Islamic representation and urban space in Banda Aceh: Linking the social and spatial

Istiqamah and Herlily
Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
E-mail: seuramoehaba@gmail.com and herlily@gmail.com

Abstract. Post conflict and tsunami; the city of Banda Aceh is experiencing a massive development as an effort to represent an Islamic city. Some strategic points have been chosen by the municipality to build architectural objects that are considered to represent Islam in the urban space. The issue of such representational practice is the development of neglecting the activities of local communities as users of urban public spaces.

The purpose of this design study is to provide an alternative to the urban design of Banda Aceh to represent Islam that is not moving from physical development but by involving community activities. Establish and rediscover the relationship between Islam and urban life in Banda Aceh. This design study uses mental maps of 50 inhabitants of Banda Aceh city of various ages who live in 10 villages around the city center. We use mental maps as a tool to read the daily activities of the community and determine the familiar urban territory with the community. The results of this study will be used to form a Muslim community and present community activities to represent Islam in the urban space.

Keywords: Banda Aceh City, Islamic representation, Muslim Community, community activities, mental map

1. Introduction
Several years after the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2005, Banda Aceh as the capital of the Aceh Province undertook a massive development. This MoU became a peace treaty agreement between the armed separatist group GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/Free Aceh Movement) and the Republic of Indonesia (RI). Many academics argue that the peace treaty was triggered by the devastating tsunami that hit Banda Aceh at the end of 2004 (Anshori, 2012). Referring to the Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) of Banda Aceh City 2009-2029 and Qanun of Banda Aceh City Year 2009 on RTRW 2009-2029, the development of Kota Banda Aceh focuses on two main visions: to realize Banda Aceh City as Madani and disaster-mitigation-based city.

This study shows that the current massive development trend in Banda Aceh City is oriented towards urban physical development. In this case, it is the construction of architectural objects that represent Islam in urban space. The practice makes architecture and urban are viewed as material objects. This led to the definition of the process of architectural and urban object formation is being biased, so that architecture and urban areas cannot be used to comprehensively comprehend the spatial city. Architecture is not an object (Borden, 2000). Architecture does not consist of isolated and monumental objects. But the object of architecture itself is presented through the various intrinsic elements that influence it.
An understanding of architectural presence is closely related to spatial studies. Space is a social product (Leverbre, 1973). Space understanding is fundamentally bound to social reality. Space is formed from the dialectical interaction between spatial and social. Therefore, architecture and urban spatial are inseparable from the social dimension that precedes the form appearance. In this case the perpetrator of the social dimension is the local community. So the core of building architecture and urban is building society. The local community as the primary user of a city is a vital element that must be involved in bringing the city alive, so that city life is sustainable.

Theoretically, this design study puts itself in the definition that building a city is building society. Practically, this design study provides a conceptual view of what the position is applied to the context of designing Banda Aceh City. What kind of concepts and strategies to build Banda Aceh City by involving and enabling the community? To achieve that goal we chose to determine the strategic points in the center of the city that are familiar with the community. Building society through the dots that have presented in their mental, so it is not necessary to build a new and foreign place (Lerner, 2014). To determine these points we used a mental map that Kevin Lynch (1960) had used. We also conducted interviews, observations, and cultural and historic studies of Banda Aceh City.

2. Social and Spatial Dialectics
The city is a theater of social action (Mumford, 1961). There is a big question about the development of the cities today that we quote from Bianpoen (2011) from the title of his book the city was built "For What and For Whom?" In the process of building cities, building community is often neglected (Hester, 2006). In fact, the city is a product of representation by the people who inhabit it. From the discourse of the present definition of society, we place ourselves in the definition of society by Luis Mumford (1961). Mumford describes society as a collection of people living in a territory that has an imaginary boundary. These imaginary limits are determined by a shrine and society is a group of people bound to a shrine. When a group of people are tied to another sanctuary, it is said to be part of another society. The assertion of the definition picture is that a society is bound by an imaginary territory. We determine this position to see the context of Banda Aceh City spatially is still relevant to the spatial picture that Mumford describes. Historically, culturally, and politically, the people of Banda Aceh are tied to the Islamic holy place; the mosque.

