

Cultural Landscape Urban Design: Preserving Local Identity in the Global Environment

Case Studies of Japanese and Malaysian Cities

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1. INTRODUCTION

Stemming from the interdependence between humans and nature, a cultural landscape system brings certain values that people respect, adapt, and use as tools to identify themselves and navigate the character of a place. The cultural landscape is often associated with agricultural settings, merely. However, it actually encompasses all human places, including cities, and the process of making and inhabiting them (Taylor 2012, 23). Seeing the urban area as a cultural landscape also supports the idea of a city as an expression of the human spirit that contributes to the formation of social identity, the collective memories of the citizens, and their sense of belonging to a place (Mumford 1937; Hayden 1995).

In today's contemporary world, cities are becoming more diverse and fluid, the process accelerated by several forces including urbanization, transnational migration, and globalization. Changes in a population's demographics intensify the city's role as an arena for heterogeneous gatherings between local communities that serve as "the host" and outsiders that serve as "the others". Although globalization is often viewed as the impetus for the universalization process, it also actually increases the consciousness of localization. According to Voisey and O'Riordan (2001, 41), "globalization and localization are not competing processes; instead, local identity is a manifestation of globalization and greater interconnectedness". It encourages the community to reaffirm its identity by preserving the traditional way of life and its heritage in the midst of the global environment.

Asian cities with their diverse historical backgrounds and living traditions represent samples of the continuous cultural landscape. They are also the laboratories for contestation and negotiation,

particularly around the subject of heritage and development, because of the perception that heritage preservation is incompatible with economic growth. Changes and dynamism make up the character of a city. However, the redevelopment of the urban fabric in the name of modernization has altered the cities' landscapes so rapidly that the local people lose their sense of control over their environment. The transformation of cultural diffusion into a cultural fusion via a homogenized landscape has eroded the quintessential qualities, resulting in a "disappearing Asian city" (Logan 2002). Furthermore, cultural heritage is also exploited as a promotional tool for mass tourism and certain political agenda.

This research argues that the urban space is a generator of sustainable development. Urban planning and design are concerned with the shaping of spaces and carry the potential to create a responsive environment. The gap between urban planning, urban design, and heritage conservation needs to be bridged by expanding the realm of conservation into a landscape-based approach, and by providing guidelines for the future of Asian urbanism that will maintain its sense of place and also embrace the sense of evolution.

This project studied the experiences of five cities in Asia in response to the dual processes of globalization and localization within the context of urban design and heritage. The selection of cases was based on the cities' preference for distinctive urban landscapes in physical spaces and intangible factors, and on their manifestation of the imprints of extensive commercial and tourism development. The project chose three culturally rich cities in Japan—Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka—which were the cradle of Japanese civilization, but have since combined their cultural heritage with a robust commercial life. On the other hand, two

cities in Malaysia, namely, Melaka and George Town, have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and have therefore proven their potential in the cultural landscape. They have, as well, experienced the impact of commercial development and tourism.

Objective and methodology

The project aims at developing urban design principles with the cultural landscape approach as a tool to accommodate the transition of Asian cities toward a sustainable future. Using the qualitative and descriptive approach, the research methodology consisted of a literature survey, interviews, and field observations. The steps of this research were as follows:

1. Reading up on the processes of contestation involving the cultural urban landscapes of Japan and Malaysia
2. A review of the extent to which the cities' regulations, as well as their urban planning and design tools, recognize and employ cultural landscape assets
3. Exploration of the communities' role in the process of planning and designing the city, and their involvement in safeguarding the cultural landscape
4. A reading of the city to evaluate the issues and potentials of utilizing the cultural landscape in urban design by considering several factors proposed by Sirisrisak (2007), including the tangible factors: natural areas, architecture, open space, skyline, and urban features; and intangible factors, namely, city function, local wisdom, and social events/traditions.

2. THE CASE OF JAPANESE CITIES

Japan can be regarded as a pioneer in the method of heritage protection in Asia. The Japanese tradition of nature worship, their awareness of the changing seasons, sense of beauty and other traditional principles are incorporated in the formation of urban development. However, many

historic cities are now suffering from the destruction caused by the postwar economic boom, insensitive new developments, and the decline of the urban population.

