

Urban Governance, Spatial Reordering, and City Image Formation: The Role of Local Bureaucracy in the Royal Baroe-Pasar Lama Area of Serang, Banten

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Abstract

This article examines the role of local state civil apparatus in spatial reordering and urban image formation in the Royal Baroe-Pasar Lama area of Serang City, Banten. The study is grounded in the argument that urban space is not merely a physical setting, but also a governance arena in which bureaucratic coordination, symbolic policy, and public service practices shape the meaning of the city. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the article analyzes how local government actors translated political directives into operational actions, including the relocation of traders, corridor arrangement, event activation, investor signaling, and institutional consolidation. The study involved 12 informants consisting of local government officials, traders, community actors, and supporting stakeholders, and was complemented by documentation from government releases and relevant reports. Based on the findings, spatial reordering in Royal Baroe generated three interconnected outcomes. First, the bureaucracy played a strategic role as coordinator, regulator, and image producer through cross-sectoral action. Second, urban image improved through visual enhancement, public events, and the production of a safer and more attractive public atmosphere. Third, the sustainability of the transformed area depends on post-project governance, especially institutional management, trader assistance, maintenance, and integrated supervision. In this context, the article contributes to politics and governance studies by showing that local bureaucracy can function not only as an implementing apparatus but also as an active agent in constructing urban legitimacy, public trust, and place-based economic optimism. Accordingly, urban transformation requires durable institutional design beyond ceremonial spatial beautification.

Keywords: *urban governance; local bureaucracy; spatial planning; city image; Royal Baroe; Serang City*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji peran aparatur sipil negara daerah dalam penataan ruang dan pembentukan citra kota di kawasan Royal Baroe-Pasar Lama, Kota Serang, Banten. Kajian ini berangkat dari pandangan bahwa ruang kota bukan sekadar setting fisik, melainkan arena tata kelola tempat koordinasi birokrasi, kebijakan simbolik, dan praktik pelayanan publik membentuk makna kota. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana aktor birokrasi daerah menerjemahkan arahan politik ke dalam tindakan operasional, termasuk relokasi pedagang, penataan koridor kawasan, aktivasi event, pengiriman sinyal kepada investor, dan penguatan kelembagaan. Penelitian melibatkan 12 informan yang terdiri atas pejabat pemerintah daerah, pedagang, aktor komunitas, dan pemangku kepentingan pendukung, serta dilengkapi dokumentasi dari rilis pemerintah dan laporan terkait. Berdasarkan temuan,

penataan ruang di Royal Baroe menghasilkan tiga keluaran yang saling terkait. Pertama, birokrasi berperan strategis sebagai koordinator, regulator, dan produsen citra melalui tindakan lintas sektor. Kedua, citra kota membaik melalui peningkatan visual, penyelenggaraan event publik, serta terciptanya suasana ruang yang lebih aman dan menarik. Ketiga, keberlanjutan kawasan yang ditransformasi sangat bergantung pada tata kelola pascaproyek, terutama pengelolaan kelembagaan, pembinaan pedagang, pemeliharaan fasilitas, dan pengawasan terpadu. Dalam konteks ini, artikel berkontribusi pada studi politik dan pemerintahan dengan menunjukkan bahwa birokrasi lokal dapat berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai pelaksana kebijakan, tetapi juga sebagai agen aktif dalam membangun legitimasi perkotaan, kepercayaan publik, dan optimisme ekonomi berbasis tempat. Dengan demikian, transformasi kota memerlukan desain kelembagaan yang berkelanjutan melampaui penataan fisik yang bersifat seremonial.

Kata kunci: pertama, kedua, ketiga.

Pendahuluan

Urban governance has increasingly become a central concern in politics and governance studies because the city is not only a site of development, but also a site where authority, legitimacy, public order, and economic aspirations are negotiated through policy and administrative practice (Harvey, 1989; Pierre, 2011). In many growing Indonesian cities, spatial disorder, informal economic activity, street congestion, and fragmented public services create both governance challenges and political opportunities. Based on this perspective, urban space should be understood as a politically mediated domain in which local governments attempt to organize circulation, visibility, and social legitimacy through planning interventions and bureaucratic coordination (Lefebvre, 1991; Healey, 1997). Through such interventions, the physical form of the city becomes closely related to public perception, investment confidence, and the symbolic performance of government capacity.

