Warisan
Journal of History and Cultural Heritage
Vol. 6
No. 1
April 2025
ISSN: 2746-3265 (Online)
Published by
Mahesa Research Center
sinta S4

Warenhuis: Symbol of Modernity and Economic Transformation of Medan in 20th Century

Rismawati Br Sagala*, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia
Rangga Handoko, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia
Nur Ardina Khoirunnisa, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia
Tiar Meidayani Pasaribu, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia
Yushar Tanjung, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the *Warenhuis*—Medan's first modern department store—as both a symbol of colonial-era modernity and a pivotal force in the city's economic transformation during the Dutch East Indies period. Strategically located at the confluence of European urban planning and local commercial dynamics, the *Warenhuis* served not only as a site for retail activity but also as a visual and functional embodiment of socio-economic change within a rapidly industrializing colonial context. The central inquiry guiding this research is: in what ways did the emergence and operation of the *Warenhuis* mirror and shape Medan's economic and spatial development during the colonial era? Using a qualitative historical methodology, the research draws upon archival sources, colonial-era newspapers, and urban planning documents to trace the department store's role in reshaping the city's commercial infrastructure. The findings reveal that the *Warenhuis* operated as more than a commercial establishment—it acted as a cultural and economic interface, where colonial ideologies of progress intersected with indigenous modes of consumption and space-making. It simultaneously symbolized colonial ambition and enabled capitalist expansion, contributing significantly to the formation of Medan's modern urban identity in the early 20th century.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted 23/04/2025
Revised 17/05/2025
Accepted 24/05/2025
Published 25/05/2025

KEYWORDS

Colonial economy; urban modernity; Medan; Warenhuis; economic transformation.

*CORRESPONDENCE AUTHOR

rismawatisagala.3212421011@mhs.unimed.ac.id

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34007/warisan.v6i1.2694

INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the 20th century, the city of Medan underwent a rapid transformation from a modest agrarian settlement into a key center of trade and administration in the Dutch East Indies, particularly within the region of East Sumatra (Sylvia et al., 2022). This evolution was closely linked to the massive expansion of plantation-based industries—most notably Deli tobacco—which positioned Medan as a quintessential colonial modern city. In this context, the urban landscape was restructured along European urban planning ideals, accompanied by the construction of modern infrastructures such as paved roads, postal services, and commercial centers (Colombijn, 2010).

One of the most striking embodiments of colonial modernity was the establishment of the Warenhuis in 1919, Medan's first modern department store. Commissioned by the Dutch trading company N.V. Hüttenbach & Co and designed by German architect G. Bos, the building reflected the Art Deco architectural style, adapted to suit the tropical environment. More than just a retail hub, the Warenhuis became a visual and functional icon of colonial modernity and emerging consumer culture (Colombijn, 2010).

The presence of the Warenhuis signaled a shift in consumption patterns, particularly among the urban elite and local *priyayi* class, who increasingly adopted Western lifestyles. This is where the notion of "colonial modernity" found its material expression—material progress became equated with cultural superiority. The consumption of imported goods within a European-styled setting highlighted and reinforced social class distinctions in Medan's multiethnic society at the time (Furnivall, 1940).

This transformation in consumption was not isolated to Medan; it formed part of a broader phenomenon throughout the Dutch East Indies. The Warenhuis can thus be interpreted as a colonial instrument that not only distributed goods but also disseminated Western cultural values surrounding modern consumption. These values constructed a socio-symbolic space wherein access to certain commodities and lifestyles signified social status and identity—echoing Daunton's concept of "aspirational consumption," where consumption is driven by the desire to emulate the lifestyle of the upper classes (Daunton, 2004).

Such aspirational consumption was closely tied to the rise of advertising and marketing strategies in colonial cities. Newspapers such as *De Sumatra Post* and *Medan Nieuwsblad* frequently published advertisements for imported products, often accompanied by imagery that conveyed ideals of European progress and modernity. These advertisements offered not just products, but aspirational lifestyles desired by elite indigenous and Chinese communities (Lindblad & Post, 2009). In this context, the Warenhuis functioned not merely as a store, but as a performative space for colonial social and cultural construction.

Beyond advertising, the social construction of consumption was also reflected in colonial culinary practices. A notable example is *rijsttafel*, a dining style that blended European conventions with the diversity of local cuisines. This tradition became a symbol of cultural hybridity and hierarchy—accessible only to specific social classes. Similarly, the Warenhuis positioned itself as an institution serving the elite, with elegant interiors, systematic product displays, and service standards modeled on European norms (Stoler, 2020).

Visual and photographic studies of colonial cities like Batavia illustrate the representative function of commercial spaces such as the Warenhuis in projecting colonial social order. Suryomenggolo's research on 19th-century Batavia highlights how commercial architecture was deliberately designed to mark class and ethnic boundaries, from entrance accessibility to service systems (Suryomenggolo, 2013). In this light, the design and function of the Warenhuis in Medan became part of a visual narrative of colonial power and spatial dominance.

The Warenhuis not only signified changing consumption habits among the urban elite but also actively shaped the cultural and social identities of colonial society. Consumer practices within such spaces were instrumental to colonialism's symbolic regulation of society in the Dutch East Indies. This illustrates that the colonial economy was not solely concerned with resource extraction and labor exploitation but also involved the orchestration of cultural values and symbols through selective, controlled consumption (Winata et al., 2023).

Beyond its symbolic dimension, the Warenhuis played a material role in the city's economic transformation. As a center for modern commerce, it introduced a structured and integrated shopping system distinct from traditional markets. This marked a shift from subsistence and small-scale trade toward a capitalist economy rooted in service and distribution (Pecotich & Shultz, 2016).

Strategically located in the Kesawan district—the colonial administrative and commercial heart of Medan—the Warenhuis was surrounded by key institutions such as the city hall, colonial banks, and the post office. This proximity underscored the building's importance as part of Medan's political and economic landscape (Pante, 2015). It also became a social space where diverse segments of society converged, albeit with unequal access. The modernity embodied by the Warenhuis operated selectively, perpetuating colonial power hierarchies through spatial aesthetics and restricted access to goods and services (Rambe et al., 2021).

Architecturally, the Warenhuis exemplified colonial adaptation of European aesthetics to tropical conditions. Colonial architecture was not merely functional—it was a vehicle for asserting cultural dominance. In this regard, the Warenhuis stood as a concrete symbol of colonial power in the urban fabric (Jovan & Sutanto, 2024). The emergence of other modern shopping venues following the Warenhuis marked a broader shift in Medan's economic structure. The growth of retail stores, logistics networks, and new commercial labor sectors all testified to this transformation (Firdaus, 2017). The roles of women as consumers and employees in these spaces also began to evolve. Despite experiencing decline during the Japanese occupation in 1942 and subsequent post-independence reconfigurations, the Warenhuis remains a vital historical and cultural landmark. It stands as a silent witness to the city's colonial, urban, and socio-economic transformations across more than a century.

Its long-abandoned state in the early 2000s prompted civic and governmental efforts to preserve historical buildings. The 2025 revitalization of the Warenhuis aimed to reintegrate colonial heritage into sustainable urban narratives. This initiative opened possibilities for reinterpreting colonial architecture not only as symbols of oppression but also as shared heritage that can be reimagined through creative reuse.

A range of studies has examined the dynamics of modernity and economic transformation in the colonial context, contributing—both directly and indirectly—to a deeper understanding of the role of the *Warenhuis* in the city of Medan. Colombijn observes that Medan's development as a colonial plantation city was inextricably linked to the expansion of the tobacco industry, which gave rise to modern infrastructure and new economic spaces, including commercial centers

such as the *Warenhuis* (Colombijn, 2010). From the perspective of power relations and social practices, Sitepu highlights how colonial spatial arrangements were instrumental in shaping housing policies in Medan. Although the colonial government's objective was to eliminate slum housing, this initiative was not without controversy, particularly in how architectural standards were imposed upon the local population (Sitepu, 2024). This perspective is further deepened by Stoler, who introduces the concept of aspirational consumption—consumption driven by the desire to emulate the lifestyle of the European upper class. This framework is especially relevant in understanding how the *Warenhuis* positioned itself as a symbol of progress and exclusivity in colonial Medan (Stoler, 2020). Complementing this, Siagian examines colonial architecture as a mechanism of power and visual control over urban space, where buildings such as the *Warenhuis* functioned as material embodiments of colonial ideology, manifested through spatial planning and architectural design. (Siagian, 2011). Lastly, Sianturi et al. (2024) explore the enduring legacy of colonial consumption patterns and the evolution of shopping centers in post-independence Medan. Their research demonstrates that the values associated with modern consumerism—originally shaped during the colonial period—continue to resonate within the city's contemporary socio-economic structures (Sianturi et al., 2024).

This article centers on two interrelated questions. First, how was the Warenhuis represented as a symbol of modernity in early 20th-century Medan—through its architecture, spatial design, and consumption practices that embodied colonial ideals of progress and cultural dominance? Second, how did the Warenhuis contribute to the economic restructuring of the city, particularly in shaping new consumption patterns, advancing the modern retail sector, and fostering the emergence of a colonial urban middle class? These two focal points are analytically intertwined, framing the Warenhuis as a nexus between symbolic colonial power and urban economic transformation.

The novelty of this study lies in its reframing of the Warenhuis not merely as a colonial relic but as a symbolic entity that integrates discourses of modernity and economic change within the urban space of colonial Medan. Distinct from previous works that largely focus on descriptive architectural history or macroeconomic colonial analysis, this research adopts an interdisciplinary lens—merging historical, architectural, and socio-economic approaches. Its contribution lies in a nuanced reading of a single commercial structure as a site of ideological and economic function, reflecting broader shifts in social structure, consumption culture, and spatial configuration. This study offers new insight into the urban colonial history of Indonesia, a field that remains underexplored in terms of understanding commercial spaces as active agents in the dynamics of colonial power and economy.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative historical approach aimed at critically reconstructing the symbolic meaning and economic function of the *Warenhuis* within the colonial urban landscape of Medan. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the social, political, and economic contexts surrounding the building, positioning it as a cultural artifact embedded with ideological significance. The research draws on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include colonial archives such as urban planning documents, editions of *De Sumatra Post*, annual reports of N.V. Hüttenbach & Co., and historical photographs that illustrate the building's form and usage. Secondary sources comprise academic literature on colonial history, tropical architectural studies, and theories of modern consumption in colonial societies.

This methodological framework is grounded in the premise that colonial urban history must be analyzed through a composite reading of visual, narrative, and spatial sources in order to reveal the intricate interplay between power and social representation. Data collection was conducted through systematic literature review and archival research, utilizing both physical and digital repositories from institutions such as the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) and KITLV Leiden. Additionally, field observations of the current condition of the *Warenhuis* were carried out to support spatial analysis and to document the transformation of its form and function over time.

The collected data were examined using a historical-critical analysis technique, which included heuristic procedures (source tracing), external and internal critique of documents, contextual interpretation, and thematic historiography. Furthermore, the study employs colonial architectural discourse analysis to explore how the building's form generates particular social meanings. This is complemented by an analysis of the colonial economy to uncover the relationship between commercial space and the broader structures of colonial capitalism (Breman, 2024; Reid, 2007).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Colonial Modernity and the Architectural-Social Function of the Warenhuis

Constructed in 1919 in the city of Medan, the *Warenhuis* was more than Sumatra's first department store—it was a tangible symbol of colonial modernity as envisioned by the Dutch East Indies administration. Built by the trading firm N.V. Hüttenbach and designed by German architect G. Bos, the building embodied the monumental European architectural style, serving as a spatial manifestation of colonial ideology that equated progress with Western culture and aesthetics. The urban fabric thus became a visual stage for showcasing colonial supremacy (Makkelo, 2017).

Architecturally, the *Warenhuis* employed the Beaux-Arts style, characterized by symmetrical design, classical columns, and a grand façade. These features conveyed elegance and opulence, central to visualizing power in the colonial context (Colombijn, 2010). Colonial architecture was never merely functional; it was a tool of representation—articulating the social and political order the colonial regime sought to institutionalize within the cityscape.

Figure 1: The Beaux-Arts architectural style of the Warenhuis
Source: shutterstock.com

The *Warenhuis* was a two-storey structure encompassing over 8,000 square meters—Medan's largest commercial building at the time. It was more than a marketplace; it was a space that reproduced social hierarchies. The interior layout followed the European department store model that emerged in the late 19th century. The ground floor was allocated for imported goods, while the upper floor housed administrative offices. This spatial division symbolically mirrored the hierarchical organization of economic and managerial functions, reflecting broader social stratification (Syam et al., 2020).

Within what appeared to be a neutral space, meanings were negotiated between progress and control. Only the colonial elite, Europeans, and local *priyayi* had unrestricted access to the full services of the *Warenhuis*. Lower-class indigenous peoples, by contrast, were largely spectators of its luxury. As such, this commercial space became a social instrument legitimizing inequality through consumption (Akbar, 2018).

Colonial modernity was not organically formed; it was produced through spaces like the *Warenhuis*—spaces that shaped how people viewed, moved, and interacted. The store was not merely a site of purchase, but a medium for staging colonial values such as efficiency, order, and Western aesthetics as markers of advancement (Sianturi et al., 2024). The *Warenhuis* must also be viewed within the broader framework of Medan's colonial urban planning as a "modern city." Strategically located in the Kesawan district—near the post office, city hall, and colonial banks—the building anchored a symbolic center of power and progress. The integration of architecture and urban function produced a landscape that visually encoded colonial dominance and social hierarchy.

Nonetheless, signs of local adaptation were present within this colonial space. Features such as tropical ventilation systems and the use of local materials reflect the building's adjustment to the regional climate. This cultural hybridity underscores the dual character of colonial architecture—dominantly European, yet contextually dependent (Mutawally & Dienaputra, 2024). Following independence, the symbolic and social functions of the *Warenhuis* shifted. Once a marker of colonial exclusivity, the building later served as a regional government office and fell into disuse by the early 2000s. This transformation illustrates the desacralization of colonial symbols in tandem with societal and regime change.

Figure 2: The Warenhuis as a Symbol of Modernity in Medan
Source: commons.wikimedia.org

Recent revitalization efforts reflect a growing awareness of colonial architecture's historical value within urban narratives. The Medan city government has sought to integrate the *Warenhuis* into cultural tourism and creative economy initiatives—not only preserving its physical form but also reactivating its social function in a contemporary context (Siagian, 2011).

The *Warenhuis*, through adaptive reuse, exemplifies how colonial architectural heritage can be reimagined for inclusive, forward-looking purposes. When repurposed as public spaces, art galleries, or cultural centers, these buildings offer broader public engagement with histories once confined to elite circles. The *Warenhuis* thus opens discussions on how postcolonial cities might recontextualize colonial symbols—not simply as aesthetic relics, but as sites for critical reflection on exclusionary practices and power dynamics. This perspective is essential to building cities that are historically and socially just (Winata et al., 2023).

The building should not be understood merely in terms of structure or façade, but through its evolving social meaning. The *Warenhuis* stands at the intersection of colonial memory and future urban imaginaries. The symbols of colonial modernity it once embodied can now be reconstructed into narratives that are more inclusive, critical, and aware of their historical complexities. As a colonial artifact, the *Warenhuis* is not only architecturally significant but also a space open to reinterpretation. Over time, public perceptions of the building have evolved, shaped by shifts in political, economic, and cultural contexts. What was once a symbol of colonial authority is increasingly being reimagined as part of a plural and historically layered urban identity (Primaditya, 2022).

This shift is visible in how people engage with the space today. Where access was once restricted to privileged groups, current efforts in conservation and revitalization mark a movement toward openness and inclusivity—transforming a symbol of domination into a shared site of collective memory. As a space deeply tied to the narrative of

colonialism, the *Warenhuis* now poses new questions: How should we treat structures inherited from oppressive systems? The answer lies not in erasure but in reinterpretation—a critical and progressive approach that embraces the complexities of inherited space (Sylvia et al., 2022).

The greatest challenge lies in balancing historical preservation with the needs of contemporary society. Revitalization must extend beyond physical restoration—it must involve rethinking function and meaning. In this sense, the *Warenhuis* can serve as a "social laboratory," a site where heritage-conscious urbanism meets present-day relevance (Sahmura & Wahyuningrum, 2018). This evolving meaning also presents pedagogical potential. If strategically managed, buildings like the *Warenhuis* can become living classrooms—spaces for critical historical engagement rather than nostalgic glorification. As such, they are not merely physical assets but symbolic cultural resources.

From an urban spatial perspective, structures like the *Warenhuis* contribute to a rich narrative fabric. They act as historical anchors, linking past and present while providing visual continuity and collective memory in the urban landscape. Their presence adds depth that sterile, ahistorical architecture cannot offer (Rukayah & Juwono, 2018). Moreover, when reactivated as creative hubs, galleries, or community centers, these spaces contribute to local economic dynamism. Their new functions breathe life into long-dormant buildings and help cultivate sustainable cultural and economic ecosystems. This functional transformation demonstrates how colonial spaces can form part of the future—not merely remnants of the past.

Visually, the *Warenhuis* offers an irreplaceable architectural texture. Its classical design enriches the cityscape and provides an artistic counterpoint to the homogeneity of modern construction. It reminds us that a vibrant city celebrates architectural and temporal diversity (Veronica & Siregar, 2018). Recontextualizing colonial buildings must not stop at aesthetics. There must be a willingness to confront the deeper legacies of colonialism, inequality, and contested heritage. In this sense, the *Warenhuis* holds potential as a space of critical dialogue—where history, architecture, and contemporary aspirations converge. Its present meaning is shaped by how society chooses to remember, interpret, and repurpose it—not as a silent monument, but as an active site where history and the future meet. In doing so, it invites citizens to co-author urban narratives and reimagine collective memory with greater justice and contextual awareness.

The Role of the Warenhuis in Reshaping Urban Economic Structures in Colonial Medan

The *Warenhuis* played a pivotal role in the modernization of Medan's urban economy during the colonial period. More than just a retail space, it embodied the entry of modern capitalist logic into the colonial urban order. According to Breman, the transformation of urban economic structures in the Dutch East Indies was significantly influenced by the emergence of modern commercial institutions that introduced new patterns of consumption, with the *Warenhuis* being a prime example (Breman, 2024). The systems implemented in the *Warenhuis* reflected the European department store model, including a categorized product layout, centralized cashiering, the employment of professional staff such as cashiers and managers, and a supply mechanism based on regular distribution cycles. This system enabled logistical efficiency and the formation of large-scale supply chains in Medan.

The presence of the *Warenhuis* signaled an early shift in urban consumption from traditional subsistence patterns to lifestyle-oriented consumption. The public became increasingly exposed to imported European goods, which held not only utilitarian but also symbolic value as markers of status. This phenomenon, referred to by Tamimi et al. as the "consumption of modernity," represents a context in which consumption became a primary means for urban populations to negotiate social class and economic aspiration (Tamimi et al., 2020). Key commodities sold at the *Warenhuis* included Western-style garments, imported stationery, pharmaceuticals, perfumes, European textiles, and canned foods—products that not only displaced local production but also helped shape the tastes of the emerging middle and elite classes.

Within this context, the *Warenhuis* catalyzed the emergence of a new consumer class: the urban middle class composed of government employees, local traders, and both European and indigenous professionals. Rukayah and Juwono highlight the importance of this class as an intermediary between the colonial elite and the lower populace, acting as the primary driver of consumption growth in major colonial cities (Rukayah & Juwono, 2018). Furthermore, the *Warenhuis* contributed to the expansion of Medan's service sector. Unlike traditional markets, the department store created a demand for skilled labor, including cashiers, accountants, and logistics coordinators, signifying the formation of an urban working class directly connected to the colonial service economy.

The restructuring of the economy was also reflected in the *Warenhuis*' supply network. Whereas goods were previously circulated within local markets, Medan became a distribution hub for European commodities across Sumatra. Simbolon and Rambe, affirm that modern colonial stores accelerated regional logistical integration and reinforced Medan's position as a commercial center (Simbolon & Rambe, 2022). The *Warenhuis*' strategic location in the Kesawan district further accelerated the development of an integrated trade zone, linking retail outlets, banks, hotels, and the port. This area evolved into an economic epicenter where commercial and social functions converged. Atika notes that port cities like Medan naturally evolved into trading hubs due to their connectivity to import-export networks, a dynamic reinforced by institutions such as the *Warenhuis* (Atika, 2016).

The economic activity surrounding the *Warenhuis* generated significant spillover effects, fostering business growth along Jalan Ahmad Yani and nearby areas. Restaurants, bookstores, and freight agencies emerged, confirming Pane et al. assertion that colonial modern shops had multiplier effects on local microeconomic structures. However, these transformations were not inclusive (Pane et al., 2020). Not all social groups benefited equally. Traditional market vendors and small-scale economic actors had to adapt to increasingly competitive distribution systems. This resulted in a growing divide between the formal economy supported by the *Warenhuis* and the marginalized informal sector.

Despite these disparities, the *Warenhuis* helped cultivate a new urban economic culture in which consumption became associated with aesthetics, efficiency, and modernity rather than subsistence alone. This demonstrates that economic modernization brought with it a shift in societal values and cultural orientation. Practically, the *Warenhuis* helped consolidate Medan's role as a commercial hub beyond Java. With a robust plantation and port economy already in place, the transformation of retail spaces reinforced the city's identity as a "modern colonial city" (Colombijn, 2010).

The economic impact of the *Warenhuis* also extended to interethnic commerce. The store served as a point of convergence for European, Chinese, and indigenous communities in a commercial context. Money became the primary medium of exchange, enabling new forms of social interaction within the economic sphere. Moreover, the building influenced the city's spatial logic, shifting its urban planning priorities from administrative to economic interests. According to Anwar, this reorientation transformed central Medan into a productive space that physically embodied the city's new socio-economic order (Anwar, 2018).

This economic transformation did not occur in a vacuum. It was shaped by external forces such as global commodity prices, colonial trade policies, and sociopolitical dynamics in the Dutch East Indies. Nevertheless, local institutions like the *Warenhuis* were vital catalysts for change at the urban level. As a legacy of colonial economics, the *Warenhuis* left an enduring imprint on Medan's modern economic infrastructure. Many of today's shopping centers in the city mirror the spatial layout, consumer concepts, and marketing strategies pioneered by the *Warenhuis*, indicating the persistence of colonial legacies in contemporary urban economic systems (Hutajulu et al., 2024).

The *Warenhuis* was not only a symbol of colonial modernity but also a key agent in Medan's urban economic transformation. As the city's first modern department store, it introduced new consumption patterns centered around imported goods and Western lifestyles. This, in turn, spurred the growth of a high-spending urban middle class that became the engine of economic expansion. According to Winata et al. the *Warenhuis* contributed to a new economic dynamic that solidified Medan's position as a regional trading hub (Winata et al., 2023). The decline of the *Warenhuis*—due to neglect and a fire in 2012—underscored the vulnerability of such historical assets. Efforts to revitalize the building through adaptive reuse are crucial for preserving both its historical and cultural significance. Adaptive reuse provides an opportunity to reactivate the *Warenhuis*' economic and social functions within a modern urban context (Nasution et al., 2018).

Revitalization efforts aim not only to conserve a historic building but to integrate its legacy into sustainable urban development. By aligning its function with current societal needs, the *Warenhuis* can once again become a vital center of economic and cultural activity. This aligns with sustainable development principles that recognize cultural heritage as a critical urban asset. In this endeavor, the role of government and civil society is essential. Collaborative initiatives involving academics, architects, and economic stakeholders are necessary for designing and implementing effective revitalization programs. As Putri et al. suggest, participatory approaches can enhance public awareness and appreciation for the historical and cultural value embedded in the *Warenhuis* (Putri et al., 2024).

Revitalizing the *Warenhuis* could also enhance Medan's cultural tourism sector. With its unique architectural heritage, the building holds potential as a compelling heritage tourism destination for both domestic and international

visitors. An integrated heritage tourism strategy centered on the *Warenhuis* can increase local revenue and create new employment opportunities. This case may serve as a model for best practices in historical preservation across Indonesia—demonstrating that, with the right approach, historic buildings can contribute meaningfully to both economic and social development (Tanaka & Mustaram, 2023).

A successful revitalization of the *Warenhuis* would reinforce Medan's identity as a city that values its history and culture. Leveraging cultural heritage as a development asset enables the city to pursue an inclusive and sustainable urban growth model. This is in line with national development goals that position culture as a foundational pillar of nation-building. The *Warenhuis* played a strategic role in transforming Medan's economic structure during the colonial era and holds tremendous potential to contribute to the city's sustainable development in the future. Through thoughtful revitalization, the *Warenhuis* may once again emerge as a proud symbol of Medan's economic dynamism and urban identity.

CONCLUSION

The *Warenhuis* stands as a concrete representation of colonial modernity—serving not merely as a retail center but as an ideological instrument that actively shaped the social and economic landscape of Medan in the early 20th century. Through its grand European-style architecture, structured spatial layout, and the introduction of modern consumer practices, the *Warenhuis* emerged as a symbol of colonial cultural superiority and simultaneously functioned as a catalyst for urban economic transformation. Its presence marked a shift in local consumption patterns, strengthened the service and distribution sectors, and played a formative role in the emergence of an urban middle class that contributed to the development of modern economic networks. In this regard, the *Warenhuis* is not only a legacy of colonial architectural history but also a key agent in shaping the economic and cultural identity of Medan—an influence that continues to resonate today.

Future research is encouraged to explore in greater depth the social dynamics that evolved around the *Warenhuis*, particularly the intersections of ethnicity and class within the colonial urban space. A multidisciplinary approach—integrating architectural studies, urban economics, and historical anthropology—may yield fresh insights into how similar colonial-era structures have influenced the trajectory of urban development in other Indonesian cities. Comparative studies with other former colonial urban centers such as Batavia (Jakarta) or Surabaya could further enrich our understanding of the strategic role commercial spaces played in the construction of colonial modernity.

