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Global Cities in a Local Context: The Case of Indonesia's Urban Development



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Abstract

After independence, Indonesia has seen a stable growth since the 80's that ended by Asian financial crisis in 1998. It was then picked up again in 2001 and further survived the Global financial crisis in 2008. The growth creates a large number of middle income groups that inhabits the urban area. The growth opens the opportunity for international investment to the major cities. As the land in the city center become more expensive, the growth of tall buildings development is inevitable.

The tall buildings have been constructed not only in Jakarta, the capital city, but also in second and third tier cities, such as Surabaya, Medan, Bandung, Balikpapan, Makassar, etc. The ASEAN open market will also open an opportunity as well as challenge to the society. The technology could be transferred, but the knowledge and local wisdom in each development will also need to be acknowledged.

Keywords: Architecture, climate, knowledge, social interaction, urban habitat

Indonesia Periods of Urban Development

Indonesian cities are in a period of phenomenal growth and profound change. This was particularly true during the years 1970 through 1998, before the monetary and economic turmoil crisis hit the country. Indonesia is at the moment experiencing the transformation revolution, both in physical and non-physical terms. This is the critical issue underlying the urbanization process, which is taking place in Indonesia. This issue is currently apparent, as our cities integrate into the global economy.

The integration into global economy means that important cities have to focus their attention to the management of their resources and urban development processes. This is due to the fact that cities have to function as significant nodes in the global communication networks, which is the backbone of the world economy integration. It is the communication network that determines the sustention and expansion of the prevalent economy. As a result, like many other cities of developing countries, Indonesian cities are strained to compete globally. These cities are required to develop their local economies as well as their urban infrastructures to a certain standard, if they are to upgrade their status within the international arena. The resulting impact of global intervention is the emerging new form of civilization. Along with that, the new composite urban-culture is also being formed. Such phenomenon can be clearly witnessed in cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Medan, and Denpasar, just to name a few.



Figure 1. Bunderan HI one of Jakarta's Landmark - renovated and revitalized in 2004 (Source: Danisworo)

Tremendous boom in the urban development took place for almost three decades between 1970 and 1998 in Jakarta and the surrounding regions. Those development pressures arose to an extent that there was no indication when this boom was going to end. The fact shown that many larger and sophisticated projects involving the development of high-rise buildings and other large-scale residential developments as well as commercial complexes was either being constructed or being proposed to the city for approval. The development was then revived from 2001 until 2014, overcoming the 2008 crisis with a strong economic fundamental.

The unique nature of Indonesian urban physical environments and the duality of their socio-economic and spatial structure should not be seen as a problem. Those should be taken as a challenge, in which could provide opportunities for establishing a distinctive living environment that blends with the local inspiration and identity. This would also provide opportunity to discover the positive role of the government, urban planners, architects and developers within the aforementioned transformation. In short, the synergy between professionals, developers, and respectable authorities is potential to develop new, imaginative and innovative approaches in urban design and planning. The global influence is inevitable.

The response of planning during the past fifty years, after the Dutch left the country, at the end of 1949, differs from episode to episode according to the socio-political condition in each episode. Urban planning in Indonesia,

after the 1945 independence comprises 3 eras, namely: The Soekarno Era, the Soeharto Era and the Reform Era.

The Challenges

The phenomenon in many developing countries is the inequity of basic resource availability between the rural and urban dwellers. The urban resident has the advantage of his close proximity to industrial and other resources, which are part of his metropolitan environment. Rural populations, which comprise the bulk of population, in contrast, have little access to those tools of modernization.

In countries such as Indonesia, urbanization should also be considered from its “socio-cultural” standpoint, which is “the sum of the changes in mentality, attitude patterns, and social behavior directly or indirectly induced by physical urbanization.” Thus, although these changes are generally come out from the intense physical urbanization, they may also take place inductively or autonomously in an environment where there were no physical impulses of change at all, (in the less developed regions of a country, for instance). Accordingly, urbanization in Indonesia is not merely in physical term.

Soekarno's Vision: The Old Order 1945-1966

Soekarno's vision to create Jakarta as a modern city that could compete with other modern cities in the world was his idea of what the

nation character building was all about. In a speech called “the transformation of Djakarta Raya” in 1962, Soekarno proclaimed:

Build up Djakarta as beautifully as possible, build it as spectacularly so that, this city, which has become the center of the struggle of the Indonesian people, will be an inspiration and beacon to the whole of struggling mankind and to all the emerging forces. If Egypt was able to construct Cairo as its capital. Italy its Rome, France its Paris and Brazil its Brasilia, then Indonesia must also proudly present Djakarta as the portal of the country (Soekarno, 1962).

