Modernity and Transformation of the Architecture of Depok City, Indonesia

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Abstract

Depok, a city in the south of Jakarta, has developed very rapidly in the last 30 years. Until the end of the 1970s, Depok was dominated by agricultural land, but now it is replaced by residential, commercial, and services areas. The dynamic development of Depok has been followed by the transformation of the architecture of the city. In the process, the transformation occurs without control. The change of the architecture of Depok city does not only affect visual issue, but also the issue of declining of city amenity and the emergence of social and environmental issues. The transformation, as a result of modernity, has background of political, economic, and social factors. Modernity does not only mean the present or the modernization, as explained by Widodo (2007), as an evolution process of political, economic, and social factors. Modernity does not only mean the present or the distinction from previous periods, but also breaking the tradition of the architecture of Depok city. We formulated a clear concept and foundation based on the current researches and literature, to further examine the issue of the transformation of the architecture of Depok city. The results of this study can be applied to a wide range of interests of continuity and change of Depok city, and also as a comparison to other cities with similar character.

1. Introduction

In the recent 30 years, Depok city has been changing in a very fast way. Up to the end of 1970s, Depok was dominated by agricultural land, but now the city crowded with residential, commercial, and services areas. Silver (2008) depicted that one of the growth centers along the railway connecting Jakarta and Bogor was the town market of Depok, which had only a few thousand inhabitants in the early 1970s. Depok grew rapidly. The population was about 390,000 in 1990. The city was a part of Jakarta metropolitan region (Figure 1), during the early of this period. The population growth continued and by 2000 it reached 816,000 (Silver, 2008). In 2012, the population of Depok city was 1,898,567, with the average density of 9,479 people/km² (Board of Statistic of Depok Municipality, 2012). The change of Depok city is a process of modernization, as explained by Widodo (2007), as an evolution process that continues on. Kostof (2001) called it as urban process that involved physical change through time.

Frisby (2004) stated that ‘architecture, like other modern arts, must represent our modernity, our capabilities and our actions through forms that we have created’. The dynamic development of Depok was followed by the transformation of the architecture of the city. The transformation, as a result of modernity, has the background of political, economic, and social factors. In the process, the transformation occurs almost without control. The change of the architecture of Depok city does not only bring visual issue, but also the issue of declining of city amenity as well as the emergence of social and environmental issues.

Berman (1988) in his criticism described that being modern means that we put ourselves in an environment that pledges an experience, authority, pleasure, development, and transformation of ourselves and the world, but at the same time that changes everything we have, we know, and everything about us. Modern environment erased all geography and ethnical limits, tribes and nations, religion and ideology, in this case, modernization is considered to unify all of them. Yet, it becomes a paradox, a unity of disunity, an occurred disintegration, contradiction, occurring confusion and even suffering. This paradox also occurs in Depok city, which on one hand, the modernity of Depok city shows a fast physical development, but on the other hand, the development also has sacrificed the quality of environment and comfort of the city.

Urban transformation is indeed not a new topic in research (see Dunbar, 2001; Woo & Hui, n.d; Yamane et al., 2008). Based on literature review, there are not many literatures and researches about transformation of the city’s architecture, particularly on the research on the relationship between modernity, architecture of the city, and urban transformation. There is not any research about the transformation of the architecture of Depok city.

This paper is a part of literature review of the dissertation on the transformation of the architecture of Depok city. Based on this review, we formulate a clear concept and foundation on the issue of the architectural transformation of Depok city, and explain how the modernity process on the transformation in Depok city. The results of
this study can be applied in a wide range of interests on the continuity and change of Depok city. The change is for the present time and the future, and also as a comparison to other cities with similar character.

2. Literature Review and Concepts

2.1 Modernity and Transformation

In analyzing the modernity, it needs to understand the difference between the terms modern, modernism, modernity, and modernization. Widodo (2009) defined the modern as up to date, trendy and new from the time in progress or recently. It is a very different term from the word ‘antique’ or old-fashioned.

