

# Public Space and The People: Cultural Relationship between Protected Areas and Coastal Community in Pekalongan, Central Java

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**Abstract.** Coastal communities in Indonesia heavily rely on public spaces for various aspects of their livelihood and well-being. These spaces serve as crucial hubs for economic activities, enabling residents to engage in commerce, trade, and other livelihood endeavors. Furthermore, public spaces provide a platform for fostering social interactions and maintaining a harmonious relationship between the community and the natural environment. This research aims to investigate the significance of public space within coastal communities, particularly in the context of the hazardous situation they face during rob flood events. These floods pose significant threats to the safety and functionality of the public spaces, impacting the daily lives and economic activities of the coastal communities. Consequently, there is an urgent need to address these challenges and ensure the resilience and sustainability of the public spaces in coastal areas. Using a qualitative research design, the study combines observational methods and interviews with individuals who actively utilize these areas. The findings of the research demonstrate that the coastal communities have a strong dependence on public space. Also, the findings provide insights into the design and management of public spaces that cater to the unique needs of coastal communities of developing and maintaining proper public spaces for them. By providing safe and functional public spaces, policymakers and stakeholders can contribute to the overall well-being and sustainable development of these coastal communities.

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## 1 Introduction

Coastal communities, with their unique geographical position at the intersection of land and sea, hold immense significance in terms of their natural beauty, economic opportunities, and cultural heritage (Khakzad et al., 2015; Neumann et al., 2017). Public spaces within these communities play a vital role in shaping the social fabric, promoting economic development, and preserving the natural environment (Cano, 2022). However, the changing dynamics of coastal areas due to factors such as climate change, population growth, and tourism have raised the need to re-examine the importance of public spaces in these communities (Amoako et al., 2022).

Several previous studies on public space tend to discuss public space from three perspectives. The first is to discuss public space in terms of debates and spatial issues related to privatization and the dynamics of the conflicts surrounding it (Pineda, 2022; Staeheli & Thompson, 1997; Vigneswaran et al., 2017). Second, the discussion about public space is related to its impact on the socio-economic life of the community (Bahreldin, 2022; Chong et al., 2020; Huong, 2019; Oloruntoba et al., 2022). The third trend is studies that look at public space from the perspective of political and policy dynamics which show the importance of sustainable development of public space (Annerstedt Van Den Bosch et al., 2016; Entradas, 2016). The objective of this paper is to re-examine the importance of public spaces in coastal communities by considering their unique characteristics and challenges. By doing so, it aims to highlight the various benefits that public spaces bring to coastal communities and shed light on the challenges they face. Based on the description above, the questions to be asked are: a. how is the perspective of coastal communities towards public space; b. What are the challenges and opportunities for increasing and expanding the public spaces of coastal communities; and What are the perceptions of coastal community members on governance and decision-making processes related to planning and management of public spaces?

The research on public space for fishing communities has been carried out by Piyapong et al., (2019), using the content analysis method which shows that the involvement of fishermen in traditional cultural activities, as well as in community development and outreach, has direct and indirect effects on a sense of belonging to a place through community relations. Additionally, this paper aims to propose strategies and recommendations

to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of public spaces in these areas. Ultimately, the objective is to contribute to the well-being and sustainable development of coastal communities through a renewed understanding of the role and importance of public spaces.

To accomplish the objective, this paper employs a multi-faceted methodology involving a comprehensive literature review, case studies, and analysis of existing research and best practices. The literature review encompasses scholarly articles, research papers, and reports from reputable sources, focusing on topics such as public space, coastal communities, urban planning, and sustainable development. This extensive review helps provide a theoretical foundation and framework for understanding the subject matter. The methodology also includes interviews or surveys conducted with relevant stakeholders such as urban planners, community members, local authorities, and coastal management experts. Their perspectives and experiences contribute valuable insights into the challenges faced by public spaces in coastal communities and the potential solutions to address them. By integrating these research approaches, the paper aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the importance of public spaces in coastal communities, substantiated by theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and practical experiences. This methodology ensures a well-rounded exploration of the subject matter, enabling a thorough understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in re-examining public spaces in coastal communities.

## **2 Result and Discussion**

Researching the importance of knowing about coastal community's perspective on public space is crucial for understanding the significance of public spaces in their lives. The coastal regions, where communities reside, often face unique challenges due to their geographical location and proximity to the dynamic coastal environment. Coastal communities are particularly vulnerable to various environmental, social, and economic changes such as sea-level rise, natural disasters, tourism pressures, and urbanization. By understanding their perspectives on public space, we can design and develop public spaces that contribute to their resilience and adaptive capacity. Public spaces can act as critical community assets that support disaster preparedness, facilitate social cohesion, and enable effective communication during crises. Researching the coastal community's views on public spaces can help identify their specific needs

and aspirations, leading to the creation of resilient public spaces that address their concerns and enhance their ability to cope with environmental challenges.

Moreover, coastal communities often rely on the natural resources and ecological services provided by the coastal environment for their livelihoods and well-being. Public spaces in coastal areas can serve as gateways to the shoreline, connecting communities with their natural surroundings. By understanding the coastal community's perspective on public space, we can ensure that these spaces not only provide recreational opportunities but also promote environmental awareness and stewardship. Public spaces that foster a sense of place and belonging within the coastal community can lead to increased engagement in coastal conservation efforts, promoting sustainable practices and preserving the unique coastal ecosystem for future generations.

