

AicQoL2014Kota Kinabalu
AMER International Conference on Quality of Life
The Pacific Sutera Hotel, Sutera Harbour, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
4-5 January 2014
“*Quality of Life in the Built & Natural Environment*”

Communal Mosques: Design functionality towards the development of sustainability for community

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe on the design of prominent communal mosque found in Muslim and non-Muslim countries and understanding on how these mosques are developed to fulfill the needs of the Muslim community and create a sustainable environment by using comparative studies. Many of mosque design in the present modern Muslim is interpreted as an object-centered form rather than emphasizing on the quality of space and function. This research is based on qualitative researches, text interpretation and observation. This study offers new insights by formulating new design approach and guideline in designing future communal mosques.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Association of Malaysian Environment-Behavior Researchers, AMER (ABRA malaysia).

Keywords: Sustainable; mosque; semiotic; community

1. Introduction

Mosque is a place for worship and to conduct multipurpose activities for Muslim. To date, the research on communal mosque only focuses on the historical development, elemental design involving ornamentation and style, technological and technical aspects of mosque design (acoustics, lighting and ventilation), conservation and preservation as well as guidelines for communal mosque design referring to religious sources (Hadith and Al Quran). This study is significant because the role and function of mosque

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in the present Muslim country is widely misinterpreted (Rasdi 1998). This can be seen from the function of the modern mosque which did not portray the role of sustainability to facilitate the development of the surrounding community (Alice, 2008; M.Zafrullah M.T, 2009). This situation occurs due to many political and social changes which happen in the modern society. As a result, mosques become the symbol of nation that is significantly built in monumental scale isolated from the urban fabric. It comes to be a dominant form in the landscape (Alice 2008) and acts as reference to Islamic symbols. In other words, mosques are treated as object-centred building which much emphasize on aesthetic rather than functionality (M.Tajuddin R. 2010; Alice, 2008; Spahic O, 2010). The function of mosque as a place to strengthen the “kinship” of Muslims began to lessen and portray lack of sustainable design values that cannot accommodate various needs of society. Since the function of mosque varies depending on its location- like mosques built in a non-Muslim country is to symbolize Muslim existence whereas mosques in a Muslim country functions as a tool to represent the identity of ‘Islamic nation’ to the world, hence it is vital to produce a sustainable mosque design. In regard to this, environmentally conscious design techniques which present moderate use of materials, energy, and space development must be present in the modern mosque design for the benefit of the Muslim society (Nangkula, 2011). By applying this idea of sustainability, it will enhance efficiency usage of space in a religious building and minimize the negative environmental impact produced by the building design. As an outcome, a conducive and functional quality of mosque’s architectural space and form can be created for the use of Muslim community. To elaborate further, the following section will define and discuss on the important criteria of communal mosque that can be applied in producing sustainable communal mosque architecture.

2. Mosque as a communal muslim catalyst

The word community can refer to a small social unit of any size that shares common values also a group of interacting people living in a common location that utilize the same available facilities within the same locality. An addition they share same goals, skills and resources. To fulfill the community needs and desire, community spaces with multipurpose function are required to ensure a harmonious communal living environment (Peck, 1998). Wates, Neck (1987) considered these communal facilities as 'community architecture' and this term is commonly used to describe the architectural space for conducting communal activities. By the, this paper will focus on mosque as the main catalyst of Muslim community architecture. Mosque can be defined as 'sajada' which means “prostrate” where mosque is categorized as the place for sujud (Gazalba, 1975; Rasdi, 1998, 2000). Besides, mosque is referred as a place for worship regardless of any religions (Bosworth, D. & P.1991; M.Tajuddin R, 2008). In describing the mosque typology, Muslim scholars had categorized that there are four types of mosques (Alice, 2008). Communal mosque or djami' type is closest to the idea of ‘community mosque’. The idea of community mosque is actually evolved since the early era of Islamic development, and the 'Prophet mosque' is the most prominent example of communal mosque in terms of functionality and usage (Rozniza O, 2007). Not only serving as a holy-place for worship solely, but also meant for communal purposes with multiple functions (Spahic Omer, 2010). It becomes as a catalyst to the development of the surrounding area within the aspects of physical needs (Hamid, 2012). This was proven based on how the Prophet’s mosque became the dominant reason for the rapid development in Mecca and Medina in which through mosque as Islamic symbols transforms and attracts the surrounding community (Hamid, 2012). In designing communal mosque, there are past scholars who had outlined the criteria for sustainable mosque. The paper will discuss on both sustainable criteria’s involving sustainable form and space design in mosque as follows.

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