



The Landscape of Exhibited Contemporary Architecture in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's contemporary architecture has developed in response to globalisation, urbanisation, and modernisation, striking a balance between regional customs and global tendencies. This research analyses projects displayed at the recent international Indonesia architecture exhibition that was held in Kuala Lumpur, November 2024, in order to investigate the state of contemporary architecture in Indonesia. Key architectural trends in residential, office, hospitality, commercial, government, and public areas are highlighted by the research, which groups these projects according to their function and geographic distribution. The results show that private-sector demands drive contemporary architectural practices, with Java and Bali & Nusa Tenggara having the highest concentration of projects, while Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Papua & Maluku continue to be under-represented. This research provides a useful foundation for further research into the innovations, problems, and trends influencing Indonesia's built environment. To gain a more thorough grasp of how Indonesian contemporary architecture, however, larger datasets and primary sources should be applied.

Keyword: Architectural trends, Contemporary architecture, Indonesia, Regional disparities

ABSTRAK

Arsitektur kontemporer Indonesia telah berkembang sebagai respons terhadap globalisasi, urbanisasi, dan modernisasi, dengan berusaha menyeimbangkan antara tradisi regional dan kecenderungan global. Penelitian ini menganalisis proyek-proyek yang dipamerkan pada pameran arsitektur internasional Indonesia yang baru-baru ini diselenggarakan di Kuala Lumpur, November 2024, untuk menyelidiki keadaan arsitektur kontemporer di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menyoroti tren arsitektur utama di bidang hunian, perkantoran, perhotelan, komersial, pemerintahan, dan ruang publik, dengan mengelompokkan proyek-proyek tersebut berdasarkan fungsi dan distribusi geografisnya. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa praktik arsitektur kontemporer sebagian besar didorong oleh permintaan sektor swasta, dengan konsentrasi proyek tertinggi berada di Jawa serta Bali & Nusa Tenggara, sementara Sumatera, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, serta Papua & Maluku masih kurang terwakili. Penelitian ini memberikan dasar yang berguna untuk penelitian lanjutan mengenai inovasi, tantangan, dan tren yang mempengaruhi lingkungan binaan di Indonesia. Namun, untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai arsitektur kontemporer Indonesia, diperlukan penggunaan kumpulan data yang lebih besar dan sumber primer.

Kata Kunci: Arsitektur kontemporer, Indonesia, Tren arsitektural, Kesenjangan regional



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1. Introduction

Contemporary architecture originated in the late 20th century, specifically throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as a reaction to modernist and postmodernist tendencies (Friedman, 2021). In contrast to modern architecture, which prioritised stringent minimalism and functionalism, contemporary architecture incorporates fluidity, asymmetry, and the use of novel materials. It perpetually adapts to technological

progress, integrating sustainability via energy-efficient technologies, green roofs, and recycled materials. Common features include open, flexible areas that merge indoor and outdoor environments, the utilisation of glass façade, modern building methods like as 3D printing, and the integration of smart technologies (Soriano & Palacios Díaz, 2023). This dynamic methodology embodies contemporary developments, rendering structures more versatile, participatory, and ecologically sustainable (Holzer, 2023).

Contemporary architecture also highlights cultural and regional influences, merging traditional features with contemporary forms to produce projects that are contextually pertinent and innovative (Al-Hammadi & Grchev, 2023; Beydoun et al., 2021). Contemporary architecture differs between countries because of variations in cultural legacy, climate, urban planning restrictions, and technical progress (Mari et al., 2023; Martins et al., 2022). The fundamental ideas of innovation, sustainability, and fluid design are consistent, although their implementation varies according to regional factors. In Japan, contemporary architecture frequently integrates minimalist aesthetics, natural materials such as wood, and designs that are resistant to earthquakes due to prevalent seismic activity. Conversely, Scandinavian nations prioritise sustainable construction, highlighting passive house principles, energy efficiency, and the utilisation of locally available materials. Contemporary architecture in the Middle East integrates modern technology with traditional features, including complex geometric designs and adaptive shade systems to mitigate excessive heat. In the United States, modern architecture is characterised by high-tech smart buildings, mixed-use urban projects, and innovative designs that challenge structural limits. These regional variances illustrate that modern architecture is not a fixed style but a versatile and adaptive methodology that addresses local requirements and identities.

