

Study of Visitor Activities in Public Spaces at Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe

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Abstract

Humans are dynamic, active and always on the move. Humans carry out various activities to fulfil their needs both physically, mentally and socially. These activities can be done anywhere, one of which is in the public space at Sudirman Field in Lhokseumawe. This research will focus on public spaces in Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe as a case study to examine visitor activities. This research aims to examine how visitor activities in public spaces in Lhokseumawe Sudirman Square. This research uses a qualitative method descriptive approach and uses the theory by John Gehl regarding activities in public spaces. This research concludes that Sudirman Field is a multifunctional field that has a variety of activities. These activities include need activities in the form of routine sports, trading and relaxing, choice activities in the form of optional sports, relaxing, children's playgrounds and social activities in the form of exhibitions, festivals, other major events, chatting with visitors and team sports. The intensity of activities that occur in Sudirman Square will increase during weekends and during major events such as exhibitions, fairs and festivals. However, this only happens on certain days or times. Sudirman Square is in accordance with Gehl's theory of applying the three types of activities in public space. Thus, it becomes a special attraction for the visitors. Thus, it becomes a special attraction for visitors because of the variety of activities that can be done.

Keywords: Activity, Public Space, Sudirman Field Lhokseumawe, Visitor.

Introduction

Humans are dynamic creatures who are active and always on the move. Humans will carry out various activities to fulfil their needs both physically, mentally and socially. These activities can be done anywhere. It can be from home, school, workplace, house of worship to public space. Public space is an open area that can be accessed by everyone, so that it can be a stage for humans in various activities and functions [1]. Activities in public spaces can be categorised into several types, including physical activities, social activities, mental activities and recreational activities.

Public space is one of the places for humans to carry out various activities, ranging from relaxing, exercising, to socialising. According to Carmona (2008), public space is a natural or built environment where the public has free access to the space [2]. Public spaces provide open spaces that can be accessed and used by everyone, regardless of social or economic status. The existence of public spaces provides many benefits for humans such as; improving physical and mental health [3], strengthening social interaction [4], and can also improve the quality of life [5]. Various activities that occur in public spaces involve various characteristics, types and actors, with this diversity, public spaces will have various dimensions from various perspectives [6].

Lhokseumawe City has various public spaces, one of which is green open public space, especially fields, including Hiraq Field and Sudirman Field. The selected research plan is Sudirman Field. One of the public spaces that is often visited by the community is Sudirman Field which is located on Jl. Iskandar Muda, Lhokseumawe city, Aceh. Unlike other public spaces, this field is a sports field equipped with various supporting facilities. This field has an area of about 7108 m² and is equipped with various facilities, such as; basketball courts, sports aids, seating, parking, culinary areas in the form of

food courts and children's playgrounds. Sudirman Square is a multi-functional favourite place for people to do various activities, such as exercising, relaxing, socialising, and attending various events held by the local government or community.

There are several previous studies on public space and activities such as Syafi'i who has researched on the same object with a focus on the advantages and disadvantages of street vendors in public space [7]. Then, there is also research on public space by Hantono who found the importance of accessibility in a public space [8]. Furthermore, research by Manuputty found teenagers' activities in public spaces [9]. Based on the above background, the researcher is interested in researching the study of visitor activities in public space in Sudirman Square, Lhokseumawe considering the many benefits of a public space for the community. This study aims to identify the types of activities based on Gehl's theory. The results of the study are expected to be the basis for better planning and management of public spaces, improve visitor comfort and safety, and optimise the function of Sudirman Square as a functional and multifunctional public space.

Literature Review

Activity

Activity is a series of actions or activities carried out by a person or group of people with a specific purpose. Activities can be physical or non-physical which involves interaction with the surrounding environment. One of the containers for activities is public space. Quality public spaces can accommodate a variety of community activities. According to Gehl [10], activities in a space can be divided into three types, namely:

1. Necessary activities
namely mandatory activities carried out to fulfil a need.
2. Optional activities
optional activities, namely activities that are carried out when there is an opportunity at the right time. Usually this activity aims to fill spare time [11].
3. Social activities
Social activities are activities that involve interaction with the surrounding.

Public Space

In general, public space is an area that can be a place for people to interact and carry out activities, both individually and in groups. The existence of a public space is one of the important things needed in a city [12]. Public space can physically be interpreted as open space outside the building [6]. The form of public space is strongly influenced by the pattern of activities in the building and the mass arrangement in it. Public space is very important for community interaction and increasing social stability.

