Rebranding city: A strategic urban planning approach in Indonesia

Yohannes Firzal
Department Architecture, Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru Indonesia 28293
E-mail: yfirzal@eng.unri.ac.id

Abstract. Concomitant with entering the decentralization period has had a significant effect on cities in Indonesia, and is seen as a new era for local life. The decentralization period has also generated sentiments which are locally bounded that can be identified in the discretion given to the local government in charge to rebranding the city. In this paper, the rebranding phenomena have learned from Pekanbaru city where has changed its city brand for few times. By using a qualitative research approach and combining multi methods to collect and process the data, this paper investigates that the rebranding city has found as a strategic approach in urban planning today that is used to inject more senses to the city and its local life by the local government. This research has confirmed, for almost two decades of the decentralization period, the rebranding phenomena are not only found to generate sense locally, but also as a power marker of the local regime.

1. Introduction
One of the consequences of today’s decentralization is that it generates a sense of localism. The shift from nationalism to autonomous decentralization is seen in installing particular power through an attempt to influence on urban planning and architecture in Pekanbaru city. This is known as rebranding the city. Rebranding in this paper is defined as leader’s policy decision that is used during the reign over the city. This attempt is mostly found as a new motto or slogan for the city, and is legalized at the beginning of the reign.

The most interesting in the rebranding is how the attempt has used not only to deliver the leader’s decision, but also is acting as a vehicle for local cultural agenda. In Pekanbaru, cultural agenda is mostly focused on developing of Malay culture [1] [2] [3]. After marginalized, today’s Malay plays its role after obtaining dominance during the decentralization period, which lasted since 1997. However, the Malay in city is also facing what is called a post revolutionary nationalism period [1], during which attempts are made to claim and reinstall Malay as the core culture within a multicultural society. Therefore, the rebranding becomes a serious policy that affects for the whole of city’s life including in urban planning and architecture in Pekanbaru.

2. Literature Review
The decentralization provides a wide opportunity for the regime to develop their regions by themselves. It is not only seen as a grand task of politics in re animation and re building of regions, but also can be found as a way to cultivate forms of belonging, which entails normative claims to whole of the city in terms of identity, jurisdiction and territory [4]. In other words, the belonging in decentralization today demands a process of reconstruction that is leading to a symbol of changes.

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which is based on certain claims. The claims that can act as a force for change in order to manifest the renewal senses by making the claims spatial, material, present and undeniable [5].

However, the cultivation will not only lead to contestation over claims, but also questions the integrity of the claims [4]. It does not grow out of spontaneous allegiances and natural affiliations, but through continuous collective attempts with deliberate efforts. Furthermore, the contestation is going to emerge a new arena for a provocative political practices. Therefore, it is never fixed or finished in its construction.

In urban area, changing is identified as an attempt to seek significant collective opportunity by using particular local sets of social relations as a logical starting point. The starting point is defined not only something visible, but also reflects and focuses such a wide variety of social facts and becomes a guide for others. It is a product of social relations, and constitutes a social phenomenon in same time. In this matter, architecture can play its revitalised role in order to recreate a collective symbol into the whole of the city space [6]. Therefore, in this paper, a rebranding city is seen as a strategic urban planning which affects not only in politics, but also both in social life and architecture of the city.

3. Research Methodology

This research has conducted through a qualitative approach. It helps to find the nature and source of people and social problems which can focus on understanding meanings and processes through collecting a variety of empirical materials [7].

The main sources of data and information have been obtained from physical evidence, people’s interpretations, and archives. The data has been collected on fieldwork study through several different methods such as observation, semi-structured interview, participant observer, testimony, and focus group discussion. By using multifarious methods, this direct engagement with research subjects can generate clarity on the less visible and intangible aspects. With voluminous data, the process of analysing the data is not a one-pass or linear process; instead of an iterative process, in which it is necessary to constantly revisit the data and ideas, or to combine them with new emerging ideas during the process. Furthermore, the deep personal involvement and interpretations of the researcher in the whole research process are seen as something that can enrich the research itself, and as a way of delivering new meaning [8]. Because data do not speak for themselves, but the researcher has to goad them into saying things.

This research in this paper was conducted in Pekanbaru city which is located on the east coast of Sumatra Island, Indonesia. This city was founded in the fifteenth century and became part of the Malay sultanate. It had been colonised by the Dutch and the Japanese and joined with Indonesia in 1949. Thereafter, Pekanbaru became a small-municipal in 1956, and was also appointed provincial capital of the Riau province in 1959. Therefore, the city serves not only as a municipality, but also as the provincial capital of Riau. Today, during the decentralization period, Pekanbaru city was granted full-municipal status, and became an autonomous decentralised city in 1999. With a population of 937,939 in 632.26 km² area, the city became one of the fastest growing economic cities in Indonesia [9].

