

## Architecture in Anthropological Perspective: Structural Reflection on Local Architectural Dynamics

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### Abstract

#### Keywords:

*Anthropological perspective; culture; human-environment interaction; local architecture; structural reflection*

This study aims to discuss the role of an anthropological perspective in architecture as well as structural reflection on the dynamics of architecture in relation to society. An anthropological lens can be used to study architecture as a manifestation of human culture to understand better the complex interactions between humans, the environment, and social structures. This research takes an anthropological approach to understanding architecture and investigates the dynamics of architecture as a cultural product influenced by social, technological, economic, and political changes. An analysis of the physical structure of architecture that reflects social structure, symbolism, and representation in architecture as a reflection of society is used to explain structural reflection. Case studies encompass vernacular, religious, colonial, and sustainable architecture. Understanding architecture from an anthropological standpoint allows humans to recognize the significance of cultural identity, the preservation of traditions, and their relationship with the physical environment as an art form in development.

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### 1. Introduction

It is believed that paradigms or knowledge evolve and annihilate previous paradigms or knowledge (Lake & Salura, 2021). This tendency can be identified as anthropological exclusion from architectural science (Setiadi, 2021). According to historical records, anthropology is integral to natural architectural works reflected in human thought (Adimihardja & Salura, 2004). The current debate about the evolution of architectural science cannot be separated from anthropological phenomena. The thought of ideological values from society influenced the science of architecture as a cultural artifact during the

era (Salura & Clarissa, 2018; Clarissa, 2016). As expressed by (Siregar, 2008), Anthropology is believed to be an art that studies and reflects human existence in a particular ecological and cultural environment with impacts that include the global aspects of society (Siregar, 2008; Salura et al., 2020b). It is also believed that humans have never stopped interpreting the natural-cultural environment that surrounds them as a vessel of life, particularly architecture, since the dawn of civilization (Lake & Salura, 2021). Thus, every anthropological study and reflection involves a significant architectural effort (Reginaldo Christophori Lake, 2022; Salura, 2005).

It is widely acknowledged that anthropology is the study of human beings and their behavior with the goal of generalizing. An anthropologist, William A. Haviland, provides a comprehensive definition of anthropology. According to him, anthropology is the art of narrating human behavior to gain a complete understanding of human diversity (Haviland, 1985).

Until now, a thorough understanding of anthropology has been interpreted as an artistic approach to revealing the meaning of human existence in the context of a more dignified life structure (Gregor Neonbasu, 2011; A.Hidayat, 2012). In this concept, anthropology attempts to look at humans through the study of specific architectures to give humans a more beautiful understanding of their existence among various creatures in the world (Purbadi et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, an anthropologist and an architectural expert's research has yet to formulate and test a hypothesis and attempt to explain the phenomenon of human existence that is observed so that it reaches its authentic roots in a specific spatial and contextual context (Lake & Salura, 2021). Thus, the growing desire to re-establish the relationship between anthropology and architecture must be balanced against the numerous scientific publications that discuss the essence of human consciousness's existence in its cultural environment.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This research aims to discuss the role of architecture from an anthropological standpoint and provide a structural reflection on the dynamics of architecture in society. An anthropological lens can be employed to investigate architecture as a manifestation of human culture to understand better the complex interactions between humans, the environment, and social structures (Jeraman, 2019). This research requires an anthropological approach to understanding architecture and investigates the dynamics of architecture as a cultural product influenced by social, technological, economic, and political changes. An analysis of the physical structure of architecture that reflects social structure, symbolism, and representation in architecture as a reflection of society is utilized to explain structural reflection. Conducting a literature review to gather information about architecture from an anthropological perspective and architectural dynamics is relevant for reading the relationship between architecture and anthropology. Books, scientific journals, articles, and related research are relevant sources. Understanding architecture as a cultural phenomenon is also approached from an anthropological standpoint. It investigates anthropological concepts like social context (Adimihardja & Salura, 2004), cultural values (Lake & Salura, 2021), and human-environment interaction in an architectural context (Pudianti & Vitasurya, 2019). In addition, it examines architecture's physical structure to determine how it reflects the social structure and symbolism in society. Determine architectural elements that represent cultural values and identities. Finally, findings from

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literature analysis, anthropological approaches, case studies, and structural analysis are compared and discussed. The implications of architectural dynamics in the context of social, cultural, and community identity are discussed. This method is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of architecture from an anthropological standpoint and investigate structural reflections contained in architectural dynamics.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **Anthropology: The art of narrating human works**

It is believed that anthropology is not the only scientific discipline that studies humans in the context of reflecting on life in an architectural frame (Setiadi, 2021). Other scientific disciplines look at humans through the perspective of art and more precise spatial arrangements. However, from the standpoint of art, anthropology is a distinct field of science that employs a specific strategy to paint a picture of humanity over a relatively long period (Ashadi, 2018). This is because anthropology has a unique and comprehensive perspective in describing human beings transparently and comprehensively (Firdaus, 2020).

