Traditional Urban Quarters in Semarang and Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Potential for Innovative Use of Urban Design for New Quarters in Indonesian Cities based on Historical and Traditional Aspects

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Abstract: The paper addresses the potential of historical and traditional aspects for designing new quarters by using appropriate design principles, which are based on more local relevant settings. Special focus is given to two types of Javanese cities (Semarang as a Coastal and Yogyakarta as a Inland city) and two types of its quarters (*Kauman*: Islamic quarter; and *Pecinan*: Chinese quarter): They document a various range of urban development up to the very present. The study analyses and compares them as a base searching for new insights about innovative ways for designing new quarters for Indonesian cities. This approach gives more attention to contextual and sustainable city development, as there is the case at present. The paper discusses a precise context within defined limits. It outlines, how and where a combination of these specific urban settings has its relevancy for further use. These four quarters like many others, which have developed over centuries still (or better said: because of their long term development) do have something to tell about designing and developing new urban quarters.

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and its urban planners (like many other developing countries) faces the discrepancy of having to use ‚conventional or global' design theories and approaches which do not really fit into the reality of urban life and development of their local cities (Zahnd, 1999). The reasons are various and complex. Answers for solutions have to be found through many fields of knowledge. This paper presents some of my ongoing PhD-research through the eyes of urban design field: focus is given especially on the specific context of four typical urban *kampungs* of two cities of Central-Java. Although the analysis and solutions looked for are done in these limited and specific settings, nevertheless it has something to tell for a wider context

of relevant and sustainable city planning in Indonesia and perhaps even to some parts of other Southeast Asian cities. Having this focus in mind, four questions arise to the relevancy of the chosen settings, which are answered shortly as follows.

1.1 Why Java?

Indonesia as a whole is still a country with a majority of rural settings. This does not apply any more for Java where more than 60% of its population live in urban environments (Sumardi, 1997). Today Java with about 140 million people is one of the most populated island of this world and its urbanisation is still intensifying and growing. Therefore Java is a potential environment to study sustainable urban design and development for a wider context where urbanisation is on the move.

1.2 Why Yogyakarta and Semarang?

Basically Java contains two types of cities: Inland- and Coastal cities (Santoso, 1983). They all have their specific characters, mixtures and developments. But looking at Yogyakarta as a typical Inland city and Semarang as Costal city gives insights to the different development of these two types. Both cities are situated in the same geographic and cultural region, nevertheless they have many difference which are representative for each type.

1.3 Why Urban *Kampungs*?

Between 60-70% of the population in Indonesian cities live in urban *kampungs* (Hanan, 1996). This means that *kampungs* do have a major impact for the developments in these cities. It is a matter of fact that the way most people of a city live effects the development of these cities.

1.4 Why Islamic and Chinese Quarters?

Javanese culture has a long tradition in history. It has been influenced by a lot of 'inputs' from outside its island. Four basic historical layers can be observed (Fig. 1). One major scholar work for Javanese history (Lombard, 1995) sees a significant impact of Asian influence for Javanese urban culture by Islamic and Chinese developments on the same historical level (2nd layer). This interrelated dynamic is seldom discussed by Indonesian scholars. First because of ethnical reason and second because the physical

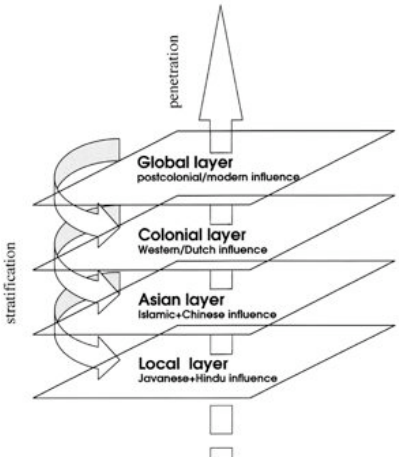

Figure 1 Four Layers in Javanese history, following the approach of Lombard, 1995. (Source: Zahnd)

appearance of both influences are expressed very differently in these cities and therefore not obvious. As a reason of this fact not much interconnected data is available about these interrelated impacts for urban developments of Javanese modern cities. Therefore this research gives special focus to this subject.

