MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE

PRESENT ISSUES AND FUTURE IDEAS

عمارة المسجد:

قضايا الحاضر و أفكار المستقبل

Editors

Prof. Mashary A. Al Naim | Dr. Hani M Al Huneidi | Dr. Noor Hanita Abdul Majid

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SPATIAL PLANNING FOR NON-MUSLIM ACCESS IN A *MASJID*

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INTRODUCTION

MASJID is a place where purity and sanctity are kept for the Muslim to perform their *ibadah*. Nevertheless, the role of *masjid* also expanded to respond to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that *masjid* also act as a centre that could provide services for the non-Muslims. In the Qur'an verse (2:143) – "*And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you*" – every aspect of life people live in a community, where each and every one depend on one another. The Prophet's Masjid was a place for shelter to those who were in dire need where lodging were provided, a place for Prophet's (PBUH) guest who were non-Muslim were welcomed and a place for discussion or dialogue for the non-Muslim (Omer, 2013). Under the *Irsyad Al-Fatwa* number 271: "The Ruling for Non-Muslim Entering the Mosque", non-Muslim are permissible to enter *masjid* (Tarmizi, 2018). However, the ruling is applicable on several conditions, which are to follow the dos and don'ts while visiting the *masjid* (Omer, 2018).

In relation to the function of a *masjid* , the *masjid* also contributes to the development of the community. As mentioned by Amnah, Bahari, and Shihabbuddin (2016), *masjids* are institutions of critical social importance because they are at the same time a place for spiritual devotion and a centre for community development. *Masjid* is the centre of activities during the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) era and still the concept is applicable till today. According to Wates and Knevitt (2013) cited by

N. 'Athiqah Baharudin and Ismail (2014) considered these communal facilities as "community architecture" and the term to be commonly used to describe the architectural space for conducting communal activities.

The goal and activities of the users are reflected through the floor plan that are interpreted by the architect (Van der Voordt, Vrielink, and Van Wegen, 1997). As mentioned in a study, *masjid* should give the feeling of comfort through spatial planning that satisfy the psychological tranquility to the users in different cultural needs (Othman, Inangda, and Ahmad, 2015). Despite that, the components of the *masjid* should be maintained as they were applied in the Prophet's Masjid.

ISSUE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Non-Muslim involvement and entering the *masjid* has not only raised multiple perception of Muslims', but also impacted on the non-Muslim perception towards Islam. Reported by Shamsuddin (2018) the *masjid* held a *masjid* open day program for the public in conjunction with Chinese New Year celebration. An approach done by the *masjid* to create the communal engagement with the non-Muslim in the neighbourhood. An attendee who felt honoured to attend the event and learn about the uniqueness of the *masjid's* architecture (Mohamad, 2018). The role of the *masjid* could expand towards the society with the involvement of non-Muslim. *Masjid* as a platform to encourage peaceful coexistence through communal engagement with non-Muslim (Amnah *et al*., 2016). Thus this leads to the research gap as to understand the accessibility of non-Muslim entering the *masjid*.

METHODOLOGY

This paper applied qualitative methodology design approach. Several method tools were used for this study; literature review, case study, content analysis, and interview. As to understand the *masjid* as an institution, literature review were done on the matter. According to Sarantakos (2013), literature review are done to review studies that have already been published. Case study method was employed for general observations regarding the design matter (Othman *et al*., 2015). The selection of case studies were selected based on its relation with non-Muslim entering the *masjid*. The selected *masjid* for the case study located five areas in Malaysia and one in Singapore, they are Masjid Negara, Masjid Wilayah, Masjid Putra, Masjid Tuanku Mizan, Masjid Al-Faizin, Kepong, and Masjid Sultan in Singapore. The *masjids* were chosen for being a tourist attraction especially to the non-Muslim, whereas Masjid Al-Faizin