a) Regulatory Tools in the National Context

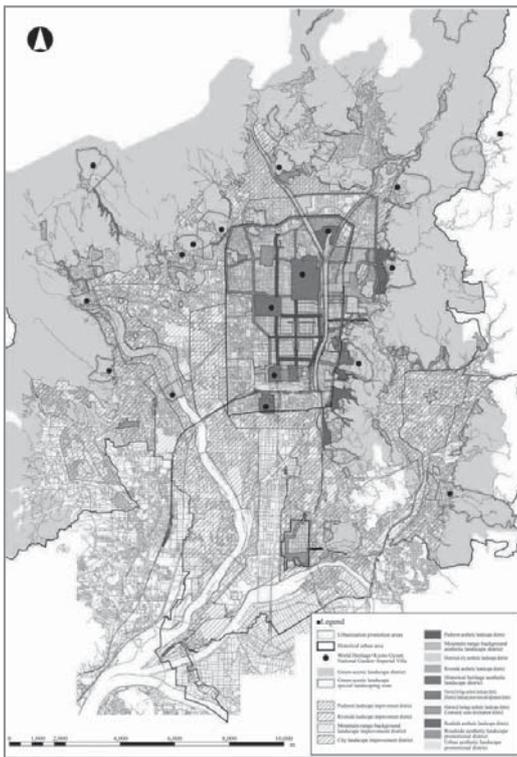
The chronological history of Japan's regulation and planning tools shows commitment to legal protections of the cultural urban landscape. The important law which denoted the enhancement of conservation starting with artifacts and then moving on to the landscape is the Law for the Preservation of Ancient Capitals (1966). Although limited to several cities, the concept was forced into action by community movements concerned with their historical environment. The essential legislation which signifies the landscape approach is the Landscape Act (2004) which articulates the categories of "good landscape" to be incorporated in a landscape plan, including the areas formed by nature, history, culture, and interregional exchange value. The Act integrates with other acts in public facilities, and encourages the participation of residents and business actors in the design process.

b) Kyoto City

As the capital of Japan from the 8th to the 19th century, Kyoto is renowned for the richness of its traditional architectural legacies, as well as its living heritage. Its rapid development since the 1960s was the catalyst for the landscape dispute in Kyoto, including the construction of Kyoto Tower in 1953, which provoked debate on new architecture in the context of a historic environment (Baba 2010, 113). Another challenge is the decreasing number of shop houses (*machiya*), especially in the downtown area that has been developed as a commercial zone. The role of the traditional neighborhood with its mixed-use functions of residential, workplace, recreational and ritual spaces is affected by the replacement of *machiya* with multistory apartments. Add to this, the new developments also disturb the vista-passage to Kyoto's natural surroundings, an important traditional design principle of Japanese cities.

Regulatory Tools

Although the problems still remain, the significance of the cultural urban landscape approach has been recognized in the current policies. The New Landscape Policy in Kyoto (2007) ensures a contextual environment through the protection of natural and historical areas, the building height regulation, the control over outdoor advertisements, and recognition of the Japanese concept on aesthetic landscape through the protection of perspective landscape, borrowed landscape, and vernacular architecture. The Master Plan of Kyoto City (2011-2020) mentions Kyoto’s vision, which intertwines environmental symbiosis, the protection of history and culture, the cultivation of industry based on traditions and wisdom, autonomy and collaboration, and a cognitive environment for future generations.



Map 1: Designation of the Aesthetic District and Landscape Improvement District
(Source: Landscape of Kyoto, Kyoto City Government)

Community Tools

The concern over saving *machiya* stimulates community efforts through the “social network” that has resulted from the tradition of independent neighborhoods. The institutional mechanism is facilitated by the Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration, which serves as a medium of collaboration between the municipal government, business enterprises, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and the citizens. One example of an NPO in preservation is the Kyomachiya Renewal Council initiated in 1992. The organization aims at enhancing appreciation and the transmission of *machiya* traditions, with its three outreach arms: the Kyomachiya Restoration Association (professional *machiya* designers and craftsmen), Friends of Kyomachiya (community education), and the Kyomachiya Information Center (provides information on the availability of a *machiya* for rent or sell). One sample project is the revitalization of Kamanza Cho-ie in Sanjo Dori in 2010, supported by the World Monuments Fund. Today, it serves as the neighborhood’s educational and consultation center for future *machiya* projects. The interrelation between urban space and social transformation has empowered the community to preserve its intangible culture, including the registration of Gion Matsuri in the UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage list, in order to generate the communities’ interest and sense of responsibility toward protecting this ritual.

Reading the City

Kyoto maintains its connection with nature as a daily part of the city through visual linkage and permeability. It designates areas where perspective landscape should be maintained, and these consist of vantage points where views of historical buildings, rivers, mountains and other landmarks are possible. This approach can be correlated to the Japanese concept of “views from within” which emphasizes the pleasure of viewing a garden from a certain vantage point, and to the concept of “borrowed scenery” (*shakkei*) which means taking advantage of scenery outside the garden and incorporating this into the view.