1.5 Hypothesis and Method

The research bases on the hypothesis that through the analysis of traditional developed urban quarters can be derived basic principles for innovative applications for planning new quarters with sustainable criteria. The analysis is done through a matrix (Fig.2) between types of cities and types of quarters. These observations points towards a new model of approaching planning and development processes for new urban quarters on more integrated levels as it is usually done.

	Inlandcity	Coastalcity
Chinese quarters	***Malioboro*** **Yogyakarta**	***Pecinan*** **Semarang**
Islamic quarters	***Kauman*** **Yogyakarta**	***Kauman*** **Semarang**

Figure 2 Matrix of analysed data. (Source: Zahnd)

2 BASIC OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ANALISYS

They will be summarized first on the macro-level of the whole city and then furthermore on the micro-level of the quarters.

2.1 Development of the Two City Types

The inland city of Yogyakarta is 200 years younger than the port city of Semarang. Nevertheless from the beginning of its foundation in 1756, Yogyakarta became the centre of Javanese cultural expertise. Still today the city has its sultan and a palace. From there the city has developed hierarchically, which has affected the development of the whole city. The city has a grid system of main roads going in north-south or west-east direction. Two central squares (*alun-alun*) with a major north-south axis still represent the symbolic macro-micro connections of the city lay-out (Bawole 1995). Today the city is well known as a center for culture, education, arts and tourism. Many of its quarters express these characters in the physical and social setting.

In opposition Semarang never had such a setting as it was always influenced by various cosmopolitan groups of traders (Widodo, 1996). Its political Javanese rulers were not in a position like the sultan dynasty in Yogyakarta. This is also expressed in the development of the city where the central square and its surronding were exposed to lot of changes (Koesmartadi, 1995) and many buildings (like the palace of its local ruler) disappeard fully. The city does not have an orthogonal grid lay-out

of streets like Yogyakarta, as it developed on more heterogen levels of influences and ideas. Until today Semarang is well known as trade and port city and many of its quarters underline this character. The city is also well know for annual floods (during rain season) as the topography of many northern parts of the city is gradually sinking. This process of sedimemtation is caused mainly by the rise of heavy building masses and infills on larges scales.

2.2 Development of the Two Types of Quarters

Like most Javanese cities, Semarang and Yogyakarta have different types of quarters with some specific characters. Two of these types are of special interest related to the subject: the Islamic quarter (*Kauman*) and the Chinese quarter

