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Effects of Life Skills Training on Stress Reduction and Coping Style in Adolescents Living in Foster Homes

Elnaz Mehdi Beigigardar, Nasser Bamdad, Mohammad Bagher Behesti, Majid Khalili, Roghayeh Abbasinianabad, Maryam Mosabeiki
A Study of Consumer individual Characteristics in Selecting Mobile Cell

Mohamad Reza Alizadeh Pahlavani, Yousef Khadivi Vaneqi
Optimization of Space Vector Pulse Width Modulation Switching Algorithms for Two-Level Inverters Regarding Different Objective Functions

D. Rostamy, M. Jabbari
Computational Correlation Coefficient and Numerically Stability for Testing Independent Random Sequences in Lattice and QMC

Mehdi Jafari
Human Development Indexes Analysis In Guilan Province and its Position in the Country of Iran During the Years 1996 to 2006

Abd El-Wahab, T.E., Ebadah, I.M.A. and Zidan, E.W.
Control of Varroa Mite by Essential Oils and Formic Acid with Their Effects on Grooming Behaviour of Honey Bee Colonies

Mahsa Khoshpanjeh, Afshin Rahnama, Mir Mohammad Seyyed Kalan, Ali Hoseinpour
Evaluating the Role of Spiritual Leadership Dimensions in Employee Empowerment and their Effect on Workforce Productivity

Kabir Saber Mobasser
Survey and Explanation Effect of Audit Apparatus Size on Audit Quality (Audit Organization in Comparison with Audit Institution Member’s IACPA)

Hamid Maleki
The Study of the Relation between Power and Policy and Policy Making

Purnama Salura, Bachtiar Fauzy
A Synthesis of Local and Non-local Architectural Concepts on Gedung Sate Building in Bandung, Indonesia

Dr. Gholamreza Tajbakhsh, Mohamad Hadi Abedi
Study of Influence of Using Internet on Modernism (Case Study of Male and Female High School and Pre-University Student from Draab City)

Reza Shafaati Laleh
Study on Relationship between Social Capital and Entrepreneurship

Mohsen Shirpour, Farhad Amiri, Jalal Jasour, Javad Shafaee
Relationship between Organizational Structure and Entrepreneurial Culture in Academic Environment
Mohammad Reza Doroodgar, Kamran Nazari, Mostafa Emami
The Study of the Relation Between Marketing Mix and Attract Customers

Bachtiar Fauzy, Antarksa Sudikno, Pumama Salura
The Resilience of Javanese Meaning in the Architectural Acculturation of Javanese with Chinese Ethnic Houses in the Kampong of Sumber

Rasoul Daneshfara, Maryam Menazadeh, Hassan Osouli, and Ebadollah Ghorbani
Investigating the Effect of Structures in Controlling Flood to Protect Soil and Control Sedimentation of Basin (Case Study: Goyjabel Ahar)

Ghodratollah Emamverdi, Maryam Shahabi Tabari
A Fuzzy Logic Approach to Modeling the Uncertainty of Government Consumption Expenditure

Morad Kordi, Fardad Edalatkhah, Hamed Ahmadinia

Mohamad Bagus Hermanto, J.D. Stigter
Application of a Continuous-Discrete Recursive Prediction Error (RPE) Algorithm for Toxicity Detection

Hossein Kharifar, Seyed Reza Razavi Saeedi, Mojtaba Nik Aeen, Hossein Ali Soltani
The Comparative Study of Responding Systems in the Governmental Centers of Four Countries (America â€“ Britannia- Pakistan- Bangladesh)

Mehrdad Nazari
Globalization and Its Impact on Development in Underdeveloped Countries Based on Iran

Samira Afzal
A Review of Localization Techniques for Wireless Sensor Networks

Paulus Hariadi, Bambang Soemardiono, Totok Noerwasito
Energy Efficient Cancer Hospital in Surabaya

Maryam Yamchahmadouski, Noushin Jafari
Study of Social â€“ Economic Status Effect on Lifestyle in Iranian Youth (Case Study in Khorramabad City 2011)

