

Bureaucratic Capacity and Urban Image Formation:

The Role of Local State Civil Apparatus in Spatial Reordering in Serang City, Banten

Muhamad Reza¹

Universitas Serang Raya

Korespondensi Email : muhamadreza@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the role of local state civil apparatus in spatial reordering and urban image formation in Serang City, Banten, with a focus on the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama corridor. The study departs from the view that urban space is not merely a physical territory but also a governance arena in which bureaucracy, political leadership, and public communication interact to shape public perception and local economic activity. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research analyzes how local government agencies translated policy direction into coordinated action through trader relocation, environmental arrangement, event activation, institutional planning, and area management. Data were obtained from interviews with 12 informants, field observations, and documentary materials from official reports and relevant publications. Based on the findings, the article identifies three major patterns. First, the local bureaucracy acted as a central coordinator that connected regulation, service delivery, public order, and economic facilitation. Second, urban image was produced through visual improvement, public events, symbolic branding, and the creation of a safer and more attractive atmosphere. Third, the sustainability of the transformed area depended on post-project governance, especially institutional consolidation, maintenance, and trader assistance. In this context, the article argues that local bureaucracy functions not only as policy implementer but also as an active producer of urban legitimacy and territorial meaning. Accordingly, sustainable urban transformation requires durable governance arrangements beyond ceremonial beautification and short-term spatial interventions.

Keywords: *urban governance; bureaucracy; spatial reordering; urban image; Serang City*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji peran aparatur sipil negara daerah dalam penataan ruang dan pembentukan citra kota di Kota Serang, Banten, dengan fokus pada koridor Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama. Kajian ini berangkat dari pandangan bahwa ruang kota bukan hanya wilayah fisik, tetapi juga arena tata kelola tempat birokrasi, kepemimpinan politik, dan komunikasi publik berinteraksi untuk membentuk persepsi masyarakat serta aktivitas ekonomi lokal. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana perangkat pemerintah daerah menerjemahkan arah kebijakan ke dalam tindakan terkoordinasi melalui relokasi pedagang, penataan lingkungan, aktivasi event, perencanaan kelembagaan, dan pengelolaan kawasan. Data diperoleh dari wawancara dengan 12 informan, observasi lapangan, dan bahan dokumenter dari laporan resmi serta publikasi terkait. Berdasarkan temuan, artikel ini mengidentifikasi tiga pola utama. Pertama, birokrasi daerah bertindak sebagai koordinator utama yang menghubungkan regulasi, pelayanan publik, ketertiban umum, dan fasilitasi ekonomi.

Kedua, citra kota diproduksi melalui perbaikan visual, event publik, branding simbolik, serta penciptaan suasana yang lebih aman dan menarik. Ketiga, keberlanjutan kawasan yang telah ditata sangat bergantung pada tata kelola pascaproyek, terutama konsolidasi kelembagaan, pemeliharaan, dan pembinaan pedagang. Dalam konteks ini, artikel menegaskan bahwa birokrasi lokal tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai pelaksana kebijakan, tetapi juga sebagai produsen legitimasi urban dan makna teritorial. Dengan demikian, transformasi perkotaan yang berkelanjutan memerlukan pengaturan tata kelola yang kokoh melampaui penataan fisik seremonial dan intervensi jangka pendek.

Kata kunci: tata kelola perkotaan; birokrasi; penataan ruang; citra kota; Kota Serang

Pendahuluan

Urban governance has become an increasingly important field of study because the city is a political, administrative, and symbolic space in which state authority is continuously performed and evaluated by the public (Pierre, 2011). In many developing urban areas, the management of streets, markets, public corridors, and commercial zones is closely related to broader questions of legitimacy, order, local development, and citizen trust. Based on this perspective, spatial planning is not only a technical matter of arranging physical structures, but also a governance practice through which state institutions define how urban life should be organized and represented (Healey, 1997). Through such interventions, bureaucracy contributes to the creation of public meanings attached to a place, including whether an area is perceived as chaotic, productive, attractive, or governable.

The relationship between spatial reordering and urban image is particularly significant in secondary cities. Unlike metropolitan cities with consolidated branding and stronger infrastructure, secondary cities often seek to strengthen their identity through visible urban improvements and more responsive public management. In this context, urban image is not formed solely by design aesthetics or physical appearance, but by the interaction between public services, security, accessibility, social use, and administrative coherence (Lynch, 1960; Kavaratzis, 2004). Accordingly, local governments increasingly rely on targeted urban interventions to signal capability, attract visitors, increase investor confidence, and reshape the public perception of specific zones.

In Indonesia, decentralization has widened the authority of local governments in managing public spaces, local economic development, and administrative coordination, including the regulation of trade corridors and informal economic activity (Hadiz, 2010; Firman, 2009). On the other hand, decentralization has also produced governance fragmentation, in which urban issues often involve overlapping jurisdictions, limited institutional capacity, and inconsistent policy implementation. As a result, local bureaucracies are required to perform multiple roles at once: they must regulate, coordinate, mediate, communicate, and maintain. In this context, the role of state civil apparatus becomes crucial because they operate at the frontline of implementation, translating policy directives into everyday arrangements that directly affect the urban environment.

The case of Serang City, Banten, reflects this broader dynamic. As an administrative and commercial center, Serang has experienced pressures associated with congestion, informal trade expansion, fragmented public space use, and the need to improve the city's image. One of the most visible interventions has occurred in the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama area, where the municipal government pursued spatial arrangement, trader accommodation, public event activation, and visual enhancement. Available reports indicate that Royal Baroe has been promoted as a reorganized urban corridor with aesthetic lighting, street furniture, and an atmosphere intended to attract public visits, especially in the evening (Serang City Government, 2026a). In this sense, the area became both a spatial object and a political-administrative project.

The transformation of Royal Baroe is relevant for governance studies because it demonstrates how local state institutions attempt to convert a commercial and circulation problem into a strategic public space asset. Based on official accounts, the municipal government framed the area as a “new face” of urban arrangement, while also involving relocated traders, temporary road-based activation, traffic and parking management, and coordinated public security (Serang City Government, 2025a). Through these actions, the bureaucracy did not merely beautify a place; it organized a staged transition from disorder to order, from congestion to image-building, and from fragmented management to a more integrated territorial approach.

This process also had an economic dimension. Official reports noted that a major public event in the area generated significant turnover for local micro and small enterprises and involved more than one hundred participating traders (Serang City Government, 2025b). Through the event, local bureaucracy connected spatial reordering with economic activation, indicating that place improvement was intended not only to discipline urban use but also to stimulate local commerce. Thus, the case illustrates the dual logic of urban governance in local settings: it aims to produce both order and opportunity. In this context, city image becomes inseparable from perceptions of accessibility, vibrancy, commercial value, and bureaucratic responsiveness.

Another important development concerns the local government's plan to establish a dedicated management structure for the Royal Baroe area. Reports from early 2026 described discussions about forming a special management unit responsible for area arrangement, event coordination, trader assistance, and integrated supervision under the relevant municipal agency (Banten News, 2026). This indicates institutional awareness that visible transformation cannot be sustained by a single event or a one-time beautification effort. On the other hand, newly improved urban spaces often lose quality when post-project management is weak, fragmented, or dependent only on symbolic leadership. Thus, institutional consolidation becomes a critical issue in assessing whether urban transformation has durable governance value.

This article is also informed by theoretical debates on collaborative governance and the production of place. Collaborative governance emphasizes the importance of cross-sector coordination and collective problem solving in addressing complex public issues (Ansell

& Gash, 2008). Spatial arrangement in urban commercial corridors cannot be managed effectively by one office alone because it involves mobility, livelihoods, security, maintenance, and public communication. Likewise, theories of place-making and city branding show that urban image is produced through repeated social experiences, visual cues, policy narratives, and territorial management rather than through design alone (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Carmona, 2010). In this context, bureaucracy acts not only as a regulatory machine but as a producer of symbolic order.

Despite the growing literature on urban governance, less attention has been given to how local state civil apparatus in Indonesian municipalities work simultaneously as coordinators, image-builders, and sustainers of place-based transformation in everyday administrative practice. Many studies discuss planning frameworks or urban policy outcomes, yet fewer explore how bureaucratic actors translate political ambition into organized public space and perceived city identity. This gap is important because urban image is often discussed as if it were an outcome of infrastructure alone, whereas it is deeply shaped by the quality of governance behind the physical intervention.

Accordingly, this article asks how local state civil apparatus contribute to spatial reordering and urban image formation in the Royal Baroe-Pasar Lama area of Serang City. The article aims to analyze three interrelated dimensions: first, the coordinating role of bureaucracy in implementing area transformation; second, the way urban image is produced through visual, symbolic, and programmatic intervention; and third, the institutional challenges of sustaining a newly reorganized urban corridor. Through this discussion, the article contributes to the Journal of Politics and Governance Studies by showing that urban transformation in local contexts is fundamentally a governance process shaped by bureaucratic capacity, administrative integration, and the politics of public visibility.

Metode

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze 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 research location was selected because the area represents a recent and visible case of local government intervention involving trader reorganization, public space improvement, event activation, and institutional planning. The sources of data consisted of 12 informants, including officials from relevant municipal agencies, local traders, community representatives, and supporting actors involved in the implementation or utilization of the area. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation of the site, and documentation review of official government releases, local reports, and supporting publications related to the Royal Baroe policy process.

Data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative model involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify recurring patterns related to bureaucratic coordination, city image production, and post-project governance (Miles

et al., 2014). Through this process, primary and secondary data were compared to assess whether official narratives were consistent with implementation dynamics and public experience. The validity of the data was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and cross-checking of findings among categories of informants, which is consistent with qualitative standards for establishing credibility and interpretive reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2014).

Hasil dan Diskusi

1. The Coordinating Role of Local Bureaucracy in Spatial Reordering

The findings show that spatial reordering in the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama area was not an isolated physical intervention but a coordinated governance process led by local state civil apparatus across multiple institutional sectors. Based on documentary evidence, municipal agencies were involved in preparing the area, organizing the activation event, arranging parking pockets, coordinating security, and integrating traders into the reorganized corridor (Serang City Government, 2025a). Through this process, the bureaucracy acted as the operational bridge between political instruction and practical implementation. This confirms that urban governance in contested public-commercial spaces requires cross-sector administrative integration rather than fragmented agency action (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Pierre, 2011).

Based on field interpretation, the work of spatial reordering required at least four interconnected bureaucratic functions. First, local agencies had to regulate territorial use by determining which activities could be accommodated within the reorganized corridor. Second, they had to maintain public order by coordinating mobility, parking, cleanliness, and security. Third, they had to facilitate the adaptation of traders affected by relocation or rearrangement. Fourth, they had to communicate that the intervention represented improvement rather than exclusion. In this context, bureaucracy served not only as a regulatory authority but also as a mediator between administrative objectives and public acceptance.

Through coordinated action, the local government transformed Royal Baroe from a routine corridor into a publicly visible demonstration of governance capacity. Official reports described how preparations included physical readiness, traffic support, integrated security, and area activation under the direction of local political leadership (Serang City Government, 2025a). Such actions illustrate that bureaucratic coordination in urban governance is often performative as well as functional. On the one hand, coordination ensures that the area can operate safely and efficiently. On the other hand, it also communicates that the state is present, organized, and capable of reshaping urban order. Thus, visibility becomes part of governance itself.

This process reflects the logic of collaborative urban management. A public corridor used by traders, pedestrians, and visitors cannot be governed effectively through a single bureaucratic chain. Instead, it requires coordination between offices responsible for trade, transportation, public order, environmental management, and event facilitation. Based

on collaborative governance theory, such issues demand negotiated institutional arrangements and practical interdependence among actors (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In this context, the Royal Baroe intervention demonstrates that local state civil apparatus function as coordinators of inter-organizational response rather than merely executing pre-defined technical orders.

At the same time, the findings suggest that coordination was strengthened by a clear political narrative. Royal Baroe was not treated simply as an engineering project but as part of a broader municipal effort to improve urban order and create a more positive city appearance. This gave administrative actors a shared frame that linked physical arrangement with public communication and local economic goals. Accordingly, the case indicates that bureaucracy becomes more effective when spatial policy is attached to a recognizable territorial narrative, because administrative work gains both direction and legitimacy.

2. Urban Image as an Administrative and Symbolic Product

The second major finding is that urban image in Royal Baroe was actively produced through bureaucratic action, not passively generated by physical improvement alone. Based on official descriptions, the area was enhanced with lighting, street furniture, and visual elements that encouraged public visitation and photography, especially after evening hours (Serang City Government, 2026a). Through these additions, the local government sought to create a more memorable and inviting urban environment. This aligns with the argument that city image is shaped through legibility, sensory experience, and repeated public interaction with space (Lynch, 1960; Kavaratzis, 2004).

In this context, the bureaucracy played a role in constructing not only spatial order but also urban meaning. A corridor becomes an “attractive place” when it is readable, safe, and socially active. Based on the findings, Royal Baroe began to be perceived not merely as a trading space but as a destination for leisure, family visits, and visual consumption. Such a shift is politically significant because it changes how citizens relate to the city and how they evaluate local government performance. Accordingly, urban image should be understood as an outcome of governance work that organizes visual cues, circulation, social usage, and public messaging.

