

ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM AS A TOOL IN DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETIC

Irina Mildawani*, Muhammad Farhan Ghazy*

*) Department of Architecture Universitas Gunadarma, Margonda Raya 100, Depok, Indonesia

e-mail: imildawani8@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The attractiveness of physical settings covers from its initial concentration on ordinary settings to anthropogenic environments, including the beauty of everyday life in the late twentieth century. A mosque is a place of worship that tends to be influenced by the legacy of glorious Islamic civilization in Indonesia. The current modern architectural design shows the existence of environmental aesthetics and local culture without losing the essence of the mosque as a place of worship. This study aims to determine the public's perception of architectural criticism of mosques with unique designs based on modernity and local culture. The method used is a descriptive case study scrutinizing respondents' perceptions in criticizing the mosque building through online questionnaires. Twenty respondents with an architectural background and 20 without architectural knowledge were chosen to answer Likert scale-based questions. The questions refer to three architectural aspects: symbols or characters, attractiveness, and functionality of the mosque. The results showed that respondents with architectural education background dominantly perceived an eminent consensus on the three architectural features compared to the ones of non-architectural environment. This indicates that respondents with an architectural education background understood the symbolic facet of the setting's attractiveness of mosque better when viewed from architectural criticism's point of view.

Keywords: *Aesthetic, Architectural Criticism, Environmental Aesthetic, Mosque*

INTRODUCTION

The central position of research on settings' attractiveness was first acknowledged in the late twentieth century. It expanded from the focus of research on ordinary scenes of nature to examine anthropogenic environments. Concurrently, the subject area has considered a specific category or classification of such settings, called the attractiveness of everyday life. The subjects' focus implies the attractiveness of more settled objects and locations and the scope of daily activities. The attractiveness of

everyday life tends to emphasize the attractiveness of smaller settings as well as the familiar objects and simple exercises that are established in such environments, however, regardless of these debates about the attractiveness of circumstance, which spins things such as the attractiveness of human settings elaborated not only with the artistic activities and ordinary landscaping but also with architectural building and design, Carlson A. (2000), Parson G. (2008), Parson (2010), Parson (2011), Parson (2016), Forsey (2013), Svabo C and Ekelund (2015), Van Etteger R, Thompson I H and Vicenzotti V. (2016)

The attractiveness of human activities is uniquely outstanding, explicitly representing the aesthetic appreciation of the all-encompassing human condition, such as the beautiful measurements of rural countryside, small towns, large cities, theme parks, gardens, museums, and even human relationships. Furthermore, the initial focal point on ordinary settings shifted to human environments' attractiveness, especially in urban settings. The research subject became the base of affluent research on the appreciation of urban neighbourhoods and other architectural locations, Von Bonsdorff P (2002) Blanc N (2013), Paetzold H (2013), Alvarez A L ed. (2017). Different perspectives highlight the aesthetic view of cultural aspects relevant to the liking of cultural landscapes—for example, environments that build important places in the cultures and histories of particular groups of people. The terminology of "sense of place" and the ideas and images from folklore, mythology, and religion frequently plays a significant role in individuals' aesthetic experience of the landscapes surrounding their homes, Carlson A (2000), Sandrider B (2007), Nomikos A (2018). Both cognitive and non-cognitive points of view can generate plentiful approaches to the aesthetic appreciation of human settings. Although various trials have been made to shape connections between the cognitive and non-cognitive orientations, Fudge R (2001), there are several collections and studies that move beyond the mental/non-cognitive difference that advise our comprehension on the appreciation of an exposition of settings and deal with problems that begin to exist about them, Berleant A and Carlson A ed. (2007), Brady et al. (2018).

THEORY / RESEARCH METHODS

Besides the settings' attractiveness, architectural analysis relates to issued or announcement critiques of buildings, principles, and other measures. In many circumstances, evaluation extends to an appraisal of the architect's achievement in obtaining their own goals and objectives and those of others. The assessment may consider the subject from the perspective of some broader context, which may involve planning, communal or artistic matters. It probably generates a polemic stand illuminating the critic's standards. The most important thing is that architectural criticism is recognized as a division of way of life reportage, particularly in high-end architectural developments.

The selection of the mosque building as a case study in this paper because the mosque is a building that is very commonly known to the public due to its close location in a community setting. Conversely, the community does not comprehend the mosque building too profoundly because it is widespread. This study seeks to

obtain public perspective by expressing their perception of understanding about the mosque building through answering the research's questionnaires.

