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The Impact of New-build Gentrification in Iskandar Malaysia: A case study of Nusajaya

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Abstract

A practice of adopting In-situ concrete (ISC) construction method for wet areas in pre-cast concrete (PC) buildings to overcome leakage problem is a setback for full IBS adoption. Various options explored while developing ideal solution only to discover the answer is possible within the existing parameters of IBS. The proposal adopts composite construction comprised of metal permanent formwork and ISC casting for toilet floor, while PC components remained as buildings structural framing system. This proposal combined different elements of IBS systems offers all the advantages associated with IBS; minimize wastages, better quality, shorter construction period and minimized unskilled workers.

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Keywords: Nusajaya; Iskandar Malaysia; new-build gentrification; impacts

1. Introduction

Gentrification has been claimed to be a powerful force that often rapidly transforms the physical, economic and social characteristics of a city, particularly of central city areas. Although many works have been constructed around the experiences of developed nations, gentrification as a global urban strategy requires to be more studied for cities in the developing countries. For major cities in Malaysia, globalised urban images are enthusiastically pursued by

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urban policy and explicitly depicted as a blueprint for a civilised city life. In response to globalization and economic competitiveness, Malaysia as a developing nation is also striving hard to compete with other countries. Due to rapid and continuous socio-economic development, Malaysia is also potentially experiencing gentrification process especially in the rapid development area like Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bahru. There are many aspects of gentrification that can be generated from national urban policies as well as local redevelopment, regeneration, and revitalization strategies (Sabri, M. Ludin, & Foziah, 2012). In the context of Iskandar Malaysia (IM), due to its rapid urbanization, signs of gentrification emerge particularly in some part of IM namely Johor Bahru and Nusajaya. IM covers an area of about 2216.3 km². It lies at the heart of South East Asia at the southern tip of Peninsular Malaysia. From a regional perspective, the development of IM will lend a greater competitive edge to the region. IM will benefit significantly from the air and sea linkages within Asia-Pacific countries. IM has also been considered to have a wider impact in relation to the zones of influence of the global cities of Kuala Lumpur and Singapore (Rizzo & Khan, 2013). As in Kuala Lumpur, the rapid socio-economic development in IM, as southern economic corridor development since 2006 brought about the same two major transformations (Bunnell, 2002; Sabri et al., 2012). First, the dramatic increase in urban land prices resulting in clustering of activities in particular areas. Second, the emergence of new socio-economic profile with their specific preferences and lifestyle (Embong & Macmillan, 2002). These new socio-economic groups are middle classes that are mostly professionals, managers, and administrators.

As IM's vision to be a 'strong, sustainable conurbation of international standing' displays a commitment to creating a sustainable conurbation, thus, the needs of particular stakeholders is taken into consideration. Such policies have led to extensive new-build gentrification mostly by displacement of existing residents and landscapes. Mat Nor et al. (2009) and Rostam et al. (2011), claimed that involuntary relocation and social disruption of the villagers occurs due to the development of IM. Through public-private urban renewal and new urban/suburban projects also, the city region has experienced spatially diffused, low-density sprawl into pre-existing rural land (Rizzo & Khan, 2013). The pursuit of its globalization agenda has given rise to gentrification in a wide range of localities including plantation, old neighbourhood, waterfront sites as well as urban fringe areas. The city-region has also witnessed widespread urban renewal and new urban/suburban projects which resulted in distinct physical and socio-economic changes. Therefore, this article seeks to contribute further understanding on the phenomenon of gentrification in the context of Nusajaya. This article aims to achieve two objectives that are:

- To prove that gentrification phenomenon occurs in the region due to signs of the new-build gentrification in Nusajaya.
- To identify the impact of new-build gentrification towards the local people.