Soekarno elucidated that Jakarta, like other cities throughout the world, had to convey a central image with its traces of signs to be equal with other world cities. In 1960, just after Jakarta was declared as Daerah Khusus Ibukota (capital city special territory), Soekarno started his “nation-building” project to put Jakarta on the map of world cities.

During this period, urban planning in Jakarta was based on Presidential Decrees rather than a conceptually formulated master plan. Thus, urban planning had become his political tool to develop the city. Soekarno acknowledged that image of the city could be developed through the quality of its streets. One of his brilliant ideas was to create the Thamrin–Soedirman axis that connected Independence Square (Taman Merdeka) with Kebayoran Baru (New Town). Along this axis he strategically placed prominent buildings and landmarks as anchors, which became the embryo for further development. These anchor projects were Sarinah Department Store, Hotel



Figure 2. Bunderan HI during the Soekarno Era (Source: Unknown)



Figure 3. Gelora Bung Karno built for 1962 Asian Games (Source: Unknown)



Figure 4. Bunderan HI (Source: Danisworo)

Indonesia, Wisma Nusantara and the Hotel Indonesia roundabout, which were built from Japan war reparations. Subsequently, the Senayan sport venues (now called Gelora Bung Karno) were built from the Russian Government's Grant along with the Semanggi cloverleaf interchange. Later followed by the construction of other important structures surrounding the Merdeka square such as the Istiqlal Mosque, the Bank of Indonesia building, a 117 m tall National Statue right at the center of the Merdeka Square and the new spatial arrangement of the square itself at the base of the tall statue, all of which was to be dedicated as the National Monument. A large cultural center was also planned as part of this National Monument but never got built.

It was Soekarno's strong intention that the country's first priority was to host the fourth Asian Games in 1962 and a year later, to host the First Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO). The GANEFO were created in response to the decision by the Olympic Organizing Committee to expel Indonesia from the Olympic organization because Israel was excluded from the fourth Asian Games in Jakarta as a result of political pressures from the Arab countries. These two spectacular events in which thousands of people took part also took place in the Thamrin–Soedirman corridor, the six-lane boulevard, from Merdeka Square, passing south through a series of newly built icon buildings and landmarks to the Asian Games Complex and the Convention Hall of the New Emerging Forces. They were organized as part of exciting

occasions at which the modern environment within Jakarta was made to envelop the crowds of the transnational alliance. This was clearly stated in another of Soekarno's statements that the Asian Games, the GANEFO, The National Monument, the Jakarta By-Pass Expressway and other spectacular projects are examples of his belief in "Nation-Character-Building."

It is easy to understand why Soekarno's vision was flavored by Architectural schemes, because he was not only a great politician but also an Architect and Civil Engineer. He was a product of the Bandoeng Technische Hoogeschool (now called Bandung Institute of Technology).

Despite strong critics from many politicians that all of these projects were unrealistic and utopian, it is no doubt that Soekarno's decision had become a basis for the transformation of Jakarta toward metropolitan city as we see it today. However, Soekarno's decision on developing Jakarta through this grandiose boulevard, i.e. Thamrin-Soedirman axis, which is a road based development policy, has undoubtedly made Jakarta as a car oriented city. It was during this era that one of the well-established rail based public transportation systems was removed, the city tram lines. Soekarno, like many other elites of the 1960s, saw highways and cars as the way of the future. Jakarta's emphasis on the building of grand new arterial roads was in line with President Soekarno's ideas about the "modern" metropolis.

The Soeharto Socio-Economic Development: The New Order 1966-1998

Soeharto's era opened a new dimension in national development in which the country began to open its doors to the market economy. This condition accelerated in the early 1980s, when the New Order Government introduced de-regulation and de-bureaucratization policies which simplified procedures and regulations in businesses and the private sector activities in order to restore macro-economic policy. This policy not only increased economic development, but also had significant effects on employment structure and the spatial pattern of urbanization. During this period, foreign investment came through infrastructure and resource (oil & gas, mining, forestation) developments and buildings projects. Again, Jakarta's Thamrin–Soedirman corridor became a "fertile" land for constructing new typologies of building projects: the grandiose highrises. Thus, this corridor became the point



Figure 5. 1980s Jakarta (Source: Danisworo)



Figure 6. Jakarta Urban Corridor (Source: Danisworo)



Figure 7. Sudirman CBD Skyline (Source: Danisworo)

of entry of new social-cultural norms and technology in which “architecture” was used as a significant media. However, this era was different from the previous one, because the social-economic forces were more dominant than the social-political one.

