PERPLEXING DISCOURSE OF INDONESIAN ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY: AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEMPORARY NUSANTARAN ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract
The term 'Nusantara', which literary means 'the archipelago', has been revisited and adopted in a newly emerging terminology of 'Nusantaran architecture'. This new term is widely accepted among Indonesian architects and scholars as an alternative direction of Indonesian architectural identity and is currently employed by the Indonesian government as a centrepiece of the national tourism strategies. The notion is being challenged as it is considered as vouge and problematic in many fundamental aspects, and the necessity to use this term as the county's identity representation is also being questioned since it may fall short into superficiality and end into commodification. This paper scrutinizes the perplexity behind contemporary Nusantaran architecture as Indonesia's widely celebrated exclamation. Focusing on scholarly discussion, this paper aims to investigate both sides of supporting and opposing arguments, to get a more comprehensive understanding of the discourse Indonesian architectural identity.

Introduction
The discussion of Indonesian contemporary architectural identity has emerged for one more time along with the Indonesian government's current national tourism agenda. Just like any other precedents in the history of Indonesian, architecture is once again employed as a tool to represent the regime's political choices, and this time, with the inclination towards traditionalism. Using a tagline of 'Nusantaran architecture' as a manifestation of what is deemed as the 'authentic' Indonesian architectural identity, the current massive propaganda has brought uproars in both professional and academic society in Indonesia. One main issue raised is that the terminology has an unsettling foundation in terms of definition and boundaries.

In this paper, I investigate the scholarly conception of what Nusantaran architecture is. The discussion is based on interviews I have done to ten Indonesian architecture scholars, who are professors and lecturers in four Indonesian architecture schools in four leading universities in Java, Indonesia. Analysing this dialectic opens up to a broader understanding of this discourse by comprising both supporting and opposing opinions. I open the discussion with a brief depiction of the contemporary architectural condition in Indonesia, including current national tourism agendas incorporating Nusantaran architecture as the main tagline of the strategies. I then explore the deeper conception of Nusantaran architecture, starting with discussing the term 'Nusantara' as the underlying idea on which the discussion of Nusantaran architecture is based. Lastly, I elaborate on the scholarly discussion of Nusantaran architecture before critically analyse how scholars position themselves in seeing this notion.

Nusantaran Architecture in Contemporary Indonesia
The discussion of Indonesian architectural identity is a severely complicated discourse for its connection with the much wider aspects of the context, including social, culture, history, economy, and also politics. The specific context of Indonesia, which consists of 13,487 islands and is a home for its 261.8 million people (in 2017) who possess more than 500 ethnic groups and 700 languages and dialects spoken (BPS, 2018, p. 85; Hargo, 2016; Hartawan, 2011, pp. 3-4), adds the intricacy when dealing with the issue of identity. The country's cultural diversity has been respected as a unique feature that can be a point of departure from which Indonesian architects delve the idea of translating the 'Indonesia-ness' into built form. Culture and tradition hence become an apparent option in

delineating the country's identity, and it is emphasised when Josef Prijotomo, an Indonesian influential architecture scholar, promoted the conception of Nusantaran architecture as an alternative direction in approaching Indonesian architectural identity.

In the recent development of Indonesia, there has been an urge among architects to refer back to local traditions in contextualizing architecture. It was popularised by Yori Antar, one of Indonesia's big-name architects, when in 2011 he initiated a movement to preserve the almost-extinct traditional architecture in Indonesia. He travelled to a very remote location of Wae Rebo in East Nusa Tenggara where he found Mbaru Niang, a group of traditional conical houses, with only four houses left standing after the other three had collapsed, and two of the remaining houses were in very bad condition. Yori Antar and his Rumah Asuh Foundation then gathered the funds and resources to help local people rebuild their custom houses (Figure 1). Antar also carried a mission to document the traditional construction methods from what was originally transferred through a spoken-language to become a universally accepted written-language. Upon completion, this preservation project was awarded The 2012 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation (UNESCO, 2013) and appeared in The Aga-Khan Award Shortlists Cycle 2011-2013 for *"initiating and facilitating a community-led revival of traditional techniques enabling all the original houses to be rebuilt"* (AKDN, n.d.). Further, this preservation project not only brought back the Mbaru Niang houses from the threat of extinction but also successfully attracted more domestic and foreign tourists to come to Wae Rebo, that in 2016, the place had 100 times more visitors than before the preservation project (Ibo, 2016). After their success with Wae Rebo, Antar and the team have preserved many other traditional houses in different places in Indonesia (including Waetabula, Wainyapu, Ratenggaro, Komodo Island, Nias, Sintang, Suroba, and Sumba), and most of these projects, if not all, gave similar notable accomplishments in terms of becoming tourist destinations which then effected on the local economy revival. In the case of Sumba, after the preservation project, Antar initiated an exhibition called 'The Soul of Sumba' in September 2017 and successfully sold *tenun* (Sumba's traditional fabric) and locally made jewelleries for the total of 1.7 billion Rupiah (USD 125,000) in just three days of exhibition (Y. Antar 2017, pers. comm., 5 October). This attainment set an example of what culture preservation could bring to improve the economic aspect of the society, and for this achievement, Yori Antar was then crowned as The Warrior of Nusantaran Architecture *(Pendekar Arsitektur Nusantara)* (Martin, 2016).