According to (Garnham, 1985) the components that form the identity of public space include three components, namely [13]:

1. Physical
This is seen from the physical structure that exists in a place such as; buildings, greenery, climate and aesthetic quality.
2. Activity or function
This relates to how people conduct social interactions in the place related to the characteristics of the area, the physical state of the environment, customs, climate that can influence each other.
3. Meaning
This is a deep aspect of the purpose and experience of using public space.

According to Hakim (1993), public space can be classified into several types, based on the nature of public space can be divided into two types, namely [14]:

- a) Closed Public Space is a public space located in a building.
- b) Open Public Space is a public space located outside the building, often referred to as open space. This type of public space is located in an open area.

Then, according to Carmona (2003) public space can be classified into several types [15]:

- a) External Public Space
Public spaces located in public areas such as roads, sidewalks, city parks, and others.
- b) Internal Public Space
Public spaces contained within public facilities that allow free access for the public, such as public spaces in public libraries, museums, airports, and so on.
- c) External and Internal 'Quasi' Public Space
Public spaces located in privately owned facilities, where the manager of the public space has full control over the access and behaviour of the users of the space, for example public spaces in universities, commercial buildings, and others.

According to Ahmaddin Ahmad (2002), the function of public space and open space is highly dependent on the cultural background and habits of the community [16]. The function of public space, namely:

- a) As a place of gathering, interaction and friendship between residents. In addition, it can also be used as a place for special activities such as playing, exercising or relaxing.
- b) Become a symbol of place and city identity [17]. Presenting a viewing space (urban scene), especially in densely

populated areas. Protecting the ecological function of the area, providing light and air circulation to the surrounding buildings. A place for city residents to breathe fresh air and refresh the view.

- c) Serves as a reserve area for future development.
- d) Utilized as a place to sell street vendors, or used for surprise markets.

Materials & Methods

This type of research is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach that aims to describe and illustrate the phenomena that occur in Sudirman Square [18]. Techniques used include observation, interviews, questionnaires, and case studies to collect data from visitors at Sudirman Square. This approach can be applied in sampling at Sudirman Square in Lhokseumawe, where the researcher uses the participant observation method as the main analysis to collect data from a predetermined sample [19]. During the observation, the researcher recorded in detail the types of activities, patterns of visitors' behavior, social interactions, and use of space. The researcher then noted how factors such as time of day, weather, and special events affected the dynamics of the space. The researcher also interacted with regular visitors to gain deeper insights into their experiences.

The research titled "Study of Visitor Activities in Public Spaces in Sudirman Square, Lhokseumawe" which is located at Jl. Iskandar Muda, in front of KNPI / Korem Lilawangsa Building, Lhokseumawe City, Aceh, Indonesia. The research population is Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe and visitors include all visitors who come to Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe during the research period. Then, the sample selection uses purposive sampling technique which will be carried out to visitors of Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe. The sampling will be done with a non-probability sample, where the researcher will select subjects who have characteristics that match the research objectives [20]. The average visitor to a public space is insecure every day. The informant criteria include:

1. Visitors who use one of the four areas of the space (sports, food, leisure or children's playground).
2. Formal merchants who have food stalls in the culinary area and informal merchants who provide children's playgrounds.

Based on these criteria, the researchers identified up to 40 people as main informants (10 visitors from each area) and up to 5 people as supporting informants (3 formal traders and 2 informal traders). As well as distributing questionnaires to 60 people through the g-form by scanning barcodes and online media. The selection of informants aims to obtain comprehensive data on visitor activities in different areas of the site, as well as the perspectives of managers and traders.

Results and Discussion

Existing research

The research was conducted in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh which has various public spaces, one of which is Sudirman Field which is managed by the Army Military Command. This field is one of the public spaces in Lhokseumawe City. This field is often used for public activities such as public parties, counseling, socializing, competitions, sports, and others.