2. Contemporary Architecture in Indonesia

Contemporary architecture in Indonesia started one or two decades later than the world. Sopandi (2017) explained that new challenges that cannot be answered through modern architecture emerged in the late 20th century, especially when the New Order administration fell in 1998. Rapid urbanisation and globalisation spurred high-rise and commercial developments that favoured international styles over indigenous ones. This generated concerns about cultural homogenisation and forgetting Indonesia's architecture. Many colonial and modernist structures are being demolished owing to commercial demands, making heritage protection difficult. Sustainability is also important, with climate-responsive designs becoming more popular, but acceptance is gradual. Some favour modern global aesthetics, while others prefer Indonesian indigenous designs. Since then, contemporary architecture has gradually begun in Indonesia.

Mosques architecture, for instance, has started to move beyond its tradition. Juwono et al. (2023) and Primanizar (2024) explore the evolving design of contemporary mosque architecture in Indonesia, particularly the tension between global influences and local traditions. Both studies acknowledge that contemporary Indonesian mosques often adopt international modernist aesthetics and Middle Eastern architectural elements, such as domes, arches, and geometric patterns. In addition, there is a growing movement toward regionalism, where architects integrate local cultural elements to create a uniquely Indonesian architectural identity. In terms of function, both studies also acknowledge the social and cultural functions of mosques beyond their role as places of worship. Mosque architecture could be shaped by *al-urf* (local customs) and serves as a cultural symbol within the community (Juwono et al., 2023). At the same time, it could also be formed by architects through their understanding and intention to create meaningful spatial experiences that encourage social interaction and contemplation (Primanizar, 2024).

Another example is shown in a research on market typology by Yapp (2020). The research makes the case that colonial modernity's "afterlives" influence contemporary urban discussions in Indonesia until today. By using Pasar Johar Semarang as a case study, the research reveals that restoring structures from the colonial era might serve as a means of protesting ill-conceived urbanisation, but it can also inadvertently perpetuate colonial myths of modernisation and marginalisation. The case study illustrates how heritage can represent conflicting ideas about Indonesia's urban future and serve as a vehicle for critique. Heritage preservation poses issues concerning which parts of history should be celebrated and how to guarantee inclusivity in architectural design, even while it provides an alternative to unchecked urbanisation. This conflict highlights larger issues in modern Indonesian architecture, such as striking a balance between local identity, modernism, and tradition in a city that is changing quickly.

Researches on contemporary houses by Loebis & Nuraini (2019) and Ramadhan et al. (2021) also show a shift in design. The researchers explore contemporary house architecture in Indonesia, emphasizing the balance between tradition and modernization. They share a common theme of architectural transformation, where traditional elements are adapted to meet modern living standards. Both studies highlight the use of local materials and climate-responsive designs, demonstrating how contemporary Indonesian houses integrate vernacular principles with modern construction techniques. Additionally, they recognize the impact of changing lifestyles and technology, where modern housing layouts and facade treatments reflect a shift toward privacy, efficiency, and adaptability in contemporary living.

However, their perspectives contrast in approach and interpretation. Loebis & Nuraini (2019) sees modernization as a gradual evolution, where traditional spatial arrangements are being altered due to socio-economic changes. In contrast, Ramadhan et al. (2021) presents contemporary houses as intentional design reinventions, where architects creatively blend local identity with advanced facade technologies like secondary skin systems. While Loebis emphasizes the loss of communal spaces in modern Javanese homes, Ramadhan et al. (2021) focuses on how architects actively preserve cultural identity through facade innovations. Ultimately, both studies illustrate different paths of modernization—one through organic spatial transformation and the other through architectural reinterpretation and material innovation.