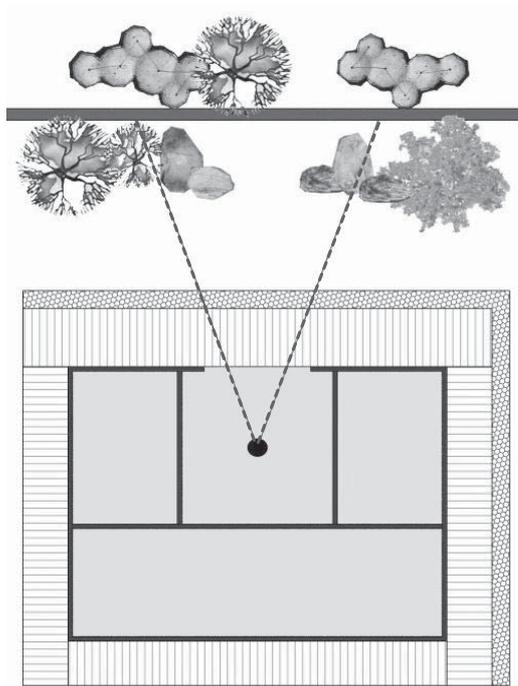


Figure 1: Illustration of the concept "views from within" and "borrowed scenery" in Japanese garden design

Built based on geomancy considerations and the grid pattern of the ancient capital of China, Chang'an, Kyoto seeks to preserve its geographical identity, not only by the physical nature of the terrain with its mountains and river, but also by the symbol attached to it. The system of *Sanshi-Suimei* (Purple Mountains and Clear Water) shows a fractal pattern of "mountain" and "river" which has been used repeatedly in various aspects of urban landscapes, from the city, on to the residential levels (Miyagi 2013). Another concept that can be extracted from traditional design is *miegakure* (concealment or hide and reveal), implemented by creating serial vision and sequential experiences resulting from movement through the environment.

The homogenous character of several preserved districts contributes to the continuous visual chain

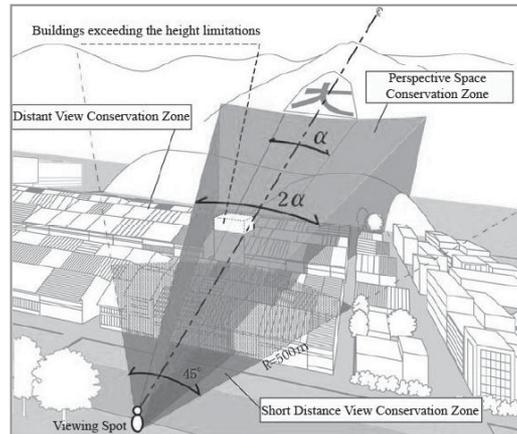


Figure 2: Conservation of perspective view from Kamo River to Daimonji Hill (Source: Landscape of Kyoto, Kyoto City Government)

of Kyoto as a whole. Yet, the contextualization of contemporary architecture also enhances the visual integrity of the city. One sample is the project of Shigenori Uoya and Associates, which designed a new type of *machiya* that can complement contemporary Kyoto and revitalize the Japanese concept of intermediate space between public and private. Traditional building blocks in Kyoto contain a communal area as an intermediate zone to create an extension of living space. The *roji* or street space between the houses is developed into a lively area for human interaction. Although *roji* remains still visible in certain parts of Kyoto, there has been failure to recognize this concept in recent urban design tools which focus more on building scale and façade.



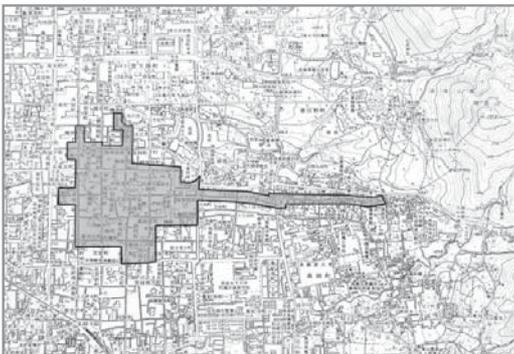
Photo 1: The spatial concept of roji needs to be preserved and adapted in present urban design (Location: Teramachi, Shimogyo)



Photo 2: The interior of Kamazya cho-ie after being restored in 2011; it now functions as a community learning center

c) Nara City

Nara is of historical significance to Japan as it served as the setting of Heijo-kyo, the country's first permanent capital established in the year of 710. Nara inherited Heijo-kyo's unique landscape with its historical grid pattern, religious sites, natural surroundings, and traditional districts rich in wooden architecture. After the capital was moved, a large part of the area became agricultural fields that, after a period of high economic growth expanded the city center, were converted to residential and commercial spaces, making the disturbance of the natural landscape and scenic view inevitable. Further, many traditional houses were replaced, and the introduction of new architecture, infrastructure, and large-scale outdoor advertisements created friction between the historic district and the new area.



Map 2: Nara City Landscape Formation Zone (not to scale) (Source: Nara City Landscape Plan)

Regulatory Tools

To manage these changes, the vision of Nara City as stated in the 4th Comprehensive Plan (2011) is leaning toward the creation of Nara as “a vibrant city with rich nature and nurtured citizens”. It explicates three pillars of development: protection of the natural, historical, and cultural environments; through the preparation of the industrial base, vitality maintenance which focuses on tourism; and collaboration by building up society with citizen participation. The Nara City Landscape Ordinance (2010) encompasses the formation of a landscape district, the conservation of natural and living landscapes, the conservation of a perspective view, as well as landscape enhancement through streetscape and the control of outdoor advertising.



Photo 3: Preservation of the city skyline and perspective view of Kōfuku-ji from Byakugo-ji

Community Engagement

Kyoto and Nara share similarities in their experience of highly significant citizen activism. Community protests in Nara had been successful in preventing the destruction of a historic building meant to make a way for railway construction. One example of an assiduous organization is the Nara Machizukuri Center Incorporated Association, an NPO organized by the community to conserve historic urban areas. The organization is actively revitalizing vacant houses and storehouses as museums and galleries, in line with the “Campaign to Stimulate Nara-Machi”. It established the Naramachi Monogatari-



Photo 4: Naramachi Monogatari-kan Hall as the center for learning about machiya and a space for cultural events

Reading the City

Nara conserves the natural and historical landscape views by considering the viewing place, the location of the object, and the perspective's angle. In addition to visual linkage, accessibility to natural areas is also equipped with relative ease of movement. To enhance visual integrity, Nara has designated 48.3 hectares as a landscape formation zone including the Naramachi area and has given subsidy for the restoration of traditional buildings. Panoramas and the urban skyline are preserved through the implementation of regulations on building height and color.

kan Hall in 1995 to provide a place for learning about machiya as well as a space for cultural events. Its most recent undertaking is the project for the Machiya Design Code in cooperation with NPOs and educational institutions, where ecological features of *machiya* are scientifically explored for the conservation of *machiya* itself, and its application in contemporary architecture. The effort on custodianship is imprinted through the preservation of urban rituals, where ceremonies and the performing arts are predominantly organized by a community group such as On-Matsuri Preservation Association.



Photo 5: On Matsuri (festival), an effort at custodianship of Nara's public ritual

In the creation of a city as a public history and learning environment, Nara provides interpretation signage, visual reconstruction, posters and plaques explaining important buildings and events. Another strategy that can be extracted from Nara's townscape is the application of the Japanese attention to detail in street features and the usage of small elements, which give a sense of intimacy and human scale. Moreover, plant materials and landscape techniques are implemented to enhance the people's orientation with regard to seasonal changes.

d) Osaka City

Historically, Osaka played a significant role as the setting of Japan’s capital (Naniwa-kyō) in 645, which then passed on various historical sites and cultural resources. The majority of these assets, however, were neither protected as cultural properties nor used as tourist attractions (Osaka Municipal Government 2002, 20). Furthermore, the impact of the process of becoming a global economic center in the region is evident in Osaka with its high-rise buildings, theme parks, and major store chains that dominate the urban scene. Despite the advanced level of modernization in Osaka, however, there is also a growing effort to reinvent its local identity by exploiting its historical assets.

Regulatory Tools

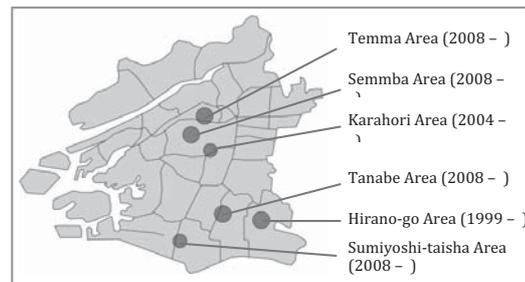
Although often perceived as a city of consumption, Osaka is working on the promotion and creation of ‘Osaka-like’ landscapes. The vision of Osaka City as stated in Osaka Plan 21 incorporates two development themes: “a city that loves its people” and “a city that shares with the world”. The goals are to create an attractive metropolitan lifestyle, stimulate the creative Osaka culture, and build a vigorous economy and industry. Several initiatives can be traced back to the designation of a scenic zone for the conservation of nature in the Okawa/ Nakanoshima area (1933), and the restoration of Water Metropolis Osaka. Other tools are the Master Plan of Cityscape and the Osaka Cityscape Formation, whose basic objective is to create an amenity-rich and cityscape formation most suitable to Osaka.

Community Engagement

Compared to Kyoto and Nara, community participation in urban development projects in Osaka is less visible because most of the projects are under the leadership of the municipal government. However, the process of city planning through public hearings and inspections also provides room for reflection on the inhabitants’ viewpoints. One effort in engaging the community

is the establishment of Osaka City’s Community Development Activity Support Program (1997) which seeks to help citizens promote community-development activities on their own initiative.

