



THE APPROPRIATE THIRD PLACES: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE MUSLIM YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Third Places refers to managed gathering spaces outside the home and work where people can engage in social interaction voluntarily. These places are known to decrease stress and build a sense of community. However, third places are currently developed in a western cultural context. This paper investigates the role of third places in the context of eastern culture, specifically with Islamic values. Using a qualitative approach, the data was gathered using semi-structured interviews with young Muslim visitors of a coffeehouse in Bandung City. The results illustrate that the coffeehouse is considered a third place. Not only because of its availability for conversation and laughter but also its architectural features that support Islamic practices like praying and maintaining certain proximity with the opposite gender. This study concluded that the cultural framework in which a third place is created is critical.

KEYWORDS:

Coffeehouses; Muslim society; Third places; Youth

INTRODUCTION

The idea of third places was initiated by Oldenburg [1] in his book *The Great Good Places*. The third place is to gather spaces outside home and work where community life unfolds. The concept of a third position is not new. People have long congregated in coffee shops, social and sports clubs, pubs, and taverns for casual gatherings, to have a drink and conversation [2]. However, the collapse of community life and the disappearance of social spaces across America and Europe, which has led to many people spending the majority of their time at work or home, was the initial area of focus of the third place concept.

The characteristics of third places are socially neutral and level their guests. The conversation is the main activity and channel for displaying and appreciating human uniqueness and individuality [3], [4]. Typically, third places are low-profile and become lively after hours. Its regular customers and playful mood also characterize it. Though different from home, the third location provides psychological warmth and support. Oldenburg [1] emphasizes that third places are crucial to community and public life because it offers health advantages. Furthermore,

third places promote social connection, help lonely people feel less isolated, and give them a feeling of reality through conversation.

The benefits of third places are confirmed in a general sense [5]-[7], but they haven't been recognized from an eastern cultural context. In eastern culture, friendliness and religious value are highly emphasized. This study aims to fill this gap. A coffeehouse in Bandung City, Indonesia, was used as the study case. Indonesia is a modern country with strong Islamic values [8]. Therefore, this study focused on Muslim youth users, their reasons and occasions when using the coffeehouses, who they go with, what they do there, how they feel about the spaces, and what benefits they gain. The paper is divided into three parts. First, Qualitative data gathering and analysis are discussed in the methodology section. The result are then reported in the discussion section, and the study is concluded with theoretical and practical implications.

METHODS

This study's subject was the coffeehouse of Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas in Bandung City. This

decision is founded on evolving modern third-place standards, such as 1) supporting digital features, 2) accommodating activities other than talking, including people-watching and working, 3) accessible location, 4) inexpensive pricing, 5) virtual engagement, and 6) innovative business model [9], [10].

The coffeehouse of Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas is located in the most prominent area of Bandung city (Figure 1). It was located on the main road that integrated with public transportation. While the area was generally famous for its commercials and tourist attractions, it was well known as the area for the Youth. There were many hangout spaces, like cafes and restaurants, and shops selling goods with the latest style. Furthermore, there were about ten academic institutions around the coffeehouse, from formal schools to vocational courses.

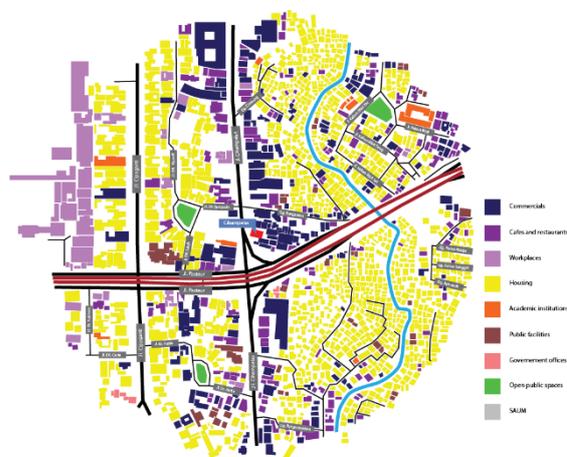


Figure 1. Environmental functions of Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas [source Author, 2021]

The initial step in the data collection process was to describe the coffeehouse as third place. To do so, physical and non-physical environments were observed. The physical details were taken from earlier models of the environment in coffee shops [9], [11], [12]. Three scales were examined during the physical observation: urban configuration, architectural details, and interior ambiance. The non-physical observation concentrated on how the visitors naturally used the spaces [13]. Since they were uniformed for being observed, the observer became wholly removed from them [14]. Visitors' behavior was observed through their looks, possessions, company, activities, talks, and seating arrangement. The observation was carried out between December 2019 and February 2020. On weekdays and weekends, observations occurred between 8 am and 12 pm (4 pm-8 pm). A total of 167 people were observed and documented using field notes, a photo, and a video.

Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was conducted with young Muslim visitors. All participants in this study are young residents of Bandung who were born and raised in Muslim families. Instead of being representative, it tried to "understand individual

experiences and make meaning of their life" [24, p. 111]. The interview focused on the Muslim Youth's preferences and spatial awareness, particularly how and why they engage in café activities. The main concern was how the third place affected their emotions and outlook after departing concerning the Islamic value they attached. Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the interviews were performed over the telephone. 25 young Muslim visitors from 14 to 18 years old were interviewed. All of them were junior and high school pupils.

The data were analyzed qualitatively using the coding technique developed by Miles et al. [15]. In this technique, concepts are gradually abstracted away from data labels that have symbolic value. Theories were not used in the coding process to create concept groups and subcategories. The participants were thoroughly questioned to prevent consistency issues within the categories. For instance, chats were frequent, but it was difficult to tell them apart from private conversations. The participants were therefore asked to describe their discussion partner, the subjects, the laughs, and the gestures.

DISCUSSION

SITUATING MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDUNG CITY

Since all participants are pupils, schools and their extended environment were their second places. These are the spaces where they develop skills through studying and socializing. They went to school from Monday to Friday, which started at 7 am and finished around 3 pm. Homework, either individual or group, was given regularly by the schools. Most of them must be done within a week or less. The schools also encouraged participants to engage in hobby groups and extracurriculars actively. The aim was to equip them with social skills like leadership, being open-minded, and the ability to work in a group. Thus, the participants continued non-academic activities after school time. The activities ranged from sports, student union meetings, and language or music. After that, they went back home.

The participant's home was the family house where parents and siblings resided. Sometimes, extended families like grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins also lived in the house. Both parents went to work every weekday during working hours; the children were dropped off and picked up at school by the parents; the female in the family wears a hijab, and the male always goes to mosque for Friday prayers; they maintain communication or '*silaturahmi*' with the extended family; and also very concern about keeping whatever consumed as '*halal*' and '*tayyib*.' Furthermore, family time was spent at least once or twice a week a month by strolling around shopping malls or eating out in a restaurant. This kind of family house was the participants' first place. In the home, participants played the role of devoted sons and daughters. They conversed with parents during dinner, shared TV and food with siblings, helped parents with

chores, did religious practices (for example, praying, reciting Quran, and fasting), and were kind to other family members.

Parental obedience and respect are the foundation of Islamic civilization [16]. The Quran (2:83; 2:215; 46:15; 47:22) and Hadith emphasize parents' and relatives' rights because parents and older family members are obliged to guide their children to follow Islamic values. Parents in Muslim families see this as the ideal. For instance, Youth rarely leave without their parent's permission; unless they go to college or get married, they can't live alone; the girls are encouraged to wear hijab and should arrive home before dark. Parents barely left their children with other caretakers since childhood. With this proximity, the Youth internalize their parents' ideals at a young age and learn to behave according to the family's ethos. They also believe they owe their parents a debt of gratitude [17]. Thus, parents' approval is vital to participants' decisions.

While the value at home is particularly about Islam, the one outside home is the opposite. Bandung city is the epicenter of creative culture in Indonesia [18], where young people voluntarily gather and interact in public settings regardless of their background. This included the Youth with a different values from the participants. According to participants' stories, the most contrasting way of life among their peers was the "western lifestyle." It was a way of life where children had more freedom and less parental authorization than participants' lives. The participants witnessed how their peers could wear open clothes and hang out until late without calling their parents in advance. They also noticed that their peers have started forming romantic relationships with the opposite gender. Those couples were often at a very close physical distance in public. This form of relationship, called '*pacaran*' or dating, was "just for fun" and has "nothing serious" towards the formal institution of marriage.

Participants' parents scarcely allowed their children to hang out with peers because they feared it would make them western. By Muslim standards, the lifestyle of the west is dangerous and shouldn't be replicated [19]. It will lead to an unstable and hazardous civilization. Connection and feeling in the family are weak. Younger generations don't seem to care for the elderly and send them to homes. Sexual freedom and marriage are devalued. Parents remarry and divorce without considering their children, who may need foster care.

The threat of western culture is not only about life quality among Muslim Youth in the future but also about family dignity. In Muslim families, family welfare and honor are more important than personal feelings or 'selfish' aspirations [19]. Each member is responsible for the family due to their actions. Therefore, failing to sustain a sense of honor is like disregarding a fundamental component of human dignity, while neglecting emotional and financial reciprocities within the extended family is like ignoring one's most

important tasks [20].

