The spirit of place dynamics at GPIB Immanuel and the Pancaran Kasih in Depok

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the spirit of place which is also known as the "genius loci" of two GPIB church buildings in Depok, Indonesia. It is important to note that the physical and spatial order of a structure theoretically has an expression usually interpreted according to the character and identity created by the observer or user. This means it is possible for buildings with the same function, liturgy, and space requirements but different physical arrangements to have the same spirit of place. The focus of this study is on the church of GPIB Immanuel and GPIB Pancaran Kasih in Depok and it was conducted qualitatively and descriptively through anatomical and phenomenological methods. The operational stage involves the emic steps which include field observations and structured or unstructured interviews for managers and informants doubling as the users of the buildings as well as ethical steps which are focused on the study of architectural theories. The results showed that the physical architectural order of the two churches creates a dynamic character and identity as well as a spirit of place even though they come from the same synod, order, and have the same liturgy and procession. This was discovered to be due to their similarities and differences.

Introduction

Philosopher Heidegger’s thought started influencing architecture with the statement provided on "thing" which means "sesuatu or something" in Indonesian (Sharr 2007). This statement was used by this philosopher to introduce the concept of "place" which serves as the basis for the development of all thoughts on place and other related things.

Christian Norberg Schulz is an architect and thinker greatly influenced by Heidegger. This is observed from the statement in “Genius loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture” that there is more meaning to a place than being just a location due to the presence of spirit or soul in every place which cannot be explained only analytically (Sastroasmito 2020). It is, however, important to note that a place is usually formed from both natural and man-made phenomena (Widodo 2019; Subroto 2019).

According to (Crowe 1995), the spirit of place is a phenomenon based on people’s belief that certain places have a “spirit or soul”. This means architectural structures such as buildings are man-made phenomena with physical arrangement and activities and each of them has its spirit of place which was stated by Norberg-Schulz (1991) to be influenced by identity, meaning, and history.

Garnham (1985) also argued that the spirit of place is formed in two aspects. These include the physical or tangible aspects in the form of sites, buildings, environment, routes, and man-made objects as well as the non-physical or intangible aspects in the form of memory, narration, ritual,
meaning, texture, color, and others. They are, however, both interrelated.

Religious buildings or ceremonies are designed to make individuals in a cultural setting feel they have entered a special place (Wijaya 2014). In Christianity, a sacred building designed for worship is called a Gereja or church. The word “Gereja” originates from “igreja” which was brought to Indonesia by the Portuguese missionaries. It is the Portuguese spelling of the Latin word “ecclesia” which turns out to be derived from the Greek “ekklesia”. This means Gereja (church) or "ekklesia" is not just a collection of people but a very special congregation of people or "calling", therefore, "Gereja" can be defined as a people called by God (Mandey 2017).

Church buildings act as catalysts which bring users through religious experiences, influence their behavior in sacred spaces, and shape their emotional responses (Estika et al. 2017). It has also been emphasized that church architecture is full of meaning, religious spirit, and sacredness (Estika et al. 2017). However, the development of the shape and face are increasingly diverse, thereby, not radiating religious meaning and spirit (Abrianti and Salura 2019). This is believed to be due to the influence of Protestant ideology which is characterized by the emphasis on God's immanence, the teaching of the word, and utilitarian concepts reflected in familiar and minimalist expressions (Stroik 2018). This concept, therefore, led to the formulation of a hypothesis that church architecture has a dynamic influence on Christianity (Kilde 2008).

There are currently different designs of worship buildings in large categories which are not easily recognized as a church (Moroz 2016). Some of them are in medium-scale as studied by Salura and Clarissa (2018) which showed that several church designs are not different from other public buildings such as offices, museums, or even sculptures (Lake 2019). This has, therefore, become a problem as observed by Pope Benedict XVI and Cardinal Antonio C. Llovera that there are no more sacred expressions in Church architecture (Chrisylla 2016).

This is reflected in the designs of Protestant church buildings which look more profane and relatively simpler than the Catholic church which is usually rich in decorative architectural elements. Kilde (2017) also observed that Protestant churches emphasize the immaterial nature of God's transcendence and this means His presence cannot be represented in a material room.

This immaterial nature is reflected in "Seven Lamps of Architecture" published by Ruskin (1889) which states that "indeed the greatness of a building is not in the stones or gold that overlays it, but the greatness is in the age and the sense of the building, where the walls have witnessed the development of human life.” Moreover, another study in the same spirit but different perspective showed that "the message and meaning contained in church architecture cannot be separated from the architectural relationship with the three main functions of the church which include fellowship (koinonia), testimony (marturia), and service (diakonia)” (Sitompul 1993).

The issue of the spirit of place in Protestant church architecture has, therefore, becomes an interesting topic to be put forward and studied more deeply. There is, however, no previous study which specifically examines the dynamics in the two GPIBs in Depok with the focus observed to be on the area or region rather than the building. Moreover, those focused on buildings were discovered not to be on worship buildings.

This background information was used to formulate the research question “how is the dynamics of the spirit of place created from the architectural and interior physical order of both churches?”

The definition of dynamics in the Indonesian Big Dictionary (KBBI) is "movement" and is also interpreted as "something that is not fixed or fluctuating". Meanwhile, in the context of this study, the intended dynamics include contrast (difference) and equality (similarity).

This study is expected to have certain benefits and these include, first, providing additional knowledge and architectural academic information, especially regarding the spirit of place and the study of its formation from the GPIB church as the object. Second, providing general knowledge to serve as a guideline for the physical development of GPIB in the future. Third, serving as a basis for further study on the GPIB church considered to be open even beyond the spirit of place aspect. Fourth, serving as input, consideration, and data for academics and architecture students.
Method

This study was conducted qualitatively with a case study approach (Murdiyanto 2020). At the theoretical level, two thoughts on the spirit of place were elaborated and these include the order of physical elements which are tangible used as the identity of the place as well as the expressions observed to have provided the meaning to the observer which are the intangibles. Furthermore, the operational stage also involves two regulatory theories from Salura (2018b) which consist of properties (internal-external) and composition (position-arrangement) based on the idea of building architectural anatomy (Salura 2018a).

The findings from the operational thoughts were used as instruments and they consist of (1) scope of the site relative to the building, (2) scope of the building which includes a. horizontal elements such as floor and other related aspects, b. vertical elements such as wall and other related aspects, and c. cover such as the roof, ceiling, and others. These make it possible to determine the physical and spatial characters which serve as the identity of the two churches.

Field observations were conducted through "architectural enjoyment" to obtain data and have the "feel and experience" of the existing space & architecture (Saraswati, Prijotomo, and Setijanti 2010). This is required to complete the theoretical analysis.

The steps involved in enjoying the architecture include the direct observation, experience, and description of the existential expression based on the three concepts of Motion, Weight, and Substance (Thiss-Evensen 1987). Moreover, structural anatomy based on scoping theory and architectural anatomy (Salura 2018a) was used at the operational level to determine the physical and spatial characteristics of the two churches. The theoretical framework is, however, presented in the following diagram (figure 1):

![Theoretical framework](image)

Figure 1. Theoretical framework

It is important to note that each church was visited four times with a duration of +/- 3 hours per visit. This is in line with the findings of Arnheim and Barrie (1997) that experiencing architecture involves traveling through the spatial sequence using existing human senses, especially sight and movement.

Field observations are part of the triage data with partial analysis with the remaining aspects being the structured and unstructured interviews conducted with the administrators and informants that are members of both churches.

Analysis steps

The first was the theoretical study of the spirit of place to have more understanding and serve as the guidelines for the field observations.

The second was the field observations which involved the creation of visual records and data of all dimensions, materials, colors, textures, and others while trying to “feel and experience the space” directly.

The third was redrawing both objects of study. Another visit was made to ensure the drawings were in accordance with field conditions. This step was also used to conduct unstructured and structured interviews with church administrators and to “feel and experience the space” for the second time.

The fourth was analyzing the results of the regulatory theory which involves property and composition elaboration using anatomical theory followed by an analysis of the elaboration results of Schulz and Garnham.

The fifth was another field visit to conduct interviews with informants that are members of the churches used as the object of study and also
to have the direct “experience and feel” of the space again.

The sixth was another field visit to “experience and feel” the space again towards ensuring conformity with the conclusions made.

The steps made it possible to have the sensory and inner experience of the architectural space (Siregar 2008) and also allows each of the objects to express itself (Hanifati and Harjoko 2020).

The object of the study

The dynamics of the spirit of place are observable through at least two objects which are based on the criteria that they are quite contrasting and also have the same physical conditions. These are further explained as follows:

1). Contrast: An important criterion considered is the age of the building and this led to the selection of GPIB Immanuel due to the fact that it was the first church in the area which was built in 1714 (Ongirwalu and Jonathans 2014). This means it can be used to represent the 18th-century GPIB as indicated in figure 2a. Moreover, GPIB Pancaran Kasih was the second church in Depok which was built in 1966 (GPIB Pancaran Kasih Depok 2020). This church does not have a long history like the GPIB Immanuel but in contrast, was used to represent the 20th-century GPIB as indicated in figure 2b.

2) Equality: The two GPIBs are independent buildings which means they are not part of other buildings. They also have approximately the same congregational capacity of 300 - 400 people. Moreover, GPIB Immanuel is located at Jl. Pemuda No.70, Depok Village, Pancoranmas Sub-district while GPIB Pancaran Kasih is at Jl. Tole Iskandar No.27, Sukamaju Sub-district, Cilodong District as indicated in figure 3.

Result and discussion

GPIB Immanuel

In the scope of the site, the dominant building elements including the white walls with towers and asymmetrical roofs display a strong vertical impression. It was, however, difficult to capture the shape and expression of the building in their entirety due to its closeness to the road. This was observed from the 1.6 m distance of the building to the fence and 1.25 m from the fence to the motorized road. This makes it quite difficult to see and enjoy the church building as a whole as indicated in figure 4. Moreover, this close distance does not create a monumental scale required for an ideal worship building.

The accessibility to the building site does not provide a successful spatial sequence needed to show the existence of an important hierarchy required in a building designed for worship. This is due to the high proximity of the building to the road as indicated by the limit of the main door to the road which was measured to be 1.6m.

There are stairs at the entrance for the congregation to enter the church building. The
dimensions of these stairs only serve as a marker to show the entrance without any specific function indicating the structure is a worship building as observed in figure 5.

![Figure 5. Entrance stairs to the building](image)

In the scope of the building, there is a reception and transition room or foyer designed with stone ornaments and inscriptions of the church establishment right at the entrance. This transitional room has two "gates" placed right and left to enter the congregation's worship area as indicated in figure 6.

![Figure 6. Material arrangement in case study 1](image)

The floor plan of the building when entering the worship room is rectangular with a seating arrangement leading to the altar and pulpit. Moreover, ceramics with red color are used on the path leading to the altar and the altar itself as shown in figure 7.

![Figure 7. GPIB Immanuel ground floor plan (left) and different floor patterns (right)](image)

The element that stands out in the worship room is the white wall while cream-colored ceramic finishing is used on the walls of the altar to show its hierarchy and importance. The connection between the main and additional worship buildings is made through a white architrave. It is important to note that the dominant white color gives a bright impression as observed in figure 8.

![Figure 8. The dominance of white in the interior of GPIB Immanuel](image)

Glass window frames, doors with wooden materials and brown paint finishing, as well as stained glass windows are used in this church. The doors, windows, and barriers are pointed arch to serve as a repetition of the rhythm in the existing forms of the building. Moreover, the placement of doors and windows on the right and left sides allows moderate illumination of the worship space by sunlight. This makes the atmosphere of the church to be calm and unpretentious.

The ceiling uses gypsum with a white wall paint finish which is in line with the lope of the roof. The height of the ceiling is approximately 7 meters and this is considered not to be too high for a church. The space dimensions or proportions and the composition of lighting and natural air circulation are configured to make the church feel shady and comfortable as shown in figure 9.

The use of ornaments in this church is limited and functional in accordance with the Protestant ideology usually applied to GPIB churches.
The ornaments directly observed in the worship room include inscriptions, bells, wall lamps, chandeliers installed in the middle of the room, and the Cross symbol as indicated in Figure 10. The placement of the Cross symbol at the middle and on the altar, wall makes it the main ornament which is often associated with Christianity. It is a symbol of sacrifice, forgiveness, salvation for Christians.

GPIB Pancaran Kasih

In the scope of the site, the most dominant form is a three-stacked symmetrical triangular roof with a slope angle which is approximately 45° as well as the use of vertically striped precast decorative walls. This roof is reminiscent of the symbol of the Christian trinity which includes God the Father, Christ the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as presented in Figure 11.

Figure 9. The ceiling in GPIB Immanuel

Figure 10. Ornamen in GPIB Immanuel

Figure 11. GPIB Pancaran Kasih building showing the trinity symbol on the building's facade

It is difficult to see the church building in its entirety when inside the site due to its high roof but visible when on the other side of the road as indicated in Figure 12.

Figure 12. The position of the GPIB Pancaran Kasih building from the outside (top) and inside the site (bottom)

The cross symbol pinned on the facade of the church is not very clearly visible due to the fact that the material used is very faint. Therefore, the building does not appear like a church. It physically looks like a multipurpose building or hall when the existing attributes are not considered.

There is no spatial sequence in the access to the building site with equal levels observed between the roads and buildings and this indicates the absence of a hierarchy.

There is an area like a foyer which faces two large wooden doors designed with stained glass directly when passing through the iron door. Furthermore, some stairs are observed to be quite free with width +/- 1800cm on the right and left sides. Meanwhile, the door was discovered not to be leading to the main worship room but a multipurpose area when opened. The foyer area feels more like a connecting terrace for the worship and multipurpose spaces as indicated in
figure 13. This, therefore, confuses those entering the church for the first time to worship.

