

## Place Detachment of Benteng Kuto Besak: Dysfunction of Tourist Areas Leading to Alienation

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### Abstract

Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) is a major historical landmark and cultural icon in Palembang. However, recent observations indicate a functional shift in the area, leading to symptoms of place detachment or spatial alienation. This research aims to identify the forms of place detachment within the BKB area and analyze its causal factors using the theoretical framework of place and placelessness (Relph, 1976). Through a qualitative-phenomenological approach, this article argues that the area's dysfunction manifested by excessive commodification, standardization of tourist experiences, and the erosion of physical authenticity has transformed BKB from a 'place' (a meaningful center) into 'placelessness' (a space devoid of identity). This dysfunction results in visitors and the local community experiencing an emotional, spiritual, and identity-based disconnection from BKB, culminating in alienation.

Keywords: Place detachment; Placelessness; Sense of place; Benteng Kuto Besak; Area Dysfunction

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### INTRODUCTION

Benteng Kuto Besak, widely recognized by its acronym BKB, stands as a monumental historical edifice in Palembang, South Sumatra, strategically situated along the northern banks of the Musi River. As a designated cultural heritage site, BKB is not merely a static monument but a dynamic repository of profound historical, architectural, and social significance. Its existence embodies the distinctiveness of indigenous military architecture, characterized by its ingenious syncretic adaptation to the specific demands of the Musi riverine environment. Unlike European fortresses of the era which were often isolated, BKB was integrated into the river network, serving as an amphibious line of defense. This morphological uniqueness endows the structure with substantial academic value, presenting fertile avenues for multidisciplinary research within the domains of vernacular architecture, urban history, and the management of cultural tourism. Established in the 18th century, Benteng Kuto Besak functioned as the royal palace (keraton) and administrative center of the Palembang Sultanate. The fortress possesses a dual significance, serving as both a defense heritage asset and a magnet for contemporary urban tourism (Francoise, 2022). With dimensions spanning 288.75 meters in length, 183.75 meters in width, 9.99 meters in height, and a wall thickness of 1.99 meters (Pradjoko & Utomo, 2013), BKB was engineered to withstand the military assaults of its era, thereby standing as a symbol of Palembang's historical resilience and fortitude.

Established in the 18th century during the zenith of local power, Benteng Kuto Besak functioned as the royal palace (keraton) and the administrative nexus of the Palembang Sultanate. At the cosmological and historical center of this landscape stands Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB), an architectural defense monument built in the late 18th century as the administrative center and royal palace (keraton) of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, following the destruction of the Kuto Gawang Fort by the Dutch colonial invasion (Zulkarnain, 2024). In the contemporary era, the fortress possesses a critical dual significance: it serves as a preserved defense heritage asset illustrating the region's military past, and simultaneously acts as a potent magnet for contemporary urban tourism (Francoise, 2022). The physical presence of the fortress is imposing; with dimensions spanning 288.75 meters in length and 183.75 meters in width, rising to a height of 9.99 meters, and fortified by walls with a thickness of 1.99 meters (Pradjoko & Utomo, 2013). These formidable specifications indicate that BKB was engineered not merely for prestige, but to withstand the heavy artillery and military assaults of its era, thereby standing as an enduring symbol of Palembang's historical resilience, sovereignty, and fortitude against colonial expansion.

Since its inception, the Benteng Kuto Besak area has evolved into a "place" imbued with deep identity and meaning, representing a core of heritage and collective memory for the people of

Palembang and the Sultanate lineage. The area reflects a historical era wherein a specific location possessed an authentic, unshakeable identity, serving as a testament to how human experience within the built environment is inextricably interwoven with history, culture, and social structure. It was a space where the cosmological order of the Sultanate met the daily life of the riverine community, creating a strong 'sense of place' that modern revitalization efforts struggle to replicate.

