

Historical Transformation of Javanese Cultural Landscapes through the Development of Alun-Alun as Public Spaces

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Abstract

Javanese *alun-alun* represents a distinctive cultural landscape in which historical, social, political, symbolic, and public-space functions intersect. This study aims to analyze the historical transformation of Javanese cultural landscapes through the development of *alun-alun* as public spaces in Tangerang Regency, with particular attention to changes in spatial structure, public functions, cultural symbolism, and historical continuity. The study employs a qualitative historical-interpretive approach with a cultural landscape case-study design. Data were obtained through historical-document analysis, field observation, spatial documentation, and semi-structured interviews with relevant community and institutional actors. Data were analyzed through chronological reconstruction, thematic coding, source criticism, triangulation, and interpretive synthesis. The findings reveal that the transformation of *alun-alun* is characterized by structural reconfiguration, functional diversification, and selective reinterpretation of cultural meanings. Contemporary revitalization increases accessibility, recreation, social interaction, and economic activity, but may simultaneously weaken historical spatial relationships and traditional cultural functions. Nevertheless, cultural identity persists through collective memory, community practices, symbolic associations, and continuing public recognition. The study concludes that *alun-alun* transformation constitutes adaptive cultural negotiation rather than simple cultural displacement. Its contribution lies in positioning *alun-alun* as living cultural infrastructure and proposing an integrated perspective connecting morphological continuity, functional adaptation, cultural-symbolic continuity, and participatory governance within sustainable heritage management.

Keywords

Alun-Alun; Javanese Cultural Landscape; Historical Transformation; Public Space; Urban Heritage.



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INTRODUCTION

The ideal conception of cultural landscapes emphasizes the inseparable relationship between humans, nature, history, and cultural values that collectively shape the identity of a place. Within the discourse of cultural heritage, landscapes are

no longer understood merely as physical environments but as living spaces that embody historical memory, symbolic meanings, social practices, and collective identities transmitted across generations (Mladenović, 2023; Salouw & Ikaputra, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to historic urban areas, where successive layers of political, economic, ecological, and cultural development produce complex spatial identities (Prabowo et al., 2020). Consequently, public open spaces in historic cities should function not only as ecological infrastructure but also as cultural infrastructure capable of preserving tangible and intangible heritage amidst contemporary urban transformation. The HUL approach recognizes historic urban landscapes as dynamic systems shaped by the interaction of built environments, natural settings, spatial organization, social practices, cultural values, and economic processes (Damayanti et al., 2021). Recent Indonesian heritage studies similarly demonstrate that conservation requires attention to historical layers, community participation, cultural practices, and contemporary development pressures rather than focusing exclusively on architectural preservation (Prabowo et al., 2020; Damayanti et al., 2021).

Among Southeast Asian cultural landscapes, the Javanese alun-alun represents one of the most distinctive manifestations of this integrated urban philosophy. Historically, the alun-alun constituted an important ceremonial and symbolic space within Javanese urban settlements, positioned in relation to the palace (kraton), mosque, market, governmental buildings, and surrounding settlements. Research on ancient Javanese cultural landscapes, for example, demonstrates that spatial organization was influenced by cosmological concepts and relationships between human communities, natural environments, and cultural practices (Maulidi & Siregar, 2021). Similarly, studies of Yogyakarta demonstrate that its urban structure was deliberately organized through philosophical and cosmological principles that connected the kraton, public spaces, religious structures, roads, and surrounding landscapes (Syahdani & Kardanardi, 2023; Permadi et al., 2024). The continuing importance of this relationship is evident in the recognition of Yogyakarta's Philosophical Axis as a cultural landscape representing Javanese philosophical thought through spatial relationships, landmarks, rituals, and traditional management systems (UNESCO, 2024; Syahdani & Kardanardi, 2023).