However, from the participants' perspective, hanging out in public with heterogeneous peers is the best way to develop self-identity and social skills. Abbott-Chapman and Robertson [21] suggested that young people intend to interact with peers without adult supervision. The nature of Youth is constructing self-identity by questioning given norms and values from the home environment. Thus, Youth naturally prefers peers because peers are people from outside the home who will not hesitate to be critical of existing norms and values. They do this construction through voluntary social interaction in public settings [22]. Places like coffeehouses were the stage for them to express self-identity and get feedback about how they could fit better as individuals and members of society. As a participant explained:

For my parents, hanging out is a waste of money and time. They see it as meaningless talk and laughing, spending money on coffee and unhealthy food. While for me, it's very inspiring. I could talk to my friends about things I don't discuss with my parents. Like how to get a girlfriend, or about nightlife and clubbing in the city. It's going to be weird and taboo topics at home. By knowing that thing, I know what is happening around me. I know the reality of life. And most importantly, talking about that did not necessarily mean I experienced them directly. I don't have to try those forbidden things by myself, but I still understand the nature and consequences of my friends. (A34)

The narrative above explains the struggle of contemporary Muslim Youth in Bandung city. The different value between home and the outside environment has placed the participants in a dilemma. On the one hand, they wanted to obey their parents. While on the other hand, they also wanted to understand and explore life outside the home. Today's young people in Indonesia desire to be both modern and pious. Teenagers who identify as Muslims strive to succeed academically and in their future occupations while remaining good Muslims [23].

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN OF THIRD PLACES

The third place appeared in the participants' routine after school and before home. In this period, adult supervision was absent because they did not have to be either at home or school. Thus, the participants could do activities they wanted, like hanging out and doing group works with peers.

For the participants, third places must offer freedom. Therefore, the spaces should not have many rules—for instance, minimum transaction to use the space, limited internet connection, or short operational hours. Most importantly, the parents must approve the third place because disobeying parents means violating Islamic values. Some third places examples mentioned by the participants were restaurants and co-working spaces that were accessible within walking distance from their schools.



Figure 2. Façade of Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas [source Author, 2020]



Figure 4. The open bar in the main space [source Author, 2020]

Besides those examples, Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas used in this study were the main third places destinations (Figure 2). It was located in an accessible location. The site was on the main road, which integrated with local and intercity public transport. It operates in a commercial and touristic neighborhood. There were shopping malls, hotels, restaurants, public parks, and other hangout spaces nearby. That includes participants' schools and houses. The coffeehouse also had restrooms, high-speed internet access, and electrical plugs at every table.

The terrace space has a relaxed and light atmosphere (Figure 5). Picnic-style tables and chairs were arranged in a moderate density and fairly uniform color. This area was connected to the outside and hence naturally ventilated. Unlike the main space, most visitors did leisure activities on the terrace, from smoking to playing cards and online mobile games. Meanwhile, the supportive space was compact and versatile in use. It was furniture-equipped little rooms or linked hallways. Sometimes these spaces were used for private gatherings or circulation rather than seats.

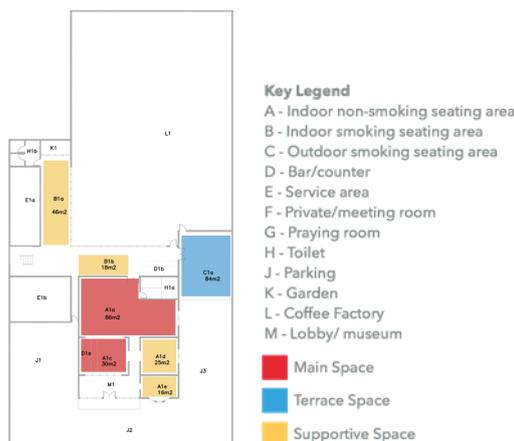


Figure 3. Main space, terrace space, and supportive space in Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas [source Author, 2020]

The outlet consisted of the main, terrace, and supportive spaces (Figure 3). The main space was the heart of the coffeehouses. It was where the hum of camaraderie was mainly situated (Figure 5). The room was air-conditioned and brightly lighted. Decorations on the walls were general information about coffee. Young visitors sat in the group, having iced coffee and light bites while laughing with their peers. Some of them were working together, using laptops and books. The bar where products are made and sold was also located in this area. The bar is open, so baristas and visitors can chat while preparing coffee (Figure 4).



Figure 5. The ambiance of the main space (left) and terrace space (right) [source Author, 2020]

As a result, the coffeehouse played a role in third places. It welcomed both individuals and groups of friends and coworkers. People of all ages and occupations are drawn to the areas to spend time there. That comprises family, social groups, mothers, and professionals. They were often observed talking, laughing, reading, watching movies, or listening to music while seated at the coffeehouses.

The participants visited the coffeehouse regularly with peers, at least one or two times a week. They behaved like regulars who have already know what to order, where to sit, and what to do. Despite the venue's frequent overcrowding, the interview showed that both outlets were seen as locations for unwinding, mingling, and enjoyment. Participants frequently used adjectives like "comfortable," "relaxed," "chilled," "friendly," "wonderful," "content," and "social" to express their feeling.

A significant benefit of third places coffeehouses is extending one's social network in a contemporary public setting [2]. The majority of participants reported enjoying reconnecting with old friends. Some participants frequently use the phrase "meeting new individuals through friends of friends" when describing

how they met their peers. Some people thought of Warunk Upnormal as a place to easily make new friends or reconnect with existing ones. In the interview, approximately half of the participants acknowledged that they had made acquaintances and met individuals without consciously seeking to do so. A frequent visitor commented, "Simply talking to acquaintances of my friend... just extending friendship, I guess." Warunk Upnormal served as a place where participants could rekindle their friendships.

Besides fulfilling the psychological needs of the participants, the third place's design was also considered appropriate in the eastern cultural context. The location of Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas was considered safe. It was easily accessed and surrounded by a neighborhood with positive images, from commercials to workplaces—no function conflicting with Islamic values, like prostitution and drugs. The site was also on the main road instead of in narrow alleys with a lack of lights. A Muslim high school participant studying near the Cihampelas outlet explained her parent's approval of the café regarding the location:

Everyone in the city knows Cihampelas street, including my parents. It is the area where people and tourists buy souvenirs and hang out. So, it is normal to enjoy free time with friends here. That is why they [my parents] permitted me to hang out at the Cihampelas outlet, even with my boyfriend. (A29)



Figure 6. Clean and bright praying room (left); transparent wall and windows seeing through the street (right) [source Author, 2020]

The facility of Warunk Upnormal Cihampelas included a clean and spacious prayer room (Figure 6). This feature was even stated in the front signage that faced the street, implying that the coffeehouse supported Muslims in performing mandatory prayers in the third place. For the participants, this facility shooed their parents about their praying practices. They did not have to put effort into finding suitable spaces to pray. When the participants hang out with peers from afternoon until night, they did not worry about where to do Maghrib prayer because the prayer room was always available and neat.

Furthermore, the wall of the outlets was transparent. Every outlet has big transparent windows facing the outside spaces (Figure 6). This transparency created visual permeability, allowing visitors to see and watch each other. In other words, people in the main space could see other visitors on the terrace and vice

versa. Prior research posited that visually permeable walls and windows that display goods and activities are among the characteristics of building features that define enjoyable social spaces [24]. This permeability of the street front is crucial in creating the conditions for such sensory stimulation.

CONCLUSION

This study started with a question about third places in eastern culture. Then, using a qualitative approach in a coffeehouse in Bandung City, the results and discussions illustrated that the coffeehouse design was considered proper for the participants and their parents as gathering spaces outside the home and school. In addition, the design of third places accommodated the Muslim Youth's need to obey parents and social norms and their psychological needs to interact with peers.

This study concludes that the appropriateness of spaces in eastern culture is crucial in making third places. The design of third place in Muslim society should consider more than a functional issue like hanging out and working. Religious practices and social norms are the two crucial issues in this study. The design of the third place balances out the stigma on Muslim youth interaction in public settings. Social interaction between peers was away from adult supervision and happened voluntarily. When using the third place, all participants felt uplifted and inspired. They were happy because they could be modern like their peers without worrying about parents and the social stigma of hanging out in a public setting. Following Crick [25], this indicated that the coffeehouses became the third place for Muslim Youth because they fulfill emotional needs and assist the struggle of being young and Muslim.

Furthermore, listening to the Youth's perspectives will ease adults' and society's concerns. Family connections stability or "normality" will influence psychoanalytic and societal perspectives of young people's activities in a public setting. Concerns about young people's public welfare are not dismissed; hence families, educators, and others in the community should protect the next generation's well-being. The Youth's challenges include changing everyday lives and impacting urban planning and design [26].

Finally, in terms of method, the quality of the semi-structured interviews was hindered by the pandemic. Time and resources for gestures and expressions were limited during phone interviews. Confirmatory queries and multiple interviews were applied to reduce data discrepancy. The data was also restricted to young Muslim customers of a single coffeehouse in Bandung City, Indonesia. Therefore, this study did not suggest a generalization.

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