Understanding the City: Its Conception and History

Ahmadin

Faculty of Social Science and Law, Universitas Negeri Makassar

ahmadin@unm.ac.id

Corresponding Author, E-mail: ahmadin@unm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The existence of a city concerning the dynamics of growth and the complexity of the problems that accompany its progress have always been an interesting topic in the study of various scientific disciplines. Specifically within the scope of social science studies, there are urban history, urban sociology, urban spatial sociology, urban anthropology, and others. Various studies with a multidisciplinary approach to the city require an understanding of the concept and a brief history of its origins as a scientific basis for the development of its studies. This article examines the basic concept of the city and its brief history, which begins with a discussion of the meaning, origins of cities, urban forms, urban development, and problems that arise in urban areas. The results of the study show that cities have various meanings from the point of view of scientists from various scientific disciplines. Historians, sociologists, economists, geographers, architects, and artists give different definitions of cities from the point of view of their respective scientific orientations.

Keywords: city, conception, history

INTRODUCTION

The face of cities in countries in various parts of the world including Indonesia that we see today, is of course very different from the conditions in the cities at the beginning of their growth. City development with a touch of modern technology, then creates new characteristics both in terms of landscape and architecture. The change in the face of the city certainly moves along with the emergence of new perceptions and paradigms of society regarding the ideal type of city (A. Ahmadin, 2021). A city is no longer understood as a center of community settlement in a closed fortress as it was at the beginning of its appearance, instead cities are envisioned as open spaces where people can enjoy various city facilities and can communicate freely across and between cities (Mansyur et al., 2022).

The city with all its progress did not appear out of nowhere, but went through developmental stages in the process and a very long time series. Thus, the discussion of cities in

various studies should ideally be connected with the past as an important element that forms a city (Lynch, 1964). There are two models of study approaches to connect the present with the past about cities, namely the diachronic approach (Cooper & Brady, 1981) which describes the stages of city development periodically and the synchronic approach (Hattnher & Hengeveld, 2016) which sees the connection between the present and the past as a direct or indirect cause and effect. Then one important thing to remember is that if every era has its own spirit, then every phase of the development of a city also has a soul of its own era and the peaks of civilization (Huntington, 2020) that are interesting to study.

The discussion of this paper is intended as a pre-understanding of cities, especially for beginners, both students, observers of cities, and other parties who are interested in this topic or field of study. For this purpose, the discussion of this article begins with a conceptual introduction to the definition of the city from the views of various experts, then the forms of the city, and the stages of its development. Understanding a number of concepts about cities can serve as a frame of reference in the discussion, especially the different scopes of study according to certain disciplines. Likewise, an understanding of the history of the city (Eade & Mele, 2002) becomes very valuable knowledge, especially for understanding the characteristics of the city (Russo & Comi, 2012) and its people which are inseparable from the influence of socio-political conditions (Furedy, 1984) in each era. This will strengthen our understanding that the face of a city is actually a reflection of the social situation of its people.

METHOD

This type of research is descriptive research using qualitative data (M. Ahmadin, 2022). The data for this research comes from a number of literature about cities in the form of books, articles in scientific journals, and other types of sources. Data collection techniques are carried out through literature research on reading sources that are directly related to the city or other relevant references (Rahman et al., 2022). Referring to the stages of historical work, there are four stages of research carried out, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and hisstoriography. Sources were collected through searches and reading activities, after which criticism of the data sources was carried out. The next stage is to interpret the data that has been criticized and then arrange it in written form which is the result of historical reconstruction.

RESULT

Definition of City

The definition of the city in terms of language aspects, refers to the Sanskrit word "Kotta" (Buxbaum, 1968) or "We" which means stronghold or fortification. Physically, the city consists of

a number of buildings that function in residential, industrial, trade, administrative, taxation, religious and entertainment activities in a certain area. Based on the formulation of the Dictionary of Sociology and Population, a city in English is called a city/town, namely a relatively permanent place of residence, a permanent population which provides a means of fulfilling primary and secondary needs of life (Kartasaputra & Hartini, 1992). Meanwhile, according to the Indonesian Dictionary, the city is defined as: (1) It is a wall that surrounds a place of defense, (2) It is a residential area consisting of houses which are a unit of residence for various levels of society, (3) An area which is the center of activity government, economy, culture and so on. Sociologically and urban history, the city is defined as a residential area marked by a unit of buildings inhabited by non-agrarian residents (Purwadarminta, 1987).