However, empirical evidence from 2018–2025 demonstrates that many Indonesian historic public spaces have undergone significant transformations driven by urban modernization, infrastructure development, tourism-oriented revitalization, commercial expansion, and changing patterns of public behavior. Research on Alun-

Alun Batu, for instance, demonstrates that changes in the surrounding built environment have influenced spatial functions and patterns of public activity. Comparative observations between 2013 and 2023 indicate that the development of the surrounding built environment significantly affected how individuals and communities experienced and utilized the alun-alun (Marhendra, 2024). Studies of public-space organization in Batu similarly indicate that spatial configuration and facilities influence patterns of interaction, privacy, territorial behavior, and public-space utilization (Firmansyah et al., 2023). Comparable processes can be observed in other Indonesian heritage areas, where revitalization, adaptive reuse, tourism development, and commercial activities create new opportunities while also generating challenges for heritage authenticity and local identity (Rusata & Hamidah, 2022; Suryada, 2023).

The transformation of alun-alun also reflects broader socio-cultural shifts in contemporary Javanese society. Contemporary public spaces increasingly accommodate festivals, sports, culinary markets, concerts, tourism activities, creative-economy initiatives, and informal economic activities. Although these developments may improve accessibility, economic vitality, and social interaction, they can simultaneously generate tensions between cultural authenticity, commercial utilization, and public accessibility. Research on heritage public spaces demonstrates that the meanings attached to such places emerge from the interaction between physical environments and everyday social experiences (Ginzarly et al., 2024). Likewise, research on the Bali Arts Centre demonstrates how cultural public spaces can simultaneously function as venues for cultural festivals, social interaction, tourism, and public activities, requiring management strategies that balance cultural functions with contemporary use (Triadnyani et al., 2024).

The cultural dimension of landscape transformation is particularly important because historical landscapes contain both tangible and intangible values. Research on Borobudur, for example, demonstrates that cultural landscapes are socially produced through time and that changing political institutions and worldviews can alter the relationship between communities and their environments (Mladenović, 2023). Similarly, research on the ancient Javanese landscape of the Brantas River Basin demonstrates that cosmological principles were incorporated into spatial organization and environmental relationships, suggesting that Javanese landscape systems historically integrated ecological, social, and symbolic dimensions (Maulidi & Siregar, 2021). This perspective is useful for interpreting alun-alun because elements such as trees, open spaces, ceremonial routes, surrounding buildings, and patterns of public

activity should be understood not as isolated physical components but as parts of an interconnected cultural landscape.

Despite growing scholarly attention toward alun-alun revitalization and heritage conservation, important research gaps remain. First, most previous studies examine alun-alun from the perspectives of urban design, public open-space utilization, behavioral mapping, architectural morphology, tourism development, or heritage management individually (Firmansyah et al., 2023; Marhendra, 2024; Prabowo et al., 2020). Second, existing literature predominantly focuses on single-case studies without sufficiently constructing a broader analytical framework explaining how different historical periods collectively reshaped Javanese public landscapes. Research on Kota Lama Semarang demonstrates the value of chronological mapping for understanding the successive physical layers of historic urban landscapes, but this approach has not been sufficiently extended to the historical transformation of alun-alun as a distinctive Javanese cultural landscape (Prabowo et al., 2020). Third, previous research pays limited attention to the interaction between tangible landscape elements and intangible cultural heritage, including rituals, collective memory, local identity, cosmological symbolism, and socio-political meanings. This limitation is significant because the HUL framework explicitly recognizes social and cultural practices, intangible heritage, identity, and community values as integral components of historic urban landscapes (UNESCO, 2011; Damayanti et al., 2021). The research gap therefore lies not simply in the limited number of studies on alun-alun, but in the absence of a historically grounded, interdisciplinary framework that explains how spatial form, political power, cultural values, environmental conditions, and public practices have interacted throughout the transformation of Javanese alun-alun.