REFERENCES

Akbar, A. (2018). Perkebunan Tembakau dan Kapitalisasi Ekonomi Sumatera Timur 1863-1930. *Jurnal Tamaddun : Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, *6*(2), 61–98. https://doi.org/10.24235/tamaddun.v6i2.3522

Anwar, S. (2018). Keruangan Perkotaan Medan dalam Tinjauan Transportasi Perkotaan Masa Kolonial. *JUSPI (Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam)*, *1*(2), 341–351. https://doi.org/10.30829/j.v1i2.1394

Atika, J. (2016). Kajian Interior Bangunan Pada PT. Pos Medan. *PROPORSI : Jurnal Desain, Multimedia Dan Industri Kreatif*, *2*(1), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.22303/proporsi.2.1.2016.13-22

Breman, J. (2024). *Kolonialisme, Kapitalisme dan Rasisme: Kronik Pasca Kolonial*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

Colombijn, F. (2013). *Under Construction: The Politics of Urban Space and Housing during The Decolonization of Indonesia, 1930-1960* (Vol. 246). Brill.

Daunton, M. J. (2004). The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City. *The English Historical Review*, *119*(482), 813–814.

Firdaus, F. (2017). *Adaptive Reuse dalam Preservasi Gedung Warenhuis di Jalan A. Yani VII*. Universitas Sumatera Utara.

Furnivall, J. S. (1940). Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy. *The Geographical Journal*, *95*(3), 226. https://doi.org/10.2307/1788413

Hutajulu, R. A., Sarita, N., Sinaga, E. I., & Sinaga, R. (2024). Eksploitasi Sumber Daya Alam Sumatera Utara pada Masa Kolonial: Implikasi dan Warisannya. *AR-RUMMAN: Journal of Education and Learning Evaluation*, *1*(2), 173–179. https://doi.org/10.57235/arrumman.v1i2.3962

Jovan, F., & Sutanto, A. (2024). Revitalisasi Tapak Ex-Kantor Borsumij Medan Menjadi Fasilitas Pendukung UMKM dengan Metode Arsitektur Simbiosis. *Jurnal Sains, Teknologi, Urban, Perancangan, Arsitektur (Stupa)*, *6*(2), 867–876. https://doi.org/10.24912/stupa.v6i2.30870

Lindblad, T. J., & Post, P. (2009). Indonesian Economic Decolonization in Regional and International Perspective. *Indonesian Economic Decolonization in Regional and International Perspective*, 1–212. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004253780

Makkelo, I. D. (2017). Sejarah Perkotaan: Sebuah Tinjauan Historiografis dan Tematis. *Lensa Budaya: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Budaya*, *12*(2), 83–101. https://doi.org/10.34050/JLB.V12I2.3052

Mutawally, A. F., & Dienaputra, R. D. (2024). Kampongverbetering dan Volkshuisvesting: Kebijakan Penataan Permukiman Kumuh di Kota Cirebon pada Masa Kolonial (1906-1942). *SOSIOHUMANIORA: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, *10*(1), 100–117. https://doi.org/10.30738/sosio.v10i1.16371

Nasution, M. F. H., Sahera, L., Siregar, M. K., & Lubis, H. F. (2018). Konsep Panduan Desain Pelestarian Kawasan Kesawan di Medan. *SENADA (Seminar Nasional Manajemen, Desain Dan Aplikasi Bisnis Teknologi)*, *1*, 493–500. https://eprosiding.idbbali.ac.id/index.php/senada/article/view/98

Pane, I. F., Siregar, N. R., & Lubis, R. N. (2020). Arsitektur Vernakular Berdasarkan Aspek Sosial-Budaya Pada Ruko Di Kota Medan. *Talenta Conference Series: Energy and Engineering (EE)*, *3*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.32734/EE.V3I1.846

Pante, M. D. (2015). Cars, Conduits, and Kampongs: The Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920-1960. *Southeast Asian Studies*, *4*(2), 424–428. https://www.proquest.com/openview/a88037c7121cd595c09ba3d27a821e05/1?cbl=2032491&pq-origsite=gscholar

Pecotich, A., & Shultz, C. J. (2016). Indonesia: Transition at a Crossroads. In *Handbook of Markets and Economies: East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315498775-7

Primaditya, K. T. (2022). Modernisasi Kota: Saluran Air Bersih Perpipaan di Jawa Masa Kolonial. *Lembaran Sejarah*, *17*(2), 171–187. https://doi.org/10.22146/lembaran-sejarah.73174

Putri, R. A. W., Wahyudie, P., & Astuti, S. B. (2024). Adaptive Reuse Bangunan Heritage sebagai Ruang Komersial: Eksplorasi Daya Tarik Generasi Z. *Jurnal Ilmiah Desain & Konstruksi*, *23*(2), 284–297. https://doi.org/10.35760/dk.2024.v23i2.13404

Rambe, F. K., Nasution, A. D., & Pane, I. F. (2021). Persepsi Masyarakat terhadap Perubahan Atribut Fisik pada Lapangan Merdeka Medan. *Jurnal Pengembangan Kota*, *9*(1), 64–71. https://doi.org/10.14710/jpk.9.1.64-71

Reid, A. (2007). *Federalism in Asia* (B. He, B. Galligan, & T. Inoguchi, Eds.). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781847207029

Rukayah, S., & Juwono, S. (2018). Arsitektur dan Desain Kota Hibrida pada Kantor Pos dan Alun-Alun di Medan. *TATALOKA*, *20*(3), 330. https://doi.org/10.14710/TATALOKA.20.3.317-330

Sahmura, Y., & Wahyuningrum, S. H. (2018). Identifikasi Langgam dan Periodisasi Arsitektur Kolonial Nusantara pada Bangunan Cagar Budaya. *MODUL*, *18*(2), 60–69. https://doi.org/10.14710/mdl.18.2.2018.60-69

Siagian, R. T. (2011). *Perubahan Tata Ruang Kota Medan Dari Klasik Ke Modern*. Universitas Sumatera Utara.

Sianturi, A. R., Nisa, K., Andari, S., Simanjuntak, P. A., & Tekege, A. (2024). Dinamika Perkembangan Tata Ruang Kota Medan : Analisis Penggunaan Lahan dan Dampaknya terhadap Keberlanjutan Kota. *Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia*, *1*(4), 560–564. https://jicnusantara.com/index.php/jiic/article/view/489

Simbolon, S. D. M. I., & Rambe, Y. S. (2022). Penerapan Elemen Menara pada Bangunan Bergaya Art Deco di Medan. *Jaur (Journal Of Architecture And Urbanism Research)*, *6*(1), 41–50. https://doi.org/10.31289/jaur.v6i1.8244

Sitepu, D. H. (2024). Politik Kebijakan Kolonial dalam Program Perumahan Rakyat di Medan, 1909-1942. *Local History & Heritage*, *4*(1), 19–25. https://doi.org/10.57251/lhh.v4i1.1287

Stoler, A. L. (2020). Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule. In *The New Imperial Histories Reader*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003060871-18

Suryomenggolo, J. (2013). *Organising under the Revolution: Unions and the State in Java, 1945-48*. NUS Press.

Syam, F. H., Arifin, N., & Arifin, H. S. (2020). Kajian Potensi Lanskap Kota Medan untuk Pengembangan Wisata Sejarah. *Jurnal Lanskap Indonesia*, *11*(2), 48–54. https://doi.org/10.29244/jli.v11i2.22739

Sylvia, D., Harahap, H. S., & Sinaga, U. H. (2022). Budaya dan Perkembangan Kota Medan dalam Perspektif Sejarah. *IJTIMAIYAH Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Budaya*, *6*(2), 27. https://doi.org/10.30821/ijtimaiyah.v6i2.17150

Tamimi, N., Fatimah, I. S., & Hadi, A. A. (2020). Tipologi Arsitektur Kolonial di Indonesia. *Vitruvian Jurnal Arsitektur Bangunan Dan Lingkungan*, *10*(1), 45. https://doi.org/10.22441/vitruvian.2020.v10i1.006

Tanaka, S., & Mustaram, A. L. (2023). Strategi Penerapan Konsep Adaptive Reuse pada Bangunan Bersejarah Olympia Plaza Medan. *Jurnal Stupa: Sains, Teknologi, Urban, Perancangan, Arsitektur*, *5*(1), 63–78. https://doi.org/10.24912/stupa.v5i1.22604

Veronica, S., & Siregar, R. W. (2018). Pengaruh Masa Kolonial terhadap Struktur Ruang Kawasan (Studi Kasus: Jl. Brigjen Katamso-Jl. Avros-Jl.Karya Jaya-Jl. A.H. Nasution, Medan). *Seminar Nasional "Kearifan Lokal Dalam Keberagaman Untuk Pembangunan Indonesia*, 571–578.

Winata, D., Tobing, R. R., & Herwindo, R. P. (2023). Adaptive Reuse Guidelines on Warenhuis Medan and Urban Heritage Environment. *Idealog: Ide Dan Dialog Desain Indonesia*, *8*(1), 80–102. https://doi.org/10.25124/idealog.v8i1.5508