2. Literature review

Gentrification constitutes one of the challenging urban phenomena. It remained a part of urban studies throughout the past forty years (Lees & Ley, 2008; Rérat, Söderström, Piguet, & Besson, 2009; Sabri et al., 2012). Early definition of gentrification refers to the displacement of low-income groups by wealthier ones in central and working-class urban areas (Lees et al., 2008). Some scholars explain the gentrification phenomena in two aspects that are from consumption-side and production-side point of view (Lees et al., 2008). The emergences of gentrifiers such as professional and new urban elites are the centres of focus by the scholars who deal with consumption side (Wyly & Drinovz, 2007). On the other hand, production-side associates the gentrification process to the role of capital rather than new urban elites in moving the affluent households back to the central city. Gentrification is a consequence and manifestation of globalisation and the neo-liberal urbanism (Davidson, 2007; He, 2010; Smith, 2002). Indeed, gentrification 'has been woven ever more tightly together with capital market processes, public sector privatization schemes, globalized city competition, welfare retrenchment and workfare requirements, and many other threads of the fabric of neo-liberal urbanism' (Lees et al., 2008). As gentrification mutates in both temporal and spatial dimensions, the conceptual meaning of gentrification has been extended to capture emerging processes of urban change. In recent years, there are more cases of gentrification across the globe. The researchers have begun 'to no longer restrict the term as a processes located in the city centre' (Maloutas, 2011; Visser & Kotze, 2008; Shaw, 2008; Slater et al., 2004; Lees, 2002). The spatial focus of gentrification now includes the rural area, infill housing, brownfield developments and the construction of newly built luxury developments in the central city (Lees

et. al., 2008). Hackworth & Smith (2001) in their assessment of the progression and spread of gentrification had analysed and introduced many new types of gentrification that have arisen during the third phases which began in the early 1990s. Among the types of gentrification in the third waves which are often debated by scholars relates to new-build gentrification (Doucet, 2014; He, 2010; Shaw 2008; Visser & Kotze, 2008; Lees et al., 2008). New-build gentrification indicate the transformation of old industrial brownfield sites into high-end, new-build developments (Marquardt et al., 2012; He, 2010; Rérat et al., 2009; Lees et al., 2008; Davidson & Lees, 2005). Most commonly, new-build gentrification is manifested in the form of the development of large-scale luxurious apartment blocks and their consumption by the middle classes (He, 2010; Davidson, 2007; Davidson & Lees, 2005). It brings both direct and indirect displacement, e.g. exclusionary displacement and price shadowing. Davidson & Lees (2005) outlined four reasons why new-build developments should be considered part of the gentrification process. These are reinvestment of capital, social upgrading, landscape changes and displacement. (Slater et al., 2004) In their cases of new-build gentrification have highlights critical issues that unify more ‘classical’ and ‘contemporary’ understandings of gentrification. They show that new-build gentrification causes displacement, albeit indirect and/or sociocultural; that in-movers are the urbane new middle classes; that a gentrified landscape/aesthetic is produced; and that capital is reinvested in disinvested urban areas (Lees et al., 2008). Indeed, these characteristics demonstrate shared traits with other less ‘controversial’ understandings of gentrification. New-build gentrification was first examined in British cities; however, it is now common in other countries both in developed and developing nations (Doucet, 2014). Gentrification not only occurs in the Western country but also in developing nation. However, in most cases, it remained in the central parts of the city (Lees, 2011; Shinwon & Kwang Joong, 2011).

3. Methodology

In this research, the first step involves identifying the subject of the literature review by using appropriate keywords. Keyword searches are the most common method of identifying literature. We begin to search for the references by using ‘gentrification’, ‘gentrifying’ and ‘gentrified’ as the primary keywords. After reviewing the literature related to gentrification, we conclude that gentrification have mutated in term of location, characteristics and types. We further used ‘new-build gentrification’ and ‘developing countries’ as keywords to explore the situation that currently occur in IM. Literature searches are undertaken most commonly using computers and electronic databases. Computer databases offer access to vast quantities of information, which can be easily retrieved than using a manual search. In this study, the internet search was used as the main method of collecting references. There are two main databases to look for the references that are <http://www.sciencedirect.com/> and <http://www.scopus.com/>. Next, meta-synthesis approach was used to prