

# Spatial Decentralization of Mosque at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam

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**Abstract** In the concept of Islamic architecture, the mosque as the center of the area is reflected in the layout patterns of ancient Islamic cities, including Islamic boarding schools. However, the layout pattern of the Islamic education area at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam presents a hall as the center of the area. The purpose of this study is to enrich the theory of functional transformation in the pattern of Islamic educational regional arrangements through a case study. This study analyzes the adaptation of the layout pattern of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam within the framework of Islamic architecture. The research results show a functional transformation, with the hall taking on a new role as the center of the area. The findings of this study indicate a shift in the mosque's meaning and values, from a center of worship and social activity to a symbol of regional identity. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the pattern of mosque decentralization in the modern *pesantren* sector from an Islamic architectural perspective. The benefit of this study is a rethinking of the mosque's meaning and function by modern *pesantren* managers in the development of an inclusive Islamic area.

**Keywords** Islamic Architecture, Mosque, Functional Transformation, Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, Mosque Centralization

## 1. Introduction

As times change, the human population continues to grow, driving physical and non-physical transformations [1-3]. Transformation has a broad impact on the dynamics of physical and non-physical changes [4,5]. This influence is evident in the principle of sustainability [6]. Transformation binds humans in social and cultural relationships [7]. This bond is related to spatial change as a basis for urban design and planning [8]. One of the most influential civilizations is the Islamic civilization, originating in the Arabian Peninsula [9] and spreading throughout the world, playing a significant role in human history [9-11]. Islamic culture plays a vital role in the arrangement of spaces in accordance with Islamic values [11].

In their urban layouts, ancient Islamic cities in Arabia feature the mosque as the center of regional development and as a symbol of the earliest Islamic civilization [12,13]. Mosques provide a *sahn* (open courtyard) as a public meeting space [14]. In the front area of the *sahn* (open courtyard) is the *maidan* (field), which is used for bazaar activities. From the *maidan* (field), access to the residential area is via narrow streets [15]. Transcending boundaries and time, the pattern has adapted as a source of unity, spirituality, and inclusivity for the global muslim community [16-18]. Functionally, mosques serve as centers for education, science, and the development of economic and social-political life [11,13].

In the realm of education, the role of the mosque also contributes to the management of the Islamic education curriculum [19], reflecting a global shift [20,21]. This development in the role of education made the mosque a pioneer in establishing school buildings [10]. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Indonesia, Islamic education has evolved [9] by integrating formal learning and Islamic education [22] in ways relevant to contemporary societal needs [22,23]. The role of the mosque in Southeast Asia as a means of education, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, was followed by the establishment of *pesantren* as Islamic boarding schools [15,17,24], which served as the first traditional form of education in Indonesia since 1399 CE [25,26]. There are five main aspects of the concept of *pesantren*: the mosque, the kyai's house as the educator, the dormitory, the *santri* (student) [27], and the educational curriculum [28]. The presence of the mosque is central to the *pesantren* area [29] as a religious space [30] and a communal space that fosters social cohesion among students [30,31].

In an era of technological advancement and social dynamics, *pesantren* as educational institutions must be able to respond to various challenges and opportunities in the educational process to maintain and enhance their existence [26,31], based on Islamic values [32,33]. This triggers functional transformation [2,4,34], which has an impact on the arrangement pattern of Islamic education areas [23] naturally [35,36] as an adaptation to the time [26]. One form of change in the development of *pesantren* is the creation of the concept of modern *pesantren*, which combines elements of traditional Islamic education with modern education [37-39]. In terms of architecture, *pesantren* in Indonesia, which initially consisted of the kyai's house, a mosque, and dormitories, expanded to include additional spaces to support education [29,40].

The combination of Islamic values and modern educational management influences *pesantren* in Indonesia [16,25], including Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam in Sukoharjo, Central Java, Indonesia [40]. Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam was founded in 1982 as a pioneer in establishing a modern boarding school [41] in Central Java [42]. The layout of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam follows the concept of Islamic architecture, with space divided into worship, social, and educational areas [13,42]. This pattern is unique in the presence of Gelora Assalaam (the hall), unlike other *pesantrens*, which adopt the pattern of the layout of ancient Islamic cities, where the mosque is the starting point for regional development. This research is relevant to contemporary issues in Islamic architecture, which makes the mosque the central point of the area.

To analyze the phenomenon of functional transformation at Pondok Pesantren Modern Assalaam, several theoretical frameworks are used. Yi-Fu Tuan [3] emphasizes the human relationship with space not only in physical terms but also in non-physical terms, such as experience, values, and meaning. Meanwhile, Berger and

Thomas Luckmann [44] explain that reality is formed through the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization within social life. Additionally, Alsayyad [15] argues that mosques in ancient Islamic cities served as centers of religious, social, educational, and political activity. By utilizing these three theories, the research aims to deepen the understanding of the shifting roles of mosques and the emergence of social space centrality in modern *pesantren*.

Several studies have examined transformations in environmental and social sustainability. Christopher Alexander [45] stated that spatial development patterns are adapted to local conditions. Jeremy Till [46] then expanded on this idea by asserting space as a dynamic entity subject to change. Some studies that have examined the development of spatial patterns in Islamic architecture include Georges Marcais [47], who stated that the center of the Friday mosque, market, and hammam is a core element. The model continued to be used in other studies that highlighted the presence of mosques as an identity of Islamic regions [13,14,30,47,48]. This is supported by the statement that the mosque is the center of development in Islamic architectural contexts [42,49,50]. After reviewing prior research, this study addresses a significant gap in the study of mosque decentralization within the context of modern *pesantren*. Studies of Islamic architecture explain that the mosque is the center of the surrounding area. However, based on the case study of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, the mosque area is not the central focus of the *pesantren* complex.

This study aims to enrich the concept of Islamic architecture through the functional transformation of the Islamic education area at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam. Then, it seeks to answer questions about why Gelora Assalaam (the hall) has become the center for the development of the Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam area, and how the spatial arrangement pattern of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam has adapted. Based on an in-depth analysis of the case study of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, the study also aims to provide a theoretical contribution to understanding the functional transformation and arrangement patterns in Islamic architecture within modern Islamic education.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This is a qualitative single-instrument case study. This study used a triangulation technique through observation, interviews, and document analysis [51-53]. This approach is used to develop a deep, holistic understanding of spatial phenomena, user behavior, meaning, and the design process, thereby revealing the dynamics of spatial transformation as functions, social aspects, and user needs change were used in this study [27]. The ancient Islamic cities' layout pattern centers the mosque at the core of regional development. However, a case study at Pesantren

Modern Assalaam showed a spatial shift followed by regional development. Therefore, Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, located in Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, was chosen as the research site.

This study used primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with key informants who played a historical role that occurred at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam and were involved for at least 15–20 years [54]:

1. Yanik Khizanatul Khoiriyah, Head of the Female Boarding Section, second batch of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam
2. Ida Rohayati, educator at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam since 1989
3. Trisnojoyo Khottob, structural official of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam since 1993

From the source, information was obtained on functional transformation at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam and the pattern of mosque centrality within its boundaries. Field observations were also conducted to observe the adaptation of spatial arrangement patterns both externally and internally. Externally, it concerned the adaptation of spatial arrangement patterns derived from Islamic architecture for educational, religious, and social activities within the Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam environment. This observation focused on the function of space, its adaptation to the needs of activities, and architectural elements indicating spatial transformation. Internally, it focused on the functional transformation of the mosque's centrality at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam. Secondary data were obtained from historical documents on the development of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, notes/documentation from various periods, old photographs, area maps, scientific articles, books, and previous research reports on Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam and spatial transformation theory, and the development of *pesantren* in Indonesia.

The data analysis was conducted by identifying the role of the mosque as the center of the *pesantren* area based on Islamic architectural theory in the aspect of modernity [36] through the transformation of space in the arrangement pattern based on Islamic architecture [25] of *pesantren* activities [20,29,55]. Then, the literature review was conducted to examine the changes in the *pesantren's* spatial patterns [28]. The study provided a more systematic overview of mosque decentralization in spatial and functional terms in the Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam area, based on Islamic architectural theory, by periodizing development in Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam.

