

## **URBAN FORM OF INDONESIA CITIES BEYOND THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD**

Bambang Heryanto<sup>1</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

The physical structures of the city or urban form are continuously changing and its final form reflects the social character of its people. It is influenced by the natural resources and formed by the decision-making processes that move continuously over time. These human values and natural resources determined, shaped and furnished the physical form of early cities to the contemporary. Urban form is the product of time and space, of nature and technology, of society and culture, and of political and socioeconomic forces. The production of urban form of Indonesian cities beyond the colonial period is the collection of products of specific courses of action or inaction undertaken by various forces such as individuals, governmental institutions, as well as large and small private interests at local, regional and national, even global level that were manifested in a specific local setting of the cities. This article reveals the development path of Indonesian cities in shaping their urban forms beyond the post-colonial period.

Key words: urban form, urban landscape, urban design, architecture.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The historical development of urban form of the Indonesian city during the post-colonial period is not value-free. The existing urban form of the Indonesian city has been delineated by various forces and determined by its local settings. The urban form is not only the physical form of the city but is actually an expression of political, economic, social and religious factors that were inherited by the society for a period of time. The natural environment and the behavior of society, as well as the contribution foreign cultures, have delineated the urban form of most Indonesian cities through times. Political and economic developments, despite bearing changes and development to the urban form, also clearly inhibited the efficient allocation of urban space in the city and as well as urban problems to the society an environment.

---

<sup>1</sup>Lecture Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Hasanuddin University, Makassar..

## **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Urban forms have been studied by a variety of disciplines, each having a different approach to its understanding with different definitions a methodological approach. This study uses a literature reviewed and field observations to investigate the changing of development of urban form in a certain period. A variety of literatures and documents concerning architecture, urban planning and design of Western world as well Indonesian cities are reviewed and analyzed. Descriptive analysis and visual data are presented in the study. Based on these focal points, a picture of the changing and development of urban forms of Indonesian cities beyond the post-colonial period is understood.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Efforts To Develop The Urban Areas**

The independence that was proclaimed in 1945 brought little change for almost a decade. There were no significant developments in most cities in the young republic due to four years of revolutionary wars following independence. Civil unrest in some parts of the country and the lack of funds are also two factors that caused no development in the cities in the post-independence period. The poor relationship with the former colonizer also brought difficulty for the authority in terms of developing the city from ashes of the previous war. However, as the administration and economy began to throb, the authority realized that housing facilities were necessary to accommodate civil servants and citizens who sought jobs in the capital of the new country. Kebayoran Baru housing complex was developed as a satellite town to accommodate 100,000 inhabitants in the capital city, namely Jakarta. Originally it was planned by a Dutch planner, Thomas Karsten, but later was continued by his follower, an Indonesian trained planner, Susilo. The project was realized by Indonesian architects in the early 1950s and completed in 1960 (Figure 1). Kebayoran was planned as a satellite of Jakarta town as Menteng for Batavia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Marbun, 1979).

During the early independence several design styles came to surface in architectural works by talented Indonesian architects. The “Jengki” style is one of various building designs that emerged as popular an architectural style in 1950s. The word “Jengki” came from the “Yankee” based on the popularity of American design that was shown on pictures

(Sukada, 1998). Jengki style was admired by people for villa structure in retreat areas. Most of these structures were designed as well as constructed by civil engineers or technical practions. The jengki's was in trend among people until the middle of 1960s Figure 2.

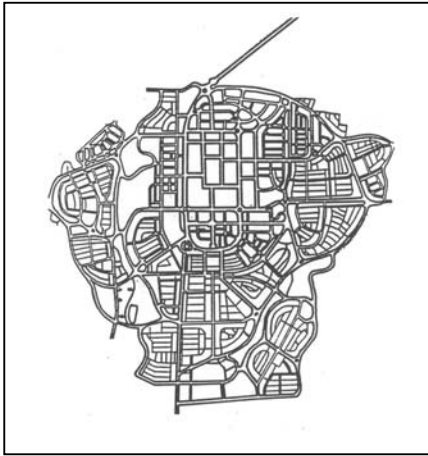


Figure 1: New Town of Kebayoran (Marbun, 1979).



Figure 2. "Yankee" style in a housing estate in Kebayoran Baru (Sukada, 1998).

Another design styles that enrich the urban of Indonesian cities is Tropical Architecture by Silaban Frederich. Silaban was graduated from local technical school in Batavia, then Jakarta, in 1930. By his architectural work, he was called the 'avant-garde' of Indonesian architects (Sukada, 1998). His ideas to link between western and local elements were manifested in the tropical Indonesian architecture that were introduced by some of his design works (Figure 3 and Figure 4). Silaban was famous through the introduction of louvres, large cantilevers, and sunbreakers for building facades.

