URBAN FORM OF INDONESIAN CITIES DURING THE COLONIZATION PERIOD.

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ABSTRACT

The development and transformation stages of Indonesian cities during the colonization period are unveiled by the manifestation of their urban form. The cities' eminent position in politics, culture and regional economics provides for a diversity of population groups. Like other Western colonizers, the Dutch forced their ideological urban design in establishing and developing the colony. Even though, laws, ordinances, and codes that were established gradually changed due to the characteristic local condition. The social, cultural of the natives as well as physical condition land imposed the Dutch to adapt the existing environment to establish and developed their ideas in town and building design. As a result, a new breed of urban design and architecture materialized in the colony’s urban form. This research is basically founded that urban form of Indonesian cities has both physical and social dimensions by tracing the process of developments.

Key words: urban form, urban design, architecture.

INTRODUCTION

The colonization period of Indonesia began with the arrival of the Dutch in the 16th century. The Dutch colonization that lasted for almost three and half centuries delineated important changes in Indonesian city patterns. After a period of time as a colleague in trading activities, the Dutch began to penetrate Indonesia as a colonizer through its trading company, the Dutch East India Company, at the end of the 16th century. As a colonizer, the Dutch were responsible for founding rational planned cities in Indonesia, where some buildings and open spaces still textured the urban form of contemporary cities. Unlike the local society, which judged their city as a sacred place, the colonizers saw the site of the existing cities as a place of little importance. The aim of the Dutch in building their settlements was paramount to creating economic, political, and administrative hegemonies.

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METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Few scholars have overlooked the connection and ideology and urban form. Urban form is the product of physical, ideas and rules, and as well as social and economic values. In order to find a response to this statement, this research attempts to work out a methodology for the study. To study the changes and development of urban form it will be done by with reference to the reviewed literatures on the subject. Various architecture, planning and design, political, social, and economic literatures have been reviewed to trace the changing and development process of urban form. By tracing the development process of urban form from several literatures and documents it will be possible to determine various factors that influence the making and shaping of urban form of Indonesian cities during the colonization era.

DISCUSSION

THE PENETRATION OF FOREIGN CULTURE IN THE URBAN FORM

The Law of the Indies, which was the town design and planning ideology in the western hemisphere, was practiced so as to express the colonizers’ ideas in constructing their new settlements. Most European colonizers, particularly continental Europeans (e.g., Spanish, Portuguese, and the Dutch), adopted this kind of code and method in town planning in building their new settlements in their colony. The determinants of the typical town planning, according to this code, were topography; political surveillance; trade, race and religious and social segregation, expressed in the gridiron pattern of the town (Morris, 1994).

One clear example of how the colonizers forced their ideas in the development of Indonesian cities during their colonization is manifested by the city of Batavia (then Jakarta). After they defeated the ruler of the town of Jayakarta and leveled the town, the Dutch laid out a new settlement, the city of Batavia in 1619 (Beg, 1985). Batavia was designed as Amsterdam in various ways. It was a Dutch city transplanted in a geographic tropical setting (Figure 1). A few other colonial cities that followed the similar pattern are Surabaya, Semarang, Bandung, Medan, Malang, Makassar, and others (Figure 2). Hence, from that period, Western approaches to design, particularly European and Dutch urban design and planning ideas, began to penetrate the traditional indigenous approach.
Their ideas were expressed with typical Dutch architecture, the Neo-classical, in general and Gothic style, in particular, of the medieval period. The buildings were from bricks that were often imported from Holland because of the previous fire incident experiences. As a mercantile colony, Indonesian coastal cities were built parallel to the canal grid street patterns, which delineate Amsterdam into blocks. Indeed, most of the colonial cities are Dutch cities cloned in a tropical setting.

**BLENDING BETWEEN WITH THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT**

The characteristic local environment that distinctively contrasted with theirs homeland and the continuous close contacts between the Dutch and the native people, particularly in social life, gave influences to their ideas in accommodating their living and working environment. For example, the hot humid climate, and what they considered an unhealthy environment, did not match their design concepts. Private and official contacts with native people created a mixture of cultures, and a kind of “mestizo” flourished. The result of this phenomenon, “Indische” culture, began to influence building design and town planning in Indonesian cities.

“Indische Architecture” and “Indische Town planning” was practiced on buildings in planning in the colony. The architecture of the houses was a mixture of European style,
the Javanese architecture or other local colors. The hybrid building form was expressed by large gardens, high ceilings, large lattice windows, air grills, and large verandahs in the urban areas as well as in the rural areas, such as in plantation estates. The most significant form that distinguishes the "Indische" building is the indigenous roof—the extended hipped roof—that was not found in the mother country (Priyotomo, 1984; Sumalyo, 1991). Doric and Ionic columns, Roman arches, Western ornamental decorations, and European floor tiles are several other Western architectural elements that contributed to the new breed of building form. Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the some of Indishe Architectures.

A MODEL OF URBAN FORM

The social and economic concepts that the Dutch brought and implemented in Dutch Indies continuously structured the physical form of cities. They influenced most cities during the colonization and into the early years of the post-independence period. Division of space, by social and economic aspects as well as racial, that textured most Southeast Asian colonial cities had also woven the colonial Indonesian cities into three concentric rings: the port and its fort, the merchant quarters, and the urban villages (McGee, 1967).