This research is therefore scientifically significant for several reasons. First, Indonesia is experiencing accelerated urban revitalization programs targeting historic city centers, making it increasingly urgent to develop conservation models that preserve cultural identity while accommodating sustainable development. The HUL Quick Scan approach developed and tested in several Indonesian cities demonstrates the importance of participatory heritage assessment involving government, communities, universities, and other stakeholders in developing sustainable strategies for historic urban areas (Damayanti et al., 2021). Second, the recognition of Yogyakarta's Philosophical Axis as a UNESCO World Heritage property has intensified international attention toward Javanese urban morphology, cultural philosophy, and historic landscape management. The property demonstrates how spatial organization, rituals, philosophical principles, and traditional management

systems collectively constitute outstanding cultural value (UNESCO, 2024). Third, interdisciplinary cultural landscape research has become increasingly important for addressing climate resilience, community participation, heritage governance, sustainable tourism, and public-space management. Recent studies of Indonesian heritage areas show that sustainability depends on balancing physical conservation with social inclusion, economic vitality, community participation, and cultural continuity (Prabowo & Salaj, 2023; Rusata & Hamidah, 2022).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the historical transformation of Javanese cultural landscapes through the development of *alun-alun* as public spaces by examining changes in spatial structure, socio-cultural functions, symbolic meanings, and historical roles from the pre-colonial period to contemporary urban development. Using a cultural landscape and Historic Urban Landscape perspective, this research seeks to explain how *alun-alun* has adapted to successive political regimes, modernization processes, and changing public needs while maintaining elements of Javanese cultural identity. Theoretically, the study contributes to enriching cultural landscape, urban heritage, and Southeast Asian urbanism literature by integrating historical, spatial, ecological, and socio-cultural analyses within one conceptual framework. Practically, it provides evidence-based recommendations for heritage conservation, sustainable public-space planning, and culturally sensitive urban revitalization policies in historic Javanese cities, ensuring that future development strengthens rather than diminishes the historical identity and living cultural values embodied in the *alun-alun*.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative historical-interpretive approach using a historical cultural landscape case-study design to examine the transformation of *alun-alun* as a public space in Tangerang Regency (Kabupaten Tangerang). This approach is selected because the research does not primarily seek to measure the current physical condition of the *alun-alun*, but to reconstruct and interpret changes in its spatial form, public functions, cultural meanings, and relationship with Javanese cultural landscape practices across different historical periods. A historical-interpretive approach is particularly appropriate because cultural landscapes are dynamic products of interactions between human activities, political structures, social practices, and environmental conditions rather than fixed physical objects (Antrop, 2005; Taylor & Lennon, 2011). The research object is therefore the historical development of the *alun-alun* and its associated landscape elements in Tangerang Regency, while the research subjects consist of local communities, cultural figures,

historians, government officials, heritage practitioners, and other actors possessing knowledge about the historical and contemporary use of the public space. This methodological choice is consistent with the Historic Urban Landscape perspective, which emphasizes the integration of historical layers, spatial morphology, social values, and contemporary development in understanding urban heritage (UNESCO, 2011).

Data are collected through historical-document analysis, field observation, semi-structured interviews, and photographic/spatial documentation, allowing methodological triangulation between historical evidence and contemporary empirical conditions. Historical documents include old maps, government archives, planning documents, photographs, local historical records, manuscripts, newspapers, and relevant scholarly publications, while field observations are directed toward identifying surviving spatial structures, landscape elements, circulation patterns, activity zones, and transformations in public-space functions. Semi-structured interviews are conducted purposively with informants selected according to their knowledge and involvement in the historical, cultural, governmental, and social dimensions of the *alun-alun*. The principal instruments are an interview guide, observation protocol, document-analysis matrix, photographic documentation protocol, and spatial recording sheet. Data analysis follows an interactive historical-interpretive process consisting of data reduction, chronological organization, source comparison, thematic coding, interpretation, and synthesis. Triangulation is subsequently used to compare documentary, observational, and interview evidence. This analytical strategy is considered most appropriate because the research problem concerns how and why the Javanese cultural landscape embodied in the *alun-alun* has transformed, rather than simply determining whether transformation has occurred (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The validity and interpretive rigor of the research are strengthened through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, and reflexive interpretation. Documentary evidence is compared with information obtained from community informants and observations of the existing landscape to identify convergences, contradictions, and historical discontinuities. Member checking is used to verify interpretations of culturally sensitive narratives with relevant informants, while reflexivity is maintained to minimize researcher assumptions when interpreting local meanings and historical memories. The final analytical framework integrates historical chronology, landscape morphology, socio-cultural function, symbolic meaning, and contemporary public-space transformation to explain the development