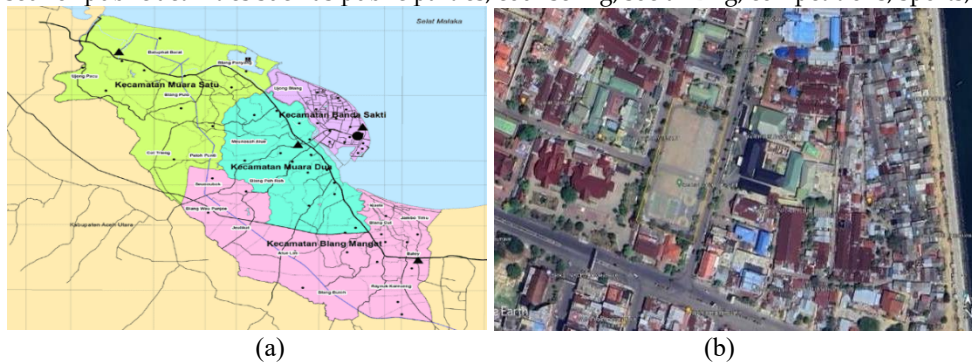


Figure 1. Research Location (a) Map of Lhokseumawe, (b) Research Location Point (Google Earth, 2024)

Access to this field there are several ways, namely: 1. access via Jalan Merdeka from the south towards Sudirman Field Lhokseumawe, 2. Access via Jalan Merdeka from the north towards Sudirman Field Lhokseumawe and alternative access by passing through the military complex (cutting road) to Sudirman Field Lhokseumawe. Looks like figure 2.



Figure 2. Access to Sudirman Field in Lhokseumawe (Author's Analysis, 2024)

Then the Sudirman Field entrance access is 4 points, with the main access is located right in the middle of the front of the field, alternative access is located in the middle of the back of the field, and on either side of the right and left of the front of the field for complementary access. See Figure 3.



Figure 1. Field Access (Author's Analysis, 2024)

Sudirman Field Facilities

There are various facilities contained in Sudirman Field Lhokseumawe. The following in Figure 4, can be seen some of the facilities at Sudirman Field Lhokseumawe, among others:

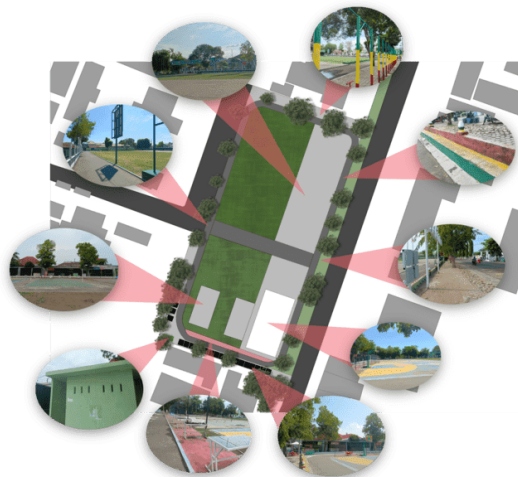


Figure 4. Sudirman Lhokseumawe Field Facility (Author's Analysis, 2024)

Sudirman Square Activities

Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe is one of the multifunctional public spaces that is used for different activities by the community (visitors). This diversity of users shows that public space can be used by different groups. However, the diversity of activities can also cause space conflicts that can lead to crowding activities if not managed properly. Activities in Sudirman Lhokseumawe Square are very diverse, including being divided into several areas, namely; culinary area, sports area, recreational area (children playing), and relaxation area, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 2. Activities at Sudirman Field in Lhokseumawe (Author's Analysis, 2024)

Based on John Gehl's Public Space Theory [10], these activities can be divided into 3 parts:

1. Necessary activities.

Necessary activities are mandatory activities that are performed to satisfy a need. This activity is a mandatory activity that is performed regardless of environmental conditions because it is important for daily life. Usually, this activity has a special purpose and is routine. The main activities or needs in public spaces in Sudirman Field in Lhokseumawe include Exercising, trading and relaxing. Exercising, such as jogging and gymnastics, is done to meet health and fitness needs. Trading is an effort by traders to make a living, with 18 culinary stalls in the form of food courts provided to support this activity. Relaxation was chosen as the main activity by some visitors for refreshment or healing purposes.

Based on the survey, of the 18 available food stalls, only 8 were occupied and 2-3 were open daily during the research period. Vendors usually sell from 15.00 to 23.00 hrs on weekdays and until 24.00 hrs on weekends. The analysis shows that Sudirman Lhokseumawe Square has accommodated demand activities according to Gehl's theory [7], but there is still room for improvement, especially in the use of commercial facilities. Although demand activities will still take place regardless of the quality of the environment, improved design and facilities can increase comfort and efficiency, which in turn can encourage more choices and social activities, and improve the overall quality of the public space. The following is the zoning of the main activities that occur in Lapangan Sudirman (Figure 6):