Kamran Nazari, Nastaran Saver, Mostafa Emami, Mostafa Saiedi, Hossein Ali Soltani
Relationship between Organizational Justice and Professional Commitment of Staff (Case Study in Public Organization in Kermanshah)

Morteza Hasanshahi
The Estimate of Coefficients Related to the Water Demand in the Urban Section of Arsanjan and Welfare Effects of a Change in Water Price

Wisnu Ari Adi and Azwar Manaf
Structural and Absorption Characteristics of Mn-Ti Substituted Ba-Sr Hexaferrite Synthesized by Mechanical Alloying Route
Nastaran Heydari, Zeinab Sheikhi, Ali Gudarzi

Considering the Relationship between Physical Stressors in Nurses and Appearance of Organizational Noncreative Conflicts


Rofaty

The Relationship Chain for Enhance Innovation and the Performance Perspective from Environmental Condition, Knowledge Sharing Behavior.....

A Synthesis of Local and Non-local Architectural Concepts on Gedung Sate Building in Bandung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to investigate the architectural synthesis created in Gedung Sate building in Bandung. The method used in this research was, firstly, to redefine a case study in detail so that the shape of building as a whole as well as each of its elements can be analyzed. Secondly, to analyze the display of the building shape completely and that of all its architectural elements in detail. The analysis was based on both building-order principles and semiotics. Based on the results of analysis it could be traced what are the local and non-local concepts on which the displays of all shapes and each of the architectural elements of Gedung Sate building are based. The findings of research concluded that, in Gedung Sate building, a synthesis between a local architectural concept, that is, Sundanese architectural concept, and The Dutch-originated architectural concept, is created.

Keywords: architectural display, architectural synthesis, architectural concept.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization that is pervading across countries, including Indonesia, has brought two contradictory sides. On one side, every nation often perceives it as a threat, because the inventions in information technology of internet have made it easier for foreign influences to penetrate any country easily. On the other side, every country may perceive it as an opportunity to survive and to develop a synergy without being affected by foreign influences. And even it may play a role of influencing other country. [1, 2, 3]

In architectural area, the globalization issue inclines to strengthen an “international style” that has been growing since 1970s. [4]. The sophistication of construction technology of developed country is often perceived as very interesting because of its novelty issue. As a consequence, most architectural constructions in developing country have nearly the same shapes and expressions as that of architecture in developed country, whereas they are of different natural and cultural conditions. The marginalization of local architectural constructions will lead to the erosion of local architectural value. The identity attached to local architecture will gradually be extinct. Of course, this problem should be dealt with cautiously [5].

Nevertheless, in Indonesia, there are still some buildings constructed in 1920s and still relatively intact until now. The buildings still have higher architectural value than newly grown modern ones [6]. One of the old buildings is Gedung Sate, situated in Bandung. The building was indeed designed by synthesizing local and non-local concepts. It is the architectural synthesis that causes the building has a survival, sustainable value as well as local expression uniqueness [8]. Thus, the issue of architectural synthesis in Gedung Sate building becomes an important one to be prioritized and studied in-depth in order to make it as a lesson-learnt.

Departing from the description above, the current research conducted an investigation on the importance of the role of synthesis in architectural area. This research emphasized an alternative new viewpoint in reading and designing architectural synthesis supplemented by its operational stages.

The benefits and utilities of the research are as follows: Firstly, in-depth understanding of architectural synthesis created in the case of study. Secondly, understanding the methods and stages of reading architectural synthesis in detail. Thirdly, understanding the crucial position of synthesis that prioritizes the proven wisdom of local architectural concept so as to create the survival and sustainability of architecture. And fourthly, understanding the crucial position of architectural synthesis so as to take part in playing a role in increasingly global condition of the world.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Case Study

In 1918, Governor General of Netherlands East Indies planed to move the capital of Netherlands East Indies from Batavia city (now Jakarta) to Bandung [9]. Since 1919, the preparation of capital removal firstly began by developing Administrative Governmental Center (Gouvernements Bedrijven). Gedung Sate was the
first public building to be built. The building was designed by a Delft graduated architect, J. Gerber. Unfortunately, in 1934, the implementation of the removal halted due to the occurrence of world economic recession, called malaise era.