Kusno (2012) explained that the modernity shows a condition of new because of the imagination and reality of local economic, politics, and social changes. Heynen (1999) provided different point that ‘modernity refers to the typical features of modern times and to the way that these features are experienced by the individual; modernity stands for the attitude toward life that is associated with a continuous process of evolution and transformation, with an orientation toward a future that will be different from the past and from the present’. In similar way, Widodo (2009) argued that the changes are embodied in various style and form of architecture with the extraordinary mixture and variety along the history. The changes of urban and architectural forms are the realization of social, economic, politic, art and cultural values.

2.2 Transformation of the Architecture of the City

Rossi (1988) affirmed the city as a man-made object. City, as an architectural entity, is not just considered visually as its various architecture, but also as an architectural construction which grows over time (Rossi, 1988). Spreiregen (1965) insisted that urban spaces, urban mass, circulation patterns, urban scale are the elements in the process of urban growth and change. In his dissertation entitled “Pengendalian Kualitas Arsitektur Kota pada Ruang Publik di Kota Pekanbaru” (Urban Architectural Quality Control on Public Space in Pekanbaru), Ekomadyo (2009) defined urban architecture as a man-made urban environmental constructions to meet their needs in their cultural life. Urban architecture can be seen through the configuration of its constructing physical elements. These physical elements include natural elements (i.e. topography, river, or sea, buildings, group of buildings as part of the city, roads, utility and infrastructure system, vegetation), and aesthetical elements (such as decoration, street furniture, and street paving pattern). These elements are composed as a media for doing various activities of the people in a city (Ekomadyo, 2009).

Rossi (1983, 1988) stated that transformation of the architecture of the city is affected by 3 factors: economic, politic and social factors. The transformation is through three phases. The first phase shows by the destruction of the fundamental structure of the medieval city. Contemporaneously, workers’ housing, mass housing, and rental housing appeared. The second phase was characterized by a progressive expansion of industrialization. Engendered separation of house and work place and destroyed their former relationships to neighborhood. He depicted ‘A choice of housing that is not always in the immediate vicinity of the work place’. The third phase, the development of means of individual transportation and the full efficiency of all means of public transportation to the work place. ‘The choice of place of residence became increasingly independent of the place of work’. The search for housing outside the city in the adjacent countryside grew ever stronger, rise to the phenomenon of the commuter.

The second factor – the politic factor, different political systems generate different forms of city and different features of urban space. The third factor is social factor. It is about the social relation to make urban Gestaltschau and the make-up of the very image of every built up area (Rossi, 1983 & 1988). The Rossi’s transformation phases are similar to the transformation in Depok city. The analysis of the transformation is explained in the subsequent sections.
3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Modernity in the Colonial History in Depok

Frampton (1992) conveyed that territorial transformation together with the technological and cultural transformation, occurred in the end of 18th century to the early 20th century in the cities of England, America, and France, underlined the born of modern architecture. The high cost of land and the decrease of the quality of the living environment, which was caused by industrialization in the urban central area, affected the movement of urban development to the suburban. The build of train tracks and highways also affected that movement.

Modernity has occurred in Depok since the colonialism era of the Dutch. In 1880, railway of the old train was built between Batavia (former name of Jakarta) and Buitenzorg (former name of Bogor) through Depok. In 1920, Depok Lama Train Station was improved from its previous status as a shelter since 1881, to be a station. Also, during the colonialism era, in Depok there was a social change done by a Dutch landlord named Cornelis Chastelein (1657-1714) to his slaves. He left his land to 12 slaves and their ancestry who were later called as Belanda Depok (Jonathan, 2011). The social change done by Chastelein can be said as a modernization. Chastelein changed the tradition of relationship between the lords and their slaves during the colonial era.

Modernization process during the colonial era also affected the architecture of Depok city, with its buildings that had art-deco architectural style (Jonathan, 2011). The buildings from the colonial era can still be found in Depok Lama (Depok old city district) by this time (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Some heritage buildings of the colonial era that can still be found on Jalan Pemuda, in Depok Lama.](image)

The modernization process stopped and had vacant period after the Dutch left Indonesia after the independence of Indonesia on August 17th, 1945. Even, Depok experienced a depressing time when social revolution happened. It is known as Peristiwa Gedoran Depok that occurred in October 1945, in which all the ancestries of the Dutch who were considered as the endorser of the Dutch were caught by the civilians. There were social-pillage, buildings demolition, and many dead victims (Wanhar, 2011).

3.2 Modernity and Transformation Era from 1970 up to now

Depok began to experience significant change since the National Housing Projects (Perumnas) Depok I and Depok II were built in the middle of 1970s. Pasar Dokumentasi Arsitektur Indonesia – PDAI (The Center of Architecture Documentation of Indonesia), PDAI (2012) confirmed that the growth of Indonesia’s economics in the decade of 1970s – during low-hanging fruit of oil production – was run by gas and oil production. The presence of those two low-cost National Housings got a high appreciation from the Jakarta society who faced the expensive cost of land in their city.

The development of those two national housings can be considered as the beginning of commuter’s mobility, where people living in Depok commuted for their workplace in Jakarta. Along with the use of private and public transports, the commuters were supported by the railway from Bogor to Jakarta. By the operating of the Jagorawi Highway access to Depok in 1978, the commuter’s mobility increased. The development also signified the beginning of the real estate development in Depok city. The success of Depok National housing supported by the existence of railway and highway from Depok to Jakarta, has pushed other developers to build housing estates in Depok. The fast real estate development in Depok is in-line with the Rossi’s critics to the occurrence of real estate phenomenon on the delivering process of modern capitalist city.

By this time Depok has grown very fast as a city with various commercial and service activities. The city was ever called as dormitory town or as a passive city. It signifies that the city becomes only ‘a sleeping bed’ at night for the commuters who work in Jakarta. However, the present Depok shows active urban living in the day and night.

The development of Depok city is also affected by the presence of University of Indonesia (UI) campus that was built in 1987. The development of UI campus then followed by several other universities such as Gunadarma University (UG). The existence of those universities has made Depok as the target of the commuters, especially the college students from Jakarta and the periurban. The daily mobility from the central of the town to the suburban or to Depok becomes interesting phenomenon of the suburban area in 21st century which is labelled by Jackson (2006) as reverse commuters.

The existence of UI and UG also becomes an external force to the change of land use in the surrounding area. The need of residence for the college students becomes a business chance for the society. They converted or renovated their houses to be boarding houses, canteen or restaurant, photo copy service, paper typing service, computer service, and others. Those changes do not only happen in the main street in Depok city, but also expand to the residential area.

The area around UI and UG campuses is dominated by boarding houses which are inhabited by comers like college students and workers as
temporary residents. There is a change in social structures among the society, housing environment which previously was a community of closed local citizens later on changed into an environment that was inhabited by comers who became temporary residents. In a recent decade, there has begun the build of vertical residence, such as apartments in Depok (Figure 3).

![Figure 3 Depok experienced the transformation from landed house (boarding houses) (above) to vertical residences/apartments (below), located on Margonda Raya Street.](image)

The existence of apartments in Depok city becomes an interesting phenomenon. This phenomenon is described as the process of residence transformation from the boarding houses to vertical residence/apartment (Prasidha, 2014). This notion is supported by the presence of apartments with studio-typed room with the facility of 1 bedroom and bathroom sized between 21-24 m², typically designed like the layout of hotel/boarding house room. The information about the shift of development of apartments to the suburban caused by expensive land cost in the central of the city, the existence of apartments in Depok obviously targeted the college students or commuters as the markets (Info Apartemen Magazine, 2013).

The development of the apartments in Depok is carried in-line with the growing number of college students from the middle-upper class of society in UI who preferred staying in the apartments than staying in boarding houses, and the increasing amount of commuters who prefer living in Depok to living in South Jakarta. The phenomenon of this ‘vertical boarding house’ happens in other cities as well where the concentration of University’s campuses is there. For example, in Bandung and Jatinangor, in West Java Province.

The society sacrifices open area in their living environment to be replaced by the boarding houses. Gradually, the open spaces in Depok city are lessen, and changed to be buildings for business activities. Various changes in the use of the area caused the increase of the intensity of land utilization. The fastest transformation of Depok city architecture occurred on Margonda Raya Street and its surrounding areas. On this main corridor of Depok City, various buildings such as shopping centers, offices, and business centers, educational institution buildings, apartments, hotels are built in various modern architecture. Along the street, we can also find governmental center, three railway stations and a bus terminal of Depok City. This transformation, on one hand, shows the presence of modernization. On the other hand, it shows the decrease of the city architecture quality and the expansion to the open space and public area as well (Figure 4).