of *alun-alun* in Tangerang Regency as a dynamic cultural landscape. This design provides stronger explanatory capacity than a purely descriptive spatial survey because it positions physical changes within their political, social, cultural, and historical contexts. (UNESCO, 2011; Taylor, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of historical documents, field observations, spatial documentation, and interviews indicates that the development of *alun-alun* in Tangerang Regency cannot be understood as a simple physical transformation of an open public space. Rather, the transformation represents a gradual reconfiguration of the relationship between spatial structure, political authority, community activities, cultural meanings, and contemporary urban development. The historical evidence demonstrates that the significance of *alun-alun* is produced through successive layers of use and interpretation. Consequently, the present landscape should be read as a palimpsest in which earlier spatial meanings have not completely disappeared but have been selectively retained, modified, or displaced by new functions. This finding confirms that cultural landscape transformation is simultaneously material and socio-cultural: changes in the physical arrangement of the public space are accompanied by changes in the ways communities understand, occupy, and reproduce its cultural significance.

The historical reconstruction shows that the *alun-alun* developed as part of a broader spatial system rather than as an isolated public square. Its position and relationship with governmental, religious, commercial, and residential areas created a spatial structure through which public life was organized. The analytical comparison of historical records with the contemporary landscape suggests that the meaning of the *alun-alun* was historically dependent on its connectivity with surrounding institutions and activity spaces. This is important because the contemporary tendency to treat the *alun-alun* as an independent recreational space obscures the relational character of the historical landscape. The findings therefore indicate that the transformation of the *alun-alun* is better characterized as a transformation of a landscape system, rather than merely a change in the appearance or facilities of a public square.

The spatial analysis further reveals three major dimensions of transformation: structural reconfiguration, functional diversification, and symbolic reinterpretation. Structural reconfiguration is reflected in changes to circulation patterns, landscape elements, activity zones, vegetation arrangements, hardscape surfaces, supporting facilities, and the relationship between the open space and surrounding buildings. These modifications increase accessibility and accommodate contemporary public

activities, but they also tend to produce a more standardized conception of public-space design. The resulting landscape is more explicitly organized around comfort, visibility, recreation, and event management than around the historical spatial hierarchy. The finding is significant because it demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily eliminate cultural landscape identity immediately; instead, it gradually changes the spatial conditions through which that identity can be experienced and reproduced.

Functional transformation represents the second major finding. The contemporary *alun-alun* has acquired multiple functions, including recreation, social interaction, informal economic activity, community gatherings, public events, and leisure. From a public-space perspective, this diversification indicates increased adaptability and continued relevance. The *alun-alun* remains socially active precisely because it can accommodate changing community needs. However, the analysis also indicates a tension between functional vitality and cultural continuity. Increased recreational and commercial activities can strengthen public use while simultaneously reducing the visibility of historical functions and cultural practices. Thus, increased utilization should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of successful heritage preservation. A public space may become more crowded and economically productive while losing some of the historical meanings that originally distinguished it from ordinary urban parks.

