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THROUGH THE UNDERSTANDING OF ITS ROLES,
TYPOLOGIES AND THEMES**Muhamad Hanafi Rahmat^{1*}, Alice Sabrina Ismail²,¹ Faculty of Built Environment & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia
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To cite this document:Rahmat, M. H. & Ismail, A. S. (2022). Review on National Identity in Architecture through the Understanding of Its Roles, Typologies and Themes. *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication*, 7 (27), 01-12.**DOI:** 10.35631/IJLGC.727001.This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

National identity is defined as a sense of belonging or ownership to a country or a nation related to the idea of unity for a country, represented by recognizing similarities in tradition, culture, language, and political ideology. Understanding national identity in architecture will direct us to study its roles, typologies, and themes. Architecture describes its own identity based on the conditions of the location it was developed which translates into physical form. It is not easy to understand what identity is and how national identity can be described in different national socio-political conditions. This study compiles the scholars' ideologies and viewpoints through literature review and direct observations on the roles, typologies, and themes of national identity in architecture. Interpretative paradigm was used to interpret and understand the factors that shaped the ideology of national identity in architecture. This paper discusses the roles of architectural national identity from the community perspective (project identity) and government's perspective ('sub-national identity', 'supra-national identity' and 'private identity'), the typologies - natural identity, artificial identity (manufactured identity), forced identity and the themes - typology, remembrance (memorial) and geopolitics. This study used a qualitative approach in which data were collected from ideological case studies and scholarly views through literature review. As a result, the roles determine why architecture was initiated, typologies allow us to understand the categorization and classifications of architecture and themes lead us to appreciate the hidden meaning of architecture. This study will be used as a reference and guide by architects, designers, planners, policymakers, and authorities to understand more about national identity in architecture.

Keywords:

National Identity, Architectural National Identity, Roles, Themes, Typology

Introduction

National identity can be interpreted as a sense of belonging or ownership to a country or a nation (Canizaro, 2007; A. Ismail & Mohd. Rasdi, 2009b; Pipan, 2008; Vale, 2008). This sense of ownership includes recognition of the similarity of tradition, culture, language, and political-ideological (Vale, 2008). Thus, national identity can be formulated into a feeling shared by a group of people towards the nation-state, regardless of status and background (Adam, 2012; Dittmer & Kim, 1993). The concept of national identity only occurs when it involves a group or a collective of human beings who have similar relationships and affiliations or a sense of belonging to a specific will. The value of these relationships does not exist as a result of blood ties but is a form of human creation that must be constantly nurtured and preserved to ensure its continuity throughout the ages (Adam, 2012; Kowert & Legro, 1996; Sokol, 2009; L. Vale, 2008). National identity is not formed by itself. This process of formation requires an in-depth understanding of two important things by members of society, namely 'identifying with one's nation' which focusing on identifying the existence and role of a nation or community towards the establishment of a state system and 'commonalities' which is finding the similarities that exist among members of society such as race, culture and any mutually agreed purpose (Koenig, 2006; Pipan, 2008; L. Vale, 2008). Apart from that, inculcating the value of 'sense of belonging' or 'emotional attachment' among community members is also something that needs to be applied in ensuring the resilience of the feeling of acknowledging the same national identity (Fladmark, 2000; Rashidah, 2014).

Discussions on national identity usually focus solely on the acceptance and appreciation of the community towards national identity. It is closely related to the relationship between the country and the people, and how values of appreciation and patriotism can be fostered between the two parties (Liu & Turner, 2018). This value of appreciation creates a strong sense of national identity between the people and the country. Architecture can also play a role as a platform in promoting the value of national identity. However, the role of architecture as a symbol of national identity is less prominent among ordinary people and is only a discussion among architects and statesmen. This awareness is very detrimental because architecture is a big part of every citizen's life and should be shaped towards a symbol of appreciation for national identity (Mastor Surat, 2016). From there, the value of national identity for the community can be nurtured easily thus producing a nation that knows its origins and has a high value of patriotism. This paper will elaborate further on the ideology of national identity in architecture from the context of its roles, ideologies, and themes. These three elements are the most frequent developed concepts in discussing the idea of national identity in architecture.