### 3. Result and Analysis

The focus of this study was the functional transformation [2,4,34,57] at Pondok Pesantren Modern

Islam Assalaam over time [2,56]. This transformation had an impact on the spatial transformation [57] of the mosque at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam. This process is an adaptation to the ever-evolving social, cultural, and religious dimensions of Islamic architecture [15]. This transformation viewed the mosque as an element undergoing functional reinterpretation, from a mere sacred space to a social space capable of accommodating the dynamics of modern *pesantren* life without relinquishing its Islamic identity. This process reflected the mosque's role as a dynamic space generator in response to local conditions and the interconnection between the physical and the meaningful.

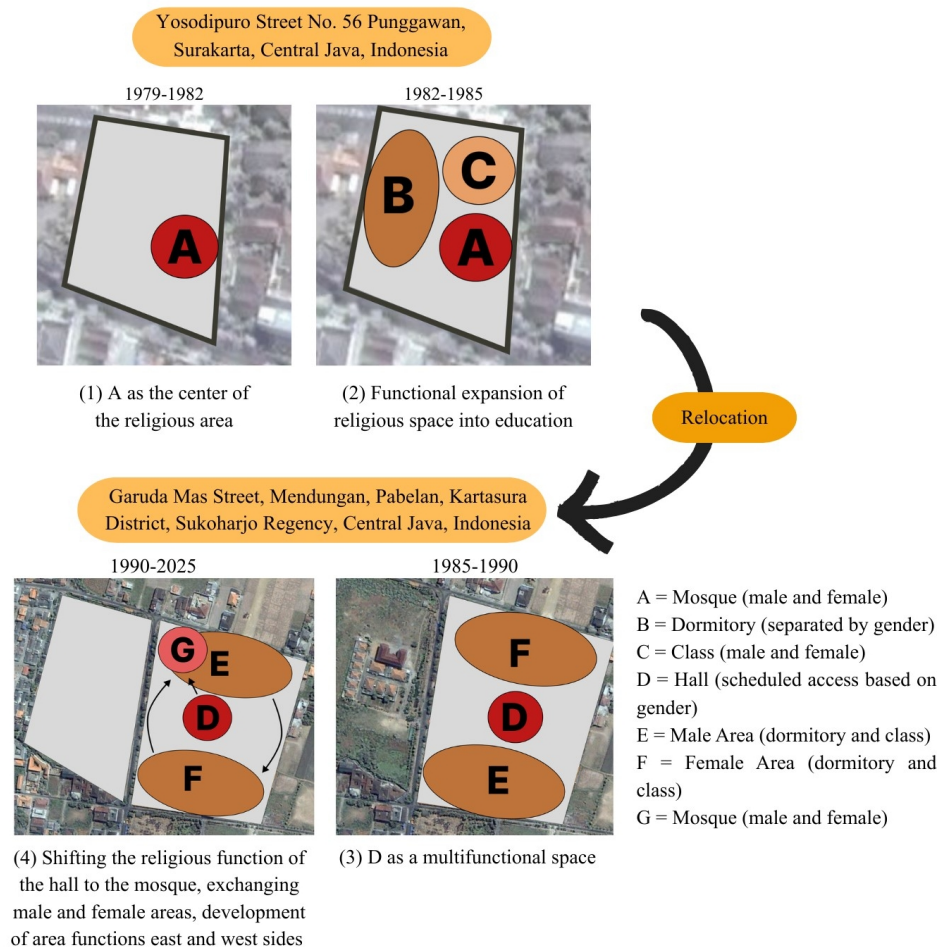
#### 3.1. Transformation of Religious-Social Space

The establishment of the mosque as the initial step in the development of Islamic education is a legacy that has been a dream of the founders of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam. The mosque serves as both a symbol and the first step in this endeavor, as stated:

“The construction of the mosque and pesantren is a great aspiration for the founder of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, prioritizing the quality and adaptive design as a response to the needs of Islamic education.” (Yanik Khizanatul Khoiriyah, Head of the Female Section and a member of the second generation of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam).