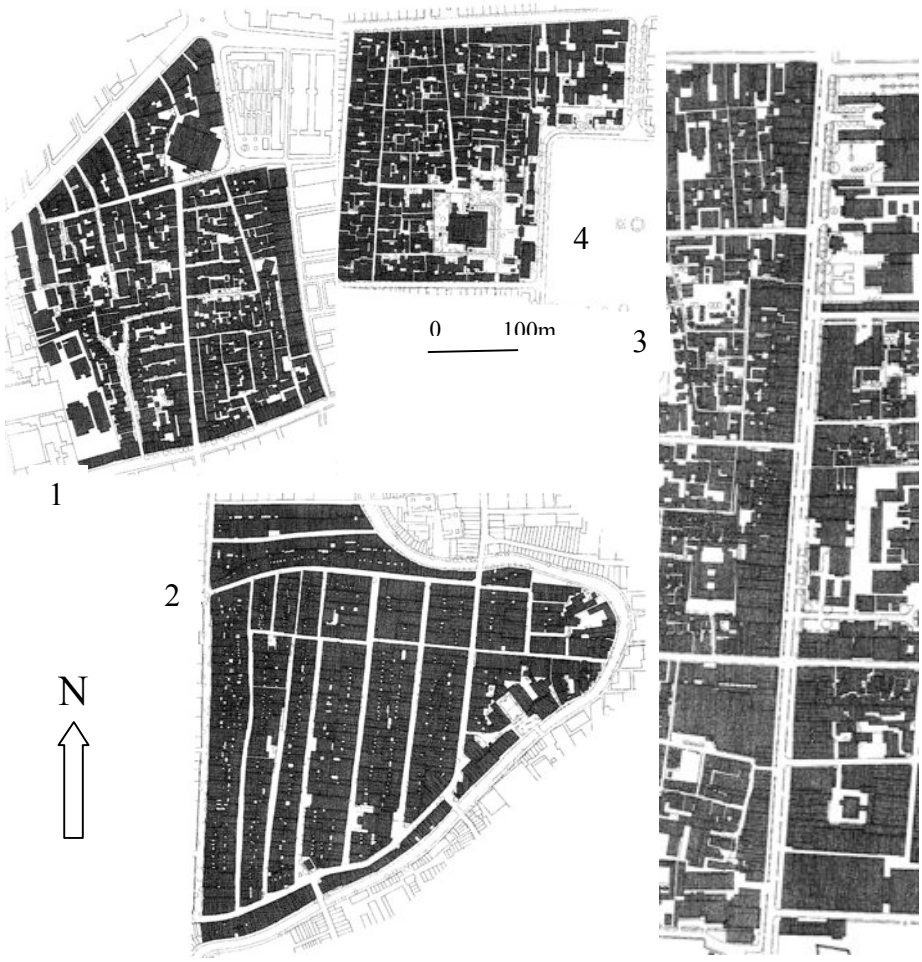

Figure 3: 1. *Kauman* Semarang; 2. *Pecinan* Semarang; 3. *Malioboro* Yogyakarta; 4. *Kauman* Yogyakarta. (Source: fieldresearch data 2002, Zahnd)

(*Pecinan, Malioboro*). Following 1.4. these two types of quarters express different approaches of understanding urban life and development (individually discussed in: Widodo, 1988; Mulyati, 1995; Suprati, 1997; YUIMS, 1999). The synopsis of the researches above states similarities but also significant differences in the historical developments of each of these analysed quarters. This is related to the overall setting and history of the city itself. Therefore today each type is expressed differently: the *Kauman* in Yogyakarta and the *Pecinan* in Semarang show rather homogen characters (physical and social); the *Kauman* in Semarang and the *Malioboro* area in Yogyakarta express great heterogenity.

Each quarter has areas where signs of the economic pressure for using the properties with most high profits are changing the setting. This causes especially a structural disintegration and loss of character for the *Malioboro* area. There is also a tendency of functional disintegration in some areas of *Pecinan* Semarang because of its great intensity of building coverage and technical infrastructural problems.

Recapitulating can be said that these four quarters display good potential for discussing design and planning strategies for new urban quarters on a contextual and sustainable base.

3 NEW MODEL FOR CONTEXTUALLY AND HISTORICALLY INTEGREATED URBAN DESIGN

This chapter introduces a new model for integrated urban design of new quarters based on contextual and historical aspects.

3.1 Levels of Urban Design

Part one of the model uses three interrelated levels which dynamics in itself first have to be understood as a base for applications of some onging principles. In a next step these data is translated for new and different contexts.

Physical Level

This level deals with the balance of concrete visible urban form and space without being limited to a certain kind of physical ‘inner’ picture. Because cities and their quarters are never finished in being built. Therefore its ‘hardware’ has to bear the potential that its physical setting can be rebuilt from within.

With this focus in mind a wide range of data from archives and exact documentations through field research have been collected and analysed. The results give a detailed understanding about the settings of these four quarters. This is important for later applications into other and new contexts.

Social Level

This level deals with the balance of form and space which is there for users who live together in complex ways. Because urban ‘software’ and ‘users’ function on various

levels and in changing grouping. The physical setting serves and supports this, giving space for social development.

With this focus in mind 800 interviews have been done with habitants and users of these quarters. Their opinions and suggestions are relevant as they express needs and wishes of people, who use these places.

Ideal Level

This level deals with the balance of various forces and interests related to resources towards and within the given context. This means that development has to be balanced in constructive ways.