Without an understanding of society and the social reality that takes place in urban space, architecture and city will be seen as a material object. But architecture itself is not an object (Borden, 2000), neither does the city. Architecture and the city do not consist of isolated and monumental material, but are connected with the various intrinsic elements that influence its emergence. To achieve an understanding of this definition, architecture and urban should be regarded regardless of their physical representation, such as the processes that occur behind that physical representation. Architecture and the city should be viewed as a spatial. Therefore, reviewing the architecture cannot be separated from spatial studies and the process of space formation.

Space is a social product (Leverbre, 1973). Space understanding is fundamentally bound to social reality. Space is formed from the dialectical interaction between spatial and social, meaning simultaneously both mental and material, work and product, physical and non-physical. In term of Edward Soja, it is called "socio-spatial dialectic". Interactive relationships, in which people create places, places shape society. "Spatial", thus refers to the production of practice, representation, and life experiences. It is a dialectical configuration of the activities that produce it. In other words, space is formed from everyday practice (Certeau, 1984). The city was created by the actions of its inhabitants, so the city could not be built by ignoring the act. In this way, the object built is not only the city but also the community and we as the users of city space.

The emphasis on understanding is important because many failures in urban planning are due to lack of attention to dialectical relationships between spatial and social. The idea of Le Corbusier (1993) on Total City Planning for example, the idea was rejected by all countries offered by Le Corbusier for seeing the city only through its physical dimensions, but forgetting the social conditions of the possible public upheaval in it. The beauty of a city is viewed from the entire physical elements
of the city, so that it can be felt from the remote view of the eyes. Another example is the city planning in Brazil by Oscar Niemeyer (1956-1961). This developing plan is not in accordance with the initial planning. In the post-industrial revolution era that upholds modernity and industrialization, the construction of urban physical facilities is highly regarded. An urban physical construction was built separately on the basis of functions, such as flyovers to facilitate cars transportation. Road area is expected to be free of occupancy. But the reality is that social conditions cause the planning is not in accordance with the plan. Communities continue to build shelters on the side of the road and mutual social interaction. Even Brazil downtown is filled with slum dwellings because it invites a lot of immigrant communities who build their dwellings.

Raising people's lives as a planning dimension is important. The study of public life can be an important tool for designing and improving urban space. Good architecture ensures good interaction between public space and public life (Gehl, 2013). Direct observation is the main tool of the type of life study society. Studying the behavior of people in urban public spaces can be used to study and compose urban forms. The city is a living thing (Makower, 2014). The city can touch people so the city can bring happiness, and people can touch the city. Anyone who is serious about exploring how the modern city affects happiness should begin by seeing clearly the scenes we have devoted to most of our resources over the last half century (Montgomery, 2013). The right to the city cannot be considered a simple visit.

3. Islamic Representation in Banda Aceh City
This design study specifically examined the Islamic representation in Banda Aceh City several years post-conflict and tsunami. In this phase, the city of Banda Aceh experienced a massive urban development momentum. Some strategic points have been chosen by the city government in an effort to represent Islam in the urban space. The momentum of development occurred several years after the end of the conflict between the armed separatist group Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Republic of Indonesia (RI) marked by the signing of a peace agreement on August 15 2005. The agreement in Helsinki resulted in a document formulating a decision called the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of Helsinki as a form of policy package of autonomy package owned by Aceh.

In an effort to gain legal force and correlation in the Indonesian state government, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) created and submitted a special law document containing the results of the Helsinki MoU. Currently, it is listed in Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Government of Aceh. This special law is referred to the Law on the Governing of Aceh (UUPA) which forms the basis and reference to the special laws prevailing in Aceh. It is a lex specialis that makes Aceh as a special autonomy region.