This study aims to determine the public's perception or response to architectural works represented by respondents by conducting architectural criticism. Architectural criticism is a response from observation of an architectural work where people record with their various fifth senses and then observe, understand with full awareness and store it in memory and be followed up with a speech in the form of statements, expressions and descriptions of the objects they observe. In the context of this research, the public will express their perceptions in criticizing the building of the Al-Azhar Grand Mosque Summarecon Bekasi from an architectural point of view.

In its development in terms of design, many innovations have been carried out by emphasizing techniques based on the existence of the setting and local culture without losing the essence of the mosque building as a place of worship, one of which is the Grand Mosque of Al-Azhar Summarecon Bekasi. This mosque, designed by Ridwan Kamil Architect, has a uniqueness that is different from other mosques in general because it takes inspiration from the Kaaba building in the Baitullah of Mecca. As the name suggests, the Al-Azhar Grand Mosque, located on Jalan Bulevar Raya Summarecon Bekasi, is a mosque situated side by side with the Al-Azhar Islamic School. Because of its location, the mosque which was built to meet the needs of worship and also as a means of friendship and harmony for the surrounding community is also used as an educational facility so that the Grand Mosque of Al-Azhar Summarecon Bekasi becomes an icon of the mosque and as a manifestation of social teachings of Islam.

Due to this inspiration, this mosque has a cube shape without a dome. The minimalist design of this mosque is also combined with terracotta colors rooted in the temple building in the Majapahit era. The entry of Islam into Indonesia influences individual mindsets in the spiritual field and architectural art, Rahayu T (2018). This influence brings the phenomenon of mosque design in Indonesia which tends to be affected by the architectural forms and elements of the legacy of the glory of Islamic civilization. Based on this statement, it can be concluded that the mosque is a space where its primary function is as a place of worship for Muslims (prayer). The mosque is not just a place to enforce congregational prayers as its primary function; more than that, the mosque has a vital role in various aspects of Muslim life (social, economic, educational, and others) so that a good mosque design will have a significant impact on the growth and development of Muslim life, Hassan S M, Kirana C, Iqbal M and Karsono B (2017).

The method used in this research is a descriptive case study method as a comprehensive study of various examples of facts in an existing framework that echoes the standpoint of respondents involved in the spectacle, Carlson A (2007). In the context of this research, the phenomenon in question is the development of mosque architecture in Indonesia. The study was conducted by reviewing the architectural aspects of the Grand Mosque of Al-Azhar Summarecon Bekasi is a case study that was then described in the form of several questions that were used as a frame of reference to examine public perceptions (respondents) in criticizing the mosque building.

Perception data was obtained through a public opinion poll through an online questionnaire (google form) to 40 respondents. Respondents in this study were respondents with two educational backgrounds, including 20 respondents with architectural experience and 20 respondents with non-architectural backgrounds. The pilot survey stage was conducted to ten respondents with an architectural education background where in that number there was one lecturer of the Gunadarma University Architectural Design Masters Program who was in charge of the Advanced Architectural Criticism course to assess the form of questions to be submitted and ten respondents with non-educational architecture backgrounds.

Respondents were asked several illustrated questions to be observed and criticized based on respondents' actual opinions and perceptions. The questions are structured referring to the descriptive critique method, which aims at the fact that if we know what an event is and the process of its occurrence, we can better understand the meaning of the building. Questions are grouped based on architectural aspects, including symbols or characters (elements that become the centre of particular attention, a means of communication and a basis for mutual understanding), attractiveness (aspects of form that have beauty and can please the eye and mind), and functional (elements of a container for activities and activities form human movement) which will then be broken down into several questions.

The results of the pilot survey showed ten questions about the architectural aspects of the Grand Mosque of Al-Azhar Summarecon Bekasi as follows:



Figure 1. Illustration for question 1

Source: Maulana M.R,2015

1. Do you agree that the design of a mosque with a dome is not a must? (symbol or character aspect question).



Figure 2. Illustration for question 2
Source: Maulana M.R,2015

2. Do you agree that you can still recognize this building as a mosque without adding the yellow one ball dome element to the design of the built minaret (the current mosque) or the minaret being constructed the same as the original design? (symbol or character aspect question).



Figure 3. Illustration for question 3
Source: Maulana M.R,2015

3. In your opinion, is the minaret or minaret the only marker in showing the existence of this mosque? (symbol or character aspect question).



Figure 4. Illustration for question 4
Source: Maulana M.R,2015

4. Do you think that the design of a mosque without windows, but with an open space (lodging) and ventilation, will not interfere with the ventilation (air exchange) in the mosque? (functional aspect question).



Figure 5. Illustration for question 5
Source: Maulana M.R,2015

5. Is it an exciting element of a wall with exposed and carved brick material (calligraphy form)? (aesthetic aspect question).



Figure 6. Illustration for question 6
Source: Maulana M.R,2015

6. Is the ramp intended for people with disabilities, the elderly, goods lanes, etc., in relating the difference in floor height to an essential element in the mosque? (functional aspect question).



Figure 7. Illustration for question 7
Source: Maulana M.R,2015

7. In your opinion, is the calligraphy ornament on the mihrab (the imam's area) an essential element in the mosque? (functional aspect question).



Figure 8. Illustration for question 8

Source: Maulana M.R.,2015

8. In your opinion, is the ceiling arrangement game (embossed/use of calligraphy ornaments) an exciting element in this mosque? (aesthetic aspect question).



Figure 9. Illustration for question 9

Source: Maulana M.R.,2015

9. Do you agree flexible space (free of inner columns) influences maximizing the capacity (number of worshipers) and the course of activities in this mosque? (functional aspect question).

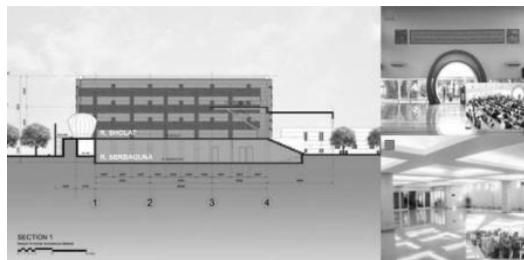


Figure 10. Illustration for question 10

Source: Maulana M.R.,2015

10. Do you agree flexible space (free of inner columns) influences maximizing the capacity (number of worshipers) and the course of activities in this mosque? (functional aspect question).

The questionnaire uses five closed Likert scales obtained from the pilot survey by measuring the level of agree-disagree of respondents in criticizing the architectural aspects of the Al-Azhar Summarecon Bekasi Mosque building. Data analysis was carried out by making a percentage index of the results of each question variable to obtain a comparison between respondents' variables who had two different educational backgrounds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Determination of the results refers to the explanation of Hamid Darmadi in the book Educational Research Methods by determining the maximum and minimum scores in determining the percentage index, Mahmud (2011). Questions and answers referring to the Likert scale are as follows. Score 5 for strongly agree, Score 4 for Agree, Score 3 for Doubtful, Score 2 for Disagree, and Score 1 for Strongly disagree.

In comparing perceptions between groups of respondents, we use an interval from 0% to 100% with analysis criteria as follows. Value (0%-19,99%) Strongly Disagree; Value (20%-39,99%) Disagree; Value (40%-59,99%): Doubtful; Value (60%-79,99%): Agree; Value (80%-100%): Strongly Agree.

Statement 1 refers to the aspect of symbols or characters by reviewing consensus on the design of a mosque with a dome is not a must.

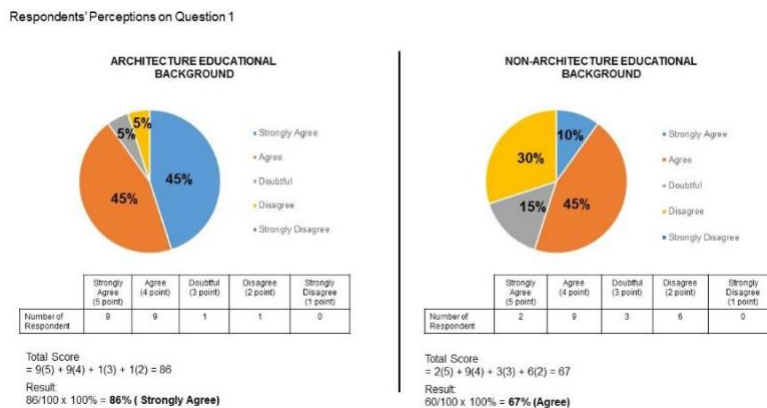


Figure 11. Respondents' perceptions on question 1.
Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 11 shows that the level of consensus between respondents with an architectural education background is higher than respondents with a non-architectural educational experience.