The relationship between governance and urban image is particularly important in secondary cities that are seeking to reposition themselves as orderly, livable, and economically promising urban centers. City image is not simply produced by architecture or beautification, but by a broader set of institutional actions that shape how citizens and visitors experience safety, accessibility, cleanliness, and public vibrancy (Lynch, 1960; Kavaratzis, 2004). In this context, bureaucratic action matters because government agencies coordinate regulations, public facilities, market relocation, event programming, and enforcement measures that directly affect the social meaning of urban space (Pierre, 1999; Innes & Booher, 2004). Accordingly, administrative arrangements can influence whether urban transformation is perceived as inclusive revitalization or merely as a symbolic display of power.

In Indonesia, the role of local bureaucracy in urban transformation has become more visible after decentralization strengthened the authority of municipal governments over spatial management, local economic development, and urban service delivery (Hadiz,

2010; Firman, 2009). Yet many local governments still face persistent coordination problems among agencies, limited fiscal capacity, uneven enforcement, and tension between formal spatial order and informal livelihoods. On the other hand, local leaders often rely on visible urban projects to demonstrate responsiveness and create a narrative of change. Thus, spatial reordering in Indonesian cities frequently combines practical governance objectives with image-building purposes. This dynamic is especially relevant in areas where traders, public circulation, and symbolic city identity intersect.

The Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama area in Serang City, Banten, offers a compelling case for examining this issue. The area has experienced efforts to reorganize urban space through trader relocation, corridor arrangement, visual enhancement, event activation, and policy coordination. Government reports describe Royal Baroe as a newly arranged corridor intended to create a more attractive and economically productive urban environment, while also accommodating relocated traders and public activities (Serang City Government, 2025a; Serang City Government, 2025b). Based on local reports, the area quickly developed as a public destination, especially after evening hours, attracting visitors from Serang and surrounding cities and generating commercial turnover for micro and small enterprises (Serang City Government, 2026a). In this sense, Royal Baroe is not only a spatial project, but also a governance project aimed at altering the image and functionality of the city.

Several developments indicate that the Royal Baroe transformation involved more than routine public works. A public event held on 26 December 2025 was framed as the launch of a “new face” of the area and involved tents, stage facilities, coordinated parking arrangements, integrated security, entertainment, and participation from local traders and officials (Serang City Government, 2025b). The event reportedly generated significant sales turnover, with 122 micro and small enterprises participating, suggesting that spatial activation and economic stimulation were intentionally linked (Serang City Government, 2026b). Through these actions, the bureaucracy did not simply regulate territory; it also curated public perception and attempted to transform a formerly congested trade zone into a recognizable civic-commercial destination.

Recent administrative developments further underscore the governance dimension of the case. Local government discussions in early 2026 proposed the establishment of a dedicated management unit for the Royal Baroe area under the relevant municipal office, with tasks including area arrangement, event coordination, business assistance, and integrated management (Banten News, 2026). Another report noted that improved area management had begun to attract investor interest in culinary, restaurant, and tourism sectors, and that a permanent management body was expected to strengthen supervision and trader assistance (ANTARA, 2026). In this context, Royal Baroe illustrates how local bureaucracy can move from project implementation to territorial management and urban branding.

From a theoretical standpoint, this article draws on debates concerning collaborative governance, urban regime coordination, and the politics of place-making.

Collaborative governance emphasizes that effective public problem solving depends on inter-organizational coordination and negotiated action among state and non-state stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Urban governance literature also highlights that city transformation requires more than hierarchical command; it depends on networks, institutional alignment, and narrative construction that connect public goals with local actors and users of space (Pierre, 2011; Healey, 1997). On the other hand, place-making studies suggest that urban spaces gain legitimacy when design, activity, and social use reinforce each other, creating a coherent sense of place rather than an isolated physical intervention (Carmona, 2010; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

Despite these conceptual advances, there remains limited discussion on how local state civil apparatus in Indonesian municipalities operate simultaneously as implementers, coordinators, and symbolic producers of city image in everyday spatial governance. Much of the existing literature focuses either on macro-level urban policy or on technical planning, while less attention is given to the administrative processes through which local agencies translate political directives into visible urban order. In this context, examining Royal Baroe helps clarify how urban image is institutionally produced through bureaucratic work, cross-sector coordination, event-based activation, and post-project management planning.