Many academics argue that GAM-RI peace is triggered by the tsunami disaster that occurred in Aceh at the end of 2004 (Anshori, 2012). Aceh requires a state administrative legal status to facilitate national and international assistance. These events brought the city of Banda Aceh underwent two climactic urban developments. First, after the tsunami, the city of Banda Aceh requires the rehabilitation and reconstruction of development. Second, Post-Conflict has made Aceh a special autonomous region with special features attached to it. The most influential feature of development is Aceh obtaining special autonomy funding for the first year up to the fifteenth year which is equal to 2% (two percent) of the National General Allocation Fund (UU No.11 / 2006). Article 183 paragraph 2). Aceh also has other sources of income such as local revenues, etc. (More are listed in Law No.11 of 2006. Chapter XXIV on "Finance."). In addition, Aceh has the right to establish a direct relationship with foreign countries, without going through an intermediary of the state of Indonesia (Law No.11 of 2006 Chapter IV on "The Authority of Aceh and Regency/City Government").

The post-conflict with Aceh's autonomous status, triggered a development tendency aimed the "Islamic Representation" in the urban space of Banda Aceh. Through the historical and Islamic context inherent in Aceh, then a number of physical development projects that represent the city of Islam are done. This development is based on the ideal Islamic past spirit revived in Banda Aceh today through the implementation of Islamic Shariah and Islamic city planning (Dewi, 2016).
Post-conflict and tsunami, there are many development programs in the city of Banda Aceh. In this design study, we limit the issue of discussion to development in the government's attempt for 'Islamic Representation' in the urban space. This is based on our observation that the development of cities aimed the Islamic Representation is seen to be the most dominant in Banda Aceh.

The statement is in line with the vision of the long-term development of Banda Aceh City contained in Qanun (Canon) of RTRW of Kota Banda Aceh 2009-2029 "The Realization of Banda Aceh as Tamaddun, Modern and Islamic City ". City Spatial Planning aims to “Creating Urban Space as an Islamic Service, Tamaddun, Modern and Based on Disaster Mitigation City”. To realize the vision of development as an effort to form a city characterized by Islam, the Islamic Representation in the city space is done through the development of physical elements of the city done at some points. According to our observations, the city government selectively chooses five strategic points to represent Islamic city through physical urban development. These points are the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque Expansion Project, Simpang Lima Demonstration Monument, Taman Sari (Bustanusslatin Banda Aceh City), Banda Aceh Madani Education Center (BMEC), Ulee Lheue Tourism Area Development. Each of the five points has a distinction based on their geographical location and historically.

These development projects are also in line with other development projects although they do not represent a specific form to represent Islam. The projects are the procurement of Trans Kuta Radja infrastructure, Simpang Tjuju Epicentrum, Monorail, Flyover, and others. The massive development of the city of Banda Aceh certainly not only change the physical form of urban, but also will change the non-physical form such as culture and social interaction of the community in it. Yet, if we trace the history of Islam in Aceh, Islamic identity in the city of Banda Aceh is formed from non-physical processes, namely social interaction that became tradition and entrenched.

![Map of five physical development location as an effort of Islamic representation in Banda Aceh.](image)

Source: Google Maps Satellite and Authors’ Digital Illustration
4. Method

In urban planning, the physical dimensions of urban development and the dimensions of social conditions in society are closely related and mutually influential (Campbell, Fainstein, 1996). Space understanding is fundamentally bound to social reality (Lefebvre, 1973). In spatial practice, social space emerges as a chain connecting various networks of activity in which there is also a material dimension of the interaction.

To connect the social and physical elements of a city, designing a city should begin with a process and method that involves the local community as a user of urban public space. Planners must enter the community and interact directly. This method is co-operative (modus operandi). Interests are determined by individuals through the process of participation (Campbell, Fainstein, 1996).

In this design study, we use mental map as the main tool to analyze. The mental map is an analytical tool that Kevin Lynch (1960) used in his book; *Image of the City*. Lynch conducted the study by involving small groups with no training, no method and no literature to guide them. Lynch learns about stories, memories, and records of people's lives. Ask the community what comes out of their minds about the city, and make a map of it, experience imagination through it. Ask for descriptions of different elements, to recognize different places.