Statement 2 refers to the symbol or character aspect by reviewing the consensus that if you don't add a yellow one ball dome element to the design of the built minaret, you can still recognize this building as a mosque building.

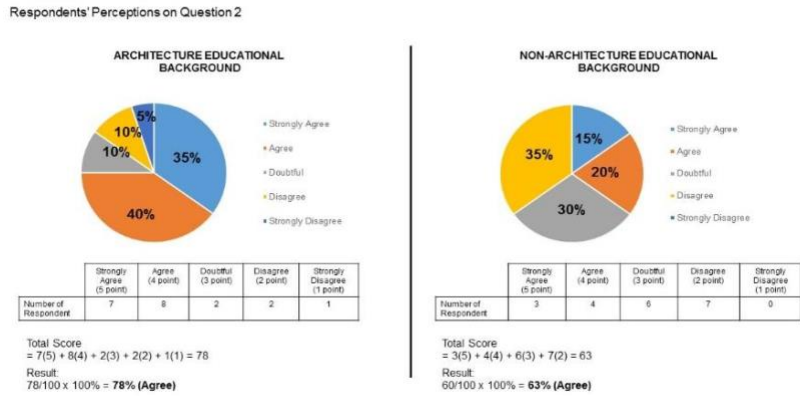


Figure 12. Respondents' perceptions on question 2.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 12 shows that the level of consensus of respondents with an architectural education background is higher than respondents with a non-architectural educational experience.

Statement 3 refers to the aspect of symbols or characters by considering the minaret or tower to be the only landmark in showing the mosque's existence.

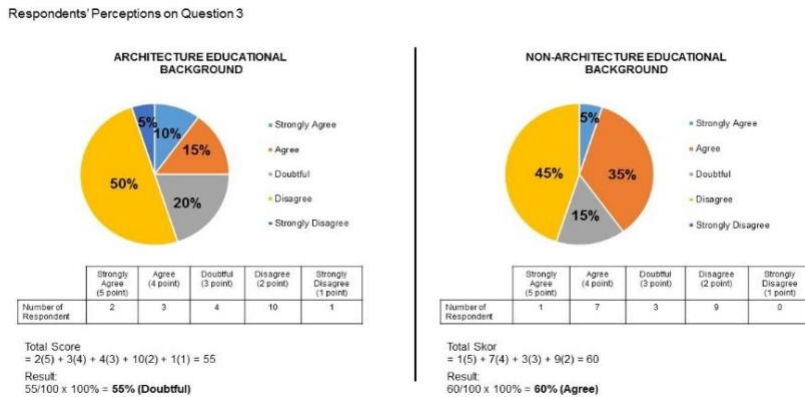


Figure 13. Respondents' perceptions on question 3.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 13 shows that respondents with non-architectural educational backgrounds agree more than respondents with architectural education backgrounds, where respondents with architectural education backgrounds doubt that the minaret or minaret is the only marker in indicating the existence of a mosque.

Statement 4 refers to the functional aspect by reviewing the mosque's design without windows. Still, there is an open space that will not interfere with the mosque's ventilation (air exchange).

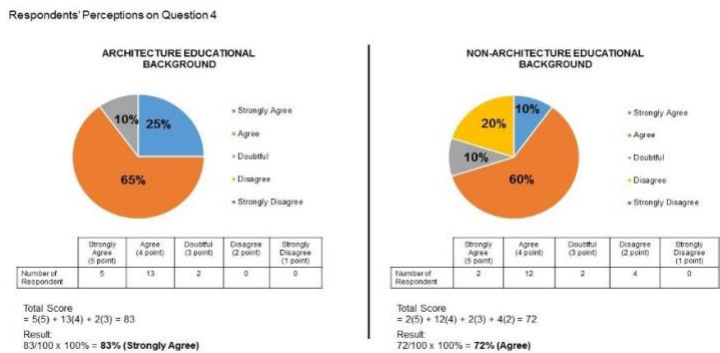


Figure 14. Respondents' perceptions on question 4.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 14 shows that the level of consensus is higher in respondents with an architectural education background.

Statement 5 refers to the aesthetic aspect by reviewing the exposed and carved brick material walls (calligraphy form), an exciting element in the mosque.

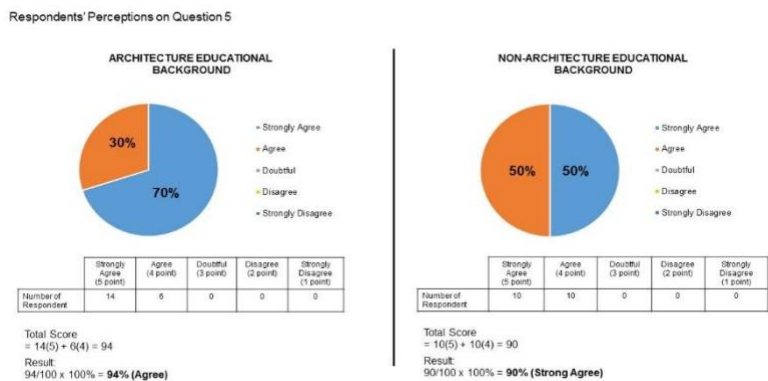


Figure 15. Respondents' perceptions on question 5.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 15 shows that the level of consensus is higher in respondents with an architectural education background (a difference of 0.4%). It can be said that both groups have the same opinion.

Statement 5 refers to the aesthetic aspect by reviewing the exposed and carved brick material walls (calligraphy form), an exciting element in the mosque.

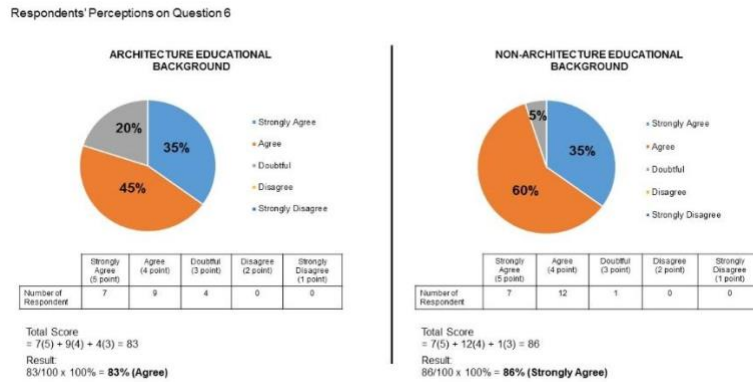


Figure 16. Respondents' perceptions on question 6.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 16 shows that the level of consensus is higher in respondents with non-architectural educational backgrounds (difference 0.3%). It can be said that both groups have the same opinion.

Statement 7 refers to the aesthetic aspect by reviewing the calligraphy ornaments on the mihrab (the imam's area) as an essential element in the mosque.

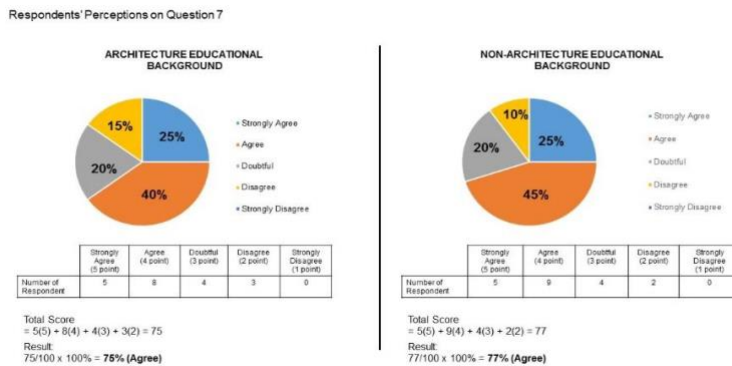


Figure 17. Respondents' perceptions on question 7.
 Source: survey, 2021

Based on the diagram, Figure 17 shows that consensus is higher for respondents with an architectural education background (difference 0.2%). Based on this, it can be said that the two groups have the same opinion.

Statement 8 refers to the aesthetic aspect by reviewing the ceiling arrangement game (arising/use of calligraphy ornaments), an exciting element in the mosque.

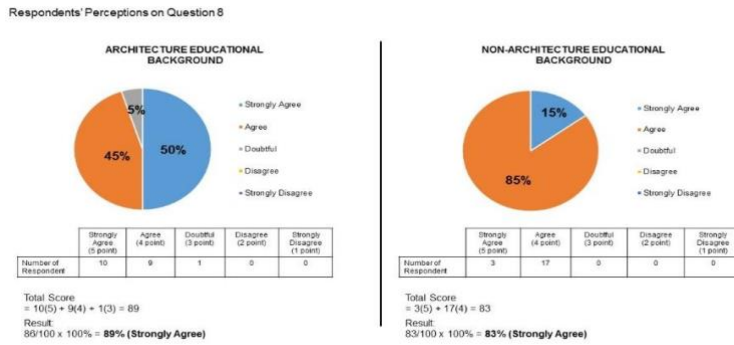


Figure 18. Respondents' perceptions on question 8.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 18 shows that consensus is higher for respondents with an architectural education background.

Statement 9 refers to the functional aspect by reviewing that flexible space (free inner columns) influences maximizing the capacity (number of worshippers) and the course of activities in the mosque.

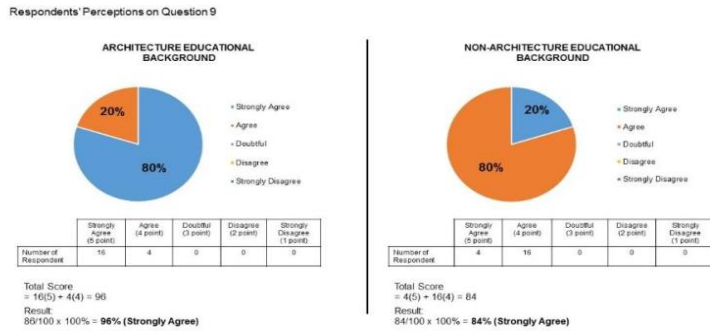


Figure 19. Respondents' perceptions on question 9.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 19 shows that the level of consensus is higher in respondents with an architectural education background.

Statement 10 refers to the functional aspect by reviewing a mosque with a multipurpose hall to accommodate multifunctional activities.

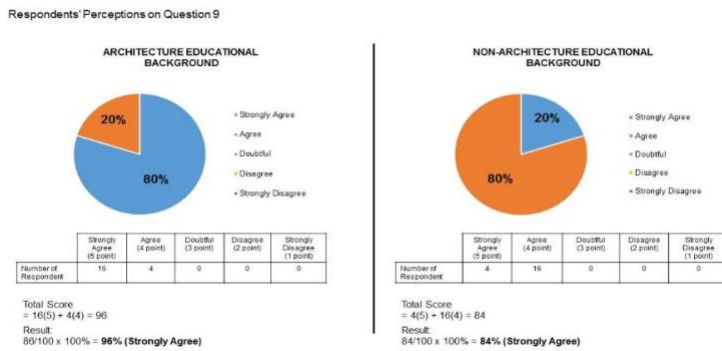


Figure 20. Respondents' perceptions on question 10.
 Source: survey, 2021

The diagram in Figure 10 shows that the level of consensus between respondents with an architectural education background and non-architectural education background is in the same percentage. Based on this, it can be said that the two groups have the same opinion.

CONCLUSIONS

Organized with an extensive capacity of environmental aesthetics, comprising the charisma of human settings and the attractiveness of everyday life, the twenty-first century has also given rise to renewed investigations of the relationship between environmental beauty and architecture criticism. This association has been gradually examined, ensuing in the analysis of earlier work on the attractiveness of nature and detailed assessments of contemporary architecture.

The case study of architectural criticism on Mosque Al Azhar Summarecon in Bekasi in Indonesia shows that respondents with architectural education background argue with a higher level of consensus both on matters relating to symbols or characters, attractiveness, and functional mosque buildings. The results show that respondents with an architectural education background better understand a mosque building viewed from an architectural point of view. However, the respondents with non-architectural educational experiences tend to have a high degree of consensus about the attractiveness and functionality of mosque buildings. Furtherly the result shows that respondents with non-architectural educational backgrounds do not have enough understanding about symbolic aspects of architectural characters in the mosque building.

Architectural criticism as a research method about the globalization of environmental aesthetics will hopefully be a wide range of analyses and practices which also foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic potential of the worldwide situation where we live.

REFERENCES

- Admadjaja J S and Dewi M S. (1999) *Eстетika Bentuk*, Gunadarma, Jakarta
- Alvarez A L ed.. (2017) Aesthetics between Art and Society: Perspectives of Arnold Berleant's Post Kantian Aesthetics of Engagement. *Types Journal*, **Vol. 6** (2), <<https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/index.php/ESPES/issue/view/9>>
- Berleant A. (2004) *Re-thinking Attractiveness: Rogue Essays on Attractiveness and the Arts*, Ashgate, Aldershot
- Berleant A. (2005) *Attractiveness and Setting: Variations on a Theme*, Ashgate, Aldershot
- Berleant A and Carlson A ed.. (2007) *The Attractiveness of Human Settings* Broadview Press, Peterborough
- Berleant A. (2010) *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human*, Imprint Academic, Exeter
- Blanc N. (2013) *Aesthetic Engagement in the City*. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. **11**, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280991838_Aesthetic_Engagement_in_the_City>
- Brady et al. (2018) John Muir's Environmental Attractiveness: Interweaving the Aesthetic, Religious, and Scientific. *Journal of Attractiveness and Art Criticism*, **76**: 463–472
- Carlson A. (2000) *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture*, Routledge, Routledge
- Carlson A. (2007) *Environmental Aesthetics*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/environmental-aesthetics/>> (Accessed on 2 August 2021)
- Forsey J. (2013) *The Aesthetics of Design*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Fudge R. (2001) Imagination and the Science-based Aesthetic Appreciation of Unscenic Nature. *Journal of Attractiveness and Art Criticism*, **59**: 275–285
- Hassan S M, Kirana C, Iqbal M and Karsono B. (2017) *Persepsi Elemen Arsitektural Masjid terkait Konsep Arsitektur Islami*. *Temu Ilmiah Ikatan Peneliti Lingkungan Binaan Indonesia (IPLBI)*, **6** (1): 101-108. <<https://doi.org/10.32315/ti.6.i101>> (Accessed 2 August 2021)
- Mahmud. (2011) *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan*, Pustaka Setia, Bandung
- Marsella N. R. (2018) *Critical and Creative Thinking In General Education: A Descriptive Case Study*. Master Thesis. College of William and Mary. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.25774/w4-kcrj-rt68>>
- Maulana M R. (2015) *Di Summarecon Bekasi Ada Masjid Tak Berkubah ala Ridwan Kamil*. *Majalah Tempo*. Jakarta <<https://ramadan.tempo.co/read/677942/di-summarecon-bekasi-ada-masjid-tak-berkubah-ala-ridwan-kamil>>
- Nomikos A. (2018) Place Matters. *Journal of Attractiveness and Art Criticism*, **76**, 453–462
- Orsat I. (2004) *Pedoman Manajemen Masjid*, Departemen Agama, Jakarta
- Paetzold H. (2013) The Aesthetics of City Strolling. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. **11**. <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/ca/7523862.0011.023/--aesthetics-of-city-strolling?rgn=main;view=fulltext>>

- Parsons G. (2008) *Nature, Aesthetic Values, and Urban Design: Building the Ordinary City*. Philosophy and Design, Springer, New York
- Parsons G. (2010) *Beauty and Public Policy*. People and Places. London: The Commission for Architecture and the Built Setting, <<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/beauty-public-policy.pdf>>
- Parsons G. (2011) Fact and Function in Architectural Criticism. *Journal of Attractiveness and Art Criticism*, **69**: 21–30
- Parsons G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Design* Polity Press, Cambridge
- Rahayu T. (2018) Kajian Fasad dan Bentuk Masjid Al-Azhar Summarecon Bekasi. *Jurnal Ilmiah ARJOUNA*, Vol. **03** (1). <<https://docplayer.info/201227986-Kajian-fasad-bentuk-masjid-al-azhar-summarecon-bekasi.html>> (Accessed on 2 August 2021)
- Sandrider B. (2007) *Cultivating Commonplaces: Sophisticated Vernacularism in Japan*, Broadview Press, Peterborough
- Svabo C and Ekelund K. (2015) Environmental Attractiveness: Notes for Design Ecology. *Nordes 2015: Design Ecologies*, **6**: 1–9
- Van Etteger R, Thompson I H and Vicenzotti V. (2016) Aesthetic Creation Theory and Landscape Architecture. *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, **11**: 80–89
- Von Bonsdorff P. (2002) *Urban Richness and the Art of Building*, Ashgate, Aldershot
- Wardani L K. (2010) *Fungsi, Makna, Simbol (Sebuah Kajian Teoritik)*. Seminar Jelajah Arsitektur Nusantara 101010 <<http://repository.petra.ac.id/17181/>>, (accesses on 2 August 2021)

This Page is Intentionally Left Blank