![Figure 4: The area of Margonda Raya Street that represents modernity and transformation of the architecture of Depok city. The northern of Margonda Raya Street (above); the southern of Margonda Raya Street (below)](image)

3.3 Modernity Paradox in the Transformation of the Architecture of Depok City

Politically, the faster change of Depok city is not out of the existence of ‘the Law 22/1999 on Regional Government’ also known as ‘the Law of Regional Autonomy of 1999. With the wider autonomy and independence, the local government tries to increase their income, such as by issuing business license for the company that can increase the regional income. In the same year, legal status of Depok was promoted as a City based on the Law 15/1999 about Depok City Municipality.
Law on Bogor Regency (Law 1/1988) is the first regulation that controls Depok City planning process. The Law is valid during the period in which Depok city was still a part of administrative region of Bogor Regency. This planning regulation has pushed the physical expansion of Depok City as one of the strategic growth centers of the Bogor Regency. Although, it was bestowed by the regulation on detailed city planning (Law 16/1995), yet this regulation did not run effectively because it did not manage the zoning regulation. The Law on Regional Spatial Planning (Law 12/2001) guides the developing of Depok city as ‘Counter Magnet City’ that adjusts the function of Jakarta Metropolitan Region, also forces the physical change of the city. Like the previous regulation, this regulation does not manage the city planning and zoning regulation in details.

The fast growing of Depok also invites investors to build modern market that dematerializes the traditional market. The existence of traditional market like Pasar Kemiri Depok becomes marginalized because of the presence of modern market. Mini market grows rapidly all around the city until the living environment. Even some heritage buildings turned into commercial buildings such as cafe, shops, and mini markets, without considering the values of architectural preservations (Figure 5).

Figure 5: One of the buildings from the colonial era – “Pondok Cina House” built in 1841 (above). Its function has changed to be a cafe in a shopping center (below)

Shopping centers and apartments are built extensively on the major corridors of the city. Depok city grows in ribbon pattern, in which the architecture of the city is dominated by shop houses and billboards (Figure 6). Depok has become a service city which is consumptive. The fast existence of those various commercial facilities describes that Depok city is a modern city, like the phenomenon explained by Powell (2000) ‘the prime role of the modern city is a center of consumption rather than production, and most recent urban architecture reflects that reality’.

Gregotty (1996) also conveys the occurrence of the shift of meaning monumentalism in architectural work. The appearance of the city reflects the exploitation of economic effects and individualistic characters.

4. Conclusion

In the context of relation between city as architecture, as Rossi (1988) noted, and the transformation of the city’s architecture, as Gregotti (1996) affirmed that ‘no new architecture can arise without modifying what already exists’. Vickers (1999) stated that ‘city architecture is the visible and tangible expression of our society’s taste, culture, politics and preoccupations’.

The modernity and transformation of the architecture of Depok city have a closed link. Modernity has participated in changing the architecture of Depok city, through the land use change, the change of building mass order, the change of building intensity, visual appearance of the area, outside space, and the change of social economic of the society. Modernity comes through the effect of various, strength, especially the effect of economics.

The modernization takes place in Depok, contains two things, i.e. the change of technology and the change of tradition. With the modernization in public transportation system, such as railway and highway, participates in forcing the shift of development, from the central of the city (Jakarta) to the suburban, in this case Depok. Depok is not only a residential place but also has become the center of service growth. This change becomes the modernity that changes the tradition in Depok, and mainly is on the activities of the civics and the elements of the architecture of the city.

The development of Depok city is not only a sub-urbanization process, but there are factors affecting that. Uncontrollable changes are affected by economic, social, and politics factors. Economy is the most influencing factor of the development of Depok city. The tense of uncontrollable development as paradox of the modernity, needs
corrective steps to control the development of Depok city.

The changes that happen can affect each other, but all the urban changes finally will get back to the factor of politics, in this case, the policy of controlling the development of Depok city. The policy of Depok city development will go along with the market that implies to the architecture of Depok city and other following urban problems. Depok city will be built upon its specific character.

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