Neighborhood level strategy is implemented through the Housing with Proper Environment (HOPE) Zone Project which seeks to improve and preserve local areas in Osaka that possess a strong historical and regional character. The Urban Redevelopment and Housing Bureau cooperated with local residents to restore urban landscapes, encourage the active promotion of local areas, and reform buildings and public facilities in accordance with townscape preservation guidelines.



Map 3: Districts under the HOPE Zone Project
Source: Osaka City Government, edited by author



Photo 6: Sumiyoshi Village Gallery A renewed town house that was converted to a gallery

Reading the City

The transformation of Osaka was started with concern for the diminished traditional waterfront, largely formed by canals and rivers. The city then sought to restore the spatial identity of Osaka by exploiting the geographical advantages of the city's proximity to water and sea, and creating new green spaces. Rivers and bridges were designed to be visibly prominent as main components of Osaka's landscape. Urban ritual now enhances the symbolic landscape, such as Tenjin-Matsuri, a summer festival which signifies how waterfront areas are essential to Osaka.



Photo 7: Community meeting facility Omoroji in Osaka HOPE zone, Hirano-go area

Osaka has had a long history as a cultural city, especially in relation to the classical performing arts. It is likewise famous for its promotion of fun, entertainment, and a lively youth. Today the city is concentrating on achieving a creative landscape by enhancing more dynamic and contemporary types of arts. The city's investment in public art enables artists to exhibit their works and gives room for self-expression. One example is the Midosuji Boulevard which functions as an urban gallery. It educates the public, gives emotional value, and, at certain times, also serves as a space for public performances.



Photo 8: Tenjin Matsuri, summer festival which denoted the importance of river for Osaka

3. THE CASE OF MALAYSIAN CITIES

Melaka City and George Town were designated as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 2008. These cities represent inhabited historic trading towns that reveal the succession of Malay, Chinese, Indian culture and European colonial powers. This sense of diversity make up the cities' identity that is expressed in urban forms, building morphology, and an intangible heritage that includes languages, religious practices, and festivals. The preserved historic districts still provide special qualities of urban space. However, both cities are experiencing the decline of the inner city population and the loss of heritage fabric. The issues' complexities add to the overemphasis on using the UNESCO listing as a tool for mass tourism that can undermine the authenticity of the cultural landscape.

a) Regulatory Tools in the National Context

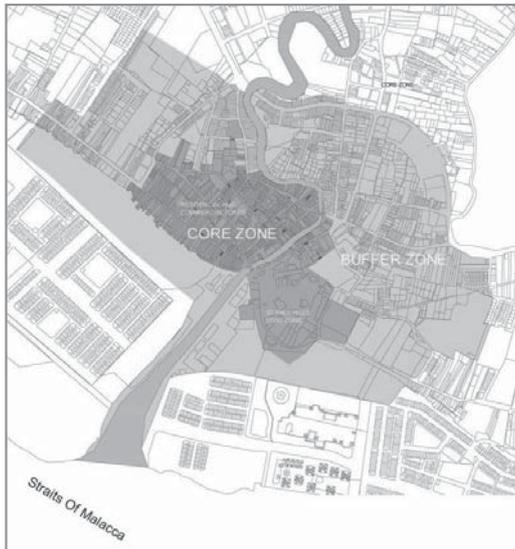
Compared to Japan, the chronology of the regulatory tools regarding conservation in Malaysia shows that the practice is relatively new. The essential legislations for conservation can be traced back to the Antiquities Act 1976 (Act 168), and the Town and Country Planning Act (Act 172) which delivered a platform for the preservation and improvement of natural and built environment, and the enhancement of the buildings' characters. The important law which denotes the improvement of conservation is the National Heritage Act (2005). The Act encompasses the preservation, conservation and management of urban areas with cultural and historical significance, comprising tangible and intangible heritage.

b) Melaka City

Originated in the 15th century Malay Sultanate, Melaka experienced the changing of powers from the Portuguese, the Dutch and, later, the British with their legacies of architectural heritage. Many ethnic groups have lived in the city since the earliest times and this is manifested in the built environment, which has areas for different ethnic groups, religious buildings, and shop houses. Global tourism is one prominent factor which caused contestation in Melaka's urban space, with market forces driving the process. The new development in the border of the heritage compound threatens the archeological sites. Commodification of heritage with a theme-park approach to attract tourists, e.g., Jonker Walk, has not only led to the loss of the authenticity of this historic corridor, but has also given rise to some protests from the residents.