Figure 1. Mbaru Niang houses in Wae Rebo (From: Untung Saroha Sihombing, 2015, reprinted with permission)

Antar's success story in injecting tourism to the previously unexplored places attracted the Indonesian government to adopt a similar approach for their tourism strategies. With the aim to double the number of foreign visitors to 20 million by 2019 as a target set by the President (Pratama, 2017), The Ministry of Tourism invited Antar together with the Indonesian Agency for Creative Economy (BEKRAF), Indonesian Institute of Architects (IAI) and PT Propan Raya as a private sector to help to pursue the goal. Focusing on developing 10 new tourism destinations as the 'New Bali', they set up series of design competitions inviting Indonesian architects to contribute in designing various functions (i.e. cultural housings, tourism villages, homestay units, restaurants, airports, and souvenir centre) while emphasizing the influence of local architecture. With the name of 'Nusantaran Architecture Design Competitions' *(Sayembara Desain Arsitektur Nusantara)* and offering prizes of 1 billion Rupiahs (around

USD 74,000) in total, the competition received an astounding enthusiasm from Indonesian architects, proven in hundreds of proposal submitted on each cycle. Even in its fourth cycle in 2016, there were 728 design proposals submitted to the competition and made the competition recorded in Indonesia World Records Museum *(Museum Rekor Indonesia–MURI)* as a design competition with most participants (Odin, 2016; Ramadhiani, 2016). From one side, this euphoria can be seen as a depiction of Indonesian people's eagerness to involve in delving their cultural identity and contributing to an effort to preserve it; but on the other side, one can also argue that the massive reaction was mostly triggered by the enormous prize offered and the enticing possible future projects.

Figure 2. The winning designs of Nusantaran Architecture Design Competitions 2016 for Homestay category
(From: http://arsitekturnusantara.propanraya.com/pemenang/2016, accessed 26 June 2019)

In this tourism development scheme, it is agitating to see that the term Nusantaran architecture is merely used as a tourism branding that may easily fall into a gimmick. Nusantaran architecture is incorporated as the packaging of profit-oriented purposes, applied in a 'top-down' approach from the government to society. It is surprisingly contradictive to Antar's initial 'bottom-up' approach in many of his preservation projects. Moreover, the effort of preserving culture and tradition by proposing cultural tourism, to some extent, brings contra-productive results. Fatris MF (2016), an author and a journalist, expressed his concern that Antar's preservation project has left unprecedented changes to Wae Rebo's society. With the title of 'Wae Rebo's Threatened Originality' *(Orisinalitas Wae Rebo yang Terancam)*, Fatris opens his paragraph saying *"this sacred village is changing to be a recreational park and losing its magical touches"*. He narrates his experience visiting the village and describes many intriguing things he found during his visit: a uniform way of how local people greeted the tourists, as if they had been trained to standardize their hospitality; the requirement for tourists to do 'check-in' in the front office and pay some amount of money before entering the village; and how the elderly made their blessing using paper money to the tourists after they checked in, something that Fatris called 'pre-paid blessing'. The impact of tourism has also required the people of Wae Rebo to make some adjustments to their rituals. A ritual of Barong Wae, for instance, is a ritual of calling ancestors' spirits that was normally done in the evening, but after tourism entered the village, the ceremony has been altered to be done in the morning to adjust the need of the tourists. Local people are divided in terms of their respond towards these changes, they are either proud or anxious about it. Some were proud to have their village listed as an international tourism destination, but others concerned about too many alterations had been made to the rituals and traditions that made it lost its essence (Fatris, 2016). It is a depiction that any effort to intervene and create changes in society, even with an aim to preserve tradition back to its 'pristine' condition, will always bring further impacts, sometimes the unexpected one. It creates a chain of reactions that one small change can alter the bigger social, cultural, political and economic aspects of the society, and with all of the changes it creates, the claim of 'authenticity' promoted by this project is thus debatable.
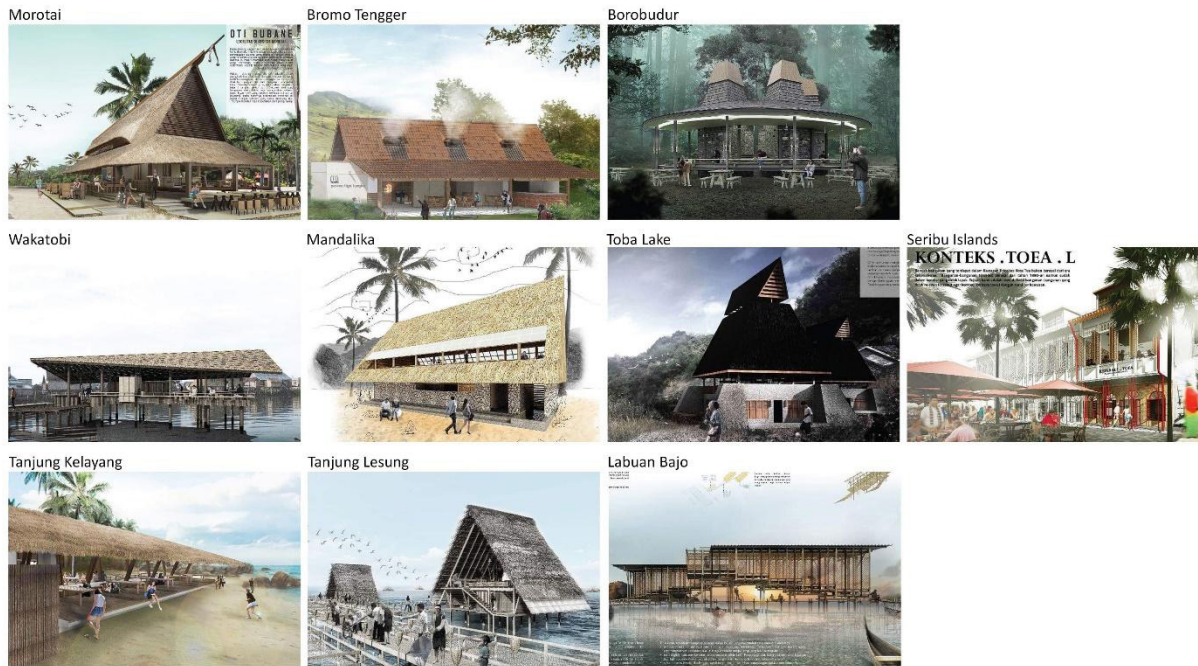
Figure 3. The winning designs of Nusantaran Architecture Design Competitions 2017 for Restaurant category
(From: https://www.facebook.com/Propan-Sayembara-Desain-Arsitektur-Nusantara-980060885356206/,
accessed 26 June 2019)