Melville C. Branerch, the author of the book "Comprehensive Urban Planning: Introduction and Explanation", in his writings explains several different understandings of cities from various experts. *First*, geographers provide an understanding of the city by focusing on the physical elements and the surrounding environment, such as: a description of the location (relationship with the surroundings, as well as the atmosphere of the place), site (site), land slope, climate, vegetation and roads. This is examined in relation to the form and function of a city. *Second*, economists explain the city in relation to economic functions that the city is a place or area to carry out economic activities such as making goods to generate profits and providing various services, investment and taxation. *Third*, sociologists see a city as a region and within it there is a population classification based on age, gender, marital status, ethnic (ethnic) background and other categories. *Fourth*, architects view cities by focusing on architectural aspects such as single buildings or groups of buildings, open spaces in and around them and various regulations relating to the planning and implementation of development. *Fifth*, the artists see the city as an area or place to generate personal encouragement, education and opportunities related to potential (Branch & Wibisono, 1995).

Characteristics of a City

Daldjoeni, who wrote the book "Intricacies of Urban Communities: Variety of Urban Sociology and Social Ecology", explained that each country has its own definition of a city for the purposes of its census. Several countries as examples, such as: Denmark, Sweden and Finland, are of the view that a settlement with a population of 200 people can already be called a town (city). Argentina and Canada, argue that a place with a population of 1000 people is called a city. United States, argues that if the population is 2500 people, it can be called a city. Even Italy, Greece and Spain are also classified as cities even though they have at least 10,000 inhabitants. The Netherlands, an area with a population of 20,000 people, is also categorized as a city. Apart

from looking at the number of inhabitants, it was also explained that if the community had reached a high enough cultural level, then the community would build a city. Cities were created by humans who have mastered natural nature with the various possibilities contained in it by changing soil, stone, iron, wood and others to create buildings from living tools (Daldjoeni, 1992).

Louis Wirth made a formulation about the city in an article entitled "Urbanization as a Way of Life", that the city is an area that has a relative area and has a certain level of population density and there is a permanent settlement for people who have a certain level of population density. and very diverse or heterogeneous social status (Wirth, 1986). Meanwhile, Jhon Gullick formulates urban society as follows: (1) there is an intermediary both as residents and as an institution that becomes a liaison in the larger community of which the city or settlement is a part. The presence of foreigners and outsiders is considered a normal condition in settlements. (2) there is a relationship between the classes above the city with individuals or other larger urban associations. (3) the existence of relationships that are impersonal, rationalistic, goal-oriented or single interpersonal and easily affected by the changes that occur and (4) the existence of cultural heterogeneity (Kamar, 2005).

City Development Stages

Historically, cities have gone through a series of developmental stages that show their respective characteristics according to geographic spatial conditions and demographic characteristics. Lewis Mumford formulated several stages of development, as described below: (1) *Eopolis*, namely the initial stage or initial stage of a city marked by the emergence of settlements. At this stage the population is characterized by its activities in agriculture, plantations, fisheries, and mining; (2) *Polis*, namely the stage of urban development characterized by the existence of a market in the village and the formation of a small-scale business sector. Even though the industry has emerged, it is certain that it has not yet had a significant influence on meeting the basic needs of life; (3) *Metropolis*, namely the stage characterized by the development of the spatial structure of the city, where the influence of the presence of the city has been felt by the surrounding area. At this stage satellite cities have also begun to appear, as supporting areas for the main city; (4) *Megalopolis*, namely the stage of city development where the population has begun to focus on materials and has certain characteristics regarding products; (5) *Tiranipolis*, which is the preparatory stage for the destruction of a city which is marked by a declining trade and market situation, so that human life is threatened; and (6) *Nekrapolis*, namely the stage of the city which has suffered a number of damages caused by several factors, such as: war, disaster, famine, and the urban planning

system which is starting to go bad. At this stage, people living in cities no longer feel comfortable (Mumford, 1961).