### **The Paradox of Identity and Dysfunction**

Strategically located on the banks of the Musi River, the BKB area is a vital node in the Palembang city network. Its position alongside the Musi River makes it not only a symbol of the past, but also a potential public space for various cultural, tourism, and creative economic activities. However, despite its designated status as a cultural heritage area that magnetizes tourists, the ongoing redevelopment of the BKB faces profound contradictions. Functional dysfunctions occur continuously and systematically, severely disrupting the comfort, safety, and overall experience of users. This issue is not merely a small-scale urban planning inconvenience; various systemic problems have escalated into a tangible public crisis, including rampant illegal levies (*pungli*), aggressive extortion by local thugs, and a pervasive sense of physical and psychological insecurity throughout the site (Kurnia et al, 2026).

These are not minor inconveniences; several systemic problems have escalated to the point of going 'viral' on social media, including rampant illegal parking fees, aggressive extortion by local thugs, and a pervasive general feeling of insecurity that permeates the site. Furthermore, in terms of spatial utilization, the BKB area is predominantly misappropriated as a venue for ephemeral events such as festivals, chaotic night markets, official city government ceremonies, or transient commercial activities (Sary & Jaya, 2021) rather than permanent cultural engagement. This reliance on temporary functions signals a failure in sustainable rehabilitation, resulting in severe spatial dysfunction.

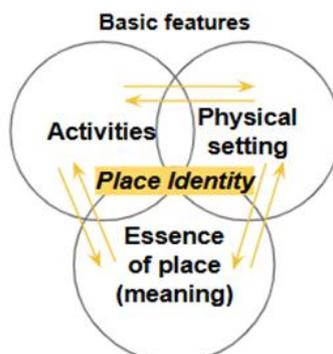
This ensuing dysfunction creates a jarring dissonance: a sharp contrast exists between the dignified image of the area as a protected cultural heritage site and the gritty reality of its operation as a problematic, unregulated public space. Consequently, the rich historical narrative attached to the fort its stories of sultanates and resistance has not been fully explored or exposed, buried instead under the noise of modern disorder. The longer these chronic problems are left unresolved, the greater the catastrophic domino effect will be on the site's reputation. Instead of strengthening the emotional and psychological bonds between the community and the place, the BKB area has unfortunately devolved into a source of consistent complaints and negative experiences for many visitors. Hence, this place has been stripped of its historical meaning, giving rise to the phenomenon of detachment or spatial alienation.

### **Place Identity: Place Attachment to Place detachment**

Recent study reveals a highly significant research gap in the study of architecture and heritage tourism. The majority of studies in geography, architecture, and environmental psychology focus exclusively on the formation and reinforcement of "place attachment" (Selfiardy et al., 2025). These studies often highlight how the preservation of historical fabric can generate civic pride and how successful placemaking efforts can strengthen the economic and social resilience of local communities (Gökce, 2025). Conversely, the active dissolution process of these spatial bonds, specifically the psychological state of "place detachment" remains a fundamentally neglected construct in heritage tourism research, particularly in the context of developing nations experiencing rapid, unregulated urban commodification (Shi & Tan, 2025). There is a scarcity of empirical studies specifically dissecting the process of spatial alienation in postcolonial defense heritage sites in Southeast Asia, where the clash between sacred historical memory and profane economic motives creates unique spatial trauma (Moradi et al., 2020).

In *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Edward Relph posits that "place" must be conceptualized not merely as an abstract, empty physical void or a set of Cartesian coordinates, but rather as a complex, multi-dimensional manifestation of human experience. Place possesses a unique and profound capacity to spatially focus human intention, experience, and action, acting as a center of meaning in a chaotic world. The persistent identity of a place is not static; it can be elucidated through the interplay of three fundamental components: (1) the physical setting, comprising the tangible fabric such as architectural

structures, rivers, and plazas; (2) the activities, situations, and events occurring therein, which breathe life into the physical form; and (3) the meanings generated by individuals and groups through their lived experiences and cognitive interpretations. These three components do not exist in isolation but interact dialectically to constitute the essential identity of a place; a change in one inevitably alters the holistic character of the whole.



**Figure 1.** Place Identity's Component  
Source: Relph, 1976; Author 2022

The Focus of Relph's phenomenology is the subtle dialectic between insiderness and outsidersness. Insiderness denotes a profound, often pre-conscious, sensation wherein an individual feels 'here rather than there' an existential state characterized by a deep sense of security, enclosure, and comfort where the environment feels familiar and unthreatening. Conversely, outsidersness represents a sense of alienation or separation from a locale, where the individual feels like an observer rather than a participant. Relph argues that when a place devolves into placelessness a state where distinctive details are erased the human capacity to connect deeply with it is compromised, culminating in detachment, where the bond between person and place is severed (Relph, 1976).

