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W F F Anwar

Conserving living heritage site in Portuguese settlement, Melaka world heritage site: issues and conservation elements

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Abstract. A living heritage site symbolizes the integration between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It has a traditional community, or a specific area in the environment of a traditional settlement. Rapid urban development poses significant threats to heritage sites, with deterioration and destruction of heritage by introducing pollution, political wars, growing tourism activities, and natural disasters. Conservation of living heritage is by accenting the role of the core community staying in traditional settlements within the heritage area. The city of Melaka was declared as World Heritage Site in 2008 and the government engaged in significant urban development to accommodate the increasing number of tourists landing, and it has threatened its heritage site. Such act jeopardised the core community of Portuguese Settlement with the risk of obliteration of its cultural heritage in the future and this is due to insufficient conservation of community's cultural heritage from soft infrastructure approaches. Hence, the purpose of this article is to highlight the issues faced by the Portuguese community and discuss elements of community participation, awareness, and stakeholder's involvement to conserve the community's cultural heritage. It is done by qualitative methods of interviews, and document analysis of relevant literature, reports and standards. The result reveals the main issues faced by the community are authenticity, vulnerability of modernisation and development hazard, and losing its community. The output of the paper would be beneficial to stakeholders, practitioners, and researchers to develop a sustainable community within the heritage site while maintaining its heritage value.

1. Introduction

Today's rapidly urbanising cities host world's critical infrastructure, development of properties, political institutes, and substantial socioeconomic events. Uncontrolled growth and informal expansion pose a major threat to social environment for irreplaceable cultural and natural resources, will induce major challenge for conservation efforts [1]. Urban Conservation Planning in Southeast Asia emphasised the conservation challenges in the urban cultural heritage for countries like China, India, and other Southeast Asia region is to confront under current urbanisation models. The character of cultural heritage sites is affected directly or indirectly by urbanisation changes because of population growth, migration, and infrastructure initiatives [2].

Heritage refers to inheritance of practices or properties from the past. The status of World Heritage Site (WHS) designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aims to promote the recognition, restoration, and conservation of cultural and natural



resources around the world [3]. The concept of living heritage arisen in the 1990s, emphasis more on intangible heritage and to protect heritage community, subsequently in 2003, The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) has created a Living Heritage Sites programme. The program's aim was to raise awareness of living heritage perceptions within the context of heritage site management and conservation [4]. Living heritage is associated with communities and the continuity of practices and traditions.

The city of Melaka was listed as UNESCO, WHS in 2008 and has become domestic and international tourists' node. In preparation to accommodate and attract tourists into its heritage site, the Melaka government has sought solution into rapid urban development [5]. Rapid urbanisation has jeopardised living heritage in Melaka WHS and among them, the living heritage of Portuguese community affected the most. Right in front of their settlement, massive reclamation work has occurred. The reclamation work is undertaken without any discussion with the community, which raised concerns and unhappiness by the community [6, 7]. Community lives in a heritage site is fragile to urbanisation, with inadequate heritage community conservation guideline, it has been the primary concern if the community cultural heritage could sustain in the future. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the issues facing by the Portuguese community as well as conservation elements to preserve its cultural heritage. The output of the paper will be beneficial to the living heritage as well as heritage authorities for a sustainable community cultural heritage in a heritage area.

2. Literature review

Community living in heritage site has a long history on its tangible and intangible cultural heritage that reflects the community status and its origin. The continuation of community connections and cultural heritage management will ensure the sustainability of the community. In the following section will justify connection between sustainable community and heritage and concept of living heritage from various literature sources.

2.1. Sustainable community

Sustainability purposes are to meet the demands of the world's present population without compromising future generations need and have achieved impetus since World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. While the aims of sustainable communities to integrate and conserve the environment, economic, and social that lies in the community [8, 9].

The definition of sustainable communities as described by the Communities Plan of the UK Government in 2003 is "places where individuals work and live, today and in the future. They cater to the diverse demands of current and future populations, are environmentally conscious, and promote to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, constructed, managed and provide equitable opportunity and high-quality services to all" [10].

