

Reconciling Colonial Narrative and Contemporary Needs: A Tripartite Adaptive Reuse Strategy for Heritage Conservation in Indonesia

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Abstract

Gedung Juang 45 in Pati is a cultural heritage building with significant historical value, but currently it faces several challenges such as declining physical condition and spatial functions that no longer meet the needs of contemporary society. This research aims to redesign the interior of the Gedung Juang 45 complex by applying the adaptive reuse approach in order to preserve its historical value while reactivating its role as a relevant public space. The research method uses a qualitative-descriptive approach through field surveys, observation of user activities, and literature study related to strategies for adapting historical buildings. The design strategy focuses on three main interventions: insertion for adding new elements without changing the main structure, intervention for functional modifications while maintaining the building authenticity, and installation for the addition of flexible interior elements. The design results show that the integration of old and new elements through the arrangement of educational, communal, and commercial zoning can improve spatial quality and strengthen community place attachment to local cultural heritage. This study concludes that adaptive reuse is an effective strategy to maintain the sustainability of cultural heritage buildings as a center for social activities and creative economy that remains relevant for contemporary society.

Keywords: *adaptive reuse, cultural heritage, Gedung Juang 45 Pati, interior design, public space*

INTRODUCTION

Pati Regency has many historical heritage buildings that still exist today. One of them is Gedung Juang 45 which is located on Panglima Besar Sudirman Street No. 61. This building was originally known as Societeit Soekarame, which was built around the 1930s during the Dutch colonial period as a gathering place for the colonial elite. During the Indonesian independence struggle around 1947–1948, the building was taken over by Indonesian fighters and its function changed into a meeting place for the fighters in defending independence (Dinas Kearsipan dan Perpustakaan Kabupaten Pati, 2020).

After independence, Gedung Juang 45 was used as a center for community social activities and several organizations of independence fighters. Over time, the building was later used as a historical gallery called *Galeri Pati Mbiyen*, which presents various documentation of local history. In addition, the area around the building has developed into a public space used by the community for social activities and culinary activities. However, the existing condition of Gedung Juang 45 shows several problems, such as the decline in the physical condition of the building, limited interior facilities, and spatial arrangement that is not yet optimal. On the other hand, the city center area of Pati continues to develop as a public space that becomes the center of social, cultural, and economic activities of the community (Diskominfo Pati, 2024).

The concept of adaptive reuse becomes one of the relevant approaches to address these problems. Adaptive reuse is the reuse of old buildings with new functions without removing their historical character (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2012). This approach allows historical buildings to be preserved while also adapting them to the needs of today's society. Through this approach, the interior design of the Gedung Juang 45 complex in Pati is redesigned as a multifunctional public space that integrates educational, communal, and commercial functions. This design is expected to improve spatial quality, strengthen the identity of the area, and increase community attachment to local historical heritage.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative–descriptive approach with a focus on adaptive interior design strategies. The methodology is arranged systematically to ensure that the new design intervention does not damage the historical value or cultural significance of Gedung Juang 45 in Pati. The research stages are divided into four main phases:

1. Identification and Documentation (Data Collection)

The initial stage involves collecting primary and secondary data related to the building:

- a. Physical Survey
Documenting the existing condition of the building, structural elements, and original ornamental details through photo mapping and field measurements.
- b. Historical Study
Tracing archives and documentation related to the history of Gedung Juang 45, which was previously known as Societeit Soeka Rame, in order to understand the building narrative and the changes of function over time.
- c. User Analysis
Conducting observations and interviews to identify the needs of contemporary public spaces in the Pati community.

2. Cultural Significance Assessment

Instead of only redesigning the building, this stage evaluates which parts of the building have high historical value and must be preserved (high significance), and which parts can be modified (low significance). This analysis refers to the principles of historical building sustainability to determine the zoning of new spatial functions.

3. Design Intervention Strategy (Adaptive Reuse Strategy)

The design methodology uses the architectural intervention approach according to Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2011), which includes:

a. Insertion

This strategy treats the old building as a “container” or shell. New interior elements are inserted as independent objects inside the building without permanent contact that could damage the original structure.

b. Intervention

This strategy involves physical modification in certain parts of the building to accommodate new functions. It may include cutting, adding, or opening building elements such as walls, doors, or windows. These interventions must follow the principle of reversibility.

c. Installation

This strategy focuses on the addition of new functions and modern technology to improve building comfort without drastically changing the historical aesthetic.

The success criteria according to Plevoets & Van Cleempoel are based on the following aspects:

a. Distinguishability, the new elements can be clearly distinguished from the original elements.

b. Compatibility, the new materials are compatible with the existing materials.

c. Reversibility, the new interventions can be removed or returned to the original condition if needed in the future.

4. Design Development and Evaluation (Synthesis)

The final stage is design synthesis, where the adaptive reuse concept is implemented into the interior design proposal. Evaluation is conducted to ensure that the new design creates a balance between preserving the collective memory of the community and fulfilling productive and sustainable spatial functions.