Besides from being the first public building to be constructed, Gedung Sate also the second building to construct by employing reinforced concrete construction and Portland cement in Bandung. At that time, there were several bureaus that proposed their own designs, but J. Gerber’s design was considered as the best design that prioritized a synthesis of local and non-local architectures. Until now, the condition of Gedung Sate is still relatively steady and its strength is still kept better than that of other contemporary public buildings which was constructed at that time. These are the reasons why Gedung Sate was selected as the case study of this research.

Analytical stages
In principle, the analysis conducted was based on a triangle diagram of architectural function-shape-meaning aspects. Although it is realized that under real condition the three aspects above are inseparable, but in this research the analysis was emphasized only on the relationship between shape and meaning aspects [10].

In the first analysis, the case study was break-down in a three-dimension way based on its elements. That is, the elements relating to land (floor, functional space), the elements relating to horizontal contexts (wall, building enclosure and structural supporting construction), the elements relating to vertical contexts (roof) [11, 12]. This breakdown should be conducted to determine in detail what is the relationship among all building elements, and also to know which are structural element, room forming element, and building ornamentation.

In the second analysis, an interpretation of all building shapes until the details of building ornaments was made. The stages of the analysis are as follows: firstly, the interpretation of building shape expression as viewed from a distance of three times of the building height or width. Secondly, the interpretation of building shape expression as viewed from a distance of the building height or width. Thirdly, the interpretation of building structure and construction. The three stages on interpretation are based on both building order principles [13] and semiotics in architecture [14]. The building order principles consist of balance order and orientation. Meanwhile, semiotics revealed the meaning on which all shapes of building and all building elements, whether the existing meanings are based on causal principles (index), reference principle (icon), or convention principle (symbol).

It is based on this in-depth investigation that what synthesis of local-nonlocal architectural concepts that is created in Gedung Sate could be revealed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Interpretation of Overall Shape Expression
The core of balance order is the existence of balance relation in the composition between parts and the whole of a building. This order consists of principles: axis, datum, repetition, and rhythm. Meanwhile, the core of orientation order is the application of hierarchy in a building. This order consists of principles of: top-down hierarchy, front-back, and far-near. Based on the results of analysis of both balance order and orientation order, the substance and nature of elements and the composition of building structure are interpreted.

Analysis of Balance Order
The clarity of Axis, see figure 01 (a): The composition of existing building elements is the composition of symmetry and vertical axis at the center that consists of entrance mass, lobby, and three stacks roof. The horizontal axis in the building inclines to be at the middle of building walls. The composition of building on the horizontal axis is that the building becomes smaller upward as marked by two separate roof covers (note that there is a shield roof ending on two underside roofs). Other horizontal axis is at the top wall opening as marked by roof that is cut by a lobby mass at the center. The roof that is provided with only an ending in the left-right end expresses that the roof is as if going through (penetrating) the lobby mass.

Fig. 01 (a): Front View of Gedung Sate, (b): Structure and construction of Gedung Sate [15]
01. Roof of void space at the center of room
02. Walls of void space at the center of working room
03. Roof of second floor office room
04. Walls of second and first floors office
05. Floor of one fifth height of wall (element 4)
06. Stairs on building entrance
07. Building entrance wall
08. Roof of Building entrance
09. Walls of void space
10. Ornament attaching to the wall
11. Structural frame above lobby
12. First Roof above lobby space
13. Second Roof above lobby space
14. Third Roof above lobby space

Analysis of Orientation Order

Center and right-left hierarchy: Entrance mass becomes very central because it is at the center of the building composition. In addition, the entrance mass becomes an eye-catcher because it has a different opening than other ones on its right-left wall. The orientation of entrance side is very clear. Therefore, the center of building is having a higher value than its right and left sides. It is reasonable to interpret that in this part there is an entrance and an orientation lobby that bind the activities in the building.