Multiplying the 'Wae Rebo effect' in 10 tourism destinations in Indonesia, as what the government intends to do, is therefore quite concerning. Comprehensive studies are needed to see what has been happening in Wae Rebo before deciding to replicate the method to other areas in Indonesia. The fact that the winning designs of the Nusantaran Architecture Design Competition (Figure 2 and Figure 3) will be used as template designs for the local people's homestays and other tourism facilities in the area illustrates the government's perspective to see culture-making as a replicable process. They treat culture in a very pragmatic way, even similar to an industrial object, and oversimplify the interweaving tissues between architecture and socio-cultural facets of the place (Purwaningrum & Ardhyanto, 2018, p. 4). Moreover, it is alarming that the winning designs were created by architects and were selected by juries who happened to be outsiders to the local communities. The claim to represent an authentic local culture is thus problematic as the designs are solely the architects' design exercise. With no collaboration with the local people, the projects barely have a connection with the local culture aside from its visual resemblance. In this process, culture is stripped down to its formal shape and, therefore, the discussion of identity remains in the area of traditional form, ornament, decoration, or style (James-Chakraborty, 2014). This resonates with Kenneth Frampton's concern that appoints:

> *"...the rich seams of our cultural heritage will soon be exhausted, burnt out, particularly when a cannibalized lexicon of eclectic historical reference, freely mixed with modernist fragments and formalist banalities, serves as the superficial gilt with which to market architecture, to situate it finally as one more item within an endless field of free-floating commodities and image"* (Frampton, 1987, p. 377).

Despite the necessity for the country to develop its tourism programs, architecture and culture commodification through a tagline of 'Nusantaran architecture' needs to be challenged. The purpose was not only to get local people involved in the tourism activities so that they will get direct financial benefits from it but also to help people grow their self-pride that their culture is valuable and worth preserving. Yet the top-down method brings some disadvantages that might outweigh the positive impact, therefore this approach needs comprehensive reconsideration before actual application.

The Problematic History of Nusantara

In this part of the paper, I make a little step back from the discussion of contemporary Nusantaran architecture and shift my focus on the brief history of 'Nusantara' to give a broader depiction of the terminology. The term 'Nusantara' is a well-known and well-accepted notion among Indonesian people in a way that the definition has been taken for granted due to over-familiarity. The word Nusantara originally came from Kawi language and has a meaning of 'the whole archipelago' (*nusya* – means island, and *antara* – means in between) (Bakhtiar, Waani, & Rengkung, 2014, p. 37; Prijotomo, 2017, p. 59; Purwaningrum, 2017). This terminology carries the idea of the 'great and powerful' Indonesia, as it is associated with the Majapahit Kingdom which has always been considered as the golden period of Indonesia. Under the reign of King Hayam Wuruk, the Prime Minister named Gajah Mada envisioned to conquer the whole archipelago under the glory of Majapahit. He took an oath that was famously

called Palapa Oath *(Sumpah Palapa)* in 1336, saying that he would not taste any flavourings in food before he had succeeded to unify Nusantara ("Nusantara," n.d.; "Palapa Oath," n.d.). Based on the book of *Pararaton* and *Negarakertagama* as two main sources of the history of this kingdom, it is stated that Majapahit had successfully conquered not only the archipelago of Indonesia, but also the area of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Philippine, Sulu Archipelago, southern Thailand, and East Timor (Arkandiptyo, 2016; "Majapahit," n.d.). Since then, the term Nusantara has always been referred to as the unity of the archipelago, although the meaning has been changing over time.
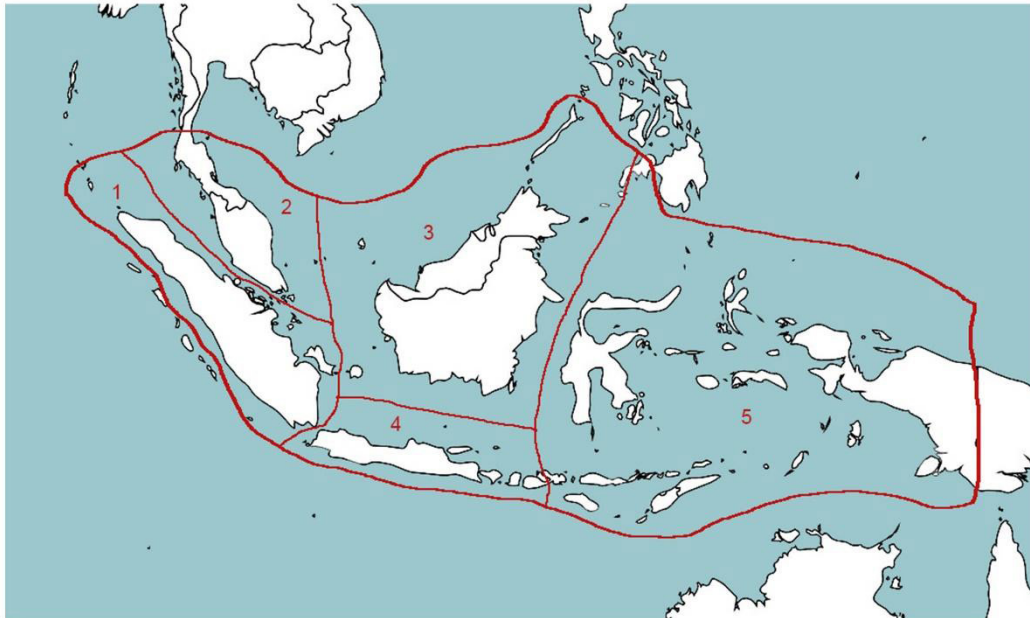
The Division of *Nagaras* (Kingdoms) in Nusantara during Majapahit Periods (13th-14th century)
based on the book of *Nagarakertagama* (1365)