Figure 13. The first-floor foyer and the stairs to the prayer room

Those going to the main or prayer room needs to pass through the stairs on the right and left of the foyer area on the ground floor. These lead to another foyer on the second floor directly above the one on the ground floor as shown in figure 14.

Figure 14. Foyer on the second floor

In the scope of the building, the plan of the worship space is square or widened and this makes the hierarchical sacred level of the altar less robust when compared to the elongated rather than widened rectangular format. Moreover, the floor material on the second floor is a cream-colored marble with several size variants in line with the design pattern. There is also no difference between the floor covering material in the congregational seating area and the altar as indicated in figure 15. This means the hierarchy and orientation are not strengthened in this structure.

The wall in the worship room is made with bricks covered with brown wood panels and a vertical wood texture pattern directed to provide an impression of vertical motion. Moreover, the texture direction and diagonal wood pattern used for the altar become the accentuations to strengthen its presence.

Figure 15. Ground floor plan of GPIB Pancaran Kasih (left) and the floor materials (right)

Glass materials with wood panels are used to form a triangle on the south side wall in line with the shape of the roof. This provides additional sunlight from the glass windows to the worship area. The other natural lights entering the worship area are from the right and left sides and these make the worship space illuminated because of the slightly excessive light as indicated in figures 16 and 17.

Figure 16. The glass wall on the south side of GPIB Pancaran Kasih. When the light is off (left) and when it is on (right)

Figure 17. Window on GPIB Pancaran Kasih

The transition room (foyer) on the second floor has a relatively low ceiling height of 2.5 m and this makes the area “stressful” for users, especially during the field observations as indicated in figure 18.
There is, however, a very high ceiling with a sloping pattern in line with the roof slope when walking towards the worship or main area and the altar as presented in figure 19. The angle of inclination and height created is quite dramatic, especially due to the need to enter the foyer area before the worship area.

The entrance of the worship area under a doubled ceiling height when compared to the transition area makes the observers instantly feel a sense of "relaxation, freedom, and at the same time like a small creature" in the worship area. This area is also called an area of encounter with God Almighty by several people. Moreover, the altar which has wooden plank walls is relatively large for the scale of this church building and this adds to the dramatic impression of the sequence.

The slope and height of the roof followed by the ceiling makes the worship area a quite dramatic and strong space, thereby, making the observers feel "small" and unpretentious due to the scale of the space compared to their heights as indicated in figure 20.

The ornaments in the building include chandeliers, wooden ornaments in the shape of a triangle, and the cross symbol which is used as the background of the altar. It is, however, important to note that the position of the cross is higher than the triangular wooden ornament, thereby, making it the strongest ornament as observed in figure 21.

Conclusion

The anatomical study showed the physical and spatial characters used as the spirit of place for these two GPIB churches. The dynamics were, therefore, observed in the similarities and differences of the structures as follows:

1. Equality

The exterior aspect shows the difficulty in capturing the front view of both buildings in their entirety and the absence of spatial sequence. Therefore, the meaning usually associated with a worship building which tends to be sacred is
architecturally weak due to the difficulties associated with enjoying the shape and face of the buildings.

The interior aspect shows the buildings both have a transitional room or Narthex before entering the worship room (not all GPIBs have one) even though their physical qualities differ.

2. Difference
a. The context of the physical arrangement of the inner space shows the characters used as the identities for the two churches are quite different. This was observed in the formation of the floor plan as well as the elongated character of the worship space (Nave) in GPIB Immanuel is an elongated and square character in GPIB Pancaran Kasih which has a less strong hierarchy. Moreover, the ceiling height in Pancaran Kasih is higher and looks magnificent. The natural lighting in Immanuel looks shady while the one in Pancaran Kasih is too bright. Furthermore, Immanuel has a "director" floor pattern which reinforces the altar hierarchy while this is absent in Pancaran kasih. Several pointed arches on the inside of Immanuel serve as the indicator of its strong character while the walls covered with plywood and bright wood motifs to create a natural atmosphere serve the same purpose for Pancaran kasih.

b. The historical context shows very pronounced differences between the two GPIBs. These are observed from the rows of pointed arches as well as the existing ornaments and decorations in Immanuel which reinforce the impression of an old or historic building. Protestant churches are usually not rich in ornaments and decorations but the inscription from the 19th century in the transition room at Immanuel strengthens the history of the church. However, these impressions and meanings were not found in Pancaran kasih.

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Author(s) contribution

Riajeng Sinta Damayanti contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Purnama Salura contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.