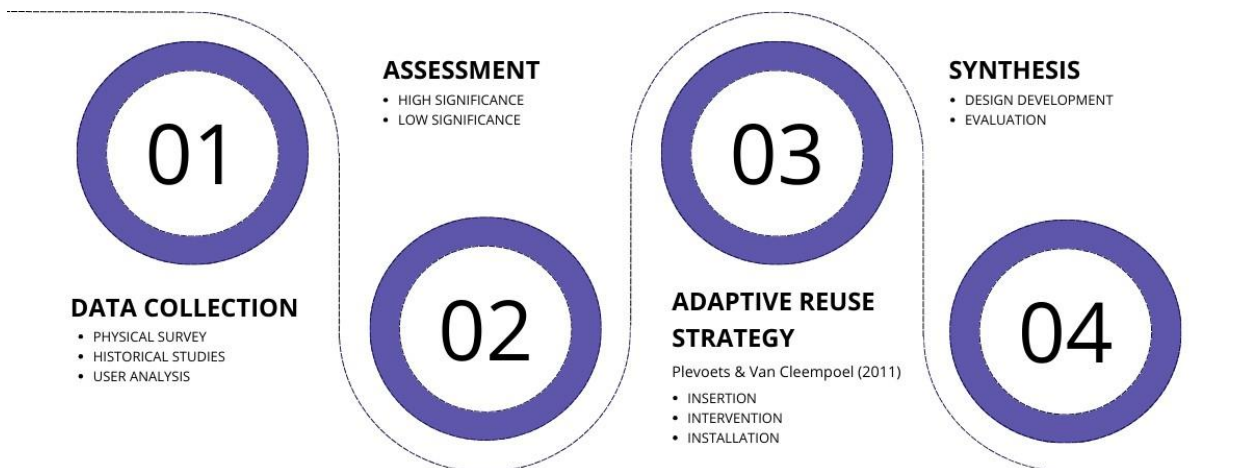


Figure 1. Design Thinking Chart
(Source: <https://www.gamelab.id/news/737-design-thinking>)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Spatial Transformation and Spatial Program

The design results show that Gedung Juang 45 in Pati, which previously had a rigid function as a veterans' meeting hall, has been transformed into a multifunctional complex (community hub). The discussion focuses on how the new spatial arrangement still respects the original spatial hierarchy of the Societeit Soeka Rame building.

The implementation of new functions such as a café, exhibition space, and co-working space is placed in areas that have low to medium historical significance. Meanwhile, the main hall is maintained as a flexible open space in order to preserve the grandeur of its colonial architectural structure.

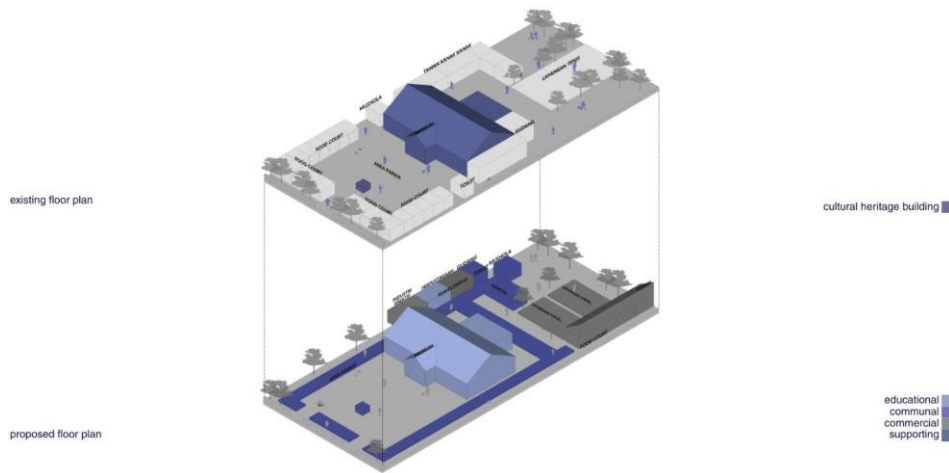


Figure 2. Illustration of the Spatial Program Layout of Gedung Juang 45 in Pati
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

2. Implementation of Adaptive Reuse Strategy

The discussion of the design results is divided into three main intervention categories based on the adaptive reuse theory (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel).

a. Insertion Strategy

In the interior area, it is found that the use of a box-in-box structure for exhibition stands and built-in furniture allows new functions to be added without damaging the original walls. Modern materials such as glass and industrial steel are used to create a clear contrast between the historical elements and the new elements. This approach follows the conservation principle that new interventions should be distinguishable from the original structure.

b. Intervention Strategy

Interventions are applied to the circulation and lighting elements. The large window openings in the original building are used to maximize natural lighting and reduce energy consumption. The discussion shows that the use of different floor materials in transition areas functions as a visual marker without changing the main structure of the building.

