

Urban Design Guidelines: a Planning Instrument for shaping the Superblocks in Jakarta, Indonesia

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Main Theme

The dissertation focuses on the control of the development that determines the form of the city, particularly in special districts and superblocks within a city. Other themes include the computer application for urban design and the social planning in urban environment.

Relevance for planning knowledge

The research will contribute in closing/narrowing the gap between the generally two-dimensional planning practice and the three-dimensional architectural design (1). An objective of the research is to improve the urban design control mechanism that has just begun its implementation in Indonesia. The research is also intended as a demonstration of computer application in supporting urban planning and design activities.

Motivation

The conventional plans and building regulations have resulted in the segregation of land parcels in the city center of Jakarta. Each building is a freestanding structure on its parcel of land. The result of this kind of development is a city that is lacking visual interest, inconvenient for pedestrian, and exacerbates the traffic jam. The city has also neglected other aspects besides visual beauty: small street vendors/hawkers, the handicapped and the old are not given facilities or support to live well in the harsh urban environment. Socially marginal groups such as street vendors need to be supported and given appropriate space in urban areas.

The city government of Jakarta has tried to overcome this problem by using the Urban Design Guideline for controlling several superblock-type developments in the capital city since 1993.

Some versions of the Guidelines have been proved and implemented in actual development in the city. The Urban Design Guidelines is not yet perfect, as time has witnessed that there are revisions in each new version of the Guideline (2). It is an objective of this dissertation to investigate the most appropriate substance and format of the guideline.

Research Methodology

A study on urban design theory is used to build the normative base of the substance of an urban design guideline. This study, together with a comparative study of planning practice in controlling the urban design in developed countries provides a base for investigating the practice of urban design control in Indonesia and possibly to advice some improvement of the current practice. Urban design control in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the USA represents the practice in the developed countries.

A study on the application of computer for urban planning & design purposes will be conducted. This study supports the simulation of an urban design guideline for an urban area, which will be performed to verify and evaluate the findings. This type of methodology is often called action research (3).

Stage of Research

The study on urban design theory and the comparative study of planning practice in controlling the urban design have been almost completed. The finding on the study on urban design guidelines is presented briefly here in the following section. The study on computer application in urban planning & design is still in progress. The simulation of an urban design guideline for an area in Jakarta will be performed right after the completion of this study.

Preliminary Results: Urban Design Guidelines as a planning tool

Some basic features of the urban design guideline as an instrument for controlling the shape of the built environment have been identified as following:

- Urban Design Guideline work similar to overlays of various regulations and plans that applies to an area, and at the same time summaries these conventional building regulations and plans.

- _ An Urban Design Guidelines is valid only for a specific area in the city, very much like the concept of a special district. Just as the name implies, a special district should have special qualities that need to be preserved. In the case of Superblock, it is the central location & its large land area that is developed in an integrated fashion/manner.
- _ Urban Design Guidelines provides a working/decision-making environment for architects who design a building in the area (4).
- _ Urban Design Guidelines are more precise (fit for the location) than the conventional building codes and plans, because they are more detailed and prepared especially for that area, and not for the entire city.
- _ Urban Design Guidelines must be updated periodically with clear updating authorities.

The advantages of using the Urban Design Guidelines for Superblock development

- _ They can easily be utilized to redistribute the floor area allowance, using the concept of a "pool of allowable floor area". Each land parcel in the planned Superblock may be allocated different floor area ratio (FAR), depending on the demand of the planning and the urban design considerations. The building can be shaped as needed within a building envelope: not rigid like parading soldier, which has been built along the major thoroughfare in Jakarta as a result of the old building regulations and plan.
- _ The use of urban design guideline can foster the growth of mixed use, thanks to a detailed vertical and horizontal (land) use planning within the guideline.
- _ The unity of design in the entire Superblock can be maintained by prescribing color, material, signage, and many other details of the buildings.
- _ The support for more pedestrian oriented activity & facility is attained through several ways:
 - _ Using the bonus & incentive scheme to attract more pedestrian-oriented activities such as cafe etc. along major pedestrian paths.
 - _ The utilization of private land for public use: part of the pedestrian path is built on the building-set-back area of the private land.
 - _ Integrated design: ensuring a good linkage by locating the pedestrian path between all major "pedestrian magnets" such as bus stop, large shops, lunch/eating establishments, large offices or other workplaces etc.

- _ Mandatory building form, such as arcade or canopy, along strategic pedestrian route is intended to provide weather protection to the pedestrian.
- _ The urban design guideline may support the social planning. Socially marginal group such as street hawkers can be granted a place to do their business in the pedestrian area of the superblock. This is an improvement from the common practice in Indonesia, where the street hawkers are unorganized, as they may occupy the sidewalk illegally and thus are subject to eviction by the municipal government.
- _ A slightly higher average FAR - e.g. from 4.0 to 4.2 - may be granted based on the lower traffic demand due to the reduction of inter-building traffic; the use of an integrated parking system with interconnected basement that was not possible with the conventional regulation; and the good connectivity to mass transit network.

Problems with the Urban Design Guidelines

There are some drawbacks and difficulties in implementing the guideline:

- _ Balancing between flexibility of the guidelines (that gives the architects and the developers more freedom of designing the Superblock) and order (that is often translated into more rigid guidelines, which discourages the architect as well as the investor) must be undertaken carefully.
- _ The difference in allocated floor space (FAR) and building coverage ratio (BCR) among land parcels within a district may invoke a feeling of unfairness between the landowners, who might have purchased those land at the same price.
- _ It requires more time to prepare the urban design guidelines than the conventional plans. This will cause an increase of cost for the developers. Note: In Indonesia, the developer bears the cost of preparing an Urban Design Guideline, which includes the fee of the urban design consultant. However, the developer may gain more due to the increased quality of the superblock, which can be sold or leased at a higher price.
- _ The new approach requires some "getting used" by the designers that are going to do the work on the site. Experience shows that the Urban Design Guidelines that have been implemented so far are still workable, albeit with a constrained feeling of the architects who design the building in that area.

Prerequisite of implementing the urban design guidelines

In order to implement an urban design guideline effectively, some conditions should be satisfied, which are:

- _ Clear boundary of planned area, including the land parcel boundaries.
- _ Clear objective of development of the area.
- _ The officials of the local government office and the architects must be trained to understand and to work with this new kind of regulating instrument.
- _ Clear decision-making rationale. It would be better if the decisions history can be traced back, so that people can refer to it in disputes etc (5). This is particularly useful in light of the long time span required to finish a superblock. There are many parties involved, and the personnel might be replaced during the course of the project.

A single developer, who then may sell or lease the land parcels at different prices, is an ideal solution for the problem of accounting the difference of allocated FAR.

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