However, although these studies offer significant insights into the characteristics of contemporary design within each category, they provide a disjointed perspective of the overarching architectural landscape. The current researches are too concentrated on certain building functions, such as mosques, markets, and landed houses. This fragmented viewpoint may jeopardise our comprehension of the evolution of current architectural practices in Indonesia, as it lacks a thorough analysis that integrates these disparate parts into a cohesive framework. This study seeks to elucidate the scope of current architectural practices in Indonesia, providing a comprehensive start in overviewing the trends, influences, and innovations that are defining the nation's built environment today.

3. Method

This study aims to discern underlying tendencies and spatial patterns in Indonesian architecture through the analysis of recent projects, providing a more systematic perspective beyond individual case studies. Thus, the data was gathered by using international-scale exhibitions of Indonesian architecture. Indonesian Architects Week (IAW) exhibition 2024 in Kuala Lumpur was chosen because of its inclusivity and accessibility. Although IAW is an international exhibition, this event was not exclusive. The invitation was open for all architects in Indonesia. The curatorial process also focused on arranging the narrative from *all* submitted projects by involving the participant architects. This means that the exhibited projects were not necessarily driven by curators but represented participation from Indonesian architects. The exhibition featured 70 projects by 70 different architects, each tackling contemporary issues in Indonesia through unique designs. These projects exemplify the varied challenges and opportunities encountered by Indonesian architects, encompassing sustainability issues and cultural integration in contemporary architecture. Beyond the displayed materials, this study also inquires project details from the exhibition catalogue. Rigorous descriptions both from the architects and curators were also incorporated in the catalogue.

The gathered data was sorted according to project execution, ensuring that only projects with real site were incorporated into the analysis. This sorting was done to reduce bias and emphasize the real context of each project. Of the 70 shown projects, 65 were considered valid for this study, having satisfied the criteria for real execution. The projects were subsequently analysed quantitatively to assess their function and geographical distribution across Indonesia's six principal islands: Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali-Nusa Tenggara, and Papua-Maluku. The study examined the interrelations among various regions, determining how modern architectural styles may differ or align according to geographical location, economic conditions, and urban development regulations.

4. Results & Discussions

The contemporary architectural projects on display at the Indonesian Architects Week (IAW) Exhibition highlighted Indonesia's dynamic architectural landscape by showcasing a variety of locales and purposes. Nine distinct functions were represented in the exhibition's projects: public spaces, government buildings, transportation terminals, residential, commercial, religious, office, and educational facilities. Additionally, these projects were dispersed throughout six key regions—Java, Sumatra, Bali & Nusa Tenggara,

Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua—which reflects the nation’s contemporary architectural practices’ geographic distribution. This diversity highlights how Indonesian architecture is changing to meet various societal demands and regional advancements.

4.1 Variety of Functions

Architectural practice presented in the exhibition demonstrates that contemporary Indonesian architecture puts strong emphasis on residential function, with 19 out of 65 (29,2%) projects (Figure 1). This trend might indicate that comfort, aesthetics and well functioned private dwelling has become a general concern in the country. The dominance of residential projects also draws the condition of dynamic supply demand in housing and, thus, requires improvement in living spaces.

In addition to that, the number of offices (10 projects) and hospitality (9 projects) are also significant. The office projects are not limited to space where people arrange meetings and have their working cubicles, but also training facilities, research and development laboratories, as well as production factories. The high numbers of office projects highlight the growth of economic development in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the hospitality projects consist of villas, resorts, and retreat complexes. The notable amount of them suggests the importance of tourism and leisure sectors in the country.

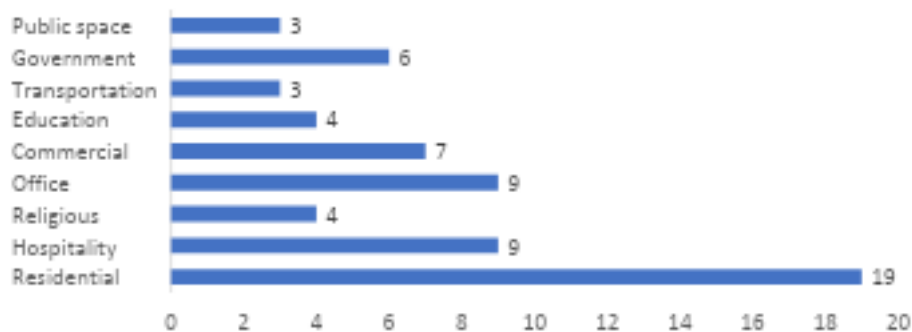


Figure 1. Distribution of the main function in each project.

Source: Author’s analysis

Furthermore, a similar number between commercial (7 projects) and government (6 projects) functions reflects a balanced focus in different sectors. Commercial functions include shops, restaurants and café, while government projects are ranging from administrative facilities in the new capital to border post building between Indonesia and Malaysia. The number of commercial projects points to a growing retail and business infrastructure. At the same time, the presence of government buildings indicates public sector investment in administrative and civic structures.

At the lower end, educational facilities (4 projects), religious buildings (4 projects), public spaces (3 projects) and transportation terminals (3 projects) are less represented in contemporary Indonesian architecture. The low number of public space projects implies that urban design initiatives in communal areas are not yet a central priority, while the comparatively few educational facilities and religious buildings edifices show that conventional architecture may still prevail in religious institutions. Likewise, the scarcity of transport terminals indicates that, although infrastructure is being constructed, it is not a primary focus of modern architectural innovation.

The data indicates that contemporary architectural practice in Indonesia is predominantly influenced by private-sector demands, especially in residential, office, and hospitality projects. Although public infrastructure, education, and transportation projects exist, they are not predominant, underscoring a disparity in architectural objectives. This tendency indicates that modern architecture in Indonesia is intricately connected to economic growth, urban development, and tourism, influencing the built environment of the nation with a commercial and residential emphasis.

4.2 Location of Projects

The distribution of contemporary architectural projects in Indonesia demonstrates a significant disparity among regions, with Java surpassing in both variety and number of projects. The distribution of architectural

projects in Indonesia's various regions is shown in Figure 2. With 40 developments, Java has the most projects, thus solidifying its position as the primary centre for modern architecture. With 14 projects, Bali and Nusa Tenggara come next, most likely as a result of initiatives connected to tourism. There are six projects in Kalimantan that may be connected to government-led investments and Nusantara, the new capital city. With only three and two projects, respectively, Sumatra and Sulawesi have even lower levels of modern architectural activity. In contrast, there are no documented projects in Papua, which emphasises the absence of architectural advancement in that area. This unequal distribution indicates that current architectural activity is concentrated in Java and Bali, whereas eastern regions continue to lack modern infrastructure and design.