The results of the interview are also supported by a historical document in a biographical book of the founder of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam [42]. From the results of the interviews and historical documents, the stages of spatial transformation occurring in Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam can be compiled in Figure 1.

Based on Figure 1, Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam has been divided into two areas over its development. From 1979 to 1985, it was located in Punggawan, and from 1985 to the present, it has been located in Kartasura District. In 1979, the mosque began as a place of worship and regular study for employees of the book publisher *Tiga Serangkai* located at Yosodipuro Street No. 56 Punggawan, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. His role extended to the surrounding community and the development of *Madrasah Diniyah Awaliyah* for men and women students. The learning method at *Madrasah Diniyah Awaliyah* was carried out every afternoon after public school. This functional transformation aligns with Mossa [10], who examined the spatial pattern of the development of Islamic education. In 1982, this pattern continued with the concept of the *pesantren* through the provision of classes and dormitories that could accommodate 100 people. The learning process combined men and women students. This was due to limited space at Pesantren Punggawan. However, the dormitory areas remained gender-segregated.



**Figure 1.** Spatial Transformation in Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam

The role of the mosque, originally for worship and education, has experienced spatial decentralization as an adaptation to increasingly complex educational needs. This showed the functional transformation of the mosque area from merely serving a religious function to extending to an educational center. In 1985, Pesantren Punggawan relocated to Kartasura District and was renamed Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam. The relocation was caused by the need for a larger area of land for the expansion of *pesantren*. Since the relocation, the layout of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam has clearly separated the men's and women's areas. This was taken into account due to the complexity of the activities within the boarding school's programs. This separation included the dormitory and educational areas. In the early development stages of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, the hall was located at the center of the area as a multi-function space. This space functioned as the center for activities and worship. In 1990, a mosque was built on the north side of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, shifting the function of the hall for worship activities to the mosque.

### 3.2. Gender Space Equality

From the initial planning stages, Pondok Pesantren

Modern Assalaam has adopted a gender-segregated approach to space utilization. This aligns with Islamic values that maintain proper social etiquette between genders [58]. Therefore, area zoning is established to delineate separate areas for men's and women's use, including dormitories, sports facilities, and activity spaces. Supported by research from Stefan Maneval [59], Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam has adopted a gender segregation system as a form of spatial privacy regulation, constructing gender roles. Therefore, area zoning is used to delineate men's and women's areas, including dormitories, sports facilities, and activity spaces, and it reflects the view that gender is a social construct that shapes the roles, expectations, and identities associated with both men and women. This confirms that the spatial difference between the two is not natural, but a product of social construction that can change over time.

The mosque, as the principal place of worship, is practically closer to the area where the male students reside. The construction of the mosque resulted in the women's area being moved from the north to the men's area in the south. This is in accordance with the Sharia, requiring men to pray in congregation at the mosque [60]. However, for the five daily prayers, the mosque is accessible to both men

and women. This is in keeping with the *pesantren's* culture, implemented as a form of discipline to enforce the Sharia regarding the virtue of timely congregational prayer.

This arrangement pattern aligns with Islamic teachings that hold that men have a more substantial obligation to attend congregational prayers at the mosque. This refers to the Sharia that emphasizes the virtue of congregational prayer in the mosque for men [61,62]. Ghafournia, N. [62] explains that space is associated with the principle of religious meaning in its activities. Although the mosque was located in the men's area, women could still use it as a place of worship for limited periods. Based on the results of field observations, it was found that the times women can use the mosque are during the five daily prayers and the time between Maghrib and Isha prayers. The spatial layout at Pondok Pesantren Modern Assalaam is consistent with this principle. The zone exchange between men and women was accompanied by the establishment of the mosque and the westward expansion of *pesantren*. The mosque was located in an area more easily accessible to men, in accordance with their obligation to pray in. The results of field observation regarding gender separation in this spatial pattern simultaneously reflected the application of Islamic values, supported by the following statements from the informant.

“Assalaam emphasizes beauty, but in terms of its prerequisites, the separation between women and men in the same area is somewhat distinct and more focused on the common good.” (Yanik Khizanatul Khoiriyah, Head of the Female Section and a member of the second generation of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam).