### **Perspective of Coastal Communities Towards Public Spaces**

Research questions	Informants' answers	Discussions
What is the perception of coastal communities regarding the availability and accessibility of public space in their area?	“Yes, that's fine, bro, because sometimes humans need a place to have fun, get together with friends so they don't stay at home all the time.”	The community considers the availability of public space as access or an instrument for channeling tertiary activities such as a place to hang out in their free time.
What are the main types of public spaces utilized and valued by coastal communities?	“It depends, bro, everyone has different preference, for me maybe I prefer a place where I can gather with friends or can do hobbies like fishing.”	The need for social interaction which is relatively high makes people choose public spaces with the criteria of being able to become an instrument to bind social

		cohesion through community activities.
How do members of coastal communities view inclusion and representation of diverse voices and cultures in the public space?	“To be honest, I don't really know, bro, if we want to give some advice or criticism, I don't know how to do it either. The community does not know well about the channels that are capable to accommodate the aspirations for the development of public spaces.”	The community does not know well about the channels that are capable to accommodate their aspirations for the development of public spaces.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for Increasing and Expanding The Public Spaces of Coastal Communities**

Research questions	Informants' answers	Discussions
What are the challenges and opportunities for increasing and expanding the public spaces of coastal communities?	“If you want to expand it, I think the residents are happy because the evicted usually get compensation so they can buy a new house in an area that isn't flooded. If it's a problem of improving quality, it's difficult, bro, because the challenge is from nature (rob floods).”	The expansion of the public space area is actually expected by the community to be able to touch private land because the compensation process is considered capable of being a gift for moving out of the tidal flood area.
What are the factors that influence the preferences of members of coastal communities for	“The important thing is it's cheap, bro, but of course the facilities are worse. If it's a security issue, God willing, it's	Preference for public space for coastal communities tends to ignore

<p>certain public spaces (eg proximity to the beach, facilities, security)?</p>	<p>safe during the day and evening like this, but maybe at night I'm a bit worried"</p>	<p>facilities and prioritizes aspects of economic affordability.</p>
<p>How do coastal communities perceive the quality and maintenance of existing public spaces?</p>	<p>"To be honest, maintenance in this mangrove area is not that good, especially since this used to be a tourist spot for refreshing people, but now it's not maintained, if you look at the building, the cleanliness also is not well maintained."</p>	<p>Maintenance of the place is decreasing along with the number of tourists visiting.</p>
<p>How do members of coastal communities see the role of public space in promoting community cohesion and social relations?</p>	<p>"The problem of social intimacy is that, for sure, bro. Pekalongan people usually really like to hang out. It's like I like fishing here and watching other people fishing too, let's talk, at least in small talk."</p>	<p>Social cohesion is formed by the similarity of behavior and habits of visitors. Managers of tourist attractions tend to be passive in seeing the social reality that occurs.</p>
<p>What are the benefits and disadvantages of public space for coastal communities from the perspective of residents?</p>	<p>"There are clear benefits, if there is a public place it's usually crowded, those who sell can also make a profit. As for the loss, it was year ago, bro, I think because this is a tourist spot, it had to be embanked so that it wouldn't flood, so many trucks that passed the road were damaged. This is totally my opinion, maybe with that policy the residents don't get flooded too, I don't know."</p>	<p>The existence of public spaces in general is not a significant problem for the community, but there is an assumption that the improvements that have taken place in terms of dealing with floods cause other losses (trade-offs) in the form of damaged roads.</p>

## Perceptions of Coastal Community Members on Governance and Decision-Making Processes Related to Planning And Management of Public Spaces

Research questions	Informants's answer	Discussions
How do members of coastal communities experience the impact tourism has on public spaces and their availability to local residents?	“Yes, earlier those who were selling could get customers, those who were bored at home could gather here. If it has a bad impact, it's difficult, because the rob subscription makes people who aren't from Pekalongan will definitely think about it.”	The dual effect of tourism as a field of economic rotation can be seen but not significant.
What are the specific needs and preferences of the various demographic groups in coastal communities regarding public spaces?	“It's just that around the beach here the number of women who come is less than the men I don't know if the girls are afraid of getting hit by rob water or what. From an economic point of view, most people here are from the lower-middle class.”	With limited access and a lack of security guarantees, there are certain categories of people who rarely enjoy the mangrove park public space. These categories of people include women and the elderly.
What is the perception of coastal community members about governance and the decision-making process related to planning and management of public space?	“If it's a big government policy issue, then there's usually socialization, but if it's something trivial, like ordinary repairs, it doesn't really need to.”	Deliberations on decisions that have the potential to have a large impact on people's lives such as the construction of embankments in the surrounding area have paid attention to public

		<p>voices, but things that are considered not directly adjacent to people's lives have not been actively communicated.</p>
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### 3 Conclusion

The community views the availability of public space as more than just a mere access point; rather, it is perceived as an essential instrument for facilitating various tertiary activities. One such significant function is providing a place for individuals to spend their leisure time, where they can engage in recreational, leisure, and social activities. Given the high demand for social interaction among community members, public spaces serve as a preferred destination for fostering connections and forming relationships. These spaces are seen as critical instruments that facilitate social cohesion through the organization of community activities. By providing a platform for people to gather, interact, and participate in shared experiences, public spaces play a vital role in strengthening the bonds within the community.

However, despite recognizing the importance of public spaces for social cohesiveness, the community's understanding of the various channels capable of accommodating the aspirations for the development of these spaces remains limited. Many are unaware of the numerous possibilities and resources that can be utilized to effectively enhance and expand public areas. One potential channel is community engagement and participatory planning. By involving local residents in the decision-making process, authorities can tap into the collective creativity and aspirations of the community, ensuring that public spaces are tailored to their specific needs and desires. This inclusivity empowers community members to take ownership of these spaces, fostering a sense of pride and responsibility in maintaining and utilizing them.

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