4. Findings

This research found some interesting issues that is influencing on planning of the city in the last two decades. First issue is about how the municipal constructs a new identity of the city by local regulation (Perda); the vision and the mission of the city. The vision of Pekanbaru is to realise the city of Pekanbaru as the centre for trade and services, education, and Malay culture toward a prosperous, faith based Godly society. This vision, then, has widely explained through the Missions that consists five articles. One of them has closely related to architecture which is stating to be accomplished through the physical appearance of buildings that reflects identity, the cultural places, and the growing consolidation of customary life [10]. Second issue is how to deliver construction of the local architecture by means of the vision and the mission of the city. According to Pekanbaru’s building
regulations, the municipality can reinstate a sense of Malayness on all city buildings to adopt Riau-Malay architecture [11].

Another issue is that, in the name of Malayness, Mayor of the city tends to act and make decisions based on group or personal interests. In this case, the changing Mayor brings a different agenda and tends to discontinue previous policies, including in giving a brand on the city. Consequently, this has obviously affecting to strategic urban planning and local architecture. For instance, this city was known as The Oil City since 1930s. However, in the beginning of decentralization period, the Mayor gave a nickname to this city that was Kotaku, Kotamu, Kota Kita which literally means the city belongs to everyone. This became a new brand of the city until 2001. The following Mayor also had declared a different nickname; Kota Bertuah which can be understood as a cultural city. This was occurred from 2001 to 2011. Concomitant with the local power shift, another new city’s brand has also been attached between 2012 to 2017; Madani Metropolis City (Figure 1). Today, the Mayor has made another revision on this nickname to Madani Smart City.

Dalam rangka mewujudkan pembangunan jangka panjang sebagaimana tercantum di dalam Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang Daerah Kota Pekanbaru 2005-2025, Visi Kota Pekanbaru adalah Terwujudnya Kota Pekanbaru sebagai Pasar Perdagangan dan Jasa, Pendidikan, serta Pusat Kebudayaan Melayu, Menuju Masyarakat Sejahtera yang Berlandaskan Iman dan Taqwa.

Visi Kota Pekanbaru diatas merupakan salah satu bentuk azam dan cita-cita masyarakat Kota Pekanbaru yang harus dirwujudkan oleh setiap Kepala Daerah yang terpilih untuk menamami kota Pekanbaru. Visi dan misi Kepala Daerah terpilih merupakan visi antara yang harus memenuhi kriteria untuk mewujudkan visi kota tersebut.

Berdasarkan Visi dan Misi Daerah Kota Pekanbaru, maka untuk periode 2012 – 2017, ditetapkan Visi Pembangunan Kota Pekanbaru adalah:

TERWUJUDNYA PEKANBARU SEBAGAI KOTA METROPOLITAN

YANG MADANI

Figure 1. The Mid Term of City Planning Agenda 2012 [12].

‘The Madani Metropolis City is a modern city through three comprehensive approaches; smart, liveable, and environmentally friendly within a religious society … in short, the city will not only develop physically, but also socially and in the spirit of Malayness’

(The Mayor of Pekanbaru, Respondent 34, Interviewed)

5. Discussion and Analysis

In one sense, giving a particular brand by the leader to the city is seen as a prolongation of the vision. In this matter, the vision has assumed too abstract and is found as a long term policy which it does not always fit with time and reality. Therefore, the leader needs to propose a minor correction in order to manifest the vision. Furthermore, as consists of multicultural life, the city needs something which comes from ‘inside’, something which operates within and which can stabilise, accommodate, and integrate the pluralistic society, something that can also promote interaction and mutual respect among members of the city. In this term, the Mayor becomes a symbol which has obligation to regulate the city.

In another sense, rebranding on the city can be seen as an attempt to show up the Mayor’s power and also to distinguish his/her from the previous one. In its practices, this attempt has widely expanded for the whole of the city. For instance, this attempt can be seen on how local building
regulation is implemented and accommodated Riau-Malay Architecture in order to construct an expression of city buildings. The first of the local buildings regulations was issued in 2000, and then revised in 2010 and 2012. Although revised, all of them are similar in content in that there is a lack of further explanation and technical guidance on how to adopt the architecture. There is only one article of the regulations which can be used to support the architecture (Table 1). Based on this article, it is assumed that most city buildings must implement cultural features of Riau-Malay architecture.

| The Article                                                                 | Main issue                        | The Mayor                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Establish specifics of adopting Riau-Malay architecture                     | Initial effort                    | H. Osman Effendi          |
|                                                                            |                                   | Reg. Number: 14           |
|                                                                            |                                   | 18 December 2000          |
| The city mayor may assign specific buildings for the adoption of           | Practitioner and income revenue    | H. Herman Abdullah        |
| Riau-Malay architecture                                                     |                                   | Reg. Number: 01           |
|                                                                            |                                   | 16 February 2010          |
| The city mayor may assign specific buildings for the adoption of Riau-Malay | High rise buildings and income    | H. Firdaus                |
| architecture                                                              | revenue                            | Reg. Number: 07           |
|                                                                            |                                   | 09 August 2012            |

In 2000, the local building regulation was being used to introduce a Riau-Malay architecture. In this time, less of city buildings have followed the regulation in order to implementing the architecture. The exception is only for the Mayor’s office which has tried to adopt traditional Malay carving on the building (Figure 2). Therefore, this time can be seen just an introduction of the regulation.

After shifted the city’s leader in 2001, the new Mayor has ordered to fully implemented the regulation. All municipal offices have to apply the elements of Malay Architecture on their buildings. Saddle roofs, gable wall with horn, and carving ornaments have become standard features on the buildings. This is also applied to all building that have funded by the municipality such as public school, market, mosques, cemetery (Figure 3).
As having a new branding for this city, the regulation was found lack support to the Mayor in order to construct a cultural city. In architectural sense, according to the branding, the cultural city was defined through expression of city buildings that have to apply Malay cultural elements. Therefore, massive changing on the expression of the city building have occurred in this period. For some extend, some adjustment was needed to regulate for new contemporary public and private buildings. Therefore, the municipal was changed the local building regulation in 2010. Basically, the regulation was giving more discretion to the Mayor to control city building and to command on the city building to adopt Riau-Malay Architecture (Figure 4).

This phenomenon has repeated. The new Mayor with his new branding agenda has altered the local building regulation in 2012. The branding of the Madani Metropolis City is aimed to provide more flexibility for local architecture. According to the latest changing, interpretation of Riau-Malay Architecture in the regulation has broader than previously defined. In this sense, the expression of city building can more various. Riau-Malay architecture is not the only source for the city building in order to interpret Malayness (Figure 5.).
Figure 5. Flexibility expression in contemporary Malay Architecture.

Practices and changes in this legal text have used to camouflage power practices in mediating particular forms of control to achieve a wide range of ideological objectives. It is possible that this may become a kind of authority on architecture that establishes a connection between power and buildings and also between people, through a shared assumption on building metaphor. In this case, the regulation has ‘forced’ city buildings to implement Riau-Malay architecture. The practice is seen not only to create a resistance and dominance, but also an ability and power to act on one’s own behalf to mitigate and to preclude other cultural forms [5]. In this situation, a regulation is not only a technical problem of administration, but also one of cultural values and social power set in overall context of the production and circulation of symbolic meanings. In this case, the regulation as a product of power practices has ‘command’ architectural production to look for pattern, similarities and differences and for the unique that might be enhanced in an urban setting. Thus, this can provoke the production of one thing as symbolic of another. Production is not always necessarily done through brute force, but also claims of expertise on various matters [13].

In light of the above, there are two essential matters that are influencing strategic urban planning in Pekanbaru; interpretation of Malayness, and defining Riau-Malay Architecture. Firstly, the term of Malayness is known as an imprecise meaning and has become a multi-trajectory terminology that can be identified in different settings and periods [3]. This is particularly true in today’s context, when Malay people are trying to reconceptualise Malayness into the narrow concepts of language, Islam and adat [2]. As a result, the term is constantly being reconstituted according to various conceptions, including to construct the new branding for the city.

Secondly, Riau-Malay Architecture has found as an unclear definition. None of definition can precisely define what Riau-Malay Architecture is. However, various explanations have been elaborated to support the architecture. The eminent explanation of Riau-Malay Architecture is referring to traditional houses which are scattered in Riau. It means that the architecture is generated by various characters of place: a mixture of characteristics, but is still in the sense of Malayness. This explanation is also bringing its problem: the word of Riau which is limited by the administrative boundary. Therefore, according to this explanation, Riau-Malay architecture has tended to be framed in a narrow perspective or in geo-administrative conception. Another explanation is that Riau-Malay Architecture is defined, at the very least, the architecture should be interpreted just as senibina (built form) which is found locally without any specific character. It means that the architecture has the openness which is emerging from daily cultural life and is based on a geo-cultural conception.

The failure to understand on the two essential matters above can bring serious consequences in rebranding the city. For instance, today’s branding has found mixing geo-cultural and geo-administrative conceptions. This has generated a chaotic assumption that architectural forms of certain places of the region can be implemented in the city, while other forms are unwelcome. This has limited Malay architecture itself to certain patterns of local styles, such as those based on roof form. In some cases, this interpretation the architecture has denied other various forms that already existed and
created more ambiguity in the implementation of local architecture itself, including for the traditional houses of Pekanbaru.

6. Conclusion
Changing and transforming the brand of the city can be seen as a natural process that occurs in any place. Although brought in particular forms and meanings, the rebranding the city is not a single process which autonomously occurs by itself. From this case, the process can be meant as a process to create their own meanings from text. In certain points, this rebranding attempt can also be found as a kind of particularism, an exclusivity, often an essentialism, and a selfishness. Furthermore, the attempt is also recognised as an acceptable process which is given a prior recognition of differences that is chasing the acceptable future form both in urban planning and architecture.

Acknowledgments
The authors gratefully acknowledge that the present research is supported by Ministry of Research and Technology and Higher Education Republic of Indonesia. The support is under the BLN Scholarship 2011-2015.

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