The statement explains that the exchange of men and women zones since the presence of the mosque and the expansion of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam adopted a functional approach, namely, the mosque remains important as a spiritual and social center for men, while women have limited time to access the mosque and have an inclusive social space. This reflects that equality is more appropriate than sameness [63] in the application of spatial arrangement patterns. The spatial arrangement patterns at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam demonstrate a balance between the principles of the Sharia, social construction, and *Pesantren's* adaptive needs in managing shared space fairly and functionally. In terms of spatial structure, Gelora Assalaam (the hall), besides being the center of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, also served as a segregated area for men and women. The gender-based separation of areas was in keeping with *pesantren's* culture and values, to maintain orderly activities, privacy, and social etiquette within the *pesantren* environment. This separation is part of the boarding school's spatial management system, emphasizing the principles of politeness, discipline, and social control in the students' daily lives.

### 3.3. Centralization Social Space

The mosque has been a spatial center since the

development of the mosque in the Punggawan area in 1979-1985. This aligns with the mosque's role as a center of human civilization [50]. However, since relocating to Kartasura District, Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam has introduced Gelora Assalaam (the hall) as its spatial center. A statement supports this:

“Gelora Assalaam (the hall) is a multipurpose building. For prayer attendees, if there's an art night, it's right there. At the same time, the new mosque is scheduled to open soon. Only after that, the prayer is in the mosque.” (Ida Rohayati, an educator at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam since 1989).

This statement confirms that, from the outset, social functions were directed toward non-sacred spaces rather than mosques. This is also supported by the results of field observations, which show that the presence of the mosque has contributed to the decline in Gelora Assalaam's (hall) function as a place of worship. This limitation of function underscores the restriction of more structured activities, the mosque's role as a place of prayer, and a Sharia-governed social space. The functional differences between the two indicate a complementary division of space: Gelora Assalaam (the hall) accommodated physical and communal activities. At the same time, the mosque served as a spiritual and educational center for Islamic values. The presence of the mosque shifted the orientation of worship activities within Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, making Gelora Assalaam (the hall) the focal point of the area. Gelora Assalaam (the hall) served as the primary venue for large-scale social activities, including meetings with students' parents, gatherings, worship, and academic events, thereby creating a hub for social interaction and togetherness. As the center area, Gelora Assalaam (the hall) also served as a boundary between the men's and women's areas.

The spatial arrangement patterns at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam were adapted to the ever-evolving spatial needs, in line with the dynamics of *pesantren* activities. Kutsiyah [27] reinforces this pattern as an implementation of *pesantren* values and traditions, enabling social transformation into *rahmatan lil'alam* for various groups, class differences, and cultural diversity. This statement is supported by:

“In terms of facilities to balance infrastructure with other institutions. Because Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam must add color, it must add color to the surrounding community. It must have an impact. Don't let the existence of Pesantren Assalaam be useless for the community.” (Trisnojoyo Khottob, structural official at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam since 1993).

The statement affirms that social spaces are designed to be interconnected to integrate activities among students, educators, and the surrounding community, thereby fostering fluid and inclusive interaction. In line with the statement from the source:

“With the concept of modern education, the development at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam has an idealist target of 100 years without renovation.” (Yanik Khizanatul Khoiriyah, Head of the Female Section and a member of the second generation of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam).

The statement affirms that regional planning not only focuses on current needs but is also designed for long-term sustainability. Although not located at the center of the area, the mosque remains the primary symbol of the Islamic character within the *pesantren* environment. The spatial arrangement at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam reflects a modern architectural vision that is adaptive, functional, and visionary, while remaining rooted in Islamic educational values. This shows that, from the beginning, the center of activity in *pesantren* was not the mosque but rather a more flexible modern building. This shift gave rise to a pattern of functional decentralization, with mosques positioned as complements to, rather than the core of, the spatial layout.