1. Nagara Melayu   3. Nagara Tanjungnegara   5. Nagara Makassar
2. Nagara Hujung Medini   4. Nagara Jawa

Figure 4. The area of Majapahit Kingdom (Redrawn from: Din, M. A. O., & Mohamad, M., 2016, p. 103)

In the more recent history, the idea to refer back to Nusantara was brought in the colonial time by Ki Hajar Dewantara, an Indonesian activist, writer, politician, and pioneer of Indonesian education, when he proposed the phrase to be the name of the country. He championed the term Nusantara as it did not contain any words that inherit foreign names, like India, Indies, or Insulinde (van der Kroef, 1951, p. 170). Although Indonesia was at the end chosen to be the name of the country mostly for its property to carry the spirit of nationalism, the popularity of Nusantara kept growing significantly, especially that it inspired people to unite under one nation and against Dutch colonialism. The term Nusantara was then highlighted by Mohammad Yamin, an Indonesian poet, politician, historian, and nationalist who later became the Minister of Education, when he wrote a book entitled Gajah Mada: The Hero of United Nusantara *(Gadjah Mada: Pahlawan Persatuan Nusantara)* (Jusuf, 2013; Nurdiarsih, 2016; Wood, 2011, pp. 36-37). Yamin's book marked the raise of contemporary Nusantara since the term was redefined as the area inside the national border of Indonesia. In this time, the term Nusantara was no longer seen as a trans-national terminology but rather used as an alias on Indonesia. Yamin's conception of Nusantara was then embedded in the national curricula to be taught at school, and it became the official definition that has been hitherto adopted by the government. The first two presidents of Indonesia, Soekarno and Soeharto consecutively, adopted this term as the core spirit of Indonesia, although they saw it in opposite perspectives: Soekarno saw it as an ideological and political instrument, whose diversity image was employed to unify the people; while Soeharto promoted it with his cultural bias with the purpose of eradicating people's political rights and eliminating threat of mass movements (Kusno, 2000, pp. 71-74; 2013, pp. 52-55).

It becomes a problem when Indonesian people are indoctrinated with the supreme idea of Nusantara and tend to idolize it in a way Joseph Campbell (2004) illustrates about hero: people praising their hero in a point of putting him or her as if *"he or she can do no wrong"* (G. Tjahjono 2017, pers. comm., 24 August). For decades, the history of Nusantara has been immensely glorified as people saw it with the eyes of worshippers, and this standpoint hindered them from questioning it further. In fact, recent studies reveal that referring to the triumphant story of Majapahit might be historically flawed, since some scholars believe that Majapahit's authority was not as vast as what it was claimed. C.C. Berg, a Dutch scholar, questions the validity of *Negarakertagama* book as the main source of information about Nusantara. He argues that the vast sovereignty of Majapahit is only a myth, a moral fable, an aspiration, a goal that was never achieved, or even better seen as a magical exercise to exaggerate the king's supremacy (Bosch, 1956, pp. 18-20; Sudrajat, 2008, pp. 41-42; Wood, 2011, p. 36). This terminology is also

considered as very subjective, since it carried a strong bias of the king's ambition (G. Tjahjono 2017, pers. comm., 24 August), especially that there is no concrete evidence to prove its glorious claim. With these disputes in mind, one can always question the legitimacy of putting Nusantara as the main reference in Indonesian contemporary architecture, since referring to a myth as a manifestation of the country's architectural identity is very much problematic. Furthermore, even if the history was true that Majapahit did conquer the whole archipelago including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippine, and Thailand, then it made Majapahit a colonist (Putra, 2017; Rudiannoor, 2013). Thus craving contemporary identity from the era of the colonist is undesirable, remembering the fact that Indonesia itself had suffered under the Dutch's colonialization for more than 350 years.

Scholarly Discussion of Nusantaran Architecture

The rapid development of Nusantaran architecture in recent years has brought relentless debates among Indonesian scholars. The term 'Nusantaran architecture' was initiated in the 1980s by Josef Prijotomo, a professor in Institut Teknologi Surabaya (ITS) in East Java, when he offered a conception that could be an alternative direction in the search for Indonesian architectural identity. Prijotomo associates Nusantaran architecture with an era in the history of Indonesian that was before colonialism period, or before 1799, or in the other word it was the period of local kingdoms (J. Prijotomo 2017, pers. comm., 19 September). In explaining it further, Prijotomo mentions:

> "Both terms 'Nusantara architecture' and 'traditional architecture' refer to the same object: the architectural characteristics of different ethnicities in Indonesia. The difference between these two terms refers to the two different ways of constructing knowledge for the same object. The knowledge of traditional architecture is built from the discipline of anthropology, whereas Nusantara architecture refers to a knowledge produced by the discipline of architecture" (Prijotomo, 2017, p. 67).