While place attachment refers to deep emotional bonds between individuals and specific spatial settings built through social interaction, historical memory, and functional dependence (Shi & Tan, 2025) the phenomenon observed at BKB demands a theoretical shift toward its antithesis: place detachment. Place detachment is an active post-attachment psychological condition (Gökce, 2025). It is characterized by the severance of emotional and identity bonds, often triggered by extreme environmental degradation, systemic managerial failures, or the introduction of hostile socio-economic elements (Li et al., 2023). Individuals no longer recognize the physical fabric as an extension of their cultural self, resulting in a fundamental rupture of the human-place bond.

Placelessness constitutes a paramount threat to historic sites designated as cultural heritage, transforming them from meaningful repositories of memory into generic landscapes. In contexts where individuals should ideally experience deep attachment, they instead encounter estrangement or detachment. Relph identifies several driving forces precipitating this phenomenon, including:

1. Mass Culture: The displacement of indigenous culture by homogenized global trends.
2. Standardization: The homogenization of design, function, and experiential qualities.
3. Commodification: The reduction of a place's intrinsic value (historical, spiritual) to mere economic exchange value or a tradable commodity.

The phenomenon of heritage commodification involves reducing the intrinsic value of a place (historical, spiritual, cultural) into mere instrumental or exchangeable economic value. Haphazard commodification leads to the "Disneyfication" or "McDonaldization" of historical spaces, where authentic culture is slowly replaced by a single monoculture or "staged authenticity" designed exclusively for rapid financial extraction. As observed in other Southeast Asian heritage sites like the *George Town World Heritage Site* in Malaysia, excessive commercialization can drive out traditional communities, alter the function of historical structures for generic commercial activities, and destroy local identity (Salim & Rahman, 2022). The following table synthesizes the theoretical transition from Place Attachment to Place Detachment within the context of historical environments:

**Tabel 1.** Synthesizes of the theoretical transition from Place Attachment to Place Detachment

<b>Spatial Construct</b>	<b>Phenomenological Characteristics</b>	<b>Environmental / Structural Triggers</b>	<b>Psychological and Behavioral Implications</b>
<b>Place Attachment</b>	Deep emotional bonds, strong cognitive identification, functional dependence.	Preservation of physical authenticity, social cohesion, living historical narratives.	Absolute feelings of <i>Insideness</i> , civic pride, ontological security, active participation.
<b>Placelessness</b>	Homogenization, standardization of experiences, reduction of unique place character.	Unchecked commercialization, mass culture integration, architectural neglect.	Loss of local distinctiveness, cognitive confusion, fading of collective memory.
<b>Place Detachment</b>	Active severance of human-place bonds, cultural disidentification.	Extortion, systemic managerial dysfunction, extreme physical degradation, hostile social climate.	Feelings of <i>Outsideness</i> , anxiety, spatial alienation, emotional trauma, visit avoidance.

### Dysfunction of Cultural Heritage Areas

The phenomenon of spatial dysfunction can be systematically identified through the displacement or misappropriation of spatial functions into uses that are fundamentally incongruent with their original designation. This misalignment is not merely a technical error but a systemic failure that generates adverse implications for both the environmental equilibrium and the social fabric of the community (Putra, 2018). Similarly, within the specific context of area development, an approach that is oriented exclusively toward physical construction ignoring the socio-cultural dimensions of space inevitably precipitates dysfunction for its users (Nursyifa, 2018). This suggests that a space defined solely by its concrete parameters, without regard for human interaction, is destined to malfunction.

Public spaces theoretically serve a pivotal role as egalitarian venues for social interaction, collaboration, and recreation. However, in practice, numerous public spaces fail to function optimally, particularly regarding the provision of facilities capable of stimulating creativity and active citizen participation (Bimantoro et al., 2022). A critical issue arises when historic tourism areas undergo revitalization; these projects often transition heritage sites into multi-functional public spaces, yet this functional transition is frequently viewed solely through the reductive lenses of commercialization and economic efficiency. This shift risks eroding the site's essence. Commercialization and the shifting of cultural values from the sacred to the profane, accompanied by the excessive exploitation of heritage assets, inherently possess the potential to engender commodification the transformation of intrinsic cultural elements into mere tradable commodities for economic benefit (Padori, 2023). It is precisely this inappropriate functional transition and aggressive commercialization that precipitates deep-seated spatial dysfunction.

In the specific case of the Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) area, the ensuing spatial dysfunction does more than degrade the physical environment; it actively severs the emotional bonds that may have already existed or had the potential to form between the visitor and the site. Recent scholarship highlights the profound psychological impact of 'ruptures to people-place bonds.' Disruptions to this bond can compromise the fundamental sense of security and self-identity that are intertwined with the location. This contributes a critical psychological dimension to the analysis, wherein negative experiences at BKB such as encountering filth or insecurity not only diminish satisfaction but also induce feelings of loss or emotional trauma, prompting visitors to exhibit avoidance behavior in the future as a defense mechanism. Consequently, it can be interpreted that while place attachment may form rapidly even during brief visits it is also fragile and susceptible to instantaneous severance due to negative experiences.

Therefore, the utilization of cultural heritage as a driver of economic growth must be strictly accompanied by a commitment to principles of sustainability and preservation to ensure the maintenance of cultural values (Van der Merwe, 2013). Without this balance, the economic asset itself is destroyed. In this manner, its utilization can be optimized as a strategic asset to strengthen competitiveness in the era of globalization. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to analyze the current state of BKB and its announced revitalization plans to comprehend how and why the site engenders a sense of alienation and 'non-belonging.' Subsequently, this study will identify future opportunities to restore the 'sense of place' at BKB, moving beyond mere physical repair to emotional restoration.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Data Collecting Methods

To investigate the factors precipitating the phenomenon of place detachment at Benteng Kuto Besak, a historical review of the area was conducted, complemented by the collection of secondary data to serve as supporting evidence. Subsequently, the research proceeded through field observations, photographic documentation, and interviews with relevant authorities, particularly those responsible for the strategic preservation efforts of Benteng Kuto Besak.

### Analysis Methods

The analytical process employed a thematic analysis approach. Emergent themes were categorized according to manifestations of detachment and subsequently interpreted through the triadic lens of Relph's placelessness: commodification, standardization, and the erosion of authenticity (dysfunction).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Identification of Place Detachment at Benteng Kuto Besak

A phenomenological analysis of user experiences in the Benteng Kuto Besak area reveals a systematic dismantling of its historical identity. The severance of human-place bonds in this area manifests in three highly concerning psychological and behavioral patterns.

#### *Identity Detachment*

The concept of place identity not merely as a preference for a location, but as a complex cognitive structure where a physical setting functions as a fundamental component of an individual's or group's self-definition (Proshansky et al. (1983). For the *wong* (people of) Palembang, Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) transcends its materiality as a fortress; it should serve as an enduring symbol of communal pride a tangible, physical reflection of the Sultanate's history, local resilience against colonial forces, and a cornerstone of cultural identity. However, a profound rupture has occurred in this bond. Many local residents, who previously claimed BKB as an extension of their cultural self ('theirs'), now experience a deep-seated sense of alienation. The fortress has undergone a jarring semiotic shift; BKB no longer represents the dignified historical identity of the 'wong Palembang,' but has instead been subsumed by the generic, commercial identity of a chaotic 'night market.' This displacement is evident in the voices of local informants who expressed a strong reluctance to visit BKB, poignantly stating it is 'no longer our place, [it is] too crowded and chaotic.' This sentiment reveals a psychological displacement where locals feel like strangers in their own home, illustrating how the unchecked degradation of the physical and social environment can effectively sever the delicate threads of place identity.



Figure 2. Benteng Kuto Besak surrounded with street vendors and recreational attractions  
Sumber: Author, 2025

#### *Functional Indifference*

Every place possesses an inherent ideal or historical function that dictates how it ought to be engaged with. As a premier cultural heritage site, the ontological function of Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) should fundamentally be rooted in education, historical reflection, and cultured recreation.