Regulatory Tools

The recognition of Melaka as a historic town was established through the Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Enactment



Map 4: Conservation Zone of the Historic City of Melaka
(not to scale)
(Source: Nomination Dossier Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca)

(1988). The Local Plan for Melaka (2001, revised in 2006) contains a range of coverage on heritage conservation that adopts and translates all strategies from the Structure Plan (2002) into a plan of action to be endorsed and implemented by the local authorities. The Conservation Area Action Plan (2008) is an important tool to complete the management process as it covers the details of urban patterns, relationships between buildings and open spaces, the protection of visual views, relations between urban areas with the existing surroundings, and urban functions. However, it can be argued that the implementation of these regulatory and planning tools is incompatible with the original objectives, because of the impacts of the commercial and tourism-oriented policy.

Community Engagement

Public participation in Melaka is relatively limited, since most of the projects are under government control, while the number of organizations working in the heritage sector is also less. However, local community resiliency remains visible. One example of the public movement in Melaka transpired in the 1980s when it succeeded in preventing an urban development scheme that threatened to transform Bukit China, the site of the largest Chinese cemetery outside China, into a commercial zone (Lim and Jorge 2006, 353).

Presently, responsible agencies in Melaka include the Local Authorities and Melaka Museums Corporation. Government provides a restored shop house in Jalan Bunga Raya as an educational center for learning about the mechanisms and examples of conservation. Melaka Heritage Trust, an organization established in 1999, brings together all related professional and local communities from various ethnic groups. However, the trust has not yet put forward more active programs to involve the community and students in heritage conservation. Those who take active roles in saving vernacular heritage through the adaptive reuse of the shop houses are the concerned residents and professionals.



Photo 9: Melaka River is one site that establishes the city's ecological identity and its urban place



Photo 10: Melaka City Conservation Center at Jalan Bunga Raya

Reading the City

As a port city, Melaka's connection to the ocean is crucial to its spatial identity. This connection disappeared, however, when the old harbor area was reclaimed through the mega development of commercial buildings and condominiums. Yet, the city has worked on the revitalization of Melaka River, including the improvement of the landscape by incorporating pathways, greeneries, and urban features. The traditional urban form of Melaka provides high permeability to this water area through linear spaces between building blocks. Still, these spaces have not been sufficiently designed and triggered as urban places, and most of them have been abandoned and utilized as a parking lot.

The visual integrity of Melaka's historic zone is formed by the lanes of shop houses, religious and colonial buildings. However, the new development in the periphery of the historic districts creates a large gap in terms of atmosphere. For example, the area around the edge of St. Paul's Hill is presently bordered by new apartments, a shopping complex, and high-rise hotels which give a sense of pressure and are out of scale vis-à-vis the low rise and compact historic center. Some heavy constructions have also been built very closely to the city's historic structures and archeological sites, including the foundations of Santiago Bastion which was rediscovered in 2003 (Lim and Jorge 2006, 39). The choice of location for high-rise buildings does not always respect the existing urban form and character, showing the insensitive policies in the development of tourism industry.



Photo 11: Conservation of the historic fabric in Heeran Street district protects the visual integrity of Melaka City



Photo 12: New development near Kampung Mortem overshadows the historic center of Melaka

c) George Town

The history of George Town can be traced back to 1786 when Captain Francis Light established the British trading post on Penang Island. Along with Melaka and Singapore, Penang formed part of the Straits Settlements with its diverse ethnic groups and religions. The architecture of George Town is represented by an ensemble of colonial architecture, temples and mosques, shop houses, townhouses, Chinese *kongsi* (clan halls), and clan jetties. The city underwent rapid urban renewal in the 1970s, where many old buildings were demolished to make way for new developments. Multistorey buildings began to appear within the town's conservation zone, disturbing the visual integrity of the traditional built form. This period also fostered the early efforts to conserve the city's heritage.

Regulation Tools

The advisory tools for urban conservation in George Town were developed in 1987 by the Planning Department of the Municipal Council of Pulau Pinang through the establishment of the George Town Urban Conservation Program and Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner-City Area of George Town. More recently, the Municipal Council prepared the Guidelines for Conservation Areas and Heritage Buildings (2007) covering conservation principles, classification and control of heritage buildings, and advertisement control. The State Government of Penang also produced the Heritage Management Plan of the Historic City of George Town, which sets detailed programs for the maintenance and management of urban heritage.

A recent tool which signifies a landscape-based approach is the Draft of the Special Area Plan of George Town (2011) that provides conservation principles, management and implementation mechanisms, as well as financial tools such as incentives and funding. The plan covers a wider area including land use and the buildings' management; guidelines for the protection of built cultural heritage and of vistas, enclaves and streetscapes; enhancement of public realm; management of circulation and access; and improvement of urban infrastructure.