Methodology

The goal of this paper is to compare three main categories in defining the concept of national identity mainly focusing on its association with architecture as a symbol to portrays national identity to the nation. The three categories are roles, typologies, and themes. The discussion focused on three recent scholarly articles that discuss the issue. In this context, this study organized the ideologies and views of scholars through a literature review and direct observation of the roles, typologies, and themes of national identity and how it relates to architecture. Interpretative paradigm was used to interpret and understand the factors that shaped the ideology behind the national identity in architecture. The interpretative paradigm is based upon axiology, which outlines that the researcher and the object being investigated have a dynamic interactive relationship that can shed light on various perspectives. It enables researchers to formulate a clear theoretical foundation that integrates social, environmental

activities to understand better the characteristics of the events in their natural setting. As for the method, the narrative approach from the researchers' point of view was used in delivering the information throughout this paper.

The 'Role' of Architectural National Identity

To understand the role of architecture as an element that translates into a national identity, it has been broken down into two different levels i.e. first to meet the needs of society and second is to meet the needs of the rulers (Zharani, 2019). The community level has a category which is 'project identity' while, to meet the needs of the government, there are three different categories namely 'sub-national identity architecture', 'supra-national identity architecture' and 'private identity architecture' (Adam, 2012; Levine, 2018; Pipan, 2008; Shear, 2018). These four levels of national identity in architecture were classified according to the role of architecture towards society and rulers (L. J. Vale, 1988). Society and government are two bodies that determine the success and failure of the national identity of a country.

'Project Identity'

Project identity is when influential individuals in society use all resources on the grounds of social change such as culture, language and architecture to form an identity that can be adopted by all walks of life to evoke a sense of acceptance and unity (Levine, 2018). In this regard, architecture is used as a medium of the symbolism of community unity and democratic values to integrate diversity in society (Hussain, 2015).

'Sub-national Identity'

Sub-national identity represents a country in terms of economic, political and social achievement (Bloom, 1993; Levine, 2018). Most newly developed and newly independent countries such as third world countries generally often used architecture as a medium of conveying the aspirations and philosophies of their national emblem. (Vale, 2008). In this context, architecture is created to meet and benefit the people as well as translated from the context of the local community.

'Supra-national Identity'

Supra-national identity is almost the same as sub-national identity. Through this supra-national identity, architecture is not only able to generate symbols of power at the national level but also at the international level (Adam, 2012; Levine, 2018; Shear, 2018). International recognition has always been the goal of all governments as it is able to elevate the dignity and prestige of the country to a higher level in line with the desire to stand on par with other developed countries. Through architecture, a government can showcase not only power, but also highlight current progress in the country (Hussain, 2015).

'Private Identity'

The formation of a private identity will occur when a powerful individual or patron in society determines architectural design according to their tastes and agendas rather than cultivating a sense of love for the country (Canizaro, 2007; Levine, 2018; Mohamad Rasdi, 2005; L. Vale, 2008).

The 'Typology' of Architectural National Identity

Mastor Surat who was one of the main pioneers in the movement towards re-creating the greatness of national identity in architecture in Malaysia has classified the typology into three

different forms of national identity (Mastor Surat, 2012, 2020). They were (a) natural identity, (b) artificial identity (manufactured) and (c) forced identity.

'Natural Identity'

Natural identity is based on the 'spirit of time' and the 'spirit of place' (Mastor Surat, 2012, 2020). Pioneered by leading architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Charles Correa, Goeffrey Bawa and many others, the 'spirit of time' brings the understanding that architecture needs to follow the current time cycle including in terms of role, technology used, construction methods, as well as considering the expertise of local labor that can provide the best construction results and response according to current and local needs. In other words, the value of art and architecture produced is not something that is outdated but can keep pace with current technology.