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was due to an event held in the *masjid* open to the public, targeting the non-Muslim community. Content analysis method tool were applied due to the *masjid's* involvement of a devastating event happened recently, that led to non-Muslim entering the *masjid* in enlightening the world with the unfortunate story. The selected study for content analysis was Masjid Al-Noor, Christchurch, New Zealand. Lastly, interview sessions were done with the management team of the *masjid* or *masjid* tour guide team in regards to how the management address the matter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Non-Muslim Entering the *Masjid*

> Non-Muslim entering the *masjid* is not alien in the tourism sector, a common activities for the non-Muslim to visit when coming to Muslim countries. However certain ground rules are to be set and abide by the non-Muslim when entering the *masjid* as a sign of respect. As stated by Spahic Omer (2018) in his article on "The Benefits of Non-Muslims Visiting Mosque", where he stated non-Muslims should be allowed to enter and visit *masjid*, but under conditions where permission are to be granted before entering, followed by the dos and don'ts inside *masjid*. This was to keep the purity and the sanctity of the *masjid*.
>
> (Omer, 2018)

Components of *Masjid*

According to the Malaysian Standards (2014), the basic components of a *masjid* consisted of prayer hall, *mihrab*, ablution area, and toilet. The main spaces are followed by the supporting spaces, depending on the needs and the size of the population. Based on Figure 1 shows the connection of the main spaces and the supporting spaces in a *masjid*.

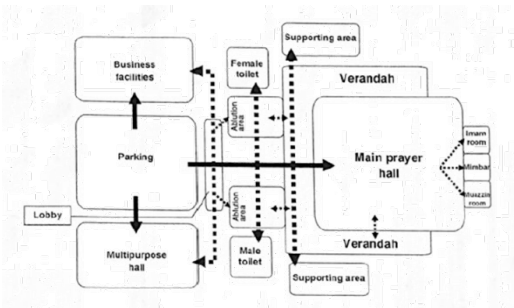

FIGURE 1
Connection of *masjid* components and the accessibility.

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RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results was derived from the selected case studies and interviews done for all six selected *masjids*; the *masjids* within Malaysia which are Masjid Negara, Masjid Wilayah, Masjid Putra, Masjid Tuanku Mizan, Masjid Al-Faizin, and Masjid Sultan in Singapore. Whereas the *masjid* selected for interpretation method done from the content analysis of Christchurch, New Zealand; Masjid Al-Noor. The findings are based on the consideration of the four main spaces of the *masjid* area, the supporting spaces and the level of accessibility addressed by the *masjid* management. The results are as follows:

> This completes the entire process required for widespread of research work on open front. Generally all International Journals are governed by an Intellectual body and they select the most suitable paper for publishing after a thorough analysis of submitted paper. Selected paper get published (online and printed) in their periodicals and get indexed by number of sources.

The analysis done and shown in the table shows the similarities and the differences of the selected *masjids*. The level of accessibility within the *masjid* differs from one another because of the intention or the purpose in allowing non-Muslim entering the *masjid* area. Majority of the selected *masjid* were mainly tourist attraction location – Masjid Negara, Masjid Wilayah, Masjid Putra, Masjid Tuanku Mizan, and Masjid Sultan. However, there were two *masjids* that were entered by non-Muslim not for tourism purposes – Masjid Al-Faizin was open for the non-Muslim in the neighbourhood through an event that the *masjid* held and Masjid Al-Noor caught the eye of the world and were open to non-Muslim after the mass shooting event.

The result shown in Table 1, that not all the *masjids* allowes non-Muslim to enter the main spaces of the *masjid* which are; main prayer hall, *mihrab*, ablution area, and the toilet. The *masjid* that are permissible to enter all the areas of the *masjid* are Masjid Wilayah, Masjid Tuanku Mizan, Masjid Al-Faizin, and Masjid Al-Noor. Whereas, for Masjid Negara, Masjid Putra, and Masjid Sultan addressed differently on the approach of managing the non-Muslim entering the *masjid* area.

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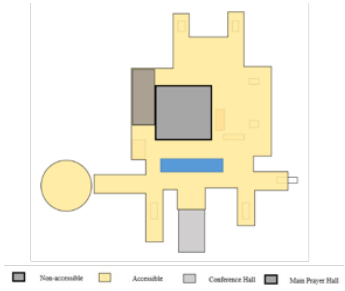
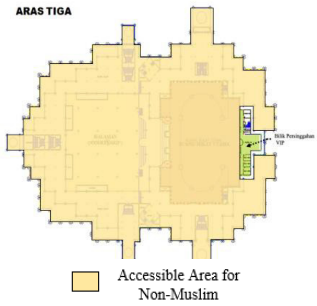
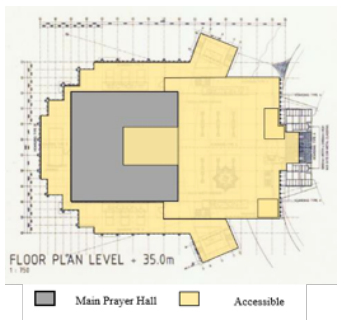
TABLE 1
Comparison table of the *masjid* in relation to non-Muslim accessibility.

	Masjid Negara, Kuala Lumpur	***Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan, Kuala Lumpur***
Level of Accessibility for non-Muslim		
Main Spaces Accessible for Non-Muslim	Toilet Ablution Area	Prayer Hall *Mihrab* Toilet Ablution Area
Non-Muslim Activities in *Masjid*	Tour *Masjid* Fruit Festival	Tour *Masjid* Masjid Open Day
Spaces for Non-Muslim Activities	Foyer Courtyard/*Masjid* Compound	*Masjid* Courtyard/ *Masjid* Compound

	Masjid Putra, Putrajaya
Level of Accessibility for Non-Muslim	
Main Spaces Accessible for Non-Muslim	Prayer Hall
Non-Muslim Activities in *Masjid*	Tour *Masjid*
Spaces for Non-Muslim Activities	Foyer Courtyard/*Masjid* Compound

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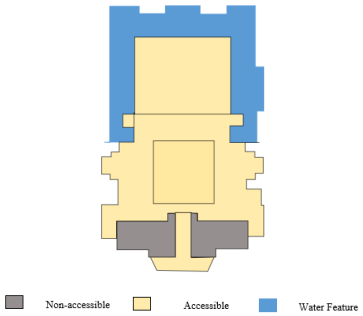
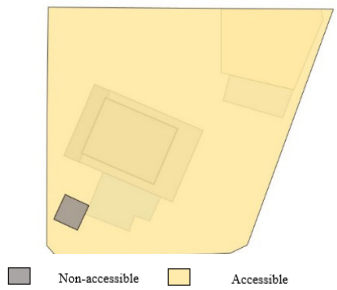
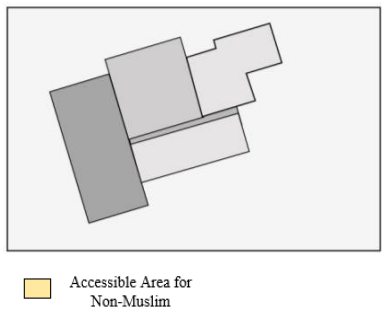
	Masjid Tuanku Mizan, Putrajaya	***Masjid Al-Faizin, Kepong***
Level of Accessibility for non-Muslim		
Main Spaces Accessible for Non-Muslim	Prayer Hall *Mihrab* Toilet Ablution Area	Prayer Hall *Mihrab* Toilet Ablution Area
Non-Muslim Activities in *Masjid*	Tour *Masjid*	*Masjid* Open Day
Spaces for Non-Muslim Activities	*Masjid*	*Masjid* Courtyard/*Masjid* Compound

	Masjid Sultan, Singapore	***Masjid Al-Noor, Christchurch***
Level of Accessibility for Non-Muslim		
Main Spaces Accessible for Non-Muslim	Toilet Ablution Area	Prayer Hall *Mihrab* Toilet Ablution Area
Non-Muslim Activities in *Masjid*	Tour *Masjid*	Interview with Reporters
Spaces for Non-Muslim Activities	*Masjid*/*Masjid* Compound	*Masjid* Courtyard/ *Masjid* Compound

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Masjid Negara, Kuala Lumpur

The spaces that Masjid Negara limits for the non-Muslim to enter are the main prayer hall and *mihrab* area. Nevertheless, the non-Muslim visitors are able to view the main prayer hall from the foyer that is surrounding the main prayer hall. Other than the limitation from the mentioned spaces, the non-Muslim are allowed to go to the toilet and ablution area in the *masjid*.