Six Types of Cities

When referring to Bouman's view of the characteristics of cities according to their development, there are 6 types that are important to know, namely: (1) Old cities in the Near East, namely king cities, which are inhabited by kings and members of the palace, bodyguards, priests, soldiers, and slaves. The special characteristics of the city of this era are: the existence of privileged groups and the absence of a sense of unity. As for the inhabitants, they are bound by their tribes of origin; (2) Cities in Old Asia, which have similarities with royal cities in the Middle East. In India and China, urban populations are divided into religious divisions, castes and family groups. Each family has its own gods and is still bound by the village of origin. As a result of the king's arbitrariness, it is not possible to create a homogeneous city; (3) Greco-Roman cities, that is, the oldest cities characterized by fortifications. This period was characterized by city life which was full of class contradictions and there were landlords; (4) The cities of the European Middle Ages, namely cities that grew preceded by the arrival of traders who settled outside the spans or walls of palaces, palaces of noble landlords, and residences of bishops. Market towns arose with large populations and merchants who obtained self-government from landlords; (5) European Cities in Western History, namely urban development that began in the 18th century; and (6) Modern City of the American Type, in which at this stage there is a fundamental difference between the number of rural and urban residents (Kamar, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The definition of the city in terms of language aspects, refers to the Sanskrit word "Kotta" or "We" which means stronghold or fortification. Physically, the city consists of a number of buildings that function in residential, industrial, trade, taxation, taxation, religious and entertainment activities in a certain area. Based on the formulation of the Dictionary of Sociology and Population, a city in English is called a city/town, namely a relatively permanent place of residence, a permanent population which provides a means of fulfilling primary and secondary needs of life. Viewed from the demographic aspect, the city is defined as an area that has a relatively large area and has a certain level of population density and the existence of a permanent settlement for people who have very diverse or heterogeneous levels and social status. Historically, the city has gone through stages of development starting from Eopolis, Polis, Metropolis, Megalopolis, Tinanipolis, and Nekrapolis.

REFERENCES

Ahmadin, A. (2021). Konstruksi Sosial-Budaya dalam Pembangunan Ruang Publik di Kota Makassar: Menatap Pantai Losari Dulu, Kini, dan Masa Mendatang. *Jurnal Kajian Sosial Dan Budaya: Tebar Science*, *5*(1), 14–20.

Ahmadin, M. (2022). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. *Jurnal Kajian Sosial Dan Budaya: Tebar Science*, *6*(1), 104–113.

Branch, M. C., & Wibisono, B. H. (1995). *Perencanaan Kota Komprehensif: Pengantar dan Penjelasan*. Gadjah Mada University Press.

Buxbaum, D. C. (1968). Some Notes on Indian Influence on Malay Customary Law. In *Family Law and Customary Law in Asia: A Contemporary Legal Perspective* (pp. 50–64). Springer.

Cooper, J., & Brady, D. W. (1981). Toward a diachronic analysis of Congress. *American Political Science Review*, *75*(4), 988–1006.

Daldjoeni, N. (1992). *Seluk beluk masyarakat kota: pusparagam sosiologi kota dan ekologi sosial*. Alumni.

Eade, J., & Mele, C. (2002). Understanding the city. *Understanding the City: Contemporary and Future Perspectives*, 3–23.

Furedy, C. (1984). Socio-political aspects of the recovery and recycling of urban wastes in Asia. *Conservation & Recycling*, *7*(2–4), 167–173.

Hattnher, M. M., & Hengeveld, K. (2016). The grammaticalization of modal verbs in Brazilian Portuguese: A synchronic approach. *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics*, 13.

Huntington, S. P. (2020). The clash of civilizations? In *The New Social Theory Reader* (pp. 305–313). Routledge.

Kamar, I. D. (2005). *Kota dalam Lintasan Sejarah: Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangannya*. Makassar: Yabuindo Press.

Kartasaputra, G., & Hartini. (1992). *Kamus Sosiologi dan kependudukan*. Bumi Aksara.

Lynch, K. (1964). *The image of the city*. MIT press.

Mansyur, A. I., Fitriani, F., Widyaputra, P. K., Amane, A. P. O., Abidin, Z., Parahita, B. N., Hilman, Y. A., Rahmawati, N., Rais, A., & Sinurat, J. (2022). *SOSIOLOGI PERKOTAAN*.

Mumford, L. (1961). *The city in history: Its origins, its transformations, and its prospects* (Vol. 67). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Purwadarminta, W. J. S. (1987). *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia: Balai Pustaka*.

Rahman, A., Sari, N. M. W., Fitriani, F., Sugiarto, M., Sattar, S., Abidin, Z., Irwanto, I., Nugroho, A. P., Indriana, I., & Ladjin, N. (2022). *METODE PENELITIAN ILMU SOSIAL*.

Russo, F., & Comi, A. (2012). City characteristics and urban goods movements: A way to environmental transportation system in a sustainable city. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *39*, 61–73.

Wirth, L. (1986). Urbanization as a Way of Life. *American Journal of Sociology, UU*, *1*.