From this statement, it is clear that Prijotomo associates the term Nusantaran architecture with traditional architecture, and his claim to see the term solely from the discipline of architecture means he aims to see it from a practical point of view. Therefore he comes with a list of characteristics that provides a tangible 'guideline' for architects to design Nusantaran architecture while arguing that architecture is a physical entity thus any representation should be physically visible on the appearance aside from its embedded values (J. Prijotomo 2017, pers. comm., 19 September). Prijotomo also sees Indonesian culture and tradition as the root of the country's identity for its capability to survive from generation to generation, something that van der Kroef mentioned as something that "possesses a rich and varied cultural development, in which the basic ingredients of indigenous life remained unaltered despite the overwhelming pressure of successive waves of Hindu, Mohammedan, and Western civilization" (van der Kroef, 1951, pp. 170-171). Moreover, Prijotomo makes an interesting claim that Indonesian traditional architecture is equal to Western classical architecture, and the only difference between the two is the way it was transferred: Indonesian traditional architecture was passed through spoken language, while Western classical architecture was transferred through written language (Kusno, 2000, p. 79; Prijotomo, 2008, pp. 1-3). He posits that both architectures possess distinctive characteristics that can be adapted to the present-day design, and for this, he asserts that the adaptation should be manifested in both tangible and intangible forms. He appoints an example that one cannot be assured of whether a building adopts the conception of Western classical architecture unless it shows any physical attributes that particularly speak classics, such as Doric or Ionic columns. By saying this, he validates the usage of traditional vocabularies in modern architecture in the form of decoration and ornament (Bakhtiar et al., 2014, p. 42), and this perspective distinguished him from the majority of the architects and scholars who commonly opposed a visual and physical representation in architecture.

This idea of Nusantaran architecture seems to be appealing for scholars in East Java, the place where the Majapahit Kingdom was once located. Scholars from Universitas Brawijaya (UB) in Malang, for instance, have very much welcomed the conception and have embedded it to the architecture school curricula, especially since one of its senior lecturer, the late Galih Widjil Pangarsa, had actively engaged to this discourse. According to Agung Murti Nugroho, who were the Head of Department when I conducted the interview, Nusantaran Architecture was chosen for its capacity to represent the country's identity as the terminology delineates the cultural space of the archipelago, compared to the term Indonesia that cannot escape from political discussion (A.M. Nugroho 2017, pers. comm., 6 September). This framing of Nusantaran architecture around the cultural aspect does generate a connection to traditional houses as a point of departure in architectural exercises. In this part, Antariksa, a professor in the same school, emphasizes that the aim of Nusantaran architecture is "preserving the past while following the future development" (Antariksa 2017, pers. comm., 8 September), thus more innovative design vocabularies are needed to bridge the traditional elements to the modern context, so that it would not be trapped in repetitive visual attributes. Yet, he admits that it is difficult to escape the Western influence since almost everything that encircles contemporary architecture, including the building materials and the construction methods, are originally developed in the West and carry Western values, measurements, and requirements. Therefore he suggests not to problematize any outcome of Nusantaran architecture design, as there is no single variable to assess it. Regardless of his subtle inclination to contrasting the East and the West, at least compared to Prijotomo's strong dichotomy of the two, Antariksa's assertion here portrays his looser standpoint in accepting any inevitable fusion between the two in the adaptation of Nusantaran architecture. This stance is quite similar to the perspective offered by Abraham Mohammad Ridjal, a lecturer from the same school. Aside from agreeing on the cultural focus of the term, Ridjal

emphasizes two distinguished attributes, which are 'empathy' and 'humanity' (A.M. Ridjal 2017, pers. comm., 7 September). By stating this, he tries to connect the terminology to social consideration and to keep it away for the trap of ocular-centrism. He highlights the importance of Nusantaran architecture to accommodate local people's characteristics and everyday living habits, regardless of any forms and shapes adopted in the design translation, and therefore the identity of the users becomes an important aspect to consider rather than exercising the formal resemblance. This argument is in contrast to Prijotomo's preference for translating Nusantaran architecture in both value and appearance. This dialectic portrays that the term Nusantaran architecture is understood quite differently among the supporters, and that the term has an unsettled definition which has been further problematized especially by the opposers of the term.

Outside East Java as the place where both the terms Nusantara and Nusantaran architecture were originated, Indonesian architecture scholars tend to be very critical towards the development of this discourse. Especially for Nusantaran architecture terminology, the vague definition is what is mainly questioned and becomes a point to problematize in many scholarly discussions. Yet interestingly, the supporters are unwilling to address this question and avoid to make further theoretical exploration of this problematic term, and instead, they prefer to jump to the discussion of a pragmatic and practical application of this term to the everyday architecture. This is evidence that the supporters of Nusantaran architecture have been unsuccessful to ground this acclaimed terminology to a more settle theoretical foundation. The definition tends to be discussed very loosely, even in some of the papers, one refers to the definition that was taught in the primary school (Bakhtiar et al., 2014, p. 43), and other uses the term interchangeably with other terminologies such as Indonesian archipelago, Southeast Asia, *Bumi Melayu* (Malayan world), *Bumi Pertiwi* (motherland of Indonesia), and Austronesia (Hidayatun & Wonoseputro, 2005, pp. 309-310). This is a sign that the definition of Nusantaran architecture has been taken for granted since the supporters rely on people's overfamiliarity with the term. The definition of Majapahit's Nusantara, Mohammad Yamin's Nusantara, and contemporary Nusantara have been mixed up altogether, while I argue that each of them, either the pre-colonial, the post-colonial, and the contemporary Nusantara, are actually three different entities; refer to different histories; were constructed for different purposes; and focus on different things. Therefore, it needs further clarification of which definition of 'Nusantara' that the term 'Nusantaran architecture' is based on, and it emphasises the needs for the supporters to add more specificity when discussing it. If it turns out that the term has nothing to do with the established pre-colonial or post-colonial Nusantara, thus exploring the theoretical definition is critical to firmly position this new term in the wider discussion of Indonesian architectural identity.