Through a mental map, Lynch posited three concepts in research in American cities, namely identity (differentiating urban elements from one another), structures (indicating patterns of elements identified), and the meaning of urban elements in order to overcome reality and perceived image. This is done Lynch because the purpose of his research concerns about the image of the city. Rob van Leeuwen in 2007 used metal maps as an analytical tool to identify symbolic changes in Banda Aceh after the tsunami, the result is that there are several new symbols emerging from the mental map of the people of Banda Aceh.

![Figure 2](image_url). Map of 10 villages around Baiturrahman Grand Mosque which is the location of the community mental map survey.

Source: Google Maps Satellite Photos and Authors’ Digital Illustration
Figure 3. Method of using mental maps as analytical tools.
Source: Authors’ Illustration

Figure 4. Mental maps of the Community.
Source: Authors’ Document

Figure 5. A volunteer is asking people to draw a mental map while listening to their memory of the city.
Source: Authors’ Document
Unlike Lynch and Leeuwen, we use mental maps as a tool for analyzing and designing cities. There are at least two functions of the mental map in our analytical framework. First, determining the proper design territory based on the results of the dominant mental map recognition from the community. The emerging territories we use as tools for spatial understanding and studies. Second, reading community activities based on randomly dominant places appear from mental map recognition. The dominant places appear randomly as we use them as tools to understand the social activities and social dimensions.

To conduct research using the mental map of the community we used 10 volunteers to help conduct the survey in 10 villages in the urban center of Banda Aceh. The volunteers are architecture students at the local university, Universitas Syiah Kuala. The activity was in the form of workshop activities that we do on Sunday, April 23 2017. The activity managed to collect 50 mental maps of inhabitants of all ages.

Volunteers conducted field surveys that spread to 10 points to collect 'mental maps' from surrounding communities. A mental map is a map that is present mentally, in the mind of society without having to look at a concrete map (on paper or gadget). People will pour their mental maps onto paper. In addition, volunteers are also active in interviewing informants related to their memory and activities about the city.

5. Discussion: Urban Design Strategy

Based on the research through the method and position of the design research, we found three stages that must be developed as the idea concept to design Banda Aceh City. The first is to enabling community, which is to bring people into the city space through their daily activities. This is necessary to build community awareness of the city, because the city is the property of the community. They are the main actors in urban space and those responsible for keeping the city in order to sustain the city’s life (Hester, 2006). The second is to instill value to community. The value in question is the value that has been entrusted and rooted in the life of the local community so that the value can be easily accepted by the community. In the context of Banda Aceh the value is the value brought by the religion of Islam. And finally, the third is value sustainability. This is a strategy or tactic used to realize the first and the second concept. In contrast to the first and second stages of the spatial approach, the third is more to tactics, political agenda, through an anthropological process that makes
local people proud of their city and provides a strong status or character to be shown to the settlers. The pride is based on values that have been embedded through the second stage and passed on to across generations. These stages will take a long time. Urban development requires a process, no good city precedents are built quickly (Makower, 2014).

5.1. Enabling community
Building the community is the effort to bring society in the city space to move through daily practice. To build the community, the first step that needs to be done is to identify community activities. What, where, when, and why they do the activity. We determined all of them through the results of mental maps, interviews, and observations.

Mental recognition from 50 inhabitants resulted 38 places that emerged more than once and 8 places that emerged more than 5 times as a marker for citizens in drawing maps. Based on our observations on the mental recognition maps of the community, we found that people tend to describe maps based on two things; their daily activities and places of monumental or historical value. Places that come based on the results of mental recognition can be our reference to read the dominant activity the city. Furthermore, our emerging mental recognition serves as a reference activity and territorial reference for connecting the spatial dimensions and social dimensions of the city as an effort for islamic representation in the urban space. Thus, the islamic representation is not a departure from the physical development of the city or architectural object, but the result of interaction between social dimension and spatial dimension.