Figure 4. Government offices of Indische architecture in Batavia
(Gill, 1998; Sukada, 1998)
The fort was the place where administrative activities of the colony were took place. Other facilities that supported the power of Dutch sovereignty that were also included inside the fort were soldier compound houses for married staff, churches, schools, and storage. Adjacent to the port zone, the second ring, was European residential, which was comprised of brick houses and spacious gardens. The third ring was the merchant quarters where firm economic capitalism was practiced to extract rich resources of the colony. This ring consisted of trade offices and shops and it was adjacent to the port and the administrative quarters of the fort along the waterfront (Figure 6).

In the busy merchant quarters the bustling traditional markets were also usually located. Scattered around the merchants’ quarters were the native villagers who made their traditional living through subsistence production. Beyond the third ring, lay the natives’ gardens as well as some industrial plants. The distinct
environment, the modern and traditional sector of economic activities and way of life that took place in the merchant ring and villages, shaped a dual urban form in the city’s landscape (Geertz, 1960). This dualistic model is a typical pattern of social and economic activities in the colonial city, which is expressed in the built environment (McGee, 1967) (Figure 7).

![Figure 7: The model of urban form of colonial City in Southeast Asian Cities (McGee, 1967)](image)

The contrast of living condition between the Europeans, Orientals, and native peoples in the city began to raise the awareness of authority in regard to urban problems. As a result, a Decentralization Act was established in 1903. The decentralization Act was the stepping stone of democratization of government in the Dutch Indies. Under the Decentralization Act in 1905, Batavia was established as the first municipality in the Dutch Indies. A number of municipalities and regencies were established in the following years. By 1918, there were 18 urban municipalities and 78 regencies in the colony. As a consequence of the set-up of municipalities, regional administrative works were transferred to the local governments. Furthermore, housing and town planning became the tasks such as the maintenance of roads, bridges, sanitation, clean waters, and markets, were important responsibility of the municipalities. The urban municipalities were aware of the poor condition of the indigenous population in some parts of their cities, but their primary task was to serve the growing Dutch population. Therefore, most of the new development plans
accommodated European residential quarters. Nonetheless, certain municipalities were concerned about the living condition of the indigenous people in the kampungs.

A CROSSBREED OF URBAN FORM

The development of Indonesian towns and cities at large, during the Dutch sovereignty, could not flourish without the power of the matured bureaucracies and participation of Dutch architects. Several Dutch architects came to the colony to participate in building construction as a result of the economic activity during the liberalization period that began in 1870. The practice of "Indische" style in architecture and town planning that was adopted in the 16th century flourished more in several cities through the involvement of Dutch architects and planners. As an example, a typical “Indische” town plan was well illustrated in Kromoblanda: On the Question of Living Conditions in Kromo’s Vast Country by H.F Tillema based on Wertheim (1957) in Wirayomatono (1995). The spatial patterns mapped the integration between the local and colonial administrative structure through the manifestation of the main square (Wirayomatono, 1995) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: A model of colonial town in Java in middle 19th century by based on Wartheim by H. PH Withamp (Wirayomatono, 1995).

At the beginning of the 20th century, several Dutch architects and planners began actively contributing their ideas in shaping the colonial architecture in some building constructions and town plans by the order of governments, rulers and the private sector. Most of the architects, besides inheriting Western ideas in design, like the “Garden City,” gradually became attracted to the local cultures and beliefs through
their experiences in designing government buildings, commercial structures, factories, education facilities, and residences. Some of their works still remain in cities on Java and outer islands. For example, a mixture of the “Garden City” model and local principles were expressed in new town plans. These towns, which were characterized by strong axes of boulevards and gardens surrounded by villa type houses, still exist today in some cities in Indonesia (Figure 9 and 10).

Figure 9: A new town of Menteng, a model of “Tropical Garden City,” in Batavia then Jakarta in the early 20th century (Heuken and Pamungkas, 2001).

Figure 10. Villa types houses and shopping centers in Menteng the, “Tropical Garden City,” of Batavia ((Heuken and Pamungkas, 2001)

CONCLUSION

The centuries of Dutch sovereignty and the role of the government in developing is reflected in the urban form of contemporary Indonesian cities. The Dutch set up Western codes and laws in urban design that originated from the motherland. The laws that were enacted regulating the relationship among different
races, classes, and religious population groups, influenced the physical form of the city.

During the colonization period under the Dutch sovereignty, foreign town planning and building code began to be practiced in Indonesia. Some of the Dutch codes on how to plan cities and how to regulate building construction had been continuously practiced. The arrival of the Dutch in the 16th century, who insisted on a modern Western concept in town planning and building construction, had significant effect on the development and transformation of the indigenous city.

The Dutch, like other European nations which practiced the Law of the Indies as urban design in town planning and building ordinance, insisted on materializing their Western concept in Indonesia. Even though, the local condition forced them to look upon the socio-cultural as well as the physical environment of the colony. Through their train architect and urban planner, a new breed of urban design and architecture principles emerged in the colony. Some of these principles which were materialized as ordinances, codes, and laws are still used by some municipal governments and they can be traced in order to observe the design and urban planning policy as well as architectural development in the Indonesian city during the colonial period.

REFERENCES