More question is proposed by Iwan Sudradjat, a professor in Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) in West Java. He critically challenged the conception of Nusantaran architecture and demanded further elaboration of whether this articulation is associated with geographic location, or range of culture, or series of history, or identity concept, or ideological belief. He also expressed his puzzlement of why the term Nusantara was chosen in the first place. He questions how the phrase of Nusantara, which came from the Hindu-Buddhist period long before Indonesia even existed in 1945, is now employed as a representation of Indonesia's contemporary identity (I. Sudradjat 2017, pers. comm., 29 September). This is an important question that problematizes the 'forced' connection between Nusantara and Indonesia, since the two are established in two different historical and temporal contexts, thus using one to represent the other is very much debatable. Between these two terms, Gunawan Tjahjono, a professor from Universitas Indonesia (UI) in Jakarta, suggests that regardless the hazy definitions of both terms, yet he argues that the term Indonesian architecture creates a deeper connection to the Indonesian people as a citizen since it provides a clearer historical and political background compared to the articulation of Nusantaran architecture. In representing Indonesia identity, Tjahjono prefers to seek for an idea that unites the archipelago and possesses deeper value to the society, rather than exercising on forms and ornaments for architecture. He appoints that there are many shared values that one can find in Indonesian society that can be the drive in making architecture, but no matter of what label or form employed, he emphasizes that any architecture should answer two main questions: 'for what' and 'for who' (G. Tjahjono 2017, pers. comm., 24 August). Both Sudradjat and Tjahjono have a similar predilection to see identity beyond its tangible aspect and focus more on the contemporary values that might change over time. This is a contrast standpoint to Prijotomo as the founding father and other supporters of Nusantaran architecture who mostly refer to tradition for its capability to remain stable after being passed for generations.

Pros and cons arguments above evoked an interesting dialectic, adding to a complication of the on-going contestation of Indonesian architectural identity. Scholars from both sides have a very strong opinion on the discourse of Nusantaran architecture, either to support or oppose to the term. From the interviews I did to these scholars, I got a sense that people from both sides have established very strong opinions about this discourse, in a way that they are reluctant to accept the possible veracity from the opposite party. My assertion here is supported by Indah Widiastuti, a scholar from Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) in West Java (2017, pers. comm., 6 October), and Ikaputra, a scholar from Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Yogyakarta (2017, pers.comm., 10 October). In their perspective, the current condition of Indonesian architectural scholarship is a little 'unhealthy' since it is more like an opinion war dominated by a few influential people instead of a dialectic. Widiastuti observes this condition as a result of a very little attempt to map different school of thoughts in Indonesian architectural scholarship, and very little eagerness to understand other parties' standpoints. I argue that these heated debates

over this discourse depict that the conception of Nusantaran architecture does have some inadequacies, especially in theoretical and philosophical aspects. Yet regardless, it does not change the fact that this terminology has been massively developed in contemporary Indonesian society and has become part of Indonesian architectural history. The question now is what to do from here? Do we need a new definition of the term to inclusively fit with contemporary reality in the current Indonesian architectural identity development? Or do we need to refer back to the long-established definition and redirect the contemporary development so that the term would have a stronger theoretical foundation? Regardless of the direction chosen, settling down this terminology, if it is even possible, still requires a long process and numerous researches.

I myself see some issues in the argument that supports the conception of Nusantaran architecture. Firstly, the intention to de-politicize architecture by adopting the phrase 'Nusantaran' instead of 'Indonesian' architecture is problematic, since *"architecture was inherently political"* (James-Chakraborty, 2014, p. 2). It is important to note that architecture is *"culture politics"* (Frampton, 1987, p. 380) and people as part of the society *"continue in subjection to political practice - that is, to state power"* (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 8). Expecting to detach the political aspect, if it is even possible, just by changing the terminology is too simplistic and disregards the tight entanglement between architecture and power. If we see further back through history, we will see that the colossal monuments, like the Pyramids and Borobudur, were tools to showcase the Kings' extensive power. Architecture became a media and status indicator, to make statements and to exhibit the Kings' supremacy that he controlled enormous human and natural resources (Glenn, 2003, p. 13). In Indonesian post-independence history, the first President, Sukarno, utilized the language of modern architecture to speak his political ego: to show the world what a new nation could build (Figure 5). The second President, Suharto, employed the power of traditional architecture to win sympathy in a way to detach politic from the people (Kusno, 2000, 2013). Moreover, if we focus particularly on the history of pre-colonial Nusantara, then we cannot disregard that Nusantara itself was a political terminology, introduced by someone who entitled a political position, through a political oath, and was used to illustrate the conquered area for a political reason. And it is not different from the post-independence Nusantara that it was utilized as jargon to inspire people to unify under one new nation. Sukarno used this term as an elucidation of great Indonesia and to further justify his political manoeuvre to confront Malaysia (Jusuf, 2013). And in today's Indonesia, as I have portrayed earlier in this paper, the articulation of Nusantara has inspired the emergence of the term of Nusantaran architecture that is then utilized by the Indonesian government to achieve their political agenda in tourism.