Community Engagement

Community engagement and collaboration in George Town are very active compared to Melaka. Penang Historic Trust which was established in 1986 has evolved, not only as facilitator to promote the conservation of Penang's physical and intangible heritage, but as an agent of advocacy of heritage legislation and policy. Another organization is ARTS-ED, which focuses on promoting local cultural sustainability through arts and heritage education, especially for young people, through collaboration with local and regional arts educators, artists, and communities.

Government agencies were established as mediums for collaboration. George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI), an agency organized by the local government, is responsible for the management, monitoring and promotion of George Town as a World Heritage Site, and enhances cooperation by working with many partners and collaborators. On the other hand, Think City, established by Khazanah Nasional Berhad under the Finance Ministry, is assigned to the implementation of the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP). Some projects run by Think City are the Business Improvement District Scheme, Urban Markets, Greening George Town, and Little India Improvement District.



Map 5: The Core and Buffer Zones of the Historic City of George Town
(Source: Nomination Dossier Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca)



Photo 13: The clan jetties represent a distinct form of settlement in George Town (Location: Lee Jetty)



Photo 14 & 15: The sheltered five-foot walkways (left) and Marking George Town project (right)



Photo 15: Lacking in natural resources, George Town can revitalize abandoned area such as Prangin Canal into an urban green space.



Photo 16: The new development failed to synchronize itself with the existing heritage setting of George Town

Reading the City

Like other case studies suggest, the best way to experience George Town is to explore its historic areas, streets, and the spaces between buildings on foot, while appreciating the sensual richness of colors, sounds, and scents. George Town showcases these aesthetic concerns and has made the city replete with options for exploration by incorporating organizations and artisans who put their marks on the streets. Urban design in George Town should enhance this character, along with the creation of a cognitive landscape. Similar to Melaka City, George Town historically had a strong connection with the ocean. However, this connection has since been cut off by road development, detaching visual access from the city edge to the ocean. Still there are abandoned open spaces and lanes that can potentially be designed as semi-public spaces in the city.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS: TOOLS FOR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE BASED URBANISM

Surrounded by transitional landscapes, Asian cities should recognize and respond to the process of globalization. The parallel force of localization is an opportunity for any city to identify its potentials and assets in the highly competitive world. The case studies presented have shown how Asian cities have become the arena of conflict between different actors in the process of negotiating globalization. There are several causes of contestations that will continuously challenge the cities including:

- Profit prioritization and economic pressure which can lead to urban renewal, slow attrition, and the replacement of the traditional fabric with modern skyscrapers.
- Insensitive new developments with contemporary architecture and infrastructure that often disadvantage the value of the traditional fabric and destruct the physical and symbolic connection of the city with nature.
- Tourism-oriented development that focuses only on increasing the number of tourists and hastens the processes of *de-contextualization* and commodification, which threaten the authenticity of cultural expression.
- Population changes in terms of number and heterogeneity, which bring about a different perception of heritage, and also the loss of traditional knowledge, particularly among the younger generations.

Regulatory Tools

The case studies demonstrate that the cultural landscape has become the medium for economic growth and the means to strengthen local identity, which is integrated with the cities' vision and regulatory tools. Although situated in different levels of progress, the cities show the expansion of the idea of conservation from merely monuments, to the broader scope of living heritage, with the incorporation of traditional design principles.

In Kyoto and Nara, for example, the landscape policy ensures protection of natural and historical areas, building height regulation, control over outdoor advertisement, and also recognition of Japanese traditional designs such as perspective landscape protection, borrowed landscape, and vernacular architecture. The conceptual scheme of conservation management in Malaysia, for its part, also attempts to synergize the objectives of economic progress, sustainability, and conservation. There is also positive movement in the urban planning and design processes, where community participation has been regarded as a much-needed method especially in recording local assets.

However, these shifts in regulatory tools are not always followed by commitment in the course of implementation. What is needed then is a method for operational guidance that can increase the commitment of the local government, community, and developers to keep their city's heritage assets, while continuously improving the regulation tools to manage urban changes.

Community Participation

The case studies reveal the local communities' growing awareness of the importance of cultural landscape, not only because of the economic benefits it yields, but also because it provides a feeling of stability and continuity while negotiating rapid urban changes. It is the medium for reclaiming the communities' sense of ownership and control over their environment. There is encouraging progress with the rise in the community's movement, civil societies, and grassroots organizations.

In all cities, the movements to protect the heritage were evoked by the communities' actions; some were started by protests against large-scale construction. Kyoto, Nara, and George Town show good practices in the traditional protection and the management process facilitated by the government. They also suggest how public involvement has evolved from conflicts toward constructive engagement and negotiation among actors. In Osaka, the effort to engage the

community is still limited to certain areas through the method of neighborhood personalization. However, it does contribute to the city's vision toward reinventing Osaka's local characters. Conversely, limited opportunities for the community's involvement in Melaka have hastened the pace of physical alteration in the historic district.