#### 4. Discussion

This chapter discusses research findings on functional transformation at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam. This spatial transformation stems from social space as the centralizing force of the *pesantren* area, which differs from other *pesantrens* that adopt the pattern of the layout of ancient Islamic cities, where the mosque is the starting point [16,29,30]. The results of the analysis show that functional transformation, social conditions, and Islamic principles are the keys to changing spatial order patterns based on Islamic values. Functional transformation is evident in the development of religious functions into educational functions since 1982, culminating in the institutionalization of *pesantren*. Territorial transformation is manifested by the separation of men and women zones, followed by the expansion westward and the construction of a mosque. Meanwhile functional transformation is evident in the functional shift of Gelora Assalaam (the hall) from a secondary to a central venue.

The implementation of this transformation can be understood through Yi-Fu Tuan [3]. His theory emphasizes that the human relationship with space is not only physical but also non-physical, encompassing experiences, values, and meaning. In this regard, the development of dormitories and classrooms at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam entails the creation of new spaces. At the same time, the mosque is positioned as a religious center that represents the deep-rooted reproduction of Islamic values. The transformation of space in *pesantren* is not only a change in layout, but also a shift in the functions and social interaction patterns that accompany it. This process is further emphasized by Peter L. Berger and Thomas

Luckmann's [44] theoretical framework on social construction, which involves externalization, objectification, and internalization. At Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, externalization is reflected in the need to separate men's and women's areas, and objectification is realized when this need is institutionalized in dormitory zoning rules, worship facilities, and activity areas. At the same time, internalization occurs when students and the boarding school community accept and live by these rules as part of their Islamic identity.

Compared with Alsayyad's [15] theory of Islamic Urbanism, there is a fundamental difference in the pattern of regional arrangement. In the concept of the ancient Islamic cities, the mosque occupied a central position as a hub for religious, social, educational, and political activities. However, the case study of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam showed a shift, with the social space (hall) occupying a central position in the regional layout. This social space became the center of both formal and informal activities, thereby influencing worship, education, and dormitory spaces. This pattern represented a contemporary adaptation to the concept of the ancient Islamic cities. The area's centrality is determined not only by the mosque but also by social spaces, in accordance with the community's actual needs. These distinguishing aspects indicate an adaptation to modern demands without abandoning Islamic values. These values were still upheld by *pesantren*, making the transformation of space sustainable, both through physical development and the strengthening of inherent social and religious meanings. This adaptation introduced a new form of regional order that remains rooted in Islamic values yet adapts to contemporary needs, as reflected in Figure 2.

In the diagram, the functional transformation at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam exhibits a pattern of centrality that differs from other *pesantrens*, which adapt the pattern of the layout of ancient Islamic cities [16,29]. The social space has become the center of the area, replacing the mosque's position as the central point [13-15, 24]. The novelty of this research lies in the discovery of the pattern of mosque decentralization within the scope of modern *pesantren*. This showed that the centrality of Islamic education areas was no longer singularly centered on mosques and could shift to more flexible social spaces. This finding opens up new perspectives on the spatial dynamics of modern *pesantren* as a form of environmental adaptation. This pattern shift constituted a more structured spatial planning strategy to preserve the mosque's sanctity and adapt to increasingly complex social needs. This principle aligns with the layout pattern at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, placing the social space (hall) at the center of the area as an adaptation to modern needs. Nevertheless, the mosque remains the religious and identity center of Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam area [16].