This article therefore asks: how does local bureaucracy shape spatial reordering and urban image formation in the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama area of Serang City? Based on this question, the article aims to analyze the governance role of local state civil apparatus in three respects: first, as coordinators of cross-sector spatial intervention; second, as producers of an urban image associated with order, attraction, and economic optimism; and third, as institutional actors responsible for sustaining transformed public space after initial beautification. Through this analysis, the article contributes to the *Journal of Politics and Governance Studies* by demonstrating that urban image is not merely aesthetic, but deeply political and administrative, reflecting how local governments perform capacity, negotiate social order, and seek legitimacy in the eyes of citizens, traders, and investors.

Metode

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the role of local bureaucracy in spatial reordering and city image formation in the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama area, Serang City, Banten Province. The research location was selected because the area has recently become a focal point of local government intervention involving trader relocation, corridor arrangement, event activation, and institutional management planning. The study used 12 sources of data consisting of municipal government officials from relevant agencies, traders affected by reorganization, community actors, and secondary documentary sources from government publications and news reports related to Royal Baroe. Data were collected through semi-structured

interviews, document review, and limited field observation of the area's spatial condition and public activity patterns.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive qualitative procedure involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify recurring themes regarding bureaucratic roles, urban image production, and governance sustainability (Miles et al., 2014). Through triangulation of interviews, documents, and observations, the study sought to compare official narratives with practical implementation and public response. In this context, data validity was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and interpretive checking across categories of informants to ensure that the findings reflected both institutional intention and lived urban experience (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Hasil dan Diskusi

1. Bureaucratic Coordination as the Core of Spatial Reordering

The findings indicate that the reorganization of Royal Baroe was not a single-agency intervention but a coordinated governance process involving municipal offices, public order actors, transport arrangements, security support, and economic facilitation. Based on available documentation, the local government framed Royal Baroe as a newly arranged urban corridor that would absorb traders relocated from earlier trading nodes while simultaneously creating a cleaner and more attractive public environment (Serang City Government, 2025b). This confirms the argument that urban governance is often operationalized through coordination rather than through isolated regulatory action alone (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Pierre, 2011).

Through bureaucratic coordination, the city government linked spatial order with circulation management, parking allocation, event logistics, and public security. Local reports explained that parking pockets were coordinated across several sites, while security involved municipal and inter-agency collaboration (Serang City Government, 2025b). Such arrangements are significant because they show that spatial governance in public commercial corridors depends on managing flows of people, vehicles, vendors, and symbols of order. In this context, local state civil apparatus functioned not merely as administrators of a public works project, but as mediators of urban complexity. Their work translated political direction into visible territorial regulation.

Interview-based interpretation suggests that bureaucratic effectiveness in this case rested on three practical capacities. First, the government had to align policy objectives across agencies that might otherwise operate sectorally. Second, it had to manage the social sensitivity of trader relocation and adaptation. Third, it had to present the transformation as beneficial rather than punitive. These capacities resonate with collaborative governance theory, which emphasizes cross-boundary coordination and negotiated implementation for public problem solving (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Accordingly, the transformation of Royal Baroe can be read as an administrative process of assembling fragmented institutional functions into a coherent urban intervention.

Another important aspect is the shift from event-based intervention toward area-based governance. Early 2026 reports documented official discussions on forming a dedicated management unit under the municipal office responsible for trade and small enterprise affairs, with functions including area management, event coordination, and business assistance (Banten News, 2026). This planned institutionalization is politically important. It suggests recognition that spatial reordering cannot be sustained by one-off beautification or ceremonial inauguration. On the other hand, without a continuing governance structure, newly arranged public spaces often deteriorate due to weak maintenance, overlapping authority, and inconsistent supervision (Carmona, 2010).

The case also reveals the performative dimension of bureaucracy. Government action in Royal Baroe was highly visible, publicized, and designed to signal state presence. Yet this visibility should not automatically be dismissed as mere symbolism. In urban governance, symbolic and practical dimensions often interact. A visibly coordinated state can create public confidence, influence behavior, and reduce perceptions of disorder, provided that symbolic intervention is followed by regular management and service delivery (Kavaratzis, 2004; Pierre, 1999). Thus, the bureaucratic role in Royal Baroe combined regulatory coordination with political communication.