Noting the indispensable components of a sustainable community in social equality, economic prosperity, and conservation of ecology, a sustainable community must embrace another component, namely, governance that requires self-reliance within the social capital [11]. Adding to that, the element of culture is required to develop a sustainable community in cultural heritage [12]. Beside four pillars of community's sustainability which are the economic, environmental, social, and cultural; additional four indicators that need to be considered are namely, incentives policy, governance, tangible heritage, and intangible heritage [14].

2.2. Heritage and conservation

Heritage is characterised by historical monuments, sites and cultural heritage being passed on from past generations in a community, as well as their value and demand. Heritage is a capital asset [14]. It is a social construct that is established within cultural and economic practise [15]. Since the mid-nineteenth century, heritage conservation has moved beyond individual buildings to include the surrounding landscape.

Conservation of cultural heritage in built environment has started from the 1970s, and it has considered the conservation of human and environmental context. Heritage conservation is defined as “dedicated to the preservation of cultural assets for the future” [16]. The conservation concepts recently being shifts from “materials” to “values” to “living” based conservation process.

The Venice Charter 1964 (Article 1) defined rural and urban environments as conservation areas, site of civilisation or historical events were discovered [17]. While ICCROM on the other hand has coined the term "living heritage" as a scope of its integrated approach to territorial and urban conservation.

The broadening area of conservation indicates rising distress about the integrated values of heritage places, and it calls attention to societal issues to strike a balance between growth and conservation. Simultaneously, conservation necessitates interdisciplinary research that integrate historical, cultural, environmental, and social qualities into a shared framework to maintain the overall quality of living heritage places ultimately.

Conservation of living based also known as people-based conservation aims at the community on the community's well-being takes precedence over tangible heritage. The concept of heritage conservation can be defined as all measures and actions aimed at safeguarding, preserve, maintain, protect, and adopt of all assets, natural, cultural, tangible, and intangible heritage simultaneously warranting its accessibility to present and future generation. The fundamental of heritage conservation is to identify, record, analyse, and protecting the heritage values [4]. Identifying, recording, analysing, and preserving heritage values are the cornerstones of heritage conservation.

2.3 Living heritage approach

The term ‘living heritage site’ in this paper is defined as traditional settlement with specific neighbourhood in the context of historic area. In this traditional settlement the ‘Outstanding universal values’ are demonstrated by the native people and physical characteristics, who keep the skills, other cultural practices, and living traditions.

A living heritage site, is a site that seeks to recreate historical conditions to replicate a period in the past, providing tourists with an experiential view of history. It is a place that recreates the conditions of a society, historical time, or natural setting. In terms of concept, it is a place with defined boundaries and a permanent local community. Therefore, the community lives inside living heritage site is different from the surrounding community because it has a special relationship with the site and its continuing functionality (Figure 1). The community considers the site to be their home because it gives them a sense of belonging, comfort, and meaning in their lives [4, 5].

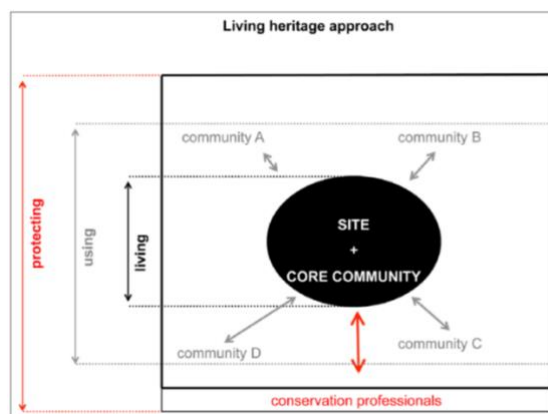


Figure 1. Living heritage approach

The elements of continuity for living heritage approach can be categorised into three, namely: community connections, cultural expressions (intangible and tangible), and continuity of care through traditional or established means [4]. Living Heritage Approach is an enhancement on the two current approaches, namely, values and fabric based and can be adapted with any category of heritage [18]. The

elements of continuity for living heritage approach can be categorised into three, namely: community connections, cultural expressions (intangible and tangible), and continuity of care through traditional or established means [5].

In response to the changing world faces by the heritage community, the community needs to evolve, but at the same time, need to conserve its original heritage functions. By conserving cultural heritage, it supports identity to the community, continuously recreated the culture practices supported by the surrounding environment.

3. Methodology

The method implemented for this paper was qualitative design by employed semi structured interview and documents analysis. Interviews session carried out with two key personals at Portuguese settlement, which are Portuguese community Regidor (village head), and head of Village Community Management Council or known as '*Majlis Pengurusan Komuniti Kampung*'. Data from interviews session were analysed using content analysis. This paper also analyses and reviews published literature, standards and reports on the issues on living heritage sites and community's cultural heritage, plus elements of community participation, awareness, and stakeholder's participation in conserving the tangible and intangible of community cultural heritage.

4. Result and discussion

4.1 Living heritage concerns

The key criteria of a living heritage site that its cultural and natural resources interact intimately with the daily lives of indigenous inhabitants, which embodies assets of significant value in social performance and strives for an evolutionary appraisal. As a result, the preservation of living heritage sites underlined the significance of 'function' and 'authenticity' in a 'constant' and 'diversity' context. The term 'living' was used to refer to 'both the living characteristics of heritage (continuity) and the heritage components in a living context' [4, 19].

Authenticity has been major issue with living heritage sites. Authenticity refers to originality of reproductions between a living history activity and the piece of the past that meant to be recreated [20]. Authenticity is a concept that suggests the context and concepts displayed and transmitted in the present necessitate the correctness and truth of the past. This is especially true when it comes to intangible cultural heritage, such as art, music, and literature. It means something is authentic if it is made, produced, or performed by the local people in accordance with customs and traditions.

The issue in historic cities, especially living heritage site for the cultural surroundings, there are contradictions between necessity for preservation approaches intended at integrity and authenticity including demands of people living in these sites [21, 7]. On the same note, other stakeholders have their own intentions, which might and might not be appropriate with conservation principle. Tourists, for example, come to the sites with certain expectations of the 'authentic' experience they want, which often does not match the site's recorded history. Unexpectedly, Portuguese community themselves encountered with authentic issue, it occurred during cultural event show when organizer had their own performance group performed the Portuguese dance although exhibited non-Portuguese traditional clothes and dance moves (M. Danker, personal communication, April, 2021). Such move of imitation setting up yet another compromise between retaining community authenticity and providing the facilities that tourists want.

Vulnerability of living heritage site due to modernisation and development hazard present issues for conservation practices. Due to rapid development in Melaka WHS to attract tourist landing, living heritage site for Portuguese community encountered with coastal reclamation barely 200 meters from their settlement. The development activities have affected socio-economic of the community, as they were once and still fishermen among them. These conflicting developments have raised worries and unhappiness among the community [6, 7].

Community in living heritage site also vulnerable of losing its community member. Younger generation migrated out of their traditional settlement for competent lifestyles, working experience, social life, and commission. These younger generation adopting well to modernisation and globalisation which dominate majority of their lifestyles and indirectly caused them slowing losing their heritage identity (M. Danker, personal communication, April, 2021). The elderly community worried in the future their cultural identity will be forgotten as the value of their culture, skills and traditions were not practices (J. Fernandos, personal communication, April, 2020).

Unlike other local community, the heritage communities are fragile to any urban development as it jeopardises their tradition, culture, and heritage. Hence, in order to conserve the core community at Portuguese Settlement, living heritage is a suitable approach to conserve and sustain the community cultural heritage for the continuity of its heritage for the future generation. Therefore, following section will discuss elements of conservation core community living in heritage site.

4.2 Elements in conserving living heritage

The need to conserve living heritage is essential as conservation elements are the foundation in conserving community cultural heritage. Engagement of people-based approach is the key to conserve living heritage site' cultural heritage. Comprehensive engagement is to conserve community members and shareholders, plus for cultural heritage assessments and for management decisions as well as referred on impacts and opportunities [22].

4.2.1 Community participation

Community participation and community conservation involvement in heritage has been well embedded in contemporary conservation practice. The potential of heritage plays an active role in the lives of communities and to bring benefits to people is increasingly widely recognised. Communities are being engaged in the process of making conservation and management decisions about themselves and their heritage, as well as the process of putting those decisions into action [23]. Through active participation and involvement of core community through any stages of planning, implementation, and development progress would encourage sustainable community for that specific heritage site [5, 24]. Therefore, it will be able to safeguard their cultural heritage by voicing out their concerns on issues regarding to cultural heritage [25, 26].

The principles of conservation and participatory planning focus on energising all stakeholders involved in the process (cultural, social, economic, and environmental), while the public's and community members' active engagement is crucial in preserving heritage assets [27]. Study shown that the impact of heritage on people's daily lives and how it can enhance their quality of life, reflecting on both the past and present and increasing the importance of cultural products [28].

Participation in WHS has strengthened the community's sense of belonging, facilitated the creation of social networks, and instilled a greater appreciation and understanding of local values [30]. Local communities play an important role in restoring and sustaining the heritage site. Their involvement in heritage management helps them prosper economically and increases their overall quality of life [31].

4.2.2 Awareness

Creating cultural heritage awareness is a critical topic for educating the public about the urgent need for cultural heritage information acquisition. Living heritage community should also be empowered to appreciate their own cultural heritage and appreciate it. Public awareness can be increase through promoting cultural heritage by means of festivals celebration, education, heritage trail and walk [32].

Awareness is an important part of protecting cultural heritage. People living near to cultural heritage site may cause damage if they not have enough conscious. For community living in heritage site, the absence of awareness of intangible cultural heritage will cause these intangible cultural heritages being extinct. While, if the awareness of tangible cultural properties is insufficient, these properties will not be protected and will be destroyed [32].

Involvement of stakeholders' participation play vital role creating awareness in heritage conservation. Previous study on awareness project with the public in Naksyah to expose Neighbourhood Diaries from the heritage community with the aim of inspiring community pride and fostering local identity through cultural heritage awareness, has proven noteworthy [33]. Seeing that the core community efforts are noticeable, and it successfully share their heritage with public.

4.2.3 Stakeholder's participation

Stakeholders' involvement is the principle of collaborative and participatory conservation which focus on stimulating all heritage stakeholders engaged in the process of social, cultural, environment, and economic [27, 34].

The conservation of community's cultural heritage is tightly bound with the government as they are involved in setting policies and taking safeguarding measure. In a particular situation, when governmental agencies may lack expertise, this is where stakeholder particularly NGO to bridge the gap in implementing conservation activities [28].

Overall, a strong attempt to conserve cultural heritage requires effective coordination that promotes communication and engagement among local community and other stakeholders. Stakeholders should be responsive to the cultural diversity of the community, and community participation demonstrates the rights to access and engage in cultural life alongside with other individual rights such as access to information and education, freedom of speech, self-mobilisation. As a result, it provides important tools for the preservation and development of living heritage in physical, economic, and social terms.

5. Conclusion

Living heritage nowadays facing with globalization, modernisation, authenticity issues and lead to community residing in living heritage site are slowly losing its traditions, practices, and traditions. Engaging the community in phases of planning, execution, and construction advancement related to their cultural heritage or living place will help to preserve the community living in heritage sites. Furthermore, a good teamwork and awareness from community' active participation and stakeholders' involvement, tied together with good communication medium will further enhance the heritage conservation for the community. Besides that, conservation elements such as community participation, awareness, and stakeholders' involvement are indispensable without one another. By understanding challenges facing by the community and assets of its cultural heritage, conservation elements able to safeguard, protect and conserve heritage value. Heritage conservation is important process that will leaves an invaluable resource for future generations.

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