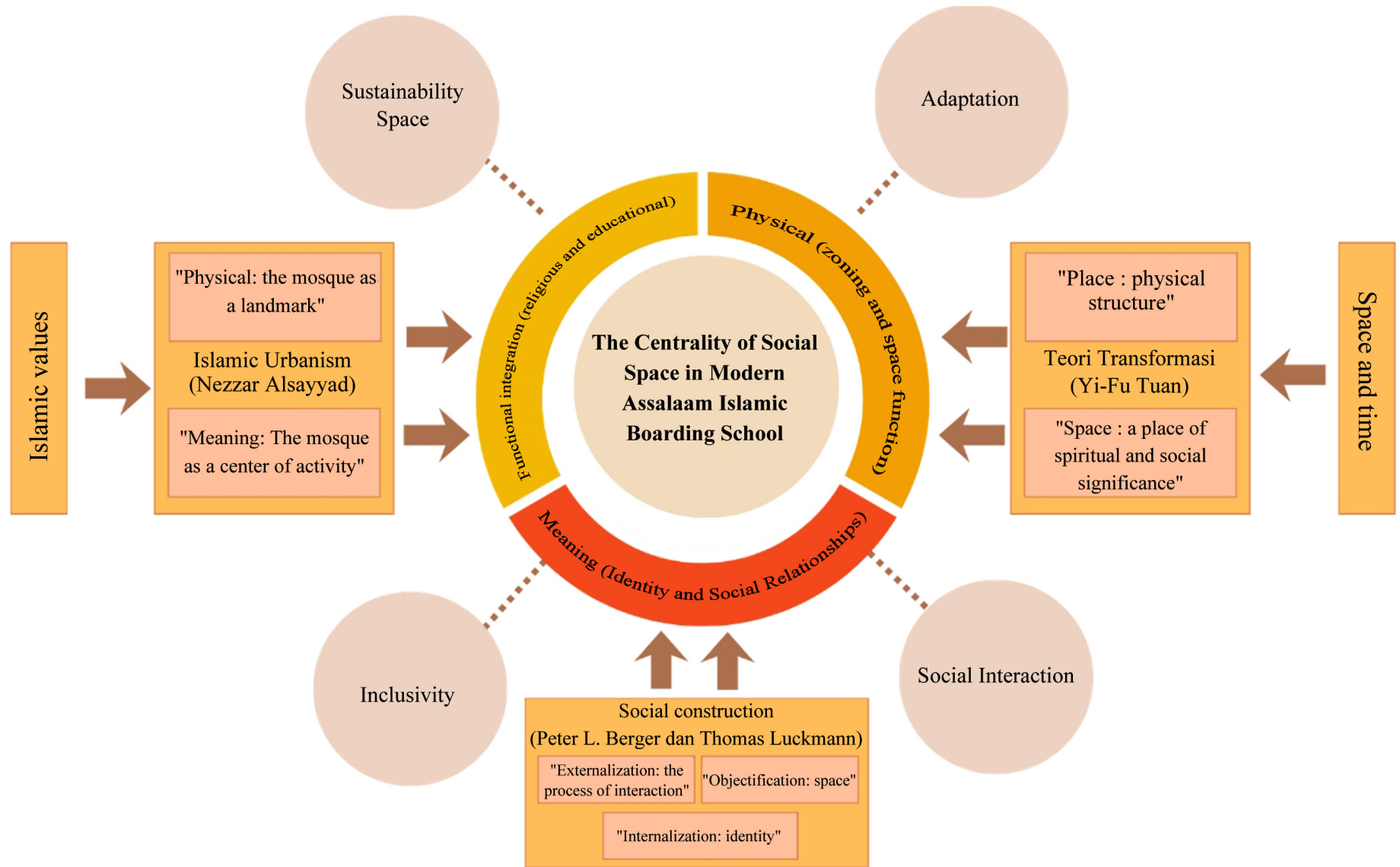


Figure 2. Social Spatial Planning in Areas Based on Islamic Values

## 5. Conclusions

The functional transformation occurring at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam represented a unique adaptation dynamic within the framework of contemporary Islamic architecture. The mosque, initially served as the area's spatial and organizational center according to Islamic values, underwent a spatial shift and no longer functions as the physical axis of the *pesantren* complex. Nevertheless, the mosque continued to function as a spiritual center, a marker of religious identity, and a symbol of the enduring relevance of Islamic values. This shift has given rise to a new spatial configuration in which educational and social functions predominate in the area's physical organization. At the same time, the mosque occupied a position of symbolic and functional centrality. This pattern showed the flexibility of modern *pesantren*. Modern *pesantren* can respond to the demands of modern education without losing their religious traditional roots. The mosque decentralization model at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam contributed to the development of Islamic architectural theory, particularly regarding the flexibility of mosque centrality. This pattern can be applied to the analysis of the transformation of Islamic education sectors in various countries facing the challenges of modernization.

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