Figure 5. The National Monument in Jakarta, one of Sukarno's nation-building project (From: Ghozian Hakeem, 2019, reprinted with permission)

Furthermore, I suspect that the emergence of this Nusantaran architecture has a strong political drive behind the claim of its cultural focus. In Indonesia academic constellation, there has been a concealed competition between universities in the West and the East of Java. Two universities in the West side of Java, Universitas Indonesia (UI) and Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) have been under the spotlight for a bit too long as two of the most prestigious state universities in Indonesia. Being close to the capital city of Indonesia, UI and ITB have been exposed to the rapid development of architecture, and it is reflected in the brisk contemporary discourse that dominates the direction of the schools. Meanwhile, in the East of Java, the emergence of Nusantaran architecture discourse creates a platform on which the East Java-based universities, Institut Teknologi Surabaya (ITS) and Universitas Brawijaya (UB), can steal the national attention. This drift shifts public recognition from the West to the East of Java, especially after the massive

national adoption of this terminology that corroborates the direction taken by ITS and UB. It is hence no surprise that, from my interview, I see a strong acceptance of the conception of Nusantaran architecture from scholars from East Java, while it gets intense opposition from scholars from Western Java. This interestingly helps to map the politics in Indonesian education, that not only Indonesia has suffered from Java-centrism in the national discussion, but there is also a strong political contestation inside Java Island, and the term Nusantaran architecture somewhat has become a political instrument for this dispute. This elucidates the intertwined connection between Nusantaran architecture and politics that not only this term has a political inclination embedded in the definition, but also this term has been utilized for political purposes and contestations, and therefore depoliticize the term would be almost impossible to do.

Aside from questioning the attempt to depoliticize architecture in Nusantaran architecture discourse, I also need to challenge the intention to intertwist this term with culture and tradition altogether. It is clear that Prijotomo as the initiator identifies this term as architecture in the period of local kingdoms and associates it with traditional architecture. This is a pragmatic, if not essentialist, perspective that develops because of his confined view in seeing this discourse solely from the perspective of architecture while discounting other aspects like anthropology, history, social science, or political science (I. Widiastuti 2017, pers. comm., 6 October). In this case, I criticize Prijotomo's paradigm of putting this specific time frame as 'the most legitimate period', if not 'the only period', where Indonesian people can crave their identity from. It is worth noting that the idea of Nusantaran architecture came into being in the first place to provide a counter-power to oppose the hegemony of Western architecture which has long been treated as *"the only truth and the only knowledge available"* (Prijotomo, 2017, p. 79). It is thus agitating that after the development of this discourse, the supporters of Nusantaran architecture have started to create a similar view to what they tried to challenge in the first place. Nusantaran architecture with its affiliation to traditional architecture has been promoted as the only valid reference that offers 'genuine' and 'authentic' ideas for architectural identity. Referring to Nusantaran architecture as *"architecture that was developed by enormous numbers of people from different tribes and races in Indonesia"* (Bakhtiar et al., 2014, p. 32), it is then contradictory that the newer Indonesian architectural history tends to be forsaken. The modern part of Indonesia, like the corridor of Jakarta's Sudirman and Thamrin Street which had been built for decades by Indonesia's first and second presidents, or the 'Golden Triangle' *(Segitiga Emas)* area in which many important buildings are located (Figure 6), has not been discussed as if it is not part of Nusantaran architecture. And regarding this case, many questions can be raised: what exactly is Nusantaran architecture? Is it possible to appoint that one building is more 'Nusantaran' than others? Are there any criteria to assess it all? Why does the term exclusively and persistently refer to traditionalism while most Indonesian contemporary people are now living a modern life? Then, where is the position of Indonesia's 'modern' architecture in this discourse? Furthermore, on seeing this evidence, there is a strong inclination to focus merely on the 'glorious past' of Indonesia and omit other series of history, something that appears to be 'cherry-picking' history to find one that is beneficial to be developed without having a solid justifiable reason. In this case, Sudradjat expresses his concern that Indonesian people are too gravitated to a particular history that can evoke self-pride and the one that makes them feel *"related to their glorious past"* (Sudrajat, 2008, p. 41).

Figure 6. Mega Kuningan as part of Jakarta's Golden Triangle area (From: Herry Tjiang, 2019, reprinted with permission)

The stance to contrast traditional and modern architecture is also problematic as it may easily fall into dichotomous thinking. It becomes paradoxical that the intention to garner the essence of Indonesian architectural identity, to distinguish the country from the West, is employing a Western colonial way of thinking. This binary outlook contrasts the 'traditional' and the 'modern'; 'marginalised' and 'centralised'; 'thesis' and 'anti-thesis'; the 'East' and the 'West' (Kusno, 2000, pp. 26-31; Said, 1979, p. 7; Tjahjono, 2017, p. 51). The Dutch as the colonizer put out the term East to represent Indonesian native coloured people who were considered marginalized, illiterate, uncivilized, ignorant, and backward, while the West was the exact opposite. This stereotypical thinking, by segregating the modern as 'theirs in the West' and the traditional as 'ours in the East', according to the famous political scientist Benedict Anderson, is a facile serialisation, which means that things are treated as a replicable plural that could be categorized in certain grids, saying *"it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there"* (Anderson, 2006, p. 184). This thinking mode applies to the way Nusantaran architecture is framed which leads to the trap of 'exoticizing' architecture. Moreover, a recent study reveals the complexity to put classification on contemporary culture, as Aninda Moezier finds out that contemporary Minangkabau people have included their 'modern house' of *rumah ketek* as part of their customary house, together with *rumah gadang* (Figure 7) which has been previously perceived as the 'traditional' (Moezier, 2017). It depicts how modern and traditional architecture have mingled together in a real-life culture, thus making a strict separation is extremely difficult, if not impossible, especially when the classification is not necessarily reliable (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). Romantic and nostalgic attachment to the stylistic traditional architecture somehow conceals a *"very ugly realities of colonialism and its legacy"* (James-Chakraborty, 2014, p. 2), and is a sign that Indonesia has not fully escaped from the colonial way of thinking. Therefore I emphasize that there should be a fundamental paradigm shift in dealing with Indonesian architectural identity discourse: from 'either-or' to 'both-and' thinking; employing critical emancipatory thinking as a liberation from the established rigid and compartmentalize framework; and mindfully map various kinds of architecture in Indonesia so one would not 'pigeon-hole' architecture based on unclear categorizations.