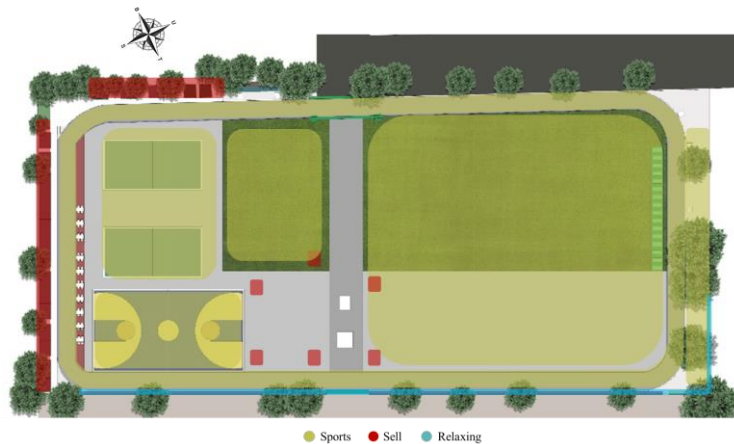


Figure 6. Necessary Activities Zoning(Author's Analysis, 2024)

2. Optional Activities

Optional activities are activities that are performed when the opportunity arises at the right time. The frequency and duration of optional activities are strongly influenced by the quality of public spaces. A well-designed space will encourage people to do more optional activities and stay longer in the space. Preferred activities in the public space at Sudirman Lhokseumawe Square include: preferred sports, relaxing, playing rides, and culinary. Selected sports activities found in this area are very diverse, namely; basketball, soccer, jogging, sports aids, volleyball, taekwondo, and badminton. Visitors can then enjoy leisure activities in the seating facilities around the field. In the area inside the field, there are children's playgrounds that are open every day. These rides are provided by various informal traders who rent the field area to Korem 011 Lilawangsa.

During the survey, 5 informal traders were found. However, only 2-3 traders are open every day. The division of boundaries between traders was determined by the field manager, Korem 011 Lilawangsa. Play rides found in this field include; electric motor rental, remote control cars, balloon houses, painting, arrows, fishing, and pinch dolls. These rides are opened at different times to adjust the field space so as not to clash with other activities at the same time, some open at 17.30 WIB or 20.00 WIB and close at 23.00 WIB on weekdays and 24.00 WIB on weekends. Saturdays and Sundays are the most popular times for visitors to this area. During the survey, it was found that things that encourage visitors to do the chosen activity include; personal interest, availability of facilities, influence from other visitors, and special events or activities. Sudirman Lhokseumawe Square has successfully implemented many aspects of Gehl's theory of activity choice.

The diversity of activities, flexibility of space use, and provision of convenient facilities have created an attractive and vibrant public space. This shows that good design and management of public spaces can improve the quality of life of visitors by providing places that support a variety of preferred activities. The following is the zoning of the main activities that take place in Sudirman Square (Figure 7):



Figure 3. Optional Activity Zoning (Author's Analysis, 2024)

3. Social Activities

Social activities are activities that involve interaction with the environment. According to Gehl, these activities occur when people meet and interact with each other. It includes conversations, games, and community activities. The quality of public spaces greatly influences the frequency and intensity of social activities. Social activity is highly dependent on the presence of other people in the same space and is driven by the opportunity to interact. Well-designed public spaces can increase the likelihood of social activity. Social activities in the public space at Sudirman Square Lhokseumawe are team sports (basketball, volleyball, and soccer), chatting among visitors and friends, counseling, exhibitions, and festivals.

Here are some of these events/activities:

- a) Meurah Silu Festival of Bank Indonesia
This event was organized by Bank Indonesia on June 24-25, 2023. The agenda of activities aims to enliven the Islamic financial economy in controlling inflation in Aceh Sea Coast and Mountains by promoting local MSMEs, seminars, competitions and business matching followed by 10 districts / cities from upstream to downstream chains. The event was also enlivened by some entertainment.
- b) Alutsista Exhibition (78th TNI Anniversary)
This event was held on October 6-8, 2023, from 09.00 to 22.00 WIB. This event is presented with exhibitions; tanks, weapons, LCR boats, Anoa Punser, cannons and also enlivened by the night market.
- c) Expo UMKM Aceh
This event was held by the Aceh Small and Medium Enterprises Cooperative Office (Diskop UKM), on December 3-5 from 14.00-22.00 WIB. The event consists of various entertainment, competitions and various local MSMEs.
- d) TNI Bazaar
This activity was held on April 2, 2024, which consisted of various activities in the form of; local handicrafts, various souvenirs and cheap food.
- e) Artjeh Space
This activity was conducted by PT Sampoerna on August 24, 2024, which consisted of several activities in the form of; competitions (photography, mural painting, skateboarding, stand-up comedy, e-sports, and short film festival), bazaars, UMKM, and live music. This activity has the theme "Dare To Be The Change", which is intended only for visitors over 18 years old. This activity starts in the morning at 10.00 WIB until the night at 23.00 WIB.

