Reconstructing Socio-Cultural Identity: Malay Culture and Architecture in Pekanbaru, Indonesia 2015

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Abstract

As continuously performed, identity can be changed and reconstructed. In this way, identity is seen capable of supporting dynamic changes in real life through transformation of practices and articulation of social relations. This study examines how reconstruction of identity of place is affected by culture and cultural production, and as an unfixed, unfinished and varying process that affects both the place and society. Particularly concomitant with shifts of power, the reconstruction is found to deliver particular attempts to impose one group's values over other groups in cultural life and social transformation.

Despite forming only one-fifth of the population of the Indonesian city of Pekanbaru, Malay people have emerged as a group who hold important positions in both local government and urban society since 2000. This makes Pekanbaru city an intriguing research case. After more than a decade, implementation of the group's values is making visible changes in the city. This attempt can be seen in using Malay architecture motifs on buildings, and introducing 'new' traditions to establish the *madani* city, which develops physically, socially and in the spirit of Malayness.

By using a qualitative approach, this study is investigating the influence of Malay culture in Pekanbaru city. The field data can be grouped into three: physical evidence, people's interpretations, and archive data collected using a range of methods such as observation, semi-structured interviews, testimonies, and group discussions. The data are analysed and interpreted within an iterative process to expand understanding of processes of reconstructing identity. Thus, this study affirms a wide range of thought about connections between the culture and identify of place which is identified through architecture and socio-cultural change in urban society. In turn, this study offers particular insights into how identity on the margin becomes an exclusive set of collective identities.