The similarity of the case studies lies in the fact that the local communities investigated have developed strategies to preserve their heritage, especially through small-scale intervention and the adaptive reuse of vernacular buildings, and their conversion into shops, cafes, galleries, and tourist accommodations. It also signifies the involvement of the business sector, particularly in creative industry and tourism. The assertiveness of the local community enhances the efforts of government and the private sector to reconnect with the people, and establish a support system that can integrate the institutional and informal approaches.

In the context of heritage safeguarding, the definition of local community should be reconsidered. The intellectuals, academia, and tourists should also be seen as stakeholders in terms of their support in preserving the cultural landscape. Furthermore, the engagement of children and the youth is crucial to reducing the generation gap. As the newer generation is more interconnected, the more readily it can provide a platform of new methods on heritage awareness.

The participatory approach is essential to addressing the problems associated with the impact of cultural tourism and the question of whose heritage is being preserved. Cultural landscape values are read differently by certain groups. Respecting and utilizing a variety of interpretations can provide better understanding of cultural resources, enrich value assessment, and ensure that strategies are employed for the benefit of local communities.

The Urban Design Principle for Cultural Landscape Making

The case studies provide lessons on synthesizing practices that can be used as urban design principles

for cultural landscape-making that merge the local historical context and traditional values, including:

- *Designing with nature* which refers to the quality of the urban environment that accommodates the following four processes:

- a) Recognition and enhancement of nature's importance through preservation

- b) Creation of visual and physical access through perspective view protection and permeability to the natural milieu

- c) Generation of a vigorous landscape as a place for activities

- d) Application of a symbolic landscape by extracting embodied meanings of landscapes and translate them into urban design strategies, integrated in the city, neighborhood and building levels

- *Having a contextual environment* which refers to the tangible and intangible connections with the genius loci of the place, by enhancing spatial identity as defined by the streets pattern, traditional building blocks, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces. Along with considering the continuity of urban functionality as a perpetual link of the city's importance in the past, present and future. There is also a need for more sensitive land use planning that prevents the concentration of high redevelopment pressures in the important historic areas in the city.

- *Character responsiveness* which refers to the affiliation of a place with its surroundings through several strategies including:

- a) physical safeguarding and restoration of historic fabrics and open spaces, and the reconstitution of their visual perspective relationships to the surrounding landscape

- b) exercising control over building height, materials, and outdoor advertisements in public spaces to ensure visual integrity and maintain the urban skyline

- c) ensuring the role of new development in creating architecture, infrastructure, and a landscape design that are in harmony with their

surroundings and can enrich the urban experience. Asian architecture should continue updating traditional concepts to suit contemporary needs and help overcome the feeling of alienation vis-à-vis the “universal” architecture

- *Design in human scale* to create an intimate connection between man and his surroundings by celebrating sensual richness in terms of sight, touch, scent and hearing, and then utilizing the art of detailing. The informality, compactness, vibrancy, and flexibility of spaces are the characteristics of a traditional city that need to be seen as wealthy, instead of chaotic. They can be adapted in the contemporary urban design.

- *Cognitive and creative environment* by providing physical and social infrastructure to develop understanding and custodianship of communities. The city as a learning space is the foundation for communicating the significance of heritage and increasing the level of appreciation for it. Participation in art and the creative environment is also a medium of intangible stamps for people to personalize their places.

In the period of transition in Asia, the cultural landscape plays more important roles. It not only gives a sense of control and continuity, but also mediates the process of democracy, enhances the landscape of tolerance within the increasing plural societies, and also becomes the instrument for environment protection. Amidst the challenges caused by unsustainable cultural and eco-tourism management, there is a need to expand the urban heritage perspective from the monument and themed district levels, toward the lived-in cultural landscape.

Every urban environment has its specific contexts, uniqueness, potentials, and constraints. Against the different historical backgrounds, and the social and economic conditions of the countries being studied, the practices observed in the case study can be adopted and modified by other Asian cities. The symbolic meaning of nature, the personalized landscape, and the traditional “social network” are the common legacies shared by many Asian

communities. For example, the method of updating traditional design principles in Japanese urban design can be adapted in Indonesian cities. The empowerment of local communities in the case studies can also inspire *Banjar* (the socio-religious institution) in Bali-Indonesia to participate in decision-making related to urban problems.

There is an understanding that certain similarities brought about by globalization cannot be avoided completely, that the characters of a city even with strong historical components, are dynamic and evolving. Certain values will survive and find their way in the new medium. The city should continue to express the values that the local people are trying to preserve as representative of the collective memory and identity. Urban design should explore the rich possibilities to articulate the cultural landscape, in philosophy and practices, as inspiration for contemporary development. The willingness to explore these values and utilize them in the built environment will be one pathway toward sustainable urbanism.

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126 Panel 3

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