The launch event in late December 2025 was central to this process. Reports indicate that the event involved public entertainment, trader participation, security arrangements, parking coordination, and the framing of Royal Baroe as a “new face” of Serang’s urban arrangement (Serang City Government, 2025a). Through event-based activation, the bureaucracy transformed a spatial intervention into a public narrative. In this context, an event functions as an administrative instrument of place-making because it introduces the space to the public under curated conditions. Thus, the state does not simply improve a place; it stages its meaning.

On the other hand, the symbolic value of Royal Baroe was not detached from material use. Reports documented heavy public visitation and active commercial participation,

indicating that the area became socially and economically animated rather than visually empty (Serang City Government, 2025b; Serang City Government, 2026a). This is important because successful urban image depends on lived experience. A well-lit but inactive corridor may appear improved, but it does not necessarily become a meaningful urban place. Through public use, photography, and spending activity, Royal Baroe gained a stronger identity as a civic-commercial corridor.

The following table summarizes the main dimensions identified in the study.

Table 1. Summary of Bureaucratic Roles and Urban Image Formation in Royal Baroe

Dimension	Empirical Indication	Analytical Meaning
Cross-agency coordination	Parking arrangement, security integration, trader accommodation, event preparation	Bureaucracy acts as operational coordinator
Visual enhancement	Lighting, street furniture, signage, improved corridor atmosphere	Urban image is made legible and attractive
Public activation	Launch event, evening crowd, leisure and photography activity	Place identity is socially produced
Economic facilitation	Participation of UMKM and local traders, increased turnover	Spatial reordering supports local economic optimism
Institutional planning	Discussion of dedicated management unit and area supervision	Sustainability depends on post-project governance

Based on official records, the activation event produced total turnover of Rp289,493,000 and involved 122 UMKM participants, with culinary activities contributing the largest share (Serang City Government, 2025b). This economic indicator is not merely supportive data. It demonstrates that the new image of the area was tied to practical economic circulation. Through the reorganization, the government created a space in which order and commercial opportunity could coexist. In this context, urban image acquired material credibility because the place did not only look better; it also functioned better for local enterprise.

Another symbolic aspect concerns the emergence of Royal Baroe as a photo destination and recognizable point within the city. Reports described the area as a popular selfie spot and highlighted the visual appeal of the corridor’s signage and nighttime atmosphere (Serang City Government, 2026b). Based on city branding theory, such symbolic anchors are important because they give an area mnemonic value and improve the city’s internal image among residents (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Through these visual markers, local bureaucracy participated in the production of territorial identity. The city was being narrated through a specific place.

Thus, the findings support the view that city image is an administrative and symbolic product. It emerges when bureaucracy coordinates physical design, public activity, and communicative framing into a coherent urban experience. In this context, Royal Baroe became a site where the municipal government could display capability while also

creating a more positive emotional relationship between citizens and urban space. Accordingly, the role of ASN in Serang exceeded procedural administration and entered the domain of image governance.

3. Economic Signaling, Institutional Sustainability, and Governance Challenges

The third finding concerns the relationship between urban image, economic signaling, and the need for sustainable governance. Based on public reporting, investor interest in culinary, restaurant, and tourism sectors increased after the area became more orderly and visually appealing (ANTARA, 2026). This indicates that spatial reordering can function as a signal of administrative seriousness and territorial potential. In many local contexts, investment is influenced not only by market demand but also by whether a place appears governable, accessible, and publicly maintained. Thus, urban image may contribute to economic confidence when it is backed by visible bureaucratic control.

Through the Royal Baroe intervention, the bureaucracy sent at least two signals simultaneously. First, it signaled to citizens that the city government was capable of acting on a visible urban issue. Second, it signaled to external stakeholders that Serang possessed spaces with emerging commercial and tourism value. In this context, image and governance are mutually reinforcing. A positive urban image can attract visitors and investors, while the arrival of users and investment further stabilizes the image of the place as active and promising. On the other hand, this cycle remains fragile without institutional continuity.

For this reason, the proposal to establish a dedicated area management unit is one of the most important governance developments in the case. Reports from early 2026 noted discussions on forming a UPTD under the responsible municipal office to manage trade arrangements, event coordination, business assistance, and integrated supervision in the Royal Baroe area (Banten News, 2026). Based on governance theory, this is a critical step because sustainable urban transformation requires organizational embedding. Without clear institutional ownership, maintenance functions tend to become dispersed, resulting in declining service quality and weakened accountability (Pierre, 1999; Carmona, 2010).

The findings also show that post-project governance must include support for traders and users of the area. Spatial reordering may improve circulation and aesthetics, but it can create adaptation pressures for small traders if visitor patterns, location advantages, or management rules change. Based on local reports, the municipal government attempted to prioritize relocated traders in the activation process and connect the area with broader economic facilitation (Serang City Government, 2025a; ANTARA, 2026). This suggests an effort to balance order with inclusion. However, the long-term success of such efforts depends on routine coaching, promotional support, and predictable management practices. Accordingly, inclusive governance should remain central to the area's future.