With this focus in mind the economic and symbolic values of sites are analized and compared and where and how this values lead and change given contexts.

3.2 Structures of Urban Design

Part two of the model focuses on five interrelated urban structures[1] as a base for shaping and developing new quarters. Within these structures identity, flexibility and vitality of existing quarters are analysed and afterwards translated into the context of new settings.

Site structure

The dynamics within 2nd dimension, where the focus is on various types, forms and sizes of sites (buildings and streets) and their combinations.

Space structure

The dynamics within 3rd dimension, where the focus is on building masses and its space between: Building to building, building to space and space to space.

Time structure

The dynamics within 4th dimension, where time is the focus: Where do these dynamics come from and where should they go.

Communication structure

The dynamic where the focus is on the differences of speed of new shapes and developments. Especially the impacts of ‘slowly’ and ‘fast’ growing areas need special attention.

Symbol structure

The dynamics of the relationship between stability and change is focussed. The individual and common interests and forces (material and immaterial) are looked at.

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[1] This part of the model has already been introduced basically at a symposium for ‘sustainablility of form’ in Switzerland (Sieverts, 2001)

3.3 Matrix of the Model

These three levels and five structures are put into a matrix (Fig. 4). This synthesis allows a discussion of different approaches towards urban design by various combinations. The results give insights towards principles, elements and networks of existing settings.

structures

levels	site	space	time	communi-cation	symbol
physical					
social					
ideal					

Figure 4 Matrix model for intetrated approaches of urban design. (Source: Zahnd)

This model supports also an integrative approach towards designing new quarters. It helps to understand the parameters needed and allows to see various relationships between them.

4 CONCLUSION: INNOVATIVE USE OF KNOWLEGDE ABOUT TRADITIONAL URBAN QUARTERS

There are different ways looking for solutions and approaches for different urban settings. Most of them use conventional or global design theories which have been developed over decades. Today most urban designer agree that the concepts of architectural modernisme (Fig. 5) have already been proved wrong and much differented and contextual approaches are needed. Today there is a general search for new concepts for urban design, where the focus is given towards contextual criteria and sustainability.

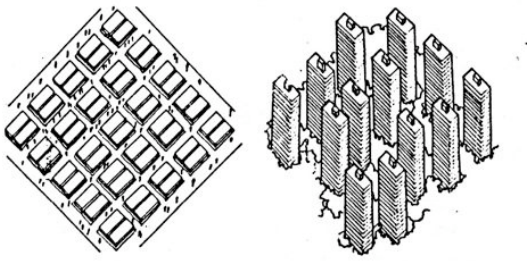

Figure 5. Two different modern approaches towards designing new quarters. (Source: Vastu-Shilpa Foundation)

The author raises the hypothesis that the following approach (Fig. 6) bears the greatest potential for the majority of Indonesian contexts (and probably at even further

places in Southeast Asia). Further studies will show whether this hypothesis can be proven or not. Therefore the effort will be to support this integrated model presented above as an effective tool for creating and developing contextual expressions for a majority of city inhabitants and users of Indonesian quarters. An approprate cummulation of different characteristics and dynamics of existing settings, that give scientific base supporting the way the majorty of urban habitants of Indonesian actually live.

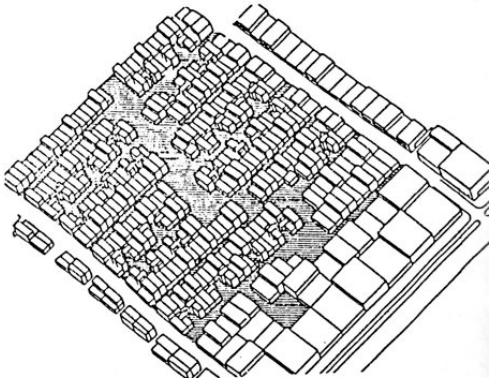

Figure 6 Historically and contextually integrated approach. (Source: Vastu-Shilpa Foundation)

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