A recent study unveils interesting facts that contemporary Indonesian people still needed symbolism in architecture to allow them to relate to their culture and tradition. Feni Kurniati studies The Grand Mosque of West Sumatra and finds out that the mosque has been widely accepted by the majority of the local people, mostly for its appealing design which portrays an outline of their traditional architecture (Kurniati, 2016, pp. 68-75; Purwaningrum, 2017, p. 6). Anderson, in his famous book Imagined Community, points out an interesting analysis about 'logoisation' which might relate to Indonesian people's inclination to see traditional architecture in a symbolic manner. Logoisation started as a reductive way used by the imperialists to represent their sovereignty, by giving certain colour on the map on the area they colonized. This coloured area was then detached from the actual map and was treated as a pure sign, a logo, an emblem that was ready to be reproduced on their various identity symbol, such as stamps, posters, official seals, letterhead, book cover, or even tablecloth (Anderson, 2006, pp. 175-176). This logoisation was then slowly adopted in their colonized countries. In Indonesia, it was firstly shown in the drawing of Borobudur, that instead of adopting naturalist style which was common in that time, Borobudur was drawn as a silhouette without any trace of sculptures: it was emptied, reduced as an outline and a logo (Anderson, 2006, pp. 183-184). This logoisation process is similar to how contemporary Indonesian architects gaining significance to 'contextualised' their design to the local culture of the place in which it is located. Adopting silhouette in design can be an effective approach in creating an attachment with the local people, and it is proven in some of the contemporary architecture works in Indonesia. Phinisi Tower in Makassar (Figure 8), for some scholars, is considered a successful example of Nusantaran architecture in translating a traditional artefact into design inspiration. This hyperbolic-shaped tower adopts the silhouette of the sail of Phinisi traditional sailboat and it appears to be 'successful' in capturing people's acceptance over the building, aside from any criticism that follows.

'Logoisation' becomes a popular method employed by many contemporary Indonesia architects in approaching Nusantaran architecture, as they treat traditional architecture largely as a symbol to anchor a building to its local context. Symbolism has always been a part of Indonesian culture and a part of the local value invested in the local houses. Yet depicting it as a logo and silhouette might lead to a trap of kitsch, where visual representation became the most important consideration overlooking other interweaving aspects in the context. Adopting traditional architecture as a design precedent might lead to ocular-centrism that puts forward the presence of traditional form, ornament, decoration, or style. The problem appears if one adopts the traditional forms and shapes as it is, without putting any curiosity and critical thinking on it. In that case, culture and tradition are treated as a frozen language, something given instead of something composed (Kusno, 2017, p. 25; Tjahjono, 2017, p. 52). With this kind of translation, an architecture may lose its value and any visual forms and decorations incorporated become meaningless since it *"gives no contributions in the continuity of people's self-belonging to their tradition"* (Widiastuti, 2014, p. 12). It is important to note that the forms and ornaments that present in traditional architecture have nothing to do with an aesthetic consideration; it was inherited by the local people from their forefathers without any concern of whether it was beautiful or ugly when accepting it (Frampton, 1987, p. 378). Therefore, the attempt to preserve Indonesian culture and tradition through architecture should shift its focus away from the burden of aesthetic and visual beautification, and rather focus on delving deeper into strengthening the value in society.

Figure 8. Phinisi Tower in Makassar, South Sulawesi used the silhouette of Phinisi Sailboat to 'contextualise' the modern building (From: Yastrib Taufiq, 2017, reprinted with permission)

Conclusion

The question of 'what is Nusantaran architecture' still requires comprehensive answers, especially to explain why choosing traditional architecture as the main design vocabularies while at the same time disregarding more recent histories that also happened in Indonesia. Scholars have raised valid and fundamental questions that need to be addressed to strengthen the theoretical foundation of this Nusantaran architecture. The perspective in seeing this conception should be liberated from any rigid mold and should be critically challenged to gain improvement in the discourse. The choice to go exclusively with traditional architecture as a point of departure for Indonesian architectural identity needs to be questioned since culture and identity are always moving and changing. Over-simplifying people's identity by putting traditional face as the only representation of local culture is seen as an imposition rather than a stimulation for people to write their own culture. Furthermore, exerting the conception of Nusantaran architecture in the society should be done very carefully, and should not be executed solely for the sake of short-term targets. Quantitative counting should be followed by qualitative analysis in studying people's conditions and behaviours before and after the implementation since many facets in people's life cannot be measured by numbers. The recent Nusantaran Architecture Design Competition is very engaging in terms of promoting design and enhancing the architectural atmosphere in Indonesia, but making the winning designs as templates for local architecture is very concerning. Further study is needed to either refine the current programs or to formulate an alternative solution to achieve the country's economic and tourism targets without heavily disrupting society's social and cultural fabrics.

Despite the idea of putting Nusantaran architecture as a manifestation of Indonesian architectural identity is considered captivating since it provides something 'different' compared to the Western culture, yet I argue that it will be very difficult for this conception to go beyond architecture kitsch and commodification. A comprehensive explanation is needed to explain when a design is labelled as contemporary Nusantaran architecture; how it is considered representing local culture; and how it touches other intertwined aspects in society beyond the artistic façade. Therefore I strongly suggest that social, cultural, historical and political factors of the society should be proportionally considered in any decision making so that this new Nusantaran architecture will not be an 'alien' among Indonesia's real-life cultures and traditions.

Acknowledgment

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