Top-down hierarchy: The center of the building, bottom-up, comprises entrance mass, middle mass in a form of massive wall with ornament, and open mass with a three stacks roof. The interpretation of building
substance and nature is as follows: The center of building is having a higher value than the left and rights sides of the building. In the center of building: the uppermost part (open mass with a three stacks roof) is a part with a landmark of building to environment scale. The wall-closed middle part is a signifier of building to a quite near scale. This part is signified by the existence of ornaments.

Analysis of the synthesis of local and nonlocal signs

Each elements of the building may become a sign with a certain meaning. Based on the result of analysis above, there are two main parts that provide signs. First, the roof part is an element that predominantly provides a sign of all existing sign compositions. Second, the wall part which is the marker element of activities in the building. The roof element comprises three parts: First, a three stacks roof is a sign of higher value than other roofs. This part can be categorized as an iconic sign. The three stacks roof with ornament above it actually refers to a bale-nyungcung shape, that is, a traditional public building existing in Tatar Sunda (Sundanese Land) region. See Figure 02 (a) (b). The ornament above the three stacks roof is a pillar with a decoration of five circles above it that looks like a sate (barbecued meat) skewers with five sates. In the time before independence era, people called the building as a building with a sate skewer above it, and then it is well known as gedung sate (Sate building). Initially, architect J Gerber wanted to convey a message that symbolizes the total cost that the Government of Netherlands E. Indies expended, that is, 5 million gulden (5 sates in one skewer). The type of symbolic sign that the designer wanted cannot in fact be recognized by public observers. Other roofs are an indexical sign, that is, the cover of the top of space below. The wall element: massive wall with an arch-shaped opening looks from a distance as an iconic sign of the wall that is not originated from local, tropical area. The wall resembles the palaces in hot-dry climate Middle-East.

The Interpretation of the Expression of Shapes around Entrance

All compositions of Entrance view was analyzed by using the method above. The discussion on balance order and orientation order was not different than that of the whole shape. What was different was the discussion on the synthesis of local and nonlocal signs.

Analysis of the synthesis of local and nonlocal signs

Nearing the entrance area, the predominant sign is a building pedestal. The pedestal is made of stone material commonly employed to build a shrine. In addition, its carved object pattern reminisces about the carved objects on Cangkuang shrine in Leles-Garut, West Java. Whereas the openings, windows, and walls of the building reminisce about the ornaments existing on buildings in The Dutch and palaces in Middle East. The pillars that decorate the opening area are of New Renaissance style.

The Interpretation of Structure and Construction

On figure 01 (a) it can be seen that the roof is apparently supported by a massive wall existing below or well known as a supporting wall system. In reality, see figure 01 (b), it is found that the structure existing in Gedung Sate as a whole is a frame structure system that uses concrete pillars and beams. Whereas all roof
frames uses steel construction. The existing massive wall is only a filling or covering element. It is not a building structure at all. In addition, the New Renaissance-styled pillars existing in the opening subtractive type is as decorative ornaments only.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of analysis it can be concluded as follows:

Firstly, the principle of synthesis created in the current case of study is the application of local concept (Sunda: Bale nyungcung) to roof. Whereas on the wall, opening, pillar, and ornament elements, nonlocal concept (The Dutch: New Renaissance/Moor) is applied. Likewise, structure and construction system as a whole applies a technological concept originated from The Dutch.

Secondly, an architectural synthesis can be understood in detail by a way of: conducting a redefinition of all elements of the building; and conducting an analysis of the expression of the shape as a whole together with its elements, the expression of the shapes of elements together with the ornaments around entrance and structure and construction systems. The analysis basis used was by disclosing the principles of balance order, orientation order, and semiotics principles-based interpretations.

Thirdly, in order to create a survival that ends up in continuity, a synthesis should always: in one side, include local concepts, that have been proven against natural condition, and cultural icons; on the other side, adapt modern technologies that are suitable to local conditions and always in line with the developments of the times.

Fourthly, under a relatively variable global condition, conducting an architectural synthesis between local proven concepts and matching nonlocal ones becomes a crucial issue. Thus, architectures of a region/nation would continuously have a specific identity that is not easily affected by the influences of any outside architectural concept.

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