The 'spirit of the place' as popularized by Charles Jencks, Michael Graves and other architects carries the interpretation that every new design and construction should meet the needs of the construction site and be able to interact well with the environment (Mastor Surat, 2012, 2020). This means that in ensuring that the construction results are successfully adapted to the surrounding environment, the role of the architect in conducting a detailed study of the site is mandatory to ensure that each newly designed building can adapt to the environment, climate, local traditions, natural law and most importantly, not a construction which 'stands awkwardly' in the local background. Among the architects who pioneered the value were Ken Yeang who always ensured that the climate and elements of the local environment were the core of every building design and Rudolf Schindler who ensured the influence of geographical elements and local landscapes was evident in every building designed.

In the Malaysian context, most researchers such as Mohamad Tajuddin, Nangkula Utaberta and Mastor Surat focus more on the concept of 'spirit of time' and 'spirit of place' to a culture centered on Islamic and humanitarian values (Mastor Surat, 2012, 2020). As we all know, these values are the main pioneers that shape historical values in Malaysia and are the most dominant characteristics of the 'spirit of place' since the era before independence.

Artificial Identity ('Manufactured Identity')

Artificial identity (manufactured identity) is an identity created at a time when the world is constantly being squeezed with the challenges of political upheaval and economic instability. Efforts to continue to meet the needs and desires of the community led to the creation of an artificial identity (manufactured identity) (A. Ismail & Mohd. Rasdi, 2009; Kosman & Nik Ibrahim, 2007; L. J. Vale, 1988). As William J. Curtis pointed out in this identity typology, artificial identity is intended to universalize architecture to a level that is acceptable to all, easy to understand and carries the proper expression. Among the examples related to artificial identity typology are architectural trends based on functionalism machine, primitive regionalism, and revivalism (Mastor Surat, 2012, 2020).

Forced Identity

Forced identity is an identity formed at the insistence of fulfilling a purpose. In this context, forced identity can be classified as an identity that is biased and profitable to a party but does not mean it comes with a negative impact and bad intentions. Forced identity usually do not take full account of the views and wishes of the user and are only guided by every instruction from the authorities. Elements in the formation of a forced identity are economic factors,

political structure, and the policies of the ruling government. Typically, the two parties that play a major role in the formation of a forced identity are the developer and the ruling government. (Kosman & Nik Ibrahim, 2007; Mohamad Rasdi & Kosman, 2005). For developers, the formation of this identity is based on meeting their needs, symbolizing full control over local development projects as well as making a profit. From the perspective of the government, a forced identity is created to meet the aspirations of the country in terms of economic achievement, strengthen the political structure and to create a proud landmark. In addition, it aims to give the ideology of governing power to continue to gain public influence as well as strengthen their power in controlling the political and social structure of the country.

Consequently, although the development of forced identity is able to drive towards the development of national identity in architecture, but due to the design formation process carried out without taking into account all the necessary requirements as a whole, in turn resulting in an architectural crisis such as 'cut and paste' architecture, disorders in determining the direction of architecture, disorders in cultural development, disorders in human and social development (Mastor Surat, 2012, 2020). While most of the forced identity architectures are symbols of greatness, the value of national identity in architecture is less pronounced and based only on one-sided direction.

The 'Theme' of Architectural National Identity

According to literature review based on the articles published in 'Journal National Identities: Critical Inquiry into Nationhood, Politics & Culture', there were three main themes in the formation of national identity in architecture namely typology, remembrance (memorial) and geopolitics (Pandya, 2020).

Typology

Discussion on the theme of typology in architecture often involves understanding the form, function, and configuration of a building. However, there are other important things to be considered in determining the design of the architecture of the national identity (especially for building like palace, national theatre stage, museum, parliament and government building) which is related to the dialectical emphasis on local culture and political environment (Pandya, 2020). Both of these play an important role in the design process of the national identity of architecture which reduces the reliance on understanding traditional typology concepts alone. Among the examples in this context is Singapore's National Theatre' (*Panggong Negara, Singapura*) which had successfully inculcating the idea of Singapore as a multiracial nation and outlining the architectural role of national identity as 'identity as recognition rather than as suppression of difference' (Quek, 2012; Stoicheva, 2009). In addition, typological elements related to historical typology, cultural references, and values related to political relations, also became guidance in the architectural design approach of national identity (Huang, 2012).

The second point of the typology discussed is on how the development of national identity in architecture in the modernization era as well as the translation of forms into international architecture and the merger of nationality ('international and cross-national forms') (Pandya, 2020). In other words, it is eclectic – combining traditional elements, history with modern elements in the proposed architectural design. This discussion often relates to how the collision of inventions from the ancient and modern era influenced the formation of the inventions for the national identity of architecture.

Remembrance (Memorial)

In discussing the theme of 'remembrance' for the national identity in architecture, the main focus is to determine who and what should be used as a 'remembrance' in the importance of the national identity of a country (Pandya, 2020). The theme of 'remembrance' is often associated with the construction of palace buildings, national theatres, museums, parliaments, and government buildings where the invention process is often based on previous historical values or socio-political elements related to the identity requirements of a country. Besides, the theme 'remembrance' also provides the value of patriotism that is conveyed implicitly or expressed through the design of the architecture produced. Hence the architecture not only looks grand in terms of form but also carrying deep appreciation values of meaning.

For example, an analysis of the post-communist memorial museum in Central-Eastern Europe commemorating the Holocaust by Ljiljana Radonić's (2017) successfully delves into the historical connections between the Nazis and the Stalinist Regime (Radonić, 2017). These values are well translated in the form of writing and successfully provide input and relevance to the architecture of national identity. The theme of 'remembrance' also managed to decode the association between architectural inventions produced through learning from post-colonial studies and previous historical stories (Scriver, 2006). The theme of 'remembrance' in the national identity in architecture will not only promote architecture in terms of form, function and configuration alone, but also disseminate inputs and patriotism that can strengthen the unity and integration of races. It brings everyone who appreciates the value of the architecture and brings them to the present through the stories of the past (Qualls, 2003). Such historical values can also be used as an attraction for tourists to continue to come and appreciate the story conveyed through the architecture that is still intact as evidence of the existence of the past glory (Prista, 2015).

Geopolitics

'Geopolitics' terms traditionally show the relationship between political power and geographic space. This often involves relations between regions and states at the national level, and international relations between countries. This is an effort to find deterministic principles that govern the development of the country. This understanding of 'geopolitics' can help deepen a country's development and defense strategy (Huzen, 2019). This is because, 'geopolitics' encompasses the understanding of social, political, economic, strategic, and geographical knowledge of the country and its relationship with other countries. Through an in-depth understanding of the geographical factors and location of a country, the elements of pros and cons can be understood and used as strategies to develop, defense and national security.

The association of 'geopolitics' theme with the national identity in architecture is used to reinforce national identity in a region of concern, explain the role and life of the local population, how they make decisions and how their values of life are shaped based on local and international geopolitical processes (Pandya, 2020). The role of this architecture is always in accordance with the urban development planning in the area in strengthening the demands of stakeholders in handling the territory. The role of geopolitics often involves discussing how the adaptation process occurs in the development project of a place based on the current geopolitical situation. In creating a national identity in architecture, the building design process should consider the current geopolitical situation and wisely adapt it to produce an architecture that portrays national identity. The main objective in this context is to prove the close association between regions as evidence of a close relationship for development purposes.

A more explicit understanding of efforts to build socio-cultural, political, and regional boundaries has also been deepened by many scholars. James Loughlin discusses Anglo-Irish politics since 1921 and seeks to establish a national identity for Northern Ireland that revolves around a building (Stormont, the parliament building for Northern Ireland), and a memorial overlooking it (Lord Carson, leader of the - Irish Unionists) (Loughlin, 1999). Loughlin examined efforts to spread political propaganda by the 'Labor Party' following the separation of Ireland's constitution in 1926. This is done to assert northern Ireland's role as an autonomous power and the 'natural part of the national territory' as opposed to the national image of the Irish Free State to the South. Loughlin assessed the effectiveness of Stormont's design (and the positive impact of Lord Carson's memorial) to delve into issues of integrity, loyalty, and feelings of belonging close to the region.

Understanding Architectural National Identity from the Malaysian Architectural Context

The Roles

To understand the concept of national identity in architecture, Malaysian architecture will be used to describe each of the terms mentioned earlier. By explaining using the real architecture, it is easier to digest the ideas discussed in each of the previously mentioned categories. 'Project identity' is portrayed by the Malaysian Parliament Building (Ismail & Mohd Rasdi, 2008). Its design displayed the idea of representative which portrays no allusion to any ethnicity or of the dominant ethnic group. In addition, exhibits modernistic and progressive expression which referred to local climatic conditions and regional values as well as the exploitation of contemporary materials and the latest available technology.

'Sub-national identity' architecture can be seen from the Melaka City Council building – 'Graha Makmur'. The architecture was developed incorporating the Malay architectural revival which is seen from its roof (Mursib, 2008). As for 'supra-national identity', a very clear example is the Petronas Twin Tower which is popularly known as KLCC (Kuala Lumpur City Centre). The building was built to attract world attention and promote Malaysia as one of the developed regions besides being used as a shopping mall, performance area, and office building during the day (Audu, 2012). As for 'private identity', Perdana Putra in Putrajaya is seen to reflect such an identity where the entire development of Putrajaya was mostly based on ideas from the patrons who led the country in that era. (A. S. Ismail & Rasdi, 2010).

The Typologies

Malay Traditional House is an example of the 'Natural Identity'. Its architecture is developed taking into account the local context, climate and topography not only a good example for architecture that uses its environment but also promotes good sustainable architecture (M Surat et al., 2010). As for the 'artificial identity', this can be seen from the Putra World Trade Center (PWTC) building in Kuala Lumpur (Mastor Surat, 2020). The roof of the building was a version of the roof design of the Malay Traditional House which was 'artificially enlarged' and 'pasted' on the new building. The sustainable architecture promoted by the original Malay Traditional House was not depicted here rather than having a roof only for its aesthetic purposes only. While for 'forced identity', the Kelantan State Education Department building was chosen as an example. By looking at the facade and dome of the building, the representation of the local context cannot be explained throughout the symbolic architectural representation of this building. Just as it aims to support the local education system, its translation into

architecture was completely out of context. This architecture was being forced to be built as it is today.

The Themes

When discussing the 'typology' theme of national identity that focuses on the local culture and political environment, the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) building can once again be seen to adapt to this approach. PWTC is the main headquarters for the most prominent Malay political party in Malaysia - UMNO (Mursib, 2008). Traditional Malay houses were used as the main reference for designing this building. By using the replicative transformation of Kelantan or Terengganu Traditional House, the appearance of the house was upscaled to the final look of the PWTC building today.

The 'remembrance' theme of national identity in architecture was illustrated through the architecture of Istana Budaya. The entire building used the concept of architecture based on the Malay ethnic community (Istana Budaya, 2021). It was a combination of Malay Traditional House space arrangement, Royal Palace and '*sireh*' leaves which were part of the symbol of Malay customs, especially during the 'proposal' process before marriage and Malay wedding ceremonies. The arrangement of the interior of the building was designed using a concept adapted from the Royal Palace, Malay Traditional House and the roof used a concept derived from the arrangement of '*sireh*' leaves in '*Sireh Junjung*'.

In the context of Malaysia, the development of its architecture according to 'geopolitics' themes can be seen from the development of several state mosques in Malaysia. (A. S. Ismail & Mohd Rasdi, 2008b). Two examples are the National Mosque, Kuala Lumpur which was built during the Tunku Abdul Rahman era (1957-1970), and the Putra Mosque, Putrajaya (1981-2003) which was built during the Tun Mahathir Mohammad era. The National Mosque was designed by incorporating the national characteristics, Malay traditional house mixed with Islamic elements. It was in line with Tunku's Islamic ideology during that era which emphasized the unity of the people. The most prominent design was the roof which was redesigned and reinvented to echo the shape of the parasol, which is the traditional emblem of Malay royalty, to create a unique roof shape for the National Mosque. As for the Putra Mosque, it was designed according to Tun Mahathir's ideology in making Malaysia an outstanding Islamic country that had experienced great infrastructure development at that time. As a result, his Islamic agenda not only reformed the country's social structure and restructured the entire government machinery, but also intensified UMNO's identification with Islam and the majority ethnic group in the country. His political idea was to highlight Malaysia as the centre of Islamic civilization - one that was successful in every aspect of development and balanced between religious and secular interests, and to show that the Malay Muslim community under UMNO was a developed society which was able to compete with other ethnicities.

Summary of Findings

From the literature review conducted on the views and ideologies of scholars, it can be concluded that there are three main points in the discussion of national identity in architecture. The table below is a summary of what has been made.

Table 1: An Overview Of The Role, Typology, And Themes Of National Identity In Architecture

Elements	Relationship with national identity	Types	Examples from architecture in Malaysia
Role (Zharani, 2019)	allows us to determine the reason the architecture was initiated whether it was to appeal to the public only or to meet the needs of the government	Community: 1. Project Identity Government: 1. Sub-national 2. Supra-national 3. Private identity	Malaysian Parliament Building Melaka City Council building – ‘Graha Makmur’ Petronas Twin Tour which is popularly known as KLCC Perdana Putra in Putrajaya
Typology (Mastor Surat, 2020)	allows us to understand the categorization and classification of the way architecture is created and developed to fulfill its purpose as part of the national identity of architecture.	Natural Identity Artificial Identity (manufactured) Forced Identity	Malay Traditional House Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) Kelantan State Education Department building
Theme (Pandya, 2020)	leads us to explore the role and appreciate the hidden meaning of architecture.	Typology Remembrance (memorial) Geopolitics	Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) Istana Budaya National Mosque, Kuala Lumpur and Putra Mosque, Putrajaya

Defining the national identity in architecture can be broken down into a sequence of ‘roles’, ‘typologies’ and ‘themes’. The ‘role’ allows us to determine why architecture was initiated either to attract the attention of the public only or to meet the needs of the government. To meet the government's needs, it is divided into three different levels, namely ‘sub-national’, ‘supra-national’ and ‘private identity’. These three levels play a role in determining the purpose of the formation of national identity in architecture. ‘Typologies’ which are divided into ‘natural identity’, ‘artificial identity (manufactured)’ and ‘forced identity’ allow us to understand the categorization of the architectural national identity. Understanding typologies allows us to classify the way architecture was created and developed to fulfill its purpose as part of national identity in architecture. ‘Themes’ in turn leads us to explore the role and appreciate the hidden meaning of national identity in architecture. It is divided into three categories namely

‘typology’, ‘remembrance (memorial)’ and ‘geopolitics. Each category gives a different appreciation of each architecture created to its role and the story of its national identity.

These three elements define the national identity in the architecture of a country, especially a multi-racial country that is not only proud of its architecture but also plays a role in fostering racial unity, instilling patriotism and love of country, living in harmony, and ensuring development towards a developed and civilized nation.

Conclusion

Glancing over all elements defining the national identity of architecture in relation to its role, typology, and theme, one will find that these elements have their own impact on the evolution of the architecture of a nation. They have brought soul and meaning to every building that is able to strengthen the multicultural relationship in the country. Unfortunately, without proper guidelines and implementation of acts relating to national identity in architecture, the hard work in setting up these elements for a nation would not be paid off and all the paper works would only remain as it is. It may seem interesting to know and learn but practicing it will involve additional costs that usually do not put the parties involved in supporting this proposal. Therefore, in ensuring that national identity in architecture finally gets its place, we need to start promoting this from an early stage. Exposing young people about the importance of national identity will lead them to better understand national identity in architecture and ultimately, implement it in their daily activities that involve personalizing their architecture in line with the national identity of architecture. If this happens, we will see a variety of colorful architecture all around that spark a spirit of patriotism in each of us.

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