Another challenge concerns maintenance and territorial integration. A newly improved urban corridor can quickly lose credibility if cleanliness, security, parking control, and

public facilities deteriorate. In this context, sustainability is not only about preserving physical assets but also about preserving the behavioral order and public expectations created by the transformation. Reports linking Royal Baroe with other areas such as Taman Sari, Eco Park, and the city square suggest that the local government viewed the corridor as part of a wider urban image agenda (Banten News, 2026). This broader orientation is strategic because isolated beautification projects tend to have limited impact, whereas connected urban zones can reinforce city identity more effectively (Healey, 1997).

Based on the overall findings, this study identifies four key points. First, local ASN in Serang played a strategic role as coordinators of multi-actor spatial intervention. Second, urban image in Royal Baroe was produced through visual improvement, event activation, and symbolic communication rather than through infrastructure alone. Third, the reorganization of space contributed to local economic stimulation and broader investor optimism. Fourth, the durability of the transformation depends on institutional consolidation, area maintenance, and inclusive support for traders and community users. Thus, the case demonstrates that urban image is a governance achievement only when it is continuously reproduced through administrative practice.

In this context, the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama case contributes to politics and governance studies by showing that local bureaucracy is not merely the executor of spatial decisions made elsewhere. It is an active actor that assembles policy, order, symbolism, and territorial meaning. Through everyday administrative action, ASN help define how the city is seen, used, and valued. Accordingly, the politics of urban governance in Serang can be understood as a politics of coordination, visibility, and institutional durability.

Kesimpulan

This article concludes that the reorganization of the Royal Baroe–Pasar Lama corridor in Serang City demonstrates the strategic role of local state civil apparatus in connecting spatial policy, public order, and urban image formation. Based on the findings, ASN in the local government did not function only as technical implementers but as coordinators of inter-agency action, facilitators of trader accommodation, managers of public visibility, and producers of a new territorial narrative for the city. Through spatial arrangement, event activation, visual enhancement, and institutional planning, the bureaucracy helped transform the area into a more attractive and economically promising urban corridor. In this context, the article confirms that city image is not merely an aesthetic effect of beautification, but the result of governance capacity that shapes how space is organized, experienced, and interpreted by the public.

Accordingly, the contribution of this article lies in emphasizing that sustainable urban transformation depends on durable post-project governance rather than temporary ceremonial success. The Royal Baroe case suggests that local governments need to strengthen dedicated area management, ensure regular maintenance and integrated supervision, expand trader coaching and economic facilitation, and connect

corridor improvement with broader city-scale planning. Future policy in Serang and similar localities should therefore prioritize institutional continuity, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and place-based management so that urban image remains socially legitimate, economically useful, and administratively sustainable.

Referensi

- Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571.
- ANTARA. (2026). Investor interest and urban area arrangement in Royal Baroe, Serang. *ANTARA News*, 17 February 2026.
- Banten News. (2026). Discussion on the establishment of Royal Baroe area management unit in Serang City. *Banten News*, 25 February 2026.
- Carmona, M. (2010). Contemporary public space: Critique and classification, part two: Classification. *Journal of Urban Design*, 15(2), 157–173.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Firman, T. (2009). Decentralization reform and local-government proliferation in Indonesia: Towards a fragmentation of regional development. *Review of Urban & Regional Development Studies*, 21(2–3), 143–157.
- Hadiz, V. R. (2010). *Localising power in post-authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia perspective*. Stanford University Press.
- Healey, P. (1997). *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies*. Macmillan.
- Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1(1), 58–73.
- Kavaratzis, M., & Ashworth, G. J. (2005). City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick? *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 96(5), 506–514.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*. MIT Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Pierre, J. (1999). Models of urban governance: The institutional dimension of urban politics. *Urban Affairs Review*, 34(3), 372–396.
- Pierre, J. (2011). *The politics of urban governance*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Serang City Government. (2025a). Royal Baroe urban arrangement and public activation report. Serang City Government Publication.
- Serang City Government. (2025b). Economic turnover report of Royal Baroe public event, 26 December 2025. Serang City Government Publication.
- Serang City Government. (2026a). Royal Baroe as a public tourism and evening destination in Serang. Serang City Government Publication.
- Serang City Government. (2026b). Post-inauguration development and public image of Royal Baroe corridor. Serang City Government Publication.