Ideally, visitors ought to arrive with the intention to learn, to contemplate the past, and to appreciate the site's immense narrative potential (Jayawarsa et al., 2024). Yet, a stark disconnect is observable in reality. For a vast majority of contemporary tourists, BKB has been reduced to functioning merely as a scenic photo spot, often treated primarily as a convenient vantage point to capture the Ampera Bridge rather than as a destination in its own right. Consequently, there is a profound lack of deep, meaningful interaction with the historical value of the fortress itself. Benteng Kuto Besak is rendered solely as a passive object of the tourist gaze, rather than an active subject of historical experience. This functional reductionism is evident in visitor behavior, which demonstrates a marked indifference toward the site's history or even its physical maintenance; their focus is narrowed almost exclusively to acquiring digital photographs and consuming snacks. In this state, visitors are physically present within the fortress grounds but remain intellectually and emotionally absent. They are no longer concerned with what BKB is a bastion of sovereignty and history but merely where it is located as a generic coordinate for leisure.



Figure 3. Benteng Kuto Besak facade without signage of guidance  
Sumber: Author, 2025

### ***Affective Disappointment***

Place attachment often initiates with a profound positive cognitive and affective response such as a sense of awe, wonder, tranquility, or joy upon an individual's first encounter with a meaningful setting (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Place detachment, conversely, is precipitated when the elicited emotional response is diametrically opposed, characterized by anxiety, vigilance, or frustration. In the specific case study of Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB), social and managerial dysfunction serves as the primary catalyst that is actively generating this detachment. The atmosphere of the site has been compromised by systemic issues regarding illegal levies (*pungli*) and aggressive extortion by thugs, problems that have become "viral" and "unresolved" scourges. These persistent issues not only threaten individual safety but also tarnish Palembang's broader reputation as a welcoming city of history and culture. Institutional acknowledgment of this failure is evident; the Mayor representatives' of Palembang has explicitly admitted to the persistent security gaps and parking chaotic inadequacies within the BKB tourism area, which have generated significant public unrest and diminished trust in local governance.

These systemic failures directly and severely compromise the visitor experience. Consequently, tourists arriving with romanticized expectations of witnessing historical grandeur frequently encounter a jarring sense of disappointment. A cognitive dissonance emerges where the expectation of an authentic, safe "place" collides violently with the gritty reality of "placelessness" and disorder. This rupture is vividly documented in digital footprints; online reviews frequently and consistently cite descriptors such as "dirty," "unmaintained," "litter-strewn," "unsafe," "ridden with thugs," and "extortion". These are not merely complaints about amenities, but are cited as the primary reasons for the deterioration of their emotional experience, effectively severing the potential for any meaningful bond with the site.

