

Placemaking and Urban Health in Public Spaces: Evaluating Physical Elements and Activities in Supporting a Healthy City in Surakarta

Lois

Master of Urban Design, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Syam Rachma Marcillia*

Master of Urban Design, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between physical elements, activity patterns, placemaking perception, and urban health in the Sriwedari public space area, Surakarta. Using a mixed-method approach, the research evaluates physical elements based on established standards, analyzes activity distribution by time and user characteristics, and measures placemaking perception through four key dimensions: Access & Linkage, Comfort & Image, Uses & Activity, and Sociability.

The results indicate that the Sriwedari area demonstrates high sociability (4.4) and active space utilization, particularly through social and recreational activities dominated by adult users. However, several physical elements—such as accessibility, seating, cleanliness, and shading—remain inadequate, resulting in lower performance in comfort (3.9) and accessibility (3.8). The limited participation of elderly and vulnerable groups further highlights issues of inclusivity.

These findings reveal an imbalance in urban health outcomes. While strong social interaction supports social cohesion and community well-being, physical health benefits remain moderate due to limited supporting infrastructure. In addition, poor environmental comfort reduces mental well-being, and inadequate accessibility limits health equity, particularly for elderly and vulnerable users. This indicates that the space performs well socially but lacks the physical and environmental quality required to support comprehensive urban health.

Consequently, the Sriwedari area can be classified as a partially healthy public space, where social vitality is high but physical comfort, accessibility, and inclusivity remain insufficient. In the context of Surakarta's Healthy City initiative, this study highlights the importance of improving physical elements and inclusive design in public spaces. Strengthening accessibility, enhancing environmental comfort, and providing adequate supporting facilities are essential to transform socially active spaces into fully health-promoting environments.

Keywords:

Urban health, public space, placemaking, physical elements, activity patterns.