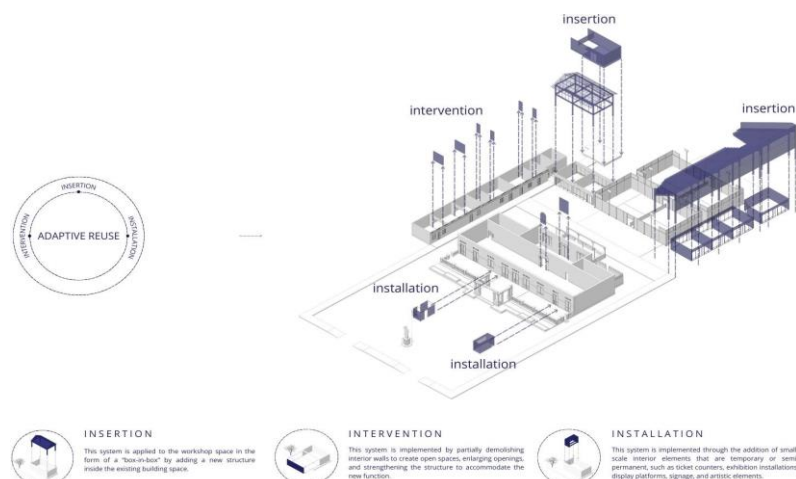


Figure 3. Adaptive Reuse Concept
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

c. Installation Strategy

Mechanical and electrical systems such as cable routes and air conditioning are designed using an exposed industrial style. This strategy is applied to avoid damaging the old brick walls which are structurally fragile. The exposed system also adds a modern aesthetic that is visually harmonious with the rough texture of the original walls.

3. Sustainability of Historical Value and Collective Memory

a. The design evaluation results show that this project not only performs physical renewal but also restores collective memory.



Figure 4. Interior of Gedung Juang 45 Museum
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

By transforming the building, which was previously “closed,” into a more “open” public space such as a café and communal areas, the building becomes a social center again in Pati.



Figure 5. Café and Communal Area of Gedung Juang 45
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

b. This discussion emphasizes that successful adaptive reuse should be able to create place attachment for the younger generation.



Figure 6. Axonometric View of Gedung Juang 45
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

The use of local materials and decorative elements that represent the history of the struggle in Pati are integrated into interior elements such as wall graphics or room naming, so that the educational function can still be delivered implicitly.



Figure 7. Material and Color Scheme of Gedung Juang 45
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

4. Synthesis Analysis: Dialogue Between the Old and the New Building

Overall, the discussion concludes that the key success of this design lies in the “dialogue” between the massive colonial architectural elements and the lighter modern interior elements. The use of neutral colors and transparent materials prevents the new design from dominating the original character of the building. The design result shows that the preservation of cultural heritage buildings does not always have to be rigid, but can be adaptive through interior design interventions that are sensitive to the historical context.

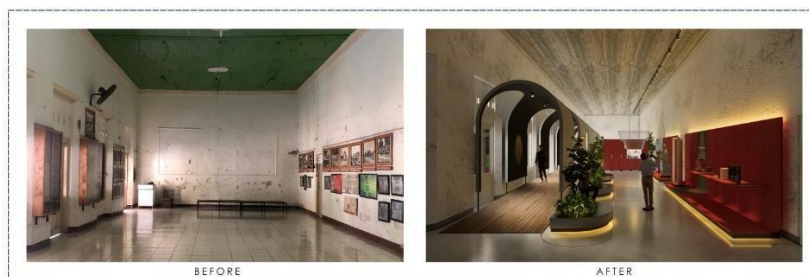


Figure 8. Site Image and Design Result
(Source: Renanta, 2025)



Figure 9. Site Image and Design Result
(Source: Renanta, 2025)

This concept can also be seen in the scale model, which shows the difference between the old walls and the new walls as a visual representation of the dialogue between the colonial elements and the new design elements.

CONCLUSION

This research successfully formulates an interior design strategy for Gedung Juang 45 in Pati through a comprehensive adaptive reuse approach. Based on the analysis and design results that have been presented, several main conclusions can be drawn:

1. Effectiveness of the Intervention Strategy

The application of adaptive reuse theory through insertion, intervention, and installation methods is proven to accommodate modern functional needs (such as communal and commercial areas) without damaging the

structural integrity and authenticity value of the cultural heritage building. The use of interior elements that are distinguishable and reversible becomes an important key in maintaining the balance between historical preservation and current functional demands.

2. Revitalization of Social Function

The transformation of Gedung Juang 45 from a passive meeting space into a dynamic public activity center has increased the connection between the local community and their historical heritage. The inclusive and adaptive interior design is able to strengthen place attachment for the younger generation in Pati Regency.

3. Sustainability of Cultural Heritage

This research shows that the sustainability of historical buildings does not only depend on physical maintenance, but also on the ability of the building to remain socially and economically relevant. A design approach that is sensitive to historical context can become a model for the conservation of similar colonial buildings in other medium-sized cities.

This research provides an academic contribution to the field of interior design by showing how “old” and “new” elements can create a harmonious dialogue. The limitation of this study lies in the focus on interior intervention. Therefore, future research is expected to explore the micro economic impact and wider community involvement after the implementation of adaptive reuse design.

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