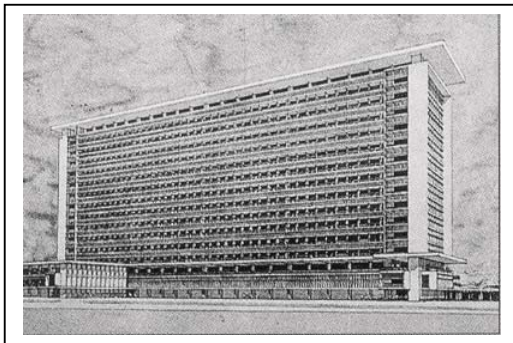


Figure 3. A rendering of Hotel Borubodur (Sukada, 1998).

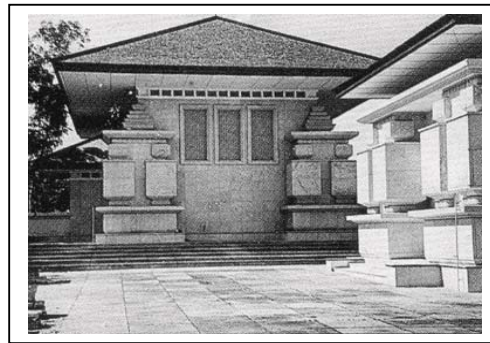


Figure 4. The main gate of Kalibata Cemetery (Sukada, 1998).

Apart from Jakarta, during the Liberal Democratic Administrative System from 1949 to 1959, development in other cities was not so accelerated. Physical developments in some cities outside Java were also limited due to lack of funds and also civil unrest. The civil unrest that broke out in 1958 and ended in 1960, was also one of the main determinants of the slow pace of physical developments in several cities, particularly on Sumatra and Sulawesi. For example, Makassar on Sulawesi, the civil unrest in Makassar's hinterland held up physical development. Even so, some cities were still able to endow their environment with buildings and other urban facilities .

### **Under The Courses Of Guided Development**

The years from 1959 to 1965 have particular significance for some cities in terms of their physical development. During this period the national ideology, "Guided Democracy," became the primary inspiration of Soekarno, the first president of the Republic. As president of a nation that just been liberated from colonial power, Soekarno gave great attention to the development of architectural design in Indonesia. Indeed, he was a graduated in Civil Engineering, with a major in building design, from one prestigious technical university in the colony. Arts and architecture were two disciplines that influenced Soekarno's political program in building the physical environment of the new nation. In the context of Nation Building, he emphasized modernity as a symbol of liberation of Indonesian's politic against Dutch colonialism and imperialist influences.

To ignite the spirit among his countrymen in developing the nation, Soekarno declared. His interest in socialism and in the arts, particularly for architecture, was inspired by the monumentalism of modern building and dynamism of social power. Despite monumentalism, Sukarno as a Javanese, praised fulfilling the existence of the three elements in cosmological space in the ritual of a state- -the palace, the mosque, and the main square (Wiryomartono 1995, Sukada 1998, Kusno, 2000)). Monumentalism, cosmological aspects and socio-realism, then, became the symbol of architectural design during the period 1960-1965 that expressing the autonomy and capability to govern the nation (Figure 5 and Figure 6).



Figure 5. National Monument symbol of Jakarta Government (Saliya, 1998).



Figure 6. Istiqlal Mosque, one of the religious symbol of of the Indonesian people (Sukada, 1998).

Sukarno's ideas to show to the world that Indonesian architects could build buildings as the westerners were enthusiastically responded by young architects who were newly graduated from abroad and local architectural school in Bandung. Some of their designs that were manifested in government buildings contributed a characteristic form to the urban fabric of many cities. (Figure 7 and Figure 8).

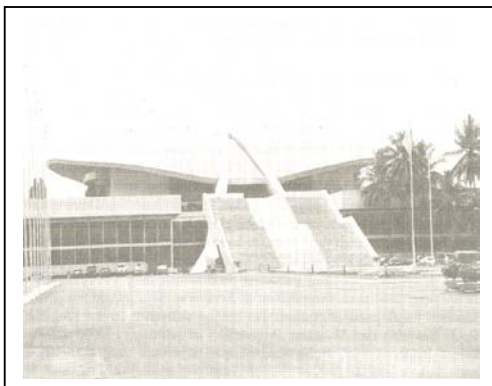


Figure 7. The People's Assembly Building (Wiryomartono, 1995).



Figure 8. The National Bank of Indonesia (Sukada, 1998).