Masjid Putra, Putrajaya

Masjid Putra has a different approach in allowing the non-Muslim when entering the main spaces of the *masjid*. The main prayer hall are partially opened for the non-Muslim to enter with red rope pole as indication of the limit of access. Within the pole area, the non-Muslim are able to experience the main prayer hall as well as a displayed gallery explanation about Islam. Unfortunately, the toilets and the ablution area are restricted for the non-Muslim from entering.

Masjid Sultan, Singapore

Masjid Sultan is similar to Masjid Negara in terms of the accessibility for non-Muslim in the *masjid* area. The main prayer hall limitation is indicated with low fence to show the limit for the non-Muslim from entering. Still they are able to observe the main prayer hall from the foyer at the rear end of the main prayer hall. The toilet and ablution areas are open to the non-Muslim to utilise, furthermore it functioned as a public toilet for the people passing by to use.

Masjid Wilayah, Kuala Lumpur

Masjid Wilayah is more flexible in allowing non-Muslim entering the *masjid*. The non-Muslims are able to experience every spaces in the *masjid* but with supervision and attended by a tour guide. They are allowed to enter the main prayer hall area up until the *mihrab* area if requested by the non-Muslims. Moreover, the *masjid* also provides a designated space for the non-Muslim in the main prayer hall to observe the perform of *solat* during prayer time.

Masjid Tuanku Mizan, Putrajaya

This *masjid* is similar to the rules and regulation stated for Masjid Wilayah, non-Muslims are permissible to enter any spaces in the *masjid* but accompanied by a tour guide.

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Masjid Al-Faizin, Kepong

This specific *masjid* has no restriction for non-Muslims to enter any space in the *masjid* area, either requested accompanied or walk freely without a tour guide. The intention are to allow the non-Muslim from the neighbourhood to feel the sense of welcoming and comfortable inside the *masjid* area. Other than that, the event were a *masjid* open day program, where other activities were organised for the non-Muslims within the *masjid* compound.

Masjid Al-Noor, Christchurch, New Zealand

This *masjid* was publicly known to the world after the horrific event that happened in the *masjid* itself, a mass shooting during Juma'ah prayer. Thus, the *masjid* is approached by many people including non-Muslims from the prime minister, the authorities, police forces, reporters from around the world and the people of New Zealand that came to give respect and share their grieve. The *masjid* is mainly a small but fully utilised functional *masjid* for the Muslim, with merely any aspect of tourism attraction is intended. Thus, the spaces within the *masjid* are accessible to enter for the story to be told and shared.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study of spatial planning on non-Muslim accessibility into *masjid* has proven that the non-Muslims are permissible to enter. However, the level of access into certain areas of the *masjids* differ from each other. Certain *masjids* may allow non-Muslims to enter into all areas in the *masjid* but with supervision, yet there are a number of *masjids* that control the accessibility of the non-Muslims when entering the spaces in the *masjid* area.

Masjid has always been associated as a place of tranquility and a place that gathers the community. *Masjid* as an institution that connects the people is proven through the Islamic history, the transformation of *masjid* in a community created a great impact to a peaceful society. Currently in Malaysia, the idea of allowing non-Muslims entering the *masjid* has not been fully accepted in the society, resulting of *masjids*' different approach in responding to the users' perceptions. The findings showed that the user perceptions are slowly changing as efforts of *masjids* to create better understanding and awareness regarding the issue of non-Muslim entering the *masjid* to be accepted by the society. Thus the approach intends to

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create the relationship towards a peaceful coexistence between Muslim and non-Muslims.

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