The analysis of community narratives provides further evidence that the transformation involves changes in collective perception. Informants generally recognize the *alun-alun* as an important public space, but its contemporary meaning is increasingly associated with recreation, social gathering, local events, and everyday leisure rather than with the historical and symbolic dimensions of the Javanese cultural landscape. This finding suggests a gradual shift from a culturally encoded public space toward a functionally oriented public space. Nevertheless, cultural memory has not disappeared entirely. Historical narratives, local traditions, community events, and symbolic references continue to provide cultural associations that connect the present landscape with its historical past. The resulting condition can therefore be characterized as selective cultural continuity: some elements remain meaningful because they continue to be practiced, while others survive primarily as visual or historical references.

The relationship between tangible and intangible heritage constitutes another important finding. Several physical landscape elements retain significance not simply because of their material presence but because communities attach memories and

cultural interpretations to them. Conversely, when physical elements are removed, relocated, redesigned, or disconnected from their historical context, associated cultural meanings become more difficult to communicate to younger generations. This demonstrates that conservation of cultural landscape cannot be reduced to preserving individual objects. The significance of the *alun-alun* emerges from relationships among spatial configuration, landscape elements, surrounding buildings, community practices, historical narratives, and patterns of movement. The findings therefore support an integrated interpretation in which tangible and intangible dimensions must be examined together.

The historical comparison also reveals that transformation has been strongly influenced by changing systems of governance and urban development. Different periods have introduced different priorities concerning the function and appearance of public space. Earlier spatial organization was closely associated with political authority, social hierarchy, ritual practices, and community organization, whereas contemporary intervention is increasingly shaped by public-service provision, urban aesthetics, tourism potential, economic activity, accessibility, and recreational demands. The landscape therefore reflects changing relationships between state institutions and society. The transformation cannot be attributed solely to modernization or community preference; it is also produced through planning decisions, development priorities, and institutional interpretations of what constitutes an appropriate contemporary public space.

A critical finding concerns the apparent contradiction between revitalization and cultural preservation. Contemporary improvements can enhance physical accessibility, cleanliness, safety, attractiveness, and opportunities for social interaction. These improvements demonstrate that adaptation is necessary if historical public spaces are to remain relevant in changing urban contexts. However, when revitalization is dominated by physical beautification without sufficient consideration of historical spatial relationships and local cultural narratives, the result may be a visually improved landscape with weakened historical authenticity. The research consequently identifies a distinction between physical revitalization and cultural revitalization. The former concerns improvements to infrastructure and appearance, whereas the latter requires the continued reproduction, interpretation, and transmission of cultural meaning. The evidence suggests that the sustainability of the *alun-alun* as a cultural landscape depends more strongly on the integration of these two dimensions than on physical improvement alone.

The findings also demonstrate that the transformation of the *alun-alun* should not be interpreted exclusively as cultural loss. Such an interpretation would overlook the adaptive capacity of public landscapes. The incorporation of new activities and contemporary facilities enables the *alun-alun* to remain socially relevant in a changing society. The more critical interpretation is therefore that transformation produces both continuity and discontinuity simultaneously. Cultural continuity is maintained through collective memory, social interaction, local events, and persistent recognition of the space as an important public place. Discontinuity occurs when historical spatial relationships, traditional functions, symbolic elements, or culturally specific practices become less visible within contemporary landscape management. The *alun-alun* consequently represents a negotiated landscape in which inherited cultural meanings coexist with modern public-space expectations.

From the perspective of cultural landscape theory, the results indicate that the historical identity of the *alun-alun* is not located in a single physical feature but in the interaction among space, memory, activity, symbolism, and historical continuity. This finding challenges an object-centered approach to heritage conservation, because preserving selected physical features does not necessarily preserve the cultural landscape as a whole. The analytical results instead support a relational understanding in which the meaning of the *alun-alun* emerges from connections between its physical form and the social practices occurring within and around it. Such an interpretation is particularly important for Tangerang Regency because contemporary development may continue to alter the spatial context in which historical meanings are produced.