### **Styles And Forms Of The Dual Urban Landscape**

The defeat of Soekarno's power by the "New Order," headed by General Suharto in 1965, brought a new dimension into the political and economic activity in Indonesia. The transformation from "Guided Democracy" to "Democratic Capitalism" changed the urban form of cities in Indonesia. The increase in economic activity, the stable political environment, and the Five-year National Development Policy accelerated construction activities in the country. Moreover, the "open door" policy in economic sectors brought in foreign capitals. Many foreign enterprises began to participate in the economic activity by opening offices in some large cities. Banks, business offices, industrial complexes, and shopping centers began to emerge in large and small cities. Besides buildings for the work place, housing estates began to sprawl in some cities. As transportation costs became significant factors for people, and the land became so scarce in the city, apartment buildings were one of the best ways to provide shelter for people to live near their work place.

During the New Order development period, skyscraper buildings that exceeded thirty stories and super-block structures began to rise in Javanese cities and on the outer islands. With an increase in the building construction industry in accordance with economic development, foreign architects began to participate in the construction activities. If a project, whether governmental or private, was supported by foreign funds or foreign investments, one of the requirements was that the design should be performed by them. On certain occasions, a joint partnership between foreign and Indonesian architects could also place. It was also common for that certain projects to have a joint investment project, both in private and government projects. This kind of policy was an opportunity for foreign architects to participate in architectural works due to this financing system (Ford, 1993).

The participation of foreign architects in architectural activity provided new colors to the urban landscape of some cities. New ideas and experiences from the Western World began to influence Indonesian architect (Abel, 1994) (Figure 9 and Figure 10). The growing numbers of local architects who engaged in the design activities manifested this phenomenon. The transfer of knowledge is expressed by the various forms and design

styles that began to appear from the traditional to the neo-traditional, vernacular to the neo-vernacular, regionalism to the neo-regionalism, and from modern to the postmodern architecture during the development period, then, became part of a consumer way of life, as Harvey has stated (1995). The appearance of buildings becomes an integral part of the marketing strategy for most enterprises. The more sophisticated, distinct and luxurious the appearance of a building, the more prestigious the company image becomes. Each building competed with each other in size, height, material, color, and style. Advanced technology allowed support of tall buildings. Eventually, skyscrapers became a monumental symbol to express economic power of business enterprise (Figure 11).

Although contemporary structures transformed the physical form in certain parts of some cities, the urban scene is still dominated by the dual model of modern and traditional landscape. It is not surprising to see modern buildings surrounded by traditional structures of houses, cottages, “*warungs*” or traditional convenience stores, and *pedagang* “*kaki-lima*” or street vendors (food stall). Old inner *kampungs*, with narrow streets, open sewerage, and temporary or makeshift wooden/bamboo houses, sit at the feet of glass and steel skyscraper office buildings (Figure 11). Although these two sectors of the economy, the “formal/modern” and “informal/traditional,” seem to be in conflict, one alongside the other, in some manner one depends on the other for survival. Many members of the formal sectors utilize the services provided by the informal sector.



Figure 9. The local theme in contemporary design (Saliya, 1998).



Figure 10. Western theme in local environment (Cipta Karya, 1998).





Figure 11. The big picture of economic symbol of large corporate insitutions in Jakarta (Siregar, 1998).

The temporal structures in the *kampung* settlements, on one hand, were physical nuisances for the authority; on the other hand, they were socially helpful in serving daily needs. For example, during breakfast and lunch break, middle and low-income office workers from the adjacent modern buildings enjoyed the presence of *warungs* and *pedagang* “*kaki-lima*,” that offered affordable and tasteful foods. In many cities, these eating places and convenient shops became the focal point for school children, construction workers, drivers, hawkers, and other urban dwellers. These gritty neighborhoods developed complex urban fabrics of streets, walkways, markets, convenience shops, and common areas that today’s planners, architects, and developers are hurriedly constructing (Figure 12).

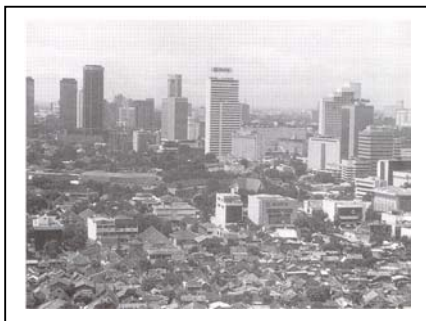


Figure 11. Jakarta the “big *kampung*” (Kusno, 2000).



Figure 12. The inner parts of a *kampung* (Cipta Karya, 1998).



### ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The development of the individual car as the dominant transportation mode caused the degraded role of the city's center. Like modern western cities, Indonesian cities began to follow their counterparts by dispersing their cities' center into several sub-centers in the city. The traditional role of the city center as the heart of urban activities declined due to the inaccessibility and high cost of its location as a work place as well as the lack of parking spaces. In addition, the decline of some urban activities in the city center affected the life of the downtown areas. The traditional patterns of city use that dominated the center --offices, squares, and markets--began to diminish. Today, with the existence of several satellite towns, the downtown areas that formerly were busy places, come alive only during business days. Nonetheless, several new centers are sprouting in many cities but they do not function and serve in the role as the heart of the city like in the old days.

Limitation of land as an urban resource for development is another problem that most cities are facing. The increase of development activities and the limited availability of land in the city caused development that went vertically beyond city limits as well. Tall mega-structures that emerged along the city's main corridors and at several new centers necessitated the provision new building regulations. For certain conditions, due to limited funds and experiences, only a few cities could prepare it. The existences of large buildings that usually consume a large amount of space, in certain areas of the cities, threaten the rights of pedestrians in open public space. This phenomenon has come forth due to the insufficiency of building block plans and designs. The limitation of lands in the center of the city besides urging buildings to move on and upward also causes the decline of open spaces and the demolition of several old buildings, often historical structures.

The ribbon development patterns that exist along the business corridors and transportation channels are other problems that many cities are facing. This phenomenon is common for the Indonesian city since the 1970s. Some of the problems of this pattern are the difficulty of the authority to control building lines, traffic congestion along the main corridors, and the stalls of informal sectors, which participate in the economic activity. Leapfrog development also takes place in some Indonesian cities. The scattered developments of new housing settlements that often do not follow the master plan, generally causes uncontrolled developments and in turn, reduces the optimization of lands. Moreover, the development of unplanned satellite towns gives the government an

additional task to provide infrastructure that was not in its yearly agenda. Experiences show that these incidents occur due to the absence of policy and regulations. Policies always come late and are prepared after the facts exist.

### CONCLUSION

The transfer of Dutch sovereignty to the new Republic brought about new experiences in development activities for Indonesian cities. During the early post-independence period several design styles came to surface in architectural works by talented Indonesian architects in their efforts in developing the urban areas. Their participations and encouragements by the idealistic and energetic President Sukarno fruitfully change the image of the capital city of Jakarta into a modern city through their designs.

The presence of foreign architects and designers in the building industries in the 1970s, besides bringing a new atmosphere in decorating the urban landscape, also caused significant problems. Some foreign architects often went beyond the local design order. A large number of them neglected the local tradition and only a few searching local ingredients that could be used to harmonize their design with the surrounding environment.

There are three significant issues and problems that were met by cities in Indonesia in beyond the post-colonial period 1) the breakdown of city's center and vagueness of periphery boundary; 2) the increase of production of physical development in urban space; and 3) the growing existence of low-income settlements or *kampungs*. This existing urban condition is not free from the influence of policy and programs that were issued by the authority. Whether it is national, regional or local policy, the influence to transform the form of urban areas for human needs was unavoidable. However, development to fulfill mankind's needs has its boundaries; thus, certain changes in policy-making are necessary in order to keep a city's urban environments lively and keep them to fulfill the needs of its citizens.

## REFERENCES

- Abel, C. (1994). Localization Versus Globalization. *Architectural Review*, September Edition, 12-20.
- Cipta Karya (1998). Bangunan Gedung di Indonesia. Direktorat Jendral Cipta Karya, Jakarta.
- Cipta Karya (1998). Perumahan dan Permukiman. Direktorat Jendral Cipta Karya, Jakarta.
- Ford, L. (1993). A Model of Indonesian City Structure. *Geographical Review*, 83, 4374-96.
- Harvey, D. (1995). *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Blackwell, Cambridge.
- Kusno A. (1994). Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, urban space and political cultures in Indonesia. Routledge, New York.
- Marbun, B.N. (1990). Kota Indonesia Masa Depan. Erlangga, Jakarta.
- Saliya, Y. Modernism and the International Style, in *Architecture in Indonesian Heritage: Architecture*, edited by Gunawan Tjahyono. Archipelago Press, Singapore.
- Siregar, S. (1998). The Architecture of Modern Indonesian Cities, in *Indonesian Heritage: Architecture*, edited by Gunawan Tjahyono. Archipelago Press, Singapore.
- Sukada, B. (1998). The Architecture of Early Independence, in *Indonesian Heritage: Architecture*, edited by Gunawan Tjahyono. Archipelago Press, Singapore.
- Wiryomartono, A.B. P. (1995). Seni bangunan dan Seni Bina Kota di Indonesia: Kajian mengenai Konsep, Struktur dan Elemen Fisik Kota Sejak Peradaban Hindu, Buddha, Islam Hingga Sekarang. PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta.