

THE PERCEPTION OF THE HERITAGE VILLAGE IMPACTS DUE TO URBANIZATION: EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Heritage village reflects the unique assets and potentials that could be a base for future development as well as for sustainable communities. This paper tries to evaluate the success of the heritage incentives program thru the perceptions among the residents of a typical Malay village of its kind – the Morten Village situated in Melaka city in Malaysia. The present study has found that the development of multiple-storey commercial building across the village' river bank has given them a hard time. By using the urbanization impact as a subject of exploration, this paper demonstrates the perception of the residents towards the effectiveness of the current incentives policy and the conservation program held in the village. This research has used a mixed study method which involves various data generation instruments, namely survey, interview as well as observation. From this research, it was found that the impacts of urbanization have altered the lifestyle and values of the community. This paper investigates the residents' perception on the effectiveness of the heritage incentives program as well as aims to enrich the debates on the conservation policy implementation.

Keywords: Conservation policy; Heritage village; Incentive programme; Urbanization impacts.

1. INTRODUCTION

What are the impacts of the heritage village due to urbanization? How do the communities survive? What are the limitations of the current incentives policies in meeting the community needs? These are the main empirical questions that this paper intends to highlight. Heritage village has been found to reflect the unique combinations of the natural, cultural and social characteristics of the urban and sub-urban fabrics. However, in spite of its potential as the typical settlement type in the pre-modern era, the heritage village has barely been spared by the modernisation phenomena. Numerous studies have attempted to explain the importance in preserving these traditional villages in the challenging urban landscape, for example the studies by Saleh (1998), Alhabshi (2010), and Mat Radzuan et al. (2015).

In this regard, heritage villages including the historic towns, city quarters, or rural settlements are very different from the managed heritage attractions. They are living environments that have evolved over time and continue to do so, an attribute that is one of the most important characteristics of heritage (Orbasli & Woodward, 2009). The term 'heritage village' which is the subject of this study is defined as a traditional neighborhood community or a specific district in the context of heritage dwellings,

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where both the physical characteristics and its inhabitants, carry on with the living traditions, skills and other cultural practices.

Therefore, this research takes its stand by defining or categorizing heritage village as dynamic and historical places containing rich tangible and intangible 'values' while sustaining various types of social interactions and traditional lifestyle. While such settlements retain a physical character of past times, they have also had to adapt to remain relevant to contemporary society. This paper tries to evaluate the success of the heritage incentives program thru the perceptions among the residents of a typical Malay village of its kind – the Morten Village situated in Melaka city in Malaysia.

2. PRESSURE DEVELOPMENT IN MELAKA CITY

1980s has brought rapid changes to Melaka's city urban fabric. In offering a significant attraction to both domestic and foreign tourists, large emphases were given to tourist's related development in the city and other parts of the states. As Ismail and Baum (2006) noted, the competitive edge between cities in Southeast Asia has forced Melaka states to create their own economic identity by strengthening the specific image of Melaka city through tourism sector. The context of heritage was 'exploited' to the fullest advantage and subsequently many tourists' service related developments began mushrooming at an unprecedented rate. Many hotels, theme parks, restaurants and commercial properties were developed extensively in the city as an attempts to attract more and more tourists to the historic city (Worden, 2003). In 1986, the reclamation project was initiated in a huge proportion of the historic waterfronts directly in front of the St. Paul's Hills and the project was completed two years later. This was the beginnings of a large-scale interventions into the very assets of Melaka's historic domain under the stronghold of the past Portuguese, Dutch and British colonialists (Malaysian Government, 2008).

The new urban area which was known as Melaka Raya was developed in the early 1990s into a large-scale shopping and entertainment centre with fair distributions of five-star hotels, service apartments, mixed commercial outlets, shopping complexes and numerous entertainment outlets. Despite the ongoing protest and argument about indiscriminate development and redevelopment taking place within the heritage sites, the state government was adamant to develop the area into a tourism hub. Of late, the most destructive feature for the site was the development of Dataran Pahlawan (Pahlawan Square) - the underground shopping complex built in the very ground of the first official announcement of Malaysia's independent from British rule was made. Within the old quarters of the city, the old shop houses and town houses remained vulnerable. In early 2016, the Melaka state government has started to develop a new economic development area in the city centre which will be known as the Hang Tuah Trade Centre that will encompass trade centers, higher education, hospitality and business.

3. METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was chosen in order to allow for a general understanding of the research problem. Following the case study approach by Yin (2003) and Stake (1995), this research study represents an appropriate method for inquiry into the emergent and diverse components of the community development in Melaka. In this regard, a mixed methods approach of concurrent triangulation designs were used by performing document reviews, observations, structured interviews and a questionnaire survey involving residents in Morten Village, Melaka. These methods consisted of two distinct

phases: quantitative and qualitative (Creswell, Clark, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). In their design, the researcher would collect both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and would then compare these two methods to determine if there could be a convergence, differences, or some combinations (Creswell, 2009). Thus, with this quantitative data and their qualitative analysis, a study could refine and explain those statistical results by exploring the participants' views in more depth (Creswell, 2003; Rossman & Wilson, 1985; and Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

By using the urbanization impacts as a subject of exploration, this paper demonstrates the perception of the residents towards the effectiveness of the current incentives policy and the conservation program held in the village. Various methods are used to assess the effectiveness of the incentives provision which involves various data generation instruments namely survey, interview as well as observation. A two-stage cluster sampling was selected to filter the optimal respondents, who had found to be benefited from the incentives provided by the authorities. The survey data were collected from March to April 2014. Survey questionnaires were held with 45 households. The selection of the respondents was based on the following criteria: (i) residents who had benefited from the heritage incentives from the authorities, and (ii) residents who were residing permanently at the settlements. The samples were filtered based on the screening questions, whether or not they have had ever received any incentives or financial support from the authorities with regards to the conservation of their cultural heritage. In addition, for the face-to-face interviews, the researcher visited the selected homes of the respondents and explained the purpose of the study. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to 1.5 hours.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the incentives program, this research has employed the Bennett's program evaluation method (Bennett, 1975). It evaluates the findings in relation to the present policy framework for understanding and managing the cultural heritage incentives program in order to establish the sustainable community in the heritage village. By using the five-point Likert scale, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements pertaining to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards the incentives program's inputs, program's activities, program's participation, program's reactions, program's learning, program's actions and program's impact (Bennett & Rockwell, 2004).

In order to facilitate an average estimation of the satisfaction level, the values were grouped according to three equal categories (Mastor & Ibrahim, 2012). The cut-off point was calculated from the difference between the mean highest value and the minimum value on three degrees that represent the number of levels using the formulae $((5-1)/3=1.33)$ and $((3-1)/3=0.66)$. The results of these levels are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Degrees of the incentives program evaluation by the residents

| Evaluation | Degree | Level |
|--|---------------|--|
| Incentives program (5-point Lickert scale) | 1.00 - 2.33 | Low (Level of incentives programmes evaluation is at low level) |
| | 2.34 - 3.67 | Moderate (Level of incentives programmes evaluation is at moderate level) |
| | 3.68 – 5.00 | High (Level of incentives programmes evaluation is at high level) |

4. BACKGROUND OF MORTEN VILLAGE

Morten Village is the only village in the city which boasts off its own identity in terms of the house design, decorations and the landscape. Situated in the heart of Melaka city, the village covers a total area of 12 acre which is the most outstanding Malay enclave with the meandering Melaka River flowing besides it (Figure 1). It is a fine example of a typical Malay village locked in the amidst of modern development but lingering on with its own past history. A majority of the village houses are typically designed in its fully laden Malay heritage, with its long roof and tiled stairs of various colors. The concrete stairs is the main criterion epitomizing the identity of the Malay society other than the wood carvings decorating the very classic verandah.



Figure 1 Morten Village consists of more than 80 typical traditional Malay houses with the Melaka River acting as the border between the village and the city

According to Wee (1999) Morten Village was named after the British Land Commissioner, F. J. Morten who had contributed to the opening of the village. However, the village was founded around the 1920s by a local man, Othman Mohd. Noh. Surrounded by skyscrapers and roadways, Melaka River is the only barrier that protects the tranquility of the village from the hustle and bustle of the modern commercial world on the opposite banks. According to the village headman, there are altogether 630 people living in this village with approximately 98 households (Table 2).

Table 2 Demographic profile of Morten Village

| Demographic Profile | Total |
|----------------------|---------|
| Population | 630 |
| Number of households | 98 |
| Total area | 12 acre |

5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Based on the survey, the most representative group in the village was 51-60 years with approximately 11% of the respondents were above 70 years old respectively (Table 3). Overall, a majority of the respondents from the study areas had formal education with only less than 5% had no formal education respectively. About more than half had attended secondary school; quarter had completed primary school; but very few attended university (9%). Table 3 also shows that majority of the respondents (40%) received a monthly income between RM1,000 to RM1,499. Those who earned between RM2,500 to RM2,999 were 20% followed by RM500 to RM999 with approximately

16%. For those who earned monthly RM1,500 to RM1,999 and RM2,000 to RM2,499 (both are 4%); and RM3,000 to RM3,499 and RM3,500 to RM3,999 (both are 2%).

Table 3 Respondents' social and economic profile

| Profile | Frequency (%) |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| <u>Age</u> | |
| Below 20 years | 1 (2.2) |
| 20-30 years | 5 (11.1) |
| 31-40 years | 7 (15.6) |
| 41-50 years | 6 (13.3) |
| 51-60 years | 12 (26.7) |
| 61-70 years | 9 (20.0) |
| Above 70 years | 5 (11.1) |
| <u>Education Level</u> | |
| University | 4 (8.9) |
| College | 1 (2.2) |
| Secondary School | 28 (62.2) |
| Primary School | 11 (24.5) |
| No Formal Education | 1 (2.2) |
| <u>Monthly Income* (RM)</u> | |
| Below RM499 | 5 (11.1) |
| RM500 to RM999 | 7 (15.6) |
| RM1,000 to RM1,499 | 18 (40.0) |
| RM1,500 to RM1,999 | 2 (4.4) |
| RM2,000 to RM2,499 | 2 (4.4) |
| RM2,500 to RM2,999 | 9 (20.0) |
| RM3,000 to RM3,499 | 1 (2.2) |
| RM3,500 to RM3,999 | 1 (2.2) |
| Private and confidential | 0 |

*Equivalent to US\$1.00 per RM4.09 (Currency exchange based on May 2016 rate).

The employment structure could give a good indication of the socio-economic profile of its residents. Based on the survey the respondents in the Morten Village were involved in various occupations namely own-business (38%), housewife (20%), homestay operator and pensioner (both 11%), government (8%), private (6%) and trishaw operator (4%).

6. THE INCENTIVES PROGRAM

In the context of the cultural heritage conservation, policy-makers in developed and developing nations are becoming more aware of the importance of identifying the best incentives mechanism or tool for the preservation of their cultural heritage in the historic areas. However, as yet, there has been little or no research into the nature and impact of these heritage incentives and how they might be integrated into the heritage management strategies. Much literatures have encompassed the incentives provision in diverse disciplines such as researched in finance by Read (2005), wildlife conservation by Hadlock and Beckwith (2002), forest management by Kumar (2007), business by Goetz (2010) but very few researchers have touched on heritage areas.

In Morten Village, about RM2 million has been allocated by the Federal Government, via the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (recently known as the Ministry of Tourism and Culture) in order for them to standardize the roofing of more than 80

houses in 2000. Besides that, the beautification programs had been carried out so as to enhance its aesthetic appeal. The most significant aid was for house renovation where selected old Malay houses have undergone renovation mainly to its main structure, walls, windows, roofs and stairs. This allocation was administered by the Melaka Museums Corporation using the funding allocated by the Conservation and Restoration Trust Fund from 2001 to 2010 (Table 4).

Obviously, the restoration project benefitted the recipient house owners. A majority of them received financial support, RM10,000 each with the total allocations of approximately RM100,000 in 2001. The highest sum distributed in 2010 and 2008 amounted to RM64,550.00 and RM46,500.00 respectively. Other aesthetic efforts provided by the Government consisted of the improvements of the pedestrians' walkways beautification, tree planting along the river and streets, outdoor street lamps, installation of roof lamp, landscape, signage, the arch gate and other public utilities. As part of revitalizing the landscape efforts by the Melaka Historic City Council (MBMB), steel railings with attractive designs were erected along the facade facing the Melaka River for the safety of the villagers and visitors.

Table 4 Value of financial allocation to the house owners in Morten Village by the Conservation and Restoration Trust Fund (2001-2010)

| Project | Owner | Year | Total (RM) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------|------------|
| 1. Restoration of house | Mr. Rahim B. Hj. Hashim | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 2. Restoration of house | Mr. Ibrahim B. Panjoor Packir | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 3. Restoration of house | Mr. Abdullah B. Jaafar | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 4. Restoration of house | Mr. Ali B. Abd. Ghani | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 5. Restoration of house | Mr. Mazlan B. Md Natar | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 6. Restoration of house | Mrs. Khatijah Bt. Hashim | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 7. Restoration of house | Mrs. Fatimah Bt. Mahabot | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 8. Restoration of house | Mr. Md. Nor B. Hj. Ali | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 9. Restoration of house | Mr. Yaakob B. Sidang Said | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| | | 2010 | 64,550.00 |
| 10. Restoration of house | Mr. Abdullah B. Tambi Husin | 2001 | 10,000.00 |
| 11. Restoration of house | Ms. Jariah Bt. Ismail | 2008 | 46,500.00 |

Source: Melaka Museums Corporation (2014)

7. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Based on the survey with the respective residents, an analysis is done by looking at the residents' perception on the effectiveness of the current incentives program. These are evaluated in the light of sociological theory by using the Bennett's program evaluation method. This research is conducted to address the overarching question which is whether incentives programme that have been formulated for the communities are suitable towards their aspirations and real needs. In a survey, 45 respondents were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied towards the incentives program's inputs (how participants perceive the resources of the program), program's activities (how participants react to the events or activities conducted), program's participation (the extent to which participants were involved), program's reactions (how participants react to the program's interest), program's learning (the extent to which participants acquired knowledge), program's actions (how participants react to the decision taken) and program's impact (the overall benefits).

Table 5 shows a summary of the mean score of the incentives program evaluation by the residents in Morten Village. As can be seen from the table below, the mean score ranged from 2.73 to 3.95, with an overall mean is 3.53. Among the seven factors of the incentives program's evaluations, program's participation and program's inputs had the highest mean score with a value of 3.95 and 3.89 respectively, followed by the program's actions (3.66) the program's reactions (3.51), the program's learning (3.50), the program's activities (3.44), and the program's impact (2.73).

Table 5 Mean for the incentives program's evaluation by residents in Morten Village

| Incentives Program Evaluation | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|
| Program Inputs | 3.889 | 1.018 | High |
| Program Activities | 3.436 | 1.121 | Moderate |
| Program Participation | 3.948 | 0.794 | High |
| Program Reactions | 3.511 | 1.203 | Moderate |
| Program Learning | 3.496 | 1.216 | Moderate |
| Program Actions | 3.659 | 1.134 | Moderate |
| Program Impacts | 2.733 | 1.260 | Moderate |
| Total Mean | 3.525 | 0.926 | Moderate |

8. DISCUSSIONS

This study evaluates how the incentives program has worked and what were the impacts and challenges faced by the concerned communities in the current scenario. The present study has found that the development of multiple-storey commercial building across the villages' river bank has given them a hard time. The following evidences have been recorded by the researcher after conducting the survey with respondents in the village. Some of those interviewed have strongly commented that the construction of the 42-storey building project has destroyed the identity and serenity of the Malay village. One of the residents pointed out:

"I totally disagree that this tall building has to be constructed in the middle of the city where our village is located. In the first place, the government should not grant permission to build such a commercial building close to our village. It has destroyed our village identity when previously we can see beautiful scenery with coconut trees along the river. With the number of modern buildings sprouting up here and there, it has damaged the scenery of our Malay 'kampung'. The surrounding is losing its spirit and identity" (Personal communication, March 14, 2014).

With rapid urbanization, one respondent from the village stated that: *"We really missed the 'kampung' environment that we had over the last 40 years being the only fishermen village in the city. Back then, our village was surrounded by nature – the trees and the river. Now all of the natural components have disappeared due to urbanization. The 'ugly big giant' (the skyscraper) across the river had make our lives uneasy and inconvenient. It has really spoilt the scenery of our 'kampung' which was really pleasant before urbanization came"*. He further added, *"The government has undertaken conservation measures since 2000 in order to preserve the traditional houses. Initially, many of the houses have been repaired and the new roofs were installed with the help of the government budget for restoration projects. But it was centrally controlled. Yet we had no say in it. And after fourteen years*

have passed, why now there are no more proactive actions taken by the government to support and maintain our heritage village?” (Personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Furthermore, one respondent has pointed out that: *“Appointed contractors installed the new roofs, timber walls and windows for our properties. However, the quality of the workmanship is found to be poor. For instance, after they had finished the renovation, we again faced other problems such as some roofs were leaking; there were gaps in between the timber wall arrangement, the windows they installed did not fit and could not be closed easily. The poor workmanship is really unacceptable and we are not truly satisfied because they did everything in a hurry. The contractors ignored our feedback on their workmanship” (Personal communication, March 17, 2014).* Another respondent commented that: *“The materials that they used were of a low quality. Some of the timber used were recycled and had been used before. They just fitted it for the sake of the repairs. Even for the floors, the planks they used were not planed and not smooth. I’ve to cover them up with mats” (Personal communication, March 18, 2014).*

From this research it was found that the impacts of urbanization have altered the lifestyle and values of the community. Digging deeper into the issues of urbanization particularly the human values, lifestyles, village life interferences and conflicts among the inhabitants have revealed some startling findings.

9. CONCLUSION

Overall, it seems that although the study has learnt a great deal about preserving the heritage village, the most relevant question which is: “Has the incentives program been effective?” has to be addressed. This research had discovered the importance of the effectiveness of the current incentives program in guiding the conservation efforts for the local economic development. Clearly, this study has identified some constraints on the current incentives policy implementation from the viewpoints of the local residents. One pertinent issue was still found to be overshadowed by the program implementation – have the communities been given adequate recognition in the decision-making process? From this research, it was found that the involvement of the local community has become even more relevant in this traditional settlement whereby the cultural heritage has appeared to become fragile if no immediate further action needed to be taken to protect the values of the communities. This paper investigates the residents’ perception on the effectiveness of the heritage incentives programme as well as aims to enrich the debates on the conservation policy implementation.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported in part by Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (Research and Innovation Fund) and the University of Malaya (Post Graduate Research Grant).

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