Figure 1. Alun-Alun in Tangerang Regency

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkMYrdfgExg>

The findings demonstrate that the transformation of *alun-alun* in Tangerang Regency should not be interpreted merely as a physical modernization of public open space, but as a restructuring of the relationship between historical identity, spatial form, social practices, and contemporary urban demands. This interpretation is consistent with the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) perspective, which conceptualizes historic urban environments as layered systems in which tangible structures, social practices, cultural meanings, and environmental characteristics interact dynamically. UNESCO's contemporary understanding of cultural landscapes similarly emphasizes that heritage value is not located exclusively in individual monuments, but in the relationships among spatial organization, historical processes, cultural practices, and living communities. The findings from Tangerang Regency therefore indicate that the transformation of *alun-alun* represents a process of landscape negotiation, in which inherited cultural meanings are continuously adjusted to accommodate contemporary requirements.

The first important analytical finding concerns the transformation from an integrated cultural landscape into a predominantly multifunctional public space. Historically, the *alun-alun* was embedded within a wider spatial system connecting political authority, religious institutions, commercial activities, settlement, and ceremonial practices. Consequently, its meaning depended upon spatial relationships rather than on the square itself. The contemporary transformation, however, tends to emphasize recreation, leisure, social interaction, events, and economic activity. This finding has a strong parallel with Marhendra's study of Alun-Alun Batu, which found that redevelopment generated new social activities and contributed to economic growth, while subsequent development of the surrounding built environment altered activity patterns and community experiences of the space. The similarity is important because it suggests that the multifunctionality of *alun-alun* is not inherently problematic.

The second major finding concerns the selective persistence of cultural identity. The research does not indicate a complete disappearance of Javanese cultural meanings. Instead, cultural identity survives through collective memory, community narratives, traditional activities, symbolic references, and continued recognition of the *alun-alun* as a culturally important place. This condition can be described as selective cultural continuity. Some historical meanings remain active because they continue to be practiced, whereas others become increasingly symbolic or commemorative. This finding corresponds with recent research on Yogyakarta's urban landscape, which demonstrates that spiritual and symbolic values remain embedded in spaces such as

the Keraton and *alun-alun*, even while urbanization and commercial development increasingly orient these spaces toward economic and tourism functions. The similarity confirms that cultural landscapes do not simply move from "traditional" to "modern"; rather, different historical meanings coexist, although their relative visibility and social importance change over time.

The third finding concerns the tension between physical revitalization and cultural authenticity. Improvements in circulation, landscaping, facilities, accessibility, cleanliness, and visual quality can make the *alun-alun* more attractive and usable. From the perspective of contemporary urban design, these interventions are rational responses to changing public needs. However, the analysis suggests that physical interventions become problematic when they are designed primarily according to generic aesthetic standards rather than the historical morphology and cultural symbolism of the site. This phenomenon is particularly important because contemporary public-space design increasingly values standardized amenities and visually attractive landscapes. The result can be what may be termed aesthetic modernization without cultural integration: the space becomes physically improved but less capable of communicating its historical specificity.

The fourth finding therefore concerns governance as a determinant of landscape transformation. The changes identified in Tangerang Regency cannot be explained exclusively through spontaneous changes in community behavior. Public-space transformation is also shaped by planning decisions, government priorities, infrastructure investment, tourism strategies, and changing interpretations of what constitutes a successful public space. The experience of Yogyakarta demonstrates the complexity of this relationship.

The Tangerang findings differ from the Yogyakarta case in one significant respect. Yogyakarta possesses a highly articulated cosmological framework and an internationally recognized heritage system in which spatial relationships are explicitly connected to Javanese philosophical concepts. UNESCO identifies the Cosmological Axis as an integrated ensemble whose tangible and intangible attributes include spatial planning, rituals, ceremonies, governance traditions, and cultural practices. Tangerang Regency does not necessarily possess the same degree of formalized cosmological articulation or international heritage recognition. This difference means that the preservation challenge in Tangerang is potentially more vulnerable to functional normalization, whereby the *alun-alun* is increasingly perceived as an ordinary public park rather than as a historically meaningful cultural landscape.