During this period, Jakarta’s cityscape, which previously was formed as a reflection of the power of presidential command and based on social-political forces during the Soekarno era, had become a new cityscape, which was predominantly dominated by a piecemeal development, based on free-market forces. Indeed, this is a unique phenomenon for further research.

The Soeharto New Order policy that mainly focused on economic growth has also resulted in the substantial promotion of industrial investment. The emergence of thousands of factories in Jakarta and

its vicinity has led to an unprecedented growth of population in Jakarta and in the surrounding cities. Ever since this policy was adopted, Jakarta has grown rapidly, expanding out into surrounding areas. Initially, most industrial, commercial and large scale residential development took place along the newly constructed toll road corridors to ensure adequate accessibility and take advantage of cheaper land in fringe areas. Later, networks of other main roads and smaller lanes were built to facilitate access to land further away from these main roads.

One of the primary challenges for Jakarta therefore was how to manage urban encroachment onto rural land. Since 1965, the metropolitan region has increased more than threefold. As is the case with most mega cities, Jakarta’s urban fringe was growing much faster than the city itself. Most of this expansion was due to

population pressures; land in the central city was expensive and occupied, so immigrants must settle on the outskirts. Already, the suburban area of BoTaBek (Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi) was colliding into suburbs of the neighboring city of Bandung, creating an urban region that stretches 40 kilometers from west to east and 60 kilometers from north to south.

To conclude, during this era, metropolitan Jakarta’s growth had far outstripped the capacity of its transport infrastructure, both the road network and mass transport facilities. Rapidly increasing travel demands have been accommodated by a transport system whose nature has changed little over the last few decades. As a result, Jakarta is almost entirely dependent on road-based transport, road space is inadequate, and severe traffic congestion has become the normal condition. Perhaps an even more important problem is the absence of any plan to help the transport system conform to the demand generated by the emerging distribution of metropolitan employment and resident locations.

Proposed solutions to Jakarta’s transport problem range from networks of high standard roads, to subways and elevated magnetic levitation systems for public transport and to improved traffic control. Some of these options have been studied extensively and others are simply ideas, but in any case little has been accomplished in the way of investment or management improvement to either expand the system or improve its operation.

The Reform Period: 1998-Present

During the Asia Financial crisis, the urban development activities in most major cities decreased significantly. The urban planning situation in Indonesia is similar to what happened during the period before the Sukarno Era (1945-1957), where the political situation was still struggling to take form, and neglected the physical and non-physical city development.

Within the Reform era, new laws on decentralization had also been legalized, such as the regional autonomy law (Law No. 22/99 and Law No. 25/99). Law No. 22/99 was issued in order to democratize local government and to devolve certain powers to the local level (Kota and Kabupaten). In addition, Law No. 25/99 was designed to support the shift of power to the local authority level, by means of the fiscal resources management at the local level.



Figure 8. Development Contrast (Source: Danisworo)

In spite of the increasing accessibility in fiscal resources for the local government, it is still insufficient to cover all development programs in the city. The government must set the priorities of urban development, such that the limited resources are spent on the most effective programs. The selected development programs may be dispersed geographically across the city. Conversely, different from the approach taken by the previous administration, in the reform era, the selection of the development program is done with input from all stakeholders, including the public. This has taken the country to the “cross road” era to have a composite blend between top-down and bottom-up management within the urban planning and development.

Concluding Remarks

In response to increasing development pressures and bright market conditions, many businesses and trading ventures were expanding their activities into property business. As a result, many large-scale urban development projects were being introduced in Jakarta as well as in the surrounding regions. In the absence of appropriate development guidelines coupled with the fact that well established institutional framework and planning order were lacking, these new breed of developers were competing with one another in acquiring large tracts of land in and around Jakarta. They later came to the government with their own version of planning and design schemes and placed requests for approval. Thus, instead of government’s comprehensive planning provides guidelines for project development, it was the project proposals, which became the reference for the formulation of official

plans. One large site, one plan, one (main) developer, and one integrated program was becoming the “state of the arts” or “trend” in current practice of urban development activities, although the plan of one developer is not necessarily well coordinated with the plan of the other developers.

Regretfully many examples of such practice exist in Jakarta and in its immediate surrounding regions. Many of these developments have formed enclaves of large-scale luxurious residential complexes with excessive facilities and infrastructure superior to those of the surrounding communities. As proving ground for professional architects and designers, this type of development has become exclusive, catering the demands of the privileged expatriates and members of the elite, where their influence has reflected middle and upper class values and resulted in an exclusive type of capitalistic philosophy and lifestyle.



Figure 9. Urban Corridor (Source: Danisworo)

Such development normally called for the involvement of qualified architects and designers who, in most cases, have to be imported from the developed countries. The rationale behind the inclusion of these foreign planners and architects is very simple, that is, these foreign experts will provide added value to the projects, and thus will help the developers in marketing their products. This is the common mentality of most developers in the developing countries including Indonesia, particularly in Jakarta. These foreign architects, as one noted scholar put it, “carried their bag of tricks around the world to bring with them wherever they landed.” So today, as a result, western methods are being repeated in the wrong context. The case would have been different if a more innovative approach in the planning and design decision process had been given room, and local resources and dimensions given fair consideration and weight.



Figure 10. Jakarta’s skyline in Sudirman CBD (Source: Erman Rahman)

Unfortunately this approach has become the standard practice in large-scale property development projects in Indonesia where, in the absence of appropriate urban development policies and urban design guidelines, the location and the concept of such developments is determined mainly by market forces. Their motive in project development is mainly profit and the “rapid turnover” of the end product that they sell to the public. Unfortunately, many new emerging developers in their pursuit of good business are following this ill approach.

It is understandable that “good” standards of working and living environment are necessary as an effort to promote a better way of living. However, it should also be known that apart from the effort to develop a new community structure that would correspond to a changing cultural environment (such as social, economic and technological) we also have to look at the creation of new environments as the answer to various problems regarding the management of growth and change.

As a new socio-cultural environment, large-scale development projects should be seen as an opportunity for the creation of a planned transitional environment designed to promote the kind of atmosphere that is conducive to change. This means that these well planned and well designed projects would allow less fortunate segments of the city’s population to gain access to equal opportunity, particularly in education, social, and economic facilities. In other words, these new projects should be able to play a role as catalysts for socio-cultural and economic integration and interaction, without discrimination, and thus will contribute positively to the process of transformation, which is now taking place in most major cities in the country.

Therefore, to avoid the negative impact of such development from happening, and in order to utilize the potential of these development proposals as an effective mechanism in the pursuit of improving the quality of our city, a more conceptual approach to planning and design should be adopted. If the architects, the authorities, and the developers could somehow jointly work together as a team and utilize a process, which insures the synergistic use of their energies and resources since the early stage of the projects, more innovative development concepts can be achieved. The success of these large-scale development projects rests largely on their capacity to achieve multiple goals and to develop workable systems for management of growth and change. Only then could these projects substantially help alleviate part of the problems of our existing city and hopefully could make our city a better place to live for every segment of the society. It was during this new order era that the super-block development concept was adopted to address these large-scale urban development projects.

The new paradigm that currently underlies the operation of the Jakarta government is more responsive to the public aspiration, in respect of the balance between the top down and the bottom up approaches. Combining the two approaches is more complicated and time consuming, because it has to be initiated by public empowerment and capacity building improvement.

The rapid changes in socio-cultural, economic and political aspects, as well as technology, seem to be responsible in shaping and reshaping our built environment. Therefore, the framework of transformation should address each level in the urban development process; either it is the micro-scale where the social interaction can be fostered, or the macro-scale, to enable the economic development.

Indonesia’s sustained economic growth and the globalization of the investment markets would affect the markets of our real-estate industry. This situation, in turn, would have critical implication on the market trends affecting individual components of a development, such as office, retail, hotel or apartment uses. The effect of all these on the trends related to the planning and design of a superblock is of comparable importance, since these components are the determinant factors in the mixed-use concept. It should be borne in mind that the characteristics that distinguish large scale mixed-use developments from other real-estate projects is that at least three significant revenue-producing uses are included and are well integrated.

The trend of living close to activity centers, particularly for young professionals, is increasing, particularly with traffic conditions in a city like Jakarta. As a result the massive pressures in high-rise apartment developments now taking place in Jakarta can be understood. The inclusion of residential facilities in an integrated superblock project would undoubtedly strengthen their position in the market.

Increased socio-economic status of much of the population and the commitment of Jakarta and other metropolitan cities to become a viable service city would also put other uses. Other uses such as cultural, recreational, entertainment and amusement, can add diversity and life, although they may not be major components of the project. When done properly, the mixing of these uses into this framework can make current superblock projects serve as prototypes for future developments.

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