Many other scientific disciplines (aside from anthropology) have previously reflected the reality of human life in various ways. Philosophers, for example, attempt to study in depth how humans think about themselves (Suaedi, 2015; Aryati, 2008). Sociologists often use respondents with a list of questions to examine certain social issues (Oktriwina, 2022). Psychologists use certain subjects to conduct experiments and experiments to understand certain problems in living together (Sasrawan, n.d.). Anatomy and physiology study how humans are biological organisms, and the social sciences focus on the unique forms of human relationships (Harimurti, 2021).

On the other hand, humanities is a study that focuses on learning the highest achievements in human culture (Basmatulhana, 2022). The difference is in the anthropologist's approach, which includes informants or respondents and other people as partners who actively assist anthropologists in learning and discovering new knowledge. This is where the distinctiveness of anthropology is revealed, specifically through narratives about human works (Nurmansyah et al., 2019). Narratives conducted by anthropologists are not always in line with the discursive approach but are physiological narratives.

An anthropologist is expected to be able to summarize measurable aspects of human life by using meaningful words to find common ground in a more significant shared life over an infinite period in the context of art and architecture (Neonbasu, 2013). Therefore, the question that underlies this study is whether there is a possibility of an intrinsic relationship or connection between anthropology and architecture.

Professor Dr. R. M. Koentjaraningrat, born on June 15, 1923, and died on March 24, 1999, has long advocated for policymakers in Thailand to use an anthropological approach in various development activities, including architectural studies. The statement that always catches the eye is that the role of architecture in the process of spatial mapping at all levels is always focused on efforts to arrange areas of human life within the spectrum of ecological and cultural systems (Koentjaraningrat, 1993; Koentjaraningrat, 2015).

Koentjaraningrat has developed a basic design based on a cultural strategy to map the dynamics of more anthropological development since the establishment of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Indonesia in 1957 (Koentjaraningrat,

1993). However, these calls are not always heeded by policymakers who tend to stick to old contracts and new projects that ignore concrete human interests.

As a result, architecture serves as a bridge between human life and contributes to developing a better, more comfortable, and dignified social life paradigm. Every healthy, peaceful, and meaningful environment for shared life requires good spatial planning, beautiful arrangement, quality spatial arrangement, and an aesthetic approach (Adimihardja & Salura, 2004).

Architecture is not only concerned with the physical aspects of spatial arrangements, both in rural and urban areas but also with feelings and human instincts (Salura, 2001). For society, both in the context of traditional and modern architecture, the role of architecture is closely related to the paradigm of belief, patterns of past life that are inherited, and certain ceremonies (Reginaldo Christophori Lake, 2014; 2015; Reginaldo Christophori Lake, Purbadi, et al., 2020; Salura, 2007). These feelings and rites follow modern architectural formats in carrying out specific actions (Salura, 2010). Attention to this aspect is essential in designing good physical buildings and developing a dignified development paradigm (Reginaldo Christophori Lake, Arinto, et al., 2020; Reginaldo Christophori Lake et al., 2021; Salura, Clarissa, & Christophori Lake, 2020). Policymakers are often fixated on project calculations alone, ignoring anthropological aspects of development (Djarot Purbadi et al., 2020). Leaders must be aware of the realities of community life. This phenomenon raises the question of whether the spatial model and paradigm arrangement of buildings in Indonesian cities have met societal needs. Another question is to what extent urban development has considered urbanization and how Indonesian architecture can respond to population movements from villages to cities by appreciating village life (Salura & Clarissa, 2018; Salura, Clarissa, & Christophori Lake, 2020).

Thus, there is an intersection between anthropology and architecture in understanding and paying attention to human aspects in spatial development. An anthropological approach can provide broader and holistic insights in designing a better, comfortable and dignified environment for living together (Nurmansyah et al., 2019).

The first intriguing concept is that Gunawan Tjahjono of the University of Indonesia has written an anthropological reflection on the dynamics of urban planning in Indonesia. The article is titled "The Role of Architecture and Anthropology in Indonesian Urban Spatial Planning in the Twenty-First Century" (Tjahjono, 2014). This paper is interesting because it discusses the meeting of architecture and anthropology, which have three interests with equal functions. These three interests are expressed clearly as follows: (1) anthropological reflection on human life, (2) more effective spatial arrangements with due regard for dependable architecture, and (3) a sincere attitude on the part of policymakers to always pay attention to policies taken so as not to harm the interests of human life (Tjahjono, 2014). (It should be noted that in the writing in the *Anthropology Journal* there is no research on the three things mentioned here).

The essence that is relevant in today's architectural civilization is the universal human attitude when involved in development efforts. Prof. Dr. James J. Fox of The Australian National University in Canberra, an Indonesian expert, particularly in Eastern Indonesia, stated that the Indonesian context, in general, necessitates an anthropological approach in all human involvement in development, both on a macro and micro scale, in villages and cities (Fox, 2006b). In other words, every human activity in the building requires an anthropological approach (Neonbasu, 2019). Prof. Fox always emphasizes the importance

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of anthropological reflection as an absolute condition for developing a development paradigm that meets the requirements of authentic architecture (Fox, 2006a). Prof. Fox explained that anthropological reflection occurs in society when various architectural actions are conducted, both traditional in nature, such as rites, and modern, such as finding layouts and spatial patterns that meet the requirements of good buildings (Fox, 1996).

The second concept is more effective spatial arrangements through dependable architecture. For both rural and urban communities, the role and function of architecture are closely related to specific human feelings, intuitions, and instincts, as well as things that can be seen physically (Arinto et al., 2014). The extent to which a person integrates the paradigm of belief and belief, as well as patterns of past life that are passed down from generation to generation, has a strong influence on the quality of a good building, as well as various aspects related to dignified development (Reginaldo Christophori Lake et al., 2018; Reginaldo Christophori Lake, Dwisusanto, et al., 2020). These things are performed secretly to invoke strength in physical development, even if they are not officially recognized (Reginaldo Christophori Lake, 2022).

Feelings for traditional architecture go hand in hand with modern architectural formats, often expressed in the custom of certain ceremonies (Suharjanto, 2014). Whether the rites are performed for purification, the liberation of an invisible authority, or some other goal far removed from human sensory experience, all play a role in influencing architectural views (Trisno et al., 2016).

The fundamental ideas of traditional architectural formats are generally related to the principle of harmony between humans as the microcosm and the universe as the macrocosm (Lake, 2022b). There is a proposition that building a harmonious relationship between these two worlds is important, with the understanding that every activity that occurs at the microcosmic level will also involve the macrocosm (Salura, 2007). When humans plan the construction of a building or design urban planning for human life, they must pay attention to and consider the interests of the universe as a whole (Salura, 2018).

An important note about the role of traditional architecture in society is here. These phenomena can be inherited feelings, habits, or patterns that appear and disappear occasionally but can be brought back to life through dreams or certain rituals (Salura, 2018).

The attitude of policymakers, who are frequently trapped in project considerations, becomes the third factor. The architect's role in building construction is often regarded as important and influential, but it repeatedly ignores the anthropological aspects of development. Gunawan's writings from the University of Indonesia, where he conducted structural studies of buildings in several Indonesian cities, including Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, offer an intriguing perspective (Tjahjono, 2014).

The development pattern of cities in Indonesia, including those mentioned earlier, follows the pattern and style of Dutch architecture (Sidharta Muljadinata et al., 2018; Suryono et al., 2013). The question is straightforward: do the spatial models and perspectives employed to establish the paradigm of building layouts in Indonesian cities meet the realistic demands of Indonesian people's lives?

Another question is whether the spatial planning in developing cities in Indonesia has considered the flow of urbanization, namely difficult-to-control movements from villages to cities. Furthermore, what role does Indonesian architecture play in seizing opportunities when designing the redevelopment of village living environments in response to human migration from villages (with a village mentality) to big cities?

In this context, it is critical to assess whether city spatial planning has considered rapid urbanization, the high flow of urbanization, and the impact on the lives of rural communities that have relocated to cities. Furthermore, Indonesian architecture can be essential in redesigning the village's living environment to accommodate the social, cultural, and economic changes resulting from people moving from villages to big cities.

#### **Management of development architecture from an anthropological perspective**

There is a widespread perception that anthropologists are rarely involved in decision-making processes involving spatial planning, building construction, and urban design. Anthropologists play an important role in researching a location's history and background before beginning development activities. Unfortunately, the primary focus is frequently on project numbers that must be completed immediately. There is an expression in this context that the project mentality has neglected the world of architecture.

It is critical to recognize that involving anthropologists in spatial planning and development decision-making processes can provide a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the sites, peoples, and cultures involved. By considering anthropological factors such as history, background, beliefs, and community needs, decisions that are more mindful of the balance between physical development and human welfare can be made. This concept is critical for shifting the paradigm away from project numbers and toward human aspects and the social context in the development process.

When designing a city, it is critical to consider various aspects of human life and architectural dimensions. The primary goal is to create good and visually stunning buildings and ensure that these structures provide comfort and aid in creating a harmonious environment between humans, fellow humans, and nature (Ismail et al., 2016).

When considering good spatial planning, it is always necessary to consider the role and function of architecture and anthropological studies. Anthropological studies can help us understand those living in that environment's needs, habits, and beliefs. By keeping this in mind, the designed spatial layout may achieve a balance between the benefits of the building and the needs of human life (Tjahjono, 2014).

This concept emphasizes the importance of examining architecture not only from the perspective of beauty but also from a social, cultural, and environmental standpoint. A well-designed building must meet the community's functional and emotional needs, create a comfortable, safe environment, and promote positive social interaction. Furthermore, in the environmental context, paying attention to the harmony between buildings and the surrounding nature is necessary to maintain environmental sustainability and minimize negative impacts on the ecosystem.

In conclusion, designing appropriate spatial planning necessitates collaboration between architecture and anthropology. Cities that are visually appealing and function optimally, provide comfort, and create a harmonious balance between humans, fellow humans, and nature can be created by combining an understanding of human needs and their relationship with the environment.

It is critical to examine existing architectural models to avoid becoming trapped in a colonial pattern that fails to respect and recognize the diversity of people's cultural heritage. Lake (2015) emphasizes the importance of the vernacular dimension in this context (Lake, 2015). The community's wealth in their local wisdom must be carefully considered and respected.

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The urbanization challenges must also be considered valuable input for the architectural paradigm in designing more dignified urban spatial planning. Our concern for villagers who move to cities should include efforts to assist them in adjusting to the city's thoughts and lifestyles. A socio-cultural approach emphasizing respect for various dimensions of human life must be a significant concern in our development's dynamics and paradigm.

In this context, creating an inclusive architectural model that considers cultural diversity and local wisdom and allows for the harmonious integration of rural communities that have relocated to cities and existing urban communities is critical. We can create an environment capable of meeting the needs and providing a sense of belonging to all people if we respect and pay attention to life's social, cultural, and human dimensions.

This effort necessitates a severe commitment to gaining knowledge and understanding of the local community's traditions, values, and cultural practices. It also entails fusing these elements with sustainable modern architectural principles. Collaboration between architects, anthropologists, and local communities is critical in developing better spatial planning. This collaboration will result in a well-functioning environment and various benefits for human life in general.

Frequently, the development paradigm being implemented in all regions does not fully recognize the significance of an anthropological perspective on various aspects of human life in Indonesia. In terms of structure, it appears that development efforts have not fully considered anthropological reflection on aspects of Indonesian people's lives.

One factor to consider is ensuring that the context of human life in Indonesia meets their various needs. As a result, genuine attention must be paid to the implementation of proper reflection on human conditions and needs rooted in human life's history.

The relationship between society and the environment can be realized by paying attention to the anthropological perspective, cultural values reflected in human life patterns, and social and economic factors that influence decision-making development. By emphasizing the proper reflection of human conditions and needs, development in Indonesia can become more inclusive and responsive to the realities of human life.

The following concept emphasizes the significance of effective spatial planning by ensuring an approach that directly responds to existing problems. If this focus is overlooked, a program-based development approach will fail. Spatial planning patterns and strategies are always closely related to each individual involved in dealing with specific conditions' architectural perspective (Caroline, 2019). Development, in this sense, requires an intelligent, wise management strategy that is truly based on intellectual thought.

In the dynamics of development, it is not only necessary to have the ability to reflect critically within an anthropological framework, but intelligence is needed in managing spatial planning by meeting needs precisely and accurately (the art of arranging). Sometimes, we only encountered development implementation carried out in the form of projects, but the implementation was not optimal, resulting in suboptimal results. In other words, problem-solving will be hampered when there are flaws in the spatial planning process and a poor understanding of the context. At this point, it takes art (the soul of an architect equipped with managerial skills) to articulate problems and difficulties in the context of community needs.

Intelligent art in spatial planning can identify and overcome existing challenges while also holistically connecting them to community needs. This concept entails seeing the big picture, developing creative solutions, and effectively managing development processes. Thus, intelligent spatial planning is the key to achieving more sustainable and societally appropriate development.

#### 4. Conclusion

To comprehend the complex relationship between humans and physical space, architecture, as a reflection of the dynamics of human society and culture, necessitates a thoroughly anthropological approach. Structural reflection on architecture dynamics assists architects, government and artists, and development decision-makers in discovering how architecture can reflect values, social change, and the complexity of society. Viewing architecture from an anthropological perspective provides broader insights into the relationship between humans and their environment and the importance of preserving cultural identity and traditions.

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