The results also reveal an important contradiction concerning economic vitality and cultural preservation. Contemporary public-space development can generate economic opportunities, increase visitor numbers, and support informal businesses. The Batu case provides empirical evidence that redesign can contribute significantly to economic growth and generate new patterns of social activity. The Tangerang findings are consistent with this adaptive function, but they suggest that economic vitality can become problematic when commercial activities dominate the spatial and symbolic character of the landscape. The issue, therefore, is not whether commercial activity should exist, but whether it remains compatible with the cultural carrying capacity and historical identity of the place. This distinction has theoretical implications for heritage planning because it rejects both extremes: treating heritage as a frozen artifact and treating modernization as an unrestricted process of commercialization.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to the Historic Urban Landscape framework by demonstrating that historical public spaces should be evaluated through the interaction of four analytical dimensions: morphological continuity, functional adaptation, cultural-symbolic continuity, and governance participation. Morphological continuity concerns the preservation of historically meaningful spatial relationships; functional adaptation concerns the capacity of the landscape to respond to contemporary needs; cultural-symbolic continuity concerns the transmission of memory and meaning; and governance participation concerns the ability of communities and institutions to negotiate transformation collectively. Existing studies frequently examine one or two of these dimensions separately.

The scientific implication is therefore that the *alun-alun* should not be categorized simply as a public open space, but as a historically layered cultural landscape whose public-space function is itself part of its heritage significance. This conceptual shift is important because it changes the objective of planning from merely optimizing spatial use to managing relationships between heritage and contemporary urban life. Recent Indonesian research on historic public spaces supports the importance of physical and social elements for maintaining urban identity, while research on Yogyakarta demonstrates the necessity of integrating symbolic meaning and community participation into heritage management. The Tangerang case adds a further dimension by emphasizing historical transformation itself: understanding what has changed, why it changed, and which meanings have survived provides a stronger basis for determining what should be conserved and what may legitimately be adapted.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the transformation of the Javanese *alun-alun* in Tangerang Regency is neither a straightforward narrative of cultural decline nor an uncomplicated success story of urban revitalization. It is a contested and negotiated process of cultural adaptation. Modernization has increased functional diversity and contemporary relevance, but it has also created risks of spatial homogenization, commercialization, and weakening historical meaning. Conversely, the persistence of collective memory, cultural practices, and local identity indicates that transformation has not eliminated the historical landscape altogether. The central theoretical argument emerging from the analysis is therefore that the sustainability of Javanese cultural landscapes depends not on preventing transformation, but on governing transformation so that contemporary functions remain connected to historical spatial structures and living cultural meanings. This argument provides a stronger conceptual basis for future conservation and planning policies in Tangerang Regency and other Javanese urban environments undergoing rapid modernization.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the historical transformation of the *alun-alun* in Kabupaten Tangerang represents a process of adaptive cultural transformation rather than a linear transition from traditional to modern public space. The findings indicate that changes in spatial configuration, public functions, landscape elements, and patterns of social use have repositioned the *alun-alun* from a historically embedded cultural landscape toward a multifunctional contemporary public space. Nevertheless, historical identity has not disappeared completely; it persists selectively through collective memory, social practices, symbolic associations, and the continued recognition of the *alun-alun* as an important communal space. This finding strengthens the Historic Urban Landscape perspective by demonstrating that cultural landscape continuity depends not simply on preserving physical elements, but on maintaining relationships between spatial form, historical memory, cultural practices, and contemporary community needs.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting its contribution. First, the historical reconstruction is dependent on the availability, continuity, and reliability of documentary sources and community memories; therefore, certain historical layers may remain incompletely documented or subject to differences in interpretation. Second, the qualitative case-study design provides contextual depth but does not permit statistical generalization to all *alun-alun* in Java. Third, the study primarily emphasizes historical, spatial, and socio-cultural transformation and therefore does not quantitatively evaluate variables such as visitor

behavior, economic impact, environmental performance, accessibility, or spatial configuration.

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