the surrounding plot of land was paved in the mid-1970s. Before that time, in the 1960s this area became the Traffic Park that was built by the Indonesian Communist Party activists. While the most advanced rapid physical changes in activity of South *Alun-alun* happened on the early 1990s. South *Alun-alun* is a place where tradition ‘*Masangin*’, which walks between the banyan trees with eyes closed, the main attraction for tourist at that place attracts lots of people to come here daily, weekly, and evenly. Besides, South *Alun-alun* develops as a real public space for the neighborhood. It is a sport area for community, it is a place to refreshing because of food hawkers and night activities there, and it is a suitable place to hold lots of competition because of not too big as North *Alun-alun*.

Table 5. Users and Activities on South *Alun-alun*

| Picture   | Explanation                                     |
|---|---|
|  | ‘ <i>Masangin</i> ’ on South <i>Alun-alun</i> . |



Rental light car activities on South *Alun-alun* every day.



Race of Kids Archery (Gladhen Hagens Jemparingan) on South *Alun-alun*.

Source: kuliner.panduanwisata.com, 2013; RanggaG4S, 2014; sayangi.com, 2013.

### Impact of Westernization

There is **no imitating process** from Western in extending traditional activities on *Alun-alun*, just **compromised process and developed based on time developing**. Besides, there is no comparative method in redevelop and reconstruction of *Alun-alun*. All revitalization planning and design of *Alun-alun* always use history and cosmological approach in its implementation, such as: the surface of *Alun-alun* should be a sand surface in order to maintain the philosophy in keeping clean feet before meet the King; and disagree with underground parking for tourists on North *Alun-alun* because of it could break the function of *Alun-alun* as a plaza in front of the Palace. So, based on this condition, it could be conclude that although *Alun-alun* established because of Western Power, but indirect rule from Western could banned impact the Westernization on community activities on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta. So, there is no real impact Westernization on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta.

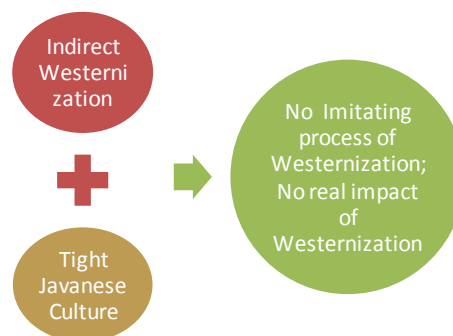


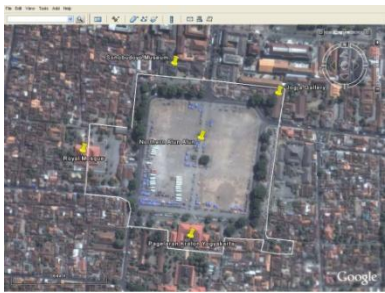
Fig.4. No Real Impact of Westernization on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta. Source: Analysis, 2016

## RESULT

### Resilience Pattern of Traditional Local Wisdom in *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta

Based on the discussion above the resilience pattern of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta in facing the no real impact of Westernization is stated in the table below.

Table 6. Resilience Pattern of *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta in Facing of Westernization

| Place                     | Resilience Pattern  |
|---------------------------|---|
| North<br><i>Alun-alun</i> | <p>North <i>Alun-alun</i> has a tight correlation with Palace and Great Mosque. The strategic location in front of Palace and Great Mosque maintain the North <i>Alun-alun</i> function as a place for Palace and Great Mosque activities, such as: 'Sekaten' and <i>Ied Pray</i>. It could be concluded that <b>resilience pattern of North <i>Alun-alun</i> is strong</b> because of the nearest location with Palace.</p>  <p>Aerial view of North <i>Alun-alun</i>. Palace is located in the Southern Area.<br/>Source: Google Maps, 2013.</p> |
| South<br><i>Alun-alun</i> | <p>South <i>Alun-alun</i> is located in the backyard of Palace. The 'un-strategic' location creates a new function of South <i>Alun-alun</i> as a new public space for surrounding neighborhood. Although the changing of activities there is not because Westernization process, but the drastic changing of activities from 'private' Palace activities to 'public' activities shows the openness and subtraction rule of Palace on this place.</p>   |

Source: Google Maps, 2013; Analyze, 2015

## CONCLUSION

This paper argues that there is there is no real impact Westernization on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta. There is no imitating process from Western in extending traditional activities on *Alun-alun*, just compromised process and developed based on time developing. This paper shows that Westernization could not be a problem in a tight tradition area, especially, if the Colonial Power had indirect rule to control people and activities in Colonization Land. Besides, the strategic and un-strategic location with Palace which has traditional activities creates the different resilience pattern in facing Westernization. It is something happen on *Alun-alun* Yogyakarta that we can teach to the Western as Juan Pedro Posani on Zahn (2008).

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