2. City Image Formation Through Visual Order, Public Activity, and Economic Signaling

The second major finding is that urban image in Royal Baroe was actively produced through the combination of visual enhancement, programmed public activity, and narratives of economic revival. Based on government reporting, the area became known for aesthetic lighting, street furniture, and evening visitation, with many visitors using the space for leisure and photography (Serang City Government, 2026a; Serang City Government, 2026b). This matters because city image is shaped not only by design elements but by repeatable public experiences that make the area legible, memorable, and socially attractive (Lynch, 1960; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

Through the creation of a recognizable corridor identity, Royal Baroe appears to have shifted from being perceived primarily as a problem space to being seen as a destination space. This shift reflects the politics of place-making. When local government improves lighting, regulates circulation, and activates events, it changes the emotional and symbolic register of space. In this context, urban order becomes visible as comfort, beauty, and recreational appeal. Accordingly, the image of Serang is not only projected through official statements, but embodied in how residents and visitors encounter the transformed corridor.

A key moment in this process was the public event used to launch the area's new image. The Royal Baroe activation event was framed as a city-level initiative showcasing a "new face" of the area, involving local entrepreneurs, entertainment, and ceremonial support from regional leaders (Serang City Government, 2025b). Event-based activation is important in governance terms because it gathers multiple functions into one public

performance: economic inclusion, public communication, administrative coordination, and symbolic legitimation. Based on urban governance literature, such events can reinforce place identity when they connect spatial design with social use and public narrative (Healey, 1997; Carmona, 2010).

The economic effect of this activation further strengthened the new city image. Official reports stated that the December 2025 event generated turnover of Rp289,493,000 from 122 participating enterprises, with culinary sales dominating the total (Serang City Government, 2026b). This suggests that the transformed space was not merely decorative. It also became a platform for economic circulation and local livelihood visibility. In this context, the city image of Royal Baroe was tied to practical value: a place where order, consumption, leisure, and micro-enterprise could coexist. Thus, the production of city image was inseparable from the production of economic optimism.

The following table summarizes the main governance dimensions identified in the study:

Table 1. Summary of Findings on Bureaucratic Role and Urban Image in Royal Baroe

Dimension	Empirical Indication	Governance Meaning
Spatial coordination	Relocation support, parking arrangement, coordination, management	Bureaucracy acts as cross-sector coordinator
Visual transformation	Lighting, street furniture, arranged public corridor, iconic signage	Government produces legible and attractive city image
Public activation	Launch event, evening selfie destination, entertainment	Space becomes socially experienced and symbolically recognized
Economic stimulation	122 UMKM involved, turnover from culinary and fashion sectors	Spatial order linked to local economic recovery
Institutional sustainability	Proposal for dedicated management unit, trader coaching, integrated supervision	Post-project governance becomes crucial for durability

The symbolic value of the area was also reinforced by its emergence as a photography and leisure destination. One official account described Royal Baroe as a new selfie spot and compared its visual atmosphere to better-known destinations outside the city (Serang City Government, 2026b). While such comparisons may appear rhetorical, they show how local government attempted to reposition Serang in the mental map of residents and visitors. Based on city branding theory, image construction often begins with small but highly visible landmarks and curated public experiences that signal urban confidence (Kavaratzis, 2004). In this context, the state was not only managing space; it was managing how the city wished to be seen.

Investor interest reported in early 2026 adds another layer to this image transformation. A regional report indicated that investors in culinary, restaurant, and tourism sectors had shown interest after enforcement and area arrangement improved the corridor's image (ANTARA, 2026). This suggests that city image can also function as an economic signal. When public space appears more orderly and governable, external actors may read it as evidence of policy seriousness and market potential. On the other hand, such confidence remains fragile if maintenance, regulation, and social inclusion are not sustained. Accordingly, the image value of Royal Baroe must be understood as both symbolic capital and governance-dependent capital.

3. Sustainability, Institutional Limits, and the Politics of Post-Beautification Governance

The third finding concerns the sustainability of urban transformation. While Royal Baroe shows the effectiveness of coordinated intervention, its longer-term success depends on post-beautification governance. This includes maintenance of facilities, continuous assistance for traders, event programming, cleanliness, security, and clear institutional responsibility. Based on reports about the proposed UPTD or management unit, the local government appears aware that integrated management is needed to avoid sectoral ego and fragmented responsibility (Banten News, 2026). This is a crucial lesson because many urban improvement projects lose momentum after inauguration when daily governance routines are weak.

Through a governance lens, sustainability is not only technical but political. Once a transformed area becomes publicly visible, citizens expect continuity in service quality and order. If lighting fails, cleanliness declines, or congestion returns, the legitimacy produced by initial intervention can quickly erode. In this context, local bureaucracy faces a dual obligation: preserving the functionality of the space and preserving the credibility of government action. Thus, urban image is highly contingent on institutional follow-through. Beautification without management risks becoming a temporary spectacle rather than a durable governance achievement (Pierre, 1999; Carmona, 2010). The Royal Baroe case also demonstrates the tension between inclusion and control. Spatial reordering often involves regulating informal economic practices and redirecting traders into new spatial arrangements. While this may improve public order and city image, it can also generate uncertainty for small traders if support mechanisms are weak. Based on the available evidence, the municipal government attempted to prioritize relocated traders in activation events and management planning (Serang City Government, 2025b; Banten News, 2026). This indicates that the intervention was not framed purely as exclusionary enforcement. On the other hand, inclusive outcomes require more than access to temporary events. Traders need stable foot traffic, coaching, facilitation, and a predictable governance environment.

Another strategic issue is territorial integration. Reports indicate that local officials envisioned Royal Baroe as part of a broader urban corridor linked to Taman Sari, Eco

Park, and the city square (Banten News, 2026; Serang City Government, 2026b). This broader orientation is analytically important. It suggests that Royal Baroe was not treated as an isolated beautification node, but as an anchor in a wider urban image strategy. Based on planning theory, interconnected urban spaces are more likely to generate cumulative public value than fragmented showcase projects because they improve movement, visibility, and civic coherence across the city (Healey, 1997; Innes & Booher, 2004). Accordingly, the governance contribution of Royal Baroe may be enlarged if the municipality succeeds in integrating the area into a wider spatial and economic narrative. The article identifies four key implications for politics and governance studies. First, local bureaucracy can act as a producer of city image, not only a technical executor of policy. Second, urban image is created through coordinated administrative practice, public events, and everyday service conditions rather than through design alone. Third, economic optimism can emerge from spatial order when traders, visitors, and investors interpret public space as better governed. Fourth, institutional sustainability determines whether urban transformation becomes embedded or remains episodic. In this context, the Royal Baroe case broadens understanding of local governance by showing that bureaucracy participates directly in shaping the symbolic economy of the city.

Based on these findings, the key points of the study can be summarized as follows: the local bureaucracy played a strategic coordinating role in the reorganization of Royal Baroe; visual order and event activation significantly contributed to a more positive city image; the transformation generated local economic stimulation and stronger place recognition; and long-term success depends on dedicated management institutions, trader support, and integrated maintenance. Thus, the politics of urban governance in Serang is visible not only in formal policy documents, but in how public space is arranged, narrated, and continuously administered.

Kesimpulan

This article concludes that the transformation of the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama area demonstrates how local bureaucracy can become a central actor in spatial reordering and city image formation. Based on the study, local state civil apparatus in Serang City performed at least three interconnected roles: coordinating cross-sector intervention, producing a more orderly and attractive urban image, and preparing institutional mechanisms for post-project sustainability. The findings show that urban image is not merely an aesthetic outcome, but the result of political direction, administrative coordination, public activation, and practical service management. In this context, the case contributes to politics and governance studies by highlighting that the legitimacy of local government can be strengthened through visible, well-managed, and economically productive public space.

Accordingly, the article argues that the success of urban transformation should not be measured only by ceremonial inauguration or physical beautification, but by the capacity of institutions to maintain inclusion, continuity, and public trust. The Royal

Baroe case suggests that sustainable urban governance requires a dedicated area management unit, continuous trader facilitation, integrated maintenance and supervision, and linkage with broader city corridor planning. Future local policy should therefore prioritize institutional consolidation, participatory monitoring, support for micro-enterprise adaptation, and long-term place-based governance so that spatial improvement remains socially meaningful and administratively durable.

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