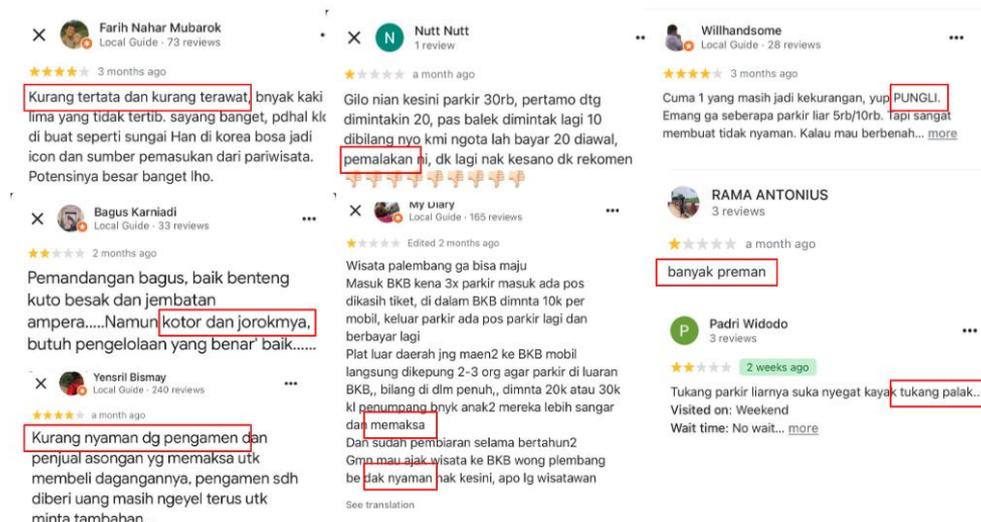


Figure 4. Google review of Benteng Kuto Besak  
 Sumber: Googlemaps, 2025

### Analysis of the Drivers of BKB's Dysfunction as a Manifestation of "Place Detachment" Aggressive Commodification

The government has articulated a vision to revitalize the Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) area. According to the Acting Mayor of Palembang, the management of BKB is to be assumed by the municipal administration with the objective of reviving heritage tourism in Palembang. Under this concept, the government intends to involve stakeholders from the arts, culture, and history sectors (Fery, 2025; Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika KOTA PALEMBANG, 2024). This vision ostensibly aligns with "Republic of Indonesia Law No. 11 of 2011 concerning Cultural Heritage, Part Three on Development, Paragraph 1 General, Article 78 (1)," which stipulates that the development of Cultural Heritage must adhere to principles of utility, security, maintenance, authenticity, and the preservation of inherent values. However, empirical reality suggests that the management of the area remains significantly misaligned with these regulations and the associated cultural-historical values.

As a consequence of this managerial failure, BKB has undergone a reduction in value. Historical and cultural values (intrinsic value) have been degraded by transactional economic values (instrumental value). Currently, Benteng Kuto Besak functions as the defense command center for Military Area Command (Kodam) II/Sriwijaya and houses a College of Health Sciences. Consequently, access to the interior of the fortress remains highly restricted given its role as an active military zone and educational facility. Land intended for tourism has been repurposed for military use, thereby preventing the optimal realization of the site's tourism potential.



Figure 5. Signage of Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan  
 Source: Author, 2025

Pushed to the periphery, the tourism activity is forced onto the fortress esplanade. This area, which ought to serve as a reflective public space honoring the site's grandeur, is currently saturated with uncurated informal vendors selling generic merchandise ranging from children's toys to mass-produced snacks that possess absolutely no thematic relevance to the history of BKB. Edward Relph (1976) characterizes this phenomenon as an extreme form of the "commodification of place," where the deep historical identity of a location is ignored, and the site is treated merely as a convenient commercial "container" rather than a "place" demanding respect. This aligns with critical theories on global heritage tourism. Similar to the Disneyfication phenomenon threatening historic sites like the George Town World Heritage Site, where historic buildings are repurposed into artificial attractions purely for business profit, BKB has reduced its heritage to a commercial landscape where authenticity slowly vanishes to serve mass consumption.

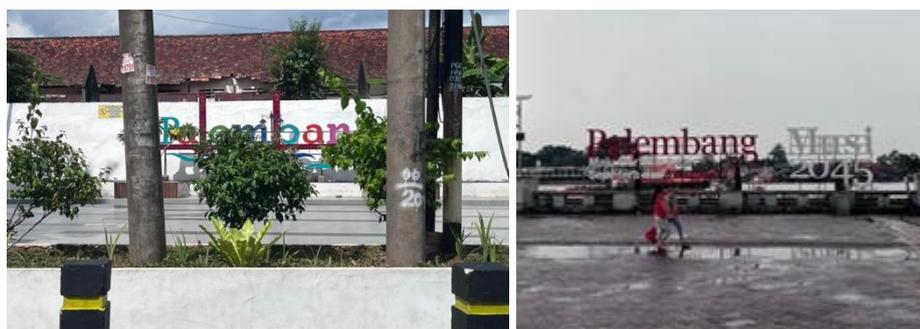


**Figure 6.** Benteng Kuto Besak esplanade at night  
Source: Author, 2025

### ***Standardization of Experience***

The dysfunction of Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) is perhaps most palpably evident in its failure to offer a distinct, site-specific experience that resonates with its historical gravity. Currently, the prevailing activities within the area ranging from sedentary leisure and culinary consumption to casual photography represent a set of standardized tourist behaviors that are observable in virtually any city square (alun-alun) or public park across Indonesia. Instead of engaging with the site as a historical artifact, visitors are presented with a generic recreational landscape dominated by rented toy cars, generic street food vendors, and mass entertainment that bears no thematic connection to the site's past. Consequently, the fort is reduced to a mere scenic backdrop, stripped of its narrative power.