The spatial that emerge based on the dominant mental recognition of the community are the Baiturrahman Mosque, Aceh Market, Peunayong Market, Kodam Iskandar Muda, Simpang Lima, Taman Sari, Pirate Pantee shop, Blang Padang, and the Tsunami Museum. Next, we evaluate the spatial and choose spatially classified public spaces as points that can be intervened. These points are Baiturrahman Mosque, Aceh Market, Peunayong Peanut Market, Taman Sari, Padang Blang, and Tsunami Museum. The dominant activity spots that appear randomly are coffee shops, mosques, hotels, and gas stations.

To build the community, the dominant activity of the community as a social dimension is connected to the dominant spatial that arises, so spatial becomes the place of daily society activity. This is important to build a sense of community ownership of the urban space.

5.2. Instilling values
After the daily activities of community merge with the urban space, the next important step is to instill value to the community. The aforementioned value framework can be determined through cultural and historic urban cultural studies, so that the value is easily absorbed by the local community. In the context of Banda Aceh the value is inseparable from the value with the perspective of Islamic religion. In this stage, many interdisciplinary studies are needed to develop it. As an urban designer then our position is strategically determining spatial design to instill value.

The center of the Islamic community is the mosque (Khan, 1990). The mosque is the most important architectural representation of Muslim identity (Abu-Lughod, 1987). We make the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, the main mosque in the city center and the most dominant place to appear in the mental map of the community as a central space to instill value. This is done by weighing the context of Islamic theology that puts the mosque as the main center to instill value. Furthermore, we connect this center to other points that became the center of community activity in the urban space.

Islamic civilization is not just a set of religious beliefs and laws but also a population that functions to regulate the life of Muslims into a society (Agustina, 2016). The decision to establish a mosque signifies a commitment to build a community either before or after the physical environment was established as a building block in a predominantly Muslim city. Therefore, as the most important representation of Moslem architecture, mosque is a key element in shaping community, environment and city based on Islamic religious values (Abu Lughod,1987).
Figure 7. Map of territory and dominant activity of mental recognition. Source: Authors’ Illustration

Figure 8. Establishing connectivity. Source: Authors’ Illustration
Figure 9. Recapitulation of mental maps.
Source: Authors’ Illustration
The discourse about the mosque can be grouped into physical and social classification. Physical aspects are often centered around the building itself as in the architectural style (Hassan, 2013), such as interior decoration, and its construction. The social aspect is related to the ritual and social activities in the mosque. This is often called the prosperity of the mosque (welfare mosque) which is basically the dynamics of the use of religion and social activities of the mosque (Khan, 1990).

5.3. Values sustainability
This third stage is a political agenda, a tactic to give the public an image of the city to be developed, so that people have the same perception of what the city will be built into. It makes people know how to behave and act as part of forming their urban space. This stage requires a number of respected actors from the public, able to protect by not emphasizing power (Foucault, 1969). Leadership that leads society about values leads people’s attitudes and actions. In Islamic teachings such leadership is reflected from the respected *ulama* and able to protect the community. In other words, in addition to government, the role of *ulama* in leading is important to be revived.

This third stage requires a long process and the process will continue across generations. A hegemony of value in urban space. When this third process is done, the city character will be formed. Values form the mindset and patterns of society in the subconscious. Embedded values form the knowledge of the community and unite with the body of community (Foucault, 1995). This makes the islamic representation in the urban space represented through the actions, activism, and character of society.

6. Conclusion
Through this design study we developed an architectural and urban framework of the importance of emphasizing building the community in urban development. The importance of enabling the community to participate in building their city. Building and sustaining the sense of belonging to the community as well as responsibility to their city. The city presence is an interaction between the social and spatial dimensions of the city.

By taking the city of Banda Aceh as a case, we provide an alternative to urban planning and design that Islamic representation is involving the social dimension of the community, which previously represented by the government through the physical development of the city. We are aware that this research still has weaknesses because the conceptual framework of design that we developed should be tested and require a long time process. But as a framework and method we did, we hope to provide new approaches and alternatives to the current method of planning and designing Banda Aceh City.

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