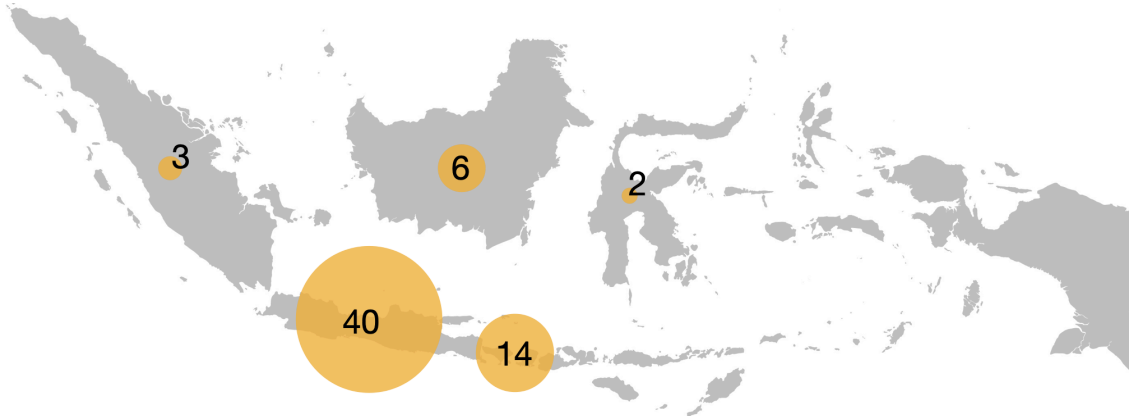


Figure 2. Distribution of projects based on the island.
Source: Author's analysis

In detail, Table 1 draws a matrix between project function and location. Java encompasses a diverse array of developments, with 14 residential complexes, 9 office projects, 4 commercial projects, and 3 religious buildings. Furthermore, public infrastructure includes three educational institutions, two transport hubs, and three public space initiatives. This diverse architectural landscape underscores Java as the most vibrant and advanced centre for modern architecture in Indonesia, where investments from both the private and public sectors foster a dynamic built environment.

Bali & Nusa Tenggara mostly emphasises hospitality-related projects, featuring six developments in this area, underscoring the region's dependence on tourism-driven architectural growth. Other project categories, comprising residential (3), office (1), commercial (1), education (1), and transportation (1), suggest that although the region lacks the architectural diversity of Java, it continues to experience consistent growth across all sectors. The substantial quantity of hospitality projects underscores Bali's status as Indonesia's foremost tourist destination, where modern architecture significantly influences the development of luxury hotels and resorts.

Conversely, Sumatra exhibits minimal architectural activity, comprising 2 residential projects and 1 hospitality construction. The lack of commercial, office, educational, and transit developments indicates that urban development and modern architectural styles have not yet achieved significant progress in the region. Likewise, Sulawesi demonstrates limited development, featuring merely 2 office complexes, suggesting that modern architectural principles have not yet exerted a substantial influence.

Table 1. Distribution matrix of project function based on location.

		Project Function								
		R e s i d e n t i a l	H o s p i t a l i t y	R e l i g i o u s	O f f i c e	C o m m e r c i a l	E d u c a t i o n	T r a n s p o r t a t i o n	G o v e r n m e n t	P u b l i c s p a c e
Project Location (island)	Java	14	2	3	9	4	3	2	0	3
	Sumatra	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Bali & Nusa Tenggara	3	6	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
	Kalimantan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0
	Sulawesi	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Papua & Maluku	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

A notable tendency is evident in Kalimantan, characterised by the predominance of government-led initiatives. This location is distinguished as an emerging architectural cluster, featuring five government buildings, partly due to the Indonesian government's plan to relocate the capital to Nusantara (Warsilah et al., 2023). The absence of residential, commercial, and hospitality projects indicates that private sector investment and urban growth remain nascent. In contrast to Java and Bali, where private ventures thrive, Kalimantan's design is presently dictated solely by governmental infrastructure initiatives.

The most alarming result is the lack of architectural activity in Papua and Maluku, where no contemporary work has been documented in any category. This signifies a significant imbalance in architectural advancement throughout Indonesia, with eastern regions predominantly marginalised from modern design trends and infrastructural enhancements. The deficiency of investment in these areas underscores the necessity for a more equitable and inclusive strategy for architectural development nationwide.

Overall, the results indicated a geographical pre-eminence of specific islands in modern architectural advancement. The statistics revealed that a substantial proportion of the projects originated from Java, Indonesia's most urbanised and economically advanced area. This dominance indicates that modern architecture in Indonesia is primarily focused in regions with robust infrastructure, elevated demand for contemporary designs, and enhanced access to professional networks. Conversely, locations like Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Sumatra, and Sulawesi had a modest prevalence of contemporary projects, indicative of burgeoning architectural development.