There is an absence of critical experiential curation that should be designed to highlight BKB's uniqueness as the last defensive bastion of the Palembang Sultanate. The dramatic history of riverine defense architecture, environmental adaptation, and anti-colonial resistance is rendered invisible, buried beneath layers of commercial uniformity. Within the framework of spatial phenomenology, this phenomenon defines placelessness at its highest level. BKB's distinct identity has been diluted and ultimately swallowed by the standardization of mass recreational facilities, turning a specifically meaningful site into a generic space that could essentially be located anywhere. This standardization effectively severs the authentic bond between historical pilgrims and the masonry of the fortress.



**Figure 7.** Ornaments added around the BKB  
Source: Author, 2025

### ***Erosion of Authenticity and Physical Dysfunction***

Authenticity constitutes the ontological core of a 'place,' serving as the anchor for its meaning and identity. However, the dysfunction at Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) is physically palpable, manifesting as a severe degradation of environmental quality. A pervasive lack of maintenance and the unchecked accumulation of waste, creates a profound 'visual noise' that distracts from the site's historical gravity. Furthermore, the deterioration of public amenities and inadequate illumination contribute significantly to a perception of insecurity, particularly during nighttime hours, transforming a potential cultural sanctuary into a space perceived as hostile or unsafe.



**Figure 8.** Waste in BKB area from street vendors from street vendors and people littering  
Source: Author, 2025

When the physical integrity of a heritage site is thus compromised, the 'spirit of place' (genius loci) inevitably diminishes. Visitors are rendered unable to connect spiritually or intellectually with the fortress's past, as its current dilapidated physical condition stands in stark, painful contrast to its historical grandeur. This dissonance creates a barrier to engagement; consequently, visitors become emotionally detached because the site fails to effectively communicate its narrative. Instead of whispering stories of resilience and power, the ruined facade speaks only of neglect.

Beyond the experiential realm, the tourism area physically confronts critical conservation challenges. The structural integrity of the fortress walls is visibly deteriorating due to the compounding effects of aging and harsh environmental factors, such as humidity and weathering. This rapid decay necessitates not merely routine cleaning, but intensive, specialized maintenance and preservation efforts by the South Sumatra Cultural Heritage Preservation Center (BPCB Sumsel) to prevent the irreversible loss of this historical asset.



**Figure 9.** The condition of Benteng Kuto Besak Fortress walls  
Source: Author, 2025



**Figure 10.** The condition of public facilities in the Kuto Besak Fortress area  
 Source: Author, 2025

When the physical integrity of a heritage site is compromised to such a degree, the 'spirit of place' (*genius loci*) will inevitably dim and vanish. Visitors become unable to connect spiritually, visually, or intellectually with the fortress's past, as its current dilapidated physical condition stands in stark, even painful contrast to the narrative of its historical grandeur. This spatial dissonance creates an impenetrable barrier to cultural engagement. Consequently, visitors become emotionally detached because the site fails to communicate its narrative effectively. Instead of whispering epics of resilience, cosmological grandeur, and riverine power, the ruined and dirty building facade speaks only of institutional neglect.

The following table presents a recapitulation of the theoretical dialectic between the drivers of structural dysfunction and their phenomenological impacts:

**Table 2.** The recapitulation of the theoretical dialectic

<b>Drivers of BKB Structural Dysfunction</b>	<b>Empirical Reality of the Area</b>	<b>Phenomenological Impact (Alienation/Detachment)</b>
<b>Aggressive Commodification</b>	Occupation of the interior by the military; overflow of uncurated street vendors (PKL) on the fortress esplanade.	Extinction of intrinsic value; BKB is perceived merely as a profane economic container, not a historical sanctuary.
<b>Standardization of Experience</b>	Dominance of generic entertainment activities (toy cars, mass snacks); absence of historical interpretation.	Erasure of site-specific identity; birth of a <i>placelessness</i> landscape indistinguishable from an ordinary city square.
<b>Erosion of Physical Authenticity</b>	Weathering of 18th-century walls, accumulation of commercial waste, poor lighting, occupation by thugs.	Loss of <i>genius loci</i> ; triggers affective disappointment, anxiety, cognitive dissonance, and space avoidance.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the phenomenon of place detachment defined here as the severance of the phenomenon of place detachment defined here as the active severance of emotional, psychological, and identity bonds observed within the Benteng Kuto Besak (BKB) cultural heritage area is not an urban coincidence. Rather, this spatial alienation represents the logical and catastrophic consequence of managerial and architectural dysfunctions that have fundamentally dismantled BKB's original character.

In this analysis, BKB illustrates a tragic urban paradox: a heritage site explicitly preserved to serve as an anchor for the community's collective memory and "sense of place," has instead evolved into a problematic space fostering "placelessness." Using Edward Relph's (1976) phenomenological theoretical framework, it is conclusively proven that BKB has suffered a fatal regression from a "place" which is a locus of meaning and identity; to a "placelessness" which is a homogenized space, commercially exploited, and void of narrative integrity.

This negative transformation is structurally driven by three crucial interrelated factors. First, unchecked aggressive commodification, where short-term transactional economic value forcibly replaces BKB's historical and cultural sanctity. Second, the standardization of the tourist experience, which reduces the grandeur of a past military fortress into merely a generic city square, failing to offer its unique narrative. Third, the erosion of physical authenticity reflected in hygiene crises, structural weathering of ancient walls, and spatial chaos (including thuggery), completely destroying BKB's "spirit of place" (*genius loci*). Ultimately, this place detachment acts as a reflection of BKB's

institutional failure to communicate its essential values. Visitors and the local community feel alienated not because their cultural appreciation has faded, but because BKB itself has been engineered to become "placeless" to its authentic historical identity.

This study broadens the dominant discourse within environmental psychology and heritage architecture. While the majority of global geographic and architectural studies over the past decade have focused almost exclusively on the formation of place attachment, this research deeply examines the active process of its dissolution namely, place detachment and spatial alienation. By contextualizing this phenomenon within a postcolonial defense heritage site vulnerable to massive commercialization, the study presents a fresh understanding that spatial alienation is not a passive "loss of attachment." Instead, it is proven to be an active experience of spatial trauma and disidentification driven by governance dysfunction.

These findings present essential, actionable insights for urban planners, the Palembang City Government, and cultural stakeholders. To halt the ongoing alienation and restore BKB's *genius loci*, the city government must fundamentally change the course of its revitalization strategy from a paradigm of mass recreational exploitation to authentic heritage conservation. Based on this phenomenological synthesis, several strategic future recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strict Spatial Zoning and Decommodification:** The city government must formulate and enforce spatial zoning policies that strictly separate the sacred/historical area of the fortress from commercial zones. Commercial activities on the main esplanade must be tightly curated to align thematically with BKB's historical value, removing the presence of generic mass vendors, and thoroughly eradicating the illegal levy networks that create spatial trauma.
2. **Integration of Community-Based Tourism (CBT):** The current exploitative centralized tourism model must be replaced with a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) approach. Reflecting on the success of the CBT concept in other Palembang heritage areas (such as Kampung Al Munawar and the Chandra Nadi Temple area), integrating surrounding traditional settlements can empower local residents to share authentic cultural narratives, providing economic benefits without destroying the physical primary site.
3. **Enhancement of Phenomenological Narratives (Digital Storytelling):** To mend the severed emotional and intellectual bonds of visitors, this site must shift from merely a passive object for photography to an active educational landscape. This demands robust enhancement of historical interpretation, through historical marker panels, expert guided tour programs, and the application of immersive technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) capable of simulating past architectural spatial experiences.

Only through a persistent commitment to restoring physical authenticity, dignified spatial governance, and the restoration of historical storytelling, can Benteng Kuto Besak be saved from placelessness and returned to its rightful position as the heart of Palembang city's civilization and identity.

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