Sudirman Lhokseumawe Square has reflected the principles of Jan Gehl's theory of urban design that supports social interaction. The square has become a safe, comfortable, and flexible place for various activities ranging from festivals to exhibitions, all of which successfully attract visitors. The increased social activity during major events shows that this space is well designed to support interaction and togetherness. In addition, events that promote local MSMEs have a positive economic impact and strengthen community involvement in the management of public spaces. Thus, Sudirman Square has become a vibrant center of social life, in line with Gehl's proposed public space design objectives. The following is the zoning of the main activities that take place in Sudirman Square (Figure 8):

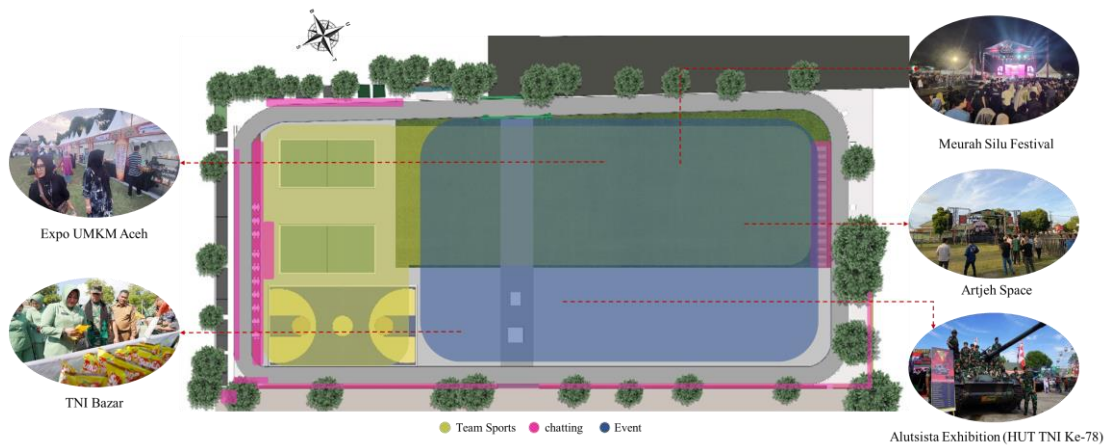


Figure 8. Social Activity Zoning (Author's Analysis, 2024)

Conclusions

Public space is a place for different groups of people to do activities in it. Sudirman Field is a multifunctional public space with various activities in it, such as main activities/needs (routine sports, commerce, and relaxation), optional activities (optional sports, relaxation, games, and culinary), and social activities (team sports, chatting, counseling, exhibitions, and festivals). The activities that dominate the area are sports and recreation. The mornings are dominated by sports activities. In the afternoon, food stalls open, there are selected sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton and others, and people relax. Then in the evening there is more variety and the opening of commercial activities by informal traders, namely children's playgrounds. So in the afternoon and evening, there is a potential for spatial conflict. The preferred time for visitors is the afternoon, influenced by cool temperatures that support various activities. The intensity of activities that occur in Sudirman Square will increase, especially on weekends and holidays. This is due to the high density of activities, following the order of areas from high to low density, namely sports area - culinary area - chill out area - recreational area (children's play). Especially during big events like exhibitions, fairs and festivals. But this only happens for a few days. The influence of the weather is also something that affects the crowd at Sudirman Field in Lhokseumawe.

This public space has succeeded in creating a dynamic and inclusive environment that facilitates social interaction and supports various community activities. Sudirman Square has implemented many aspects of Gehl's theory of designing public spaces that support activities. The variety of activities, flexibility of space use, and provision of convenient facilities have created an attractive and vibrant public space. In addition, various events organized in this area have succeeded in increasing the frequency and intensity of social activities, as well as strengthening community involvement in public space management. Improving the quality and use of Sudirman Square as a public space requires a comprehensive approach. In addition to regular evaluation of facilities to meet the needs of visitors, there is also a need for good management and community involvement in decision-making, and socialization of the importance of maintaining cleanliness is also a key factor. In this way, Sudirman Square can continue to be a dynamic and sustainable public space.

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