Despite the absence of an architect from Kalimantan, the island exhibited numerous projects with essential functions. For example, the new capital city (IKN), airport, and border checkpoint. Conversely, Papua and Maluku have minimal to absent representation, indicating that current architectural approaches have not yet achieved substantial prominence in these regions. This unequal distribution emphasises the necessity for additional architectural advancement beyond Java and reveals regional inequalities in design innovation and construction prospects throughout the archipelago.

5. Conclusion

Indonesia's modern architecture is vibrant but unevenly dispersed among areas and building purposes. Modernism shaped contemporary architecture internationally, but increasing urbanisation and globalisation after the 1998 political upheaval in Indonesia shaped it. The Indonesian Architects Week (IAW) 2024 exhibition found that private-sector demands, particularly in residential, office, and hospitality projects, shape contemporary Indonesian architecture, reflecting economic growth, tourism growth, and changing

lifestyles. Java is the centre of modern architecture, whereas Bali and Nusa Tenggara emphasise hospitality. Sumatra and Sulawesi have little architecture, while Kalimantan's development is government-driven (Basuki, 2023). The lack of projects in Papua and Maluku shows that additional architectural investment in under-represented areas is needed to spread contemporary architectural progress across Indonesia.

Indonesian residential, office, and hospitality architecture is dominated by private-sector requirements. Public infrastructure, education, and transportation projects are not dominant, accentuating architectural variations. This implies that economic growth, urbanisation, and tourism shape Indonesia's modern architecture, especially in commercial and residential districts. However, the low number of public infrastructure projects, including educational, transportation, and public spaces, implies that urban design and public sector-driven architecture have not been a priority recently.

Regional differences persist in Indonesia's contemporary architecture despite its growth. Java dominates architectural development with 40 of 65 projects, indicating urban and economic concentration, whereas Bali & Nusa Tenggara's 14 projects emphasise tourism-driven construction. Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi have few documented projects, and Papua & Maluku are mostly absent from modern architecture. This uneven distribution highlights the need for a more inclusive and balanced approach to architectural development to ensure that modern design and infrastructure improvements reach all of Indonesia, especially the eastern provinces. To build a more comprehensive and contextually rich architectural identity for Indonesia, future architectural practises should blend modernism with tradition, improve sustainability and cultural relevance, and promote equitable growth in urban and rural contexts.

This study illuminates Indonesia's rich and diverse contemporary architecture by identifying significant trends, geographical distributions, and functional variances. This research examines Indonesia's changing architectural landscape by analysing data from the IAW 2024 exhibition, showing how modern architecture meets economic, social, and cultural needs. The findings help explain how Indonesian architects use global and local influences to create distinctive buildings.

This report suggests various practical and policy solutions to regional disparities and sectoral imbalances. First, decentralised funding and incentive systems like tax exemption, subsidies, and public-private partnerships should support architectural growth in under-represented regions like Papua, Maluku, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. Second, national development goals should prioritise public architecture initiatives for education, infrastructure, and culturally and contextually grounded civic spaces. Third, sponsoring regional architectural exhibitions and platforms beyond Java and Bali would increase visibility, local architectural debate, and cross-regional collaboration among architects, stakeholders, and communities.

This study's limitations must be acknowledged. Only a curated selection of work from a single exhibition is available, so it does not include all contemporary Indonesian architectural approaches. The study also lacks primary research methodologies including architect interviews, direct field observations, and stakeholder viewpoints, which might illuminate these projects' design processes, obstacles, and contextual elements. These limits make the study unsuitable for generalising about Indonesian modern architecture. It should be used as a starting point for more extensive research, including field studies, comparative analyses, and practitioner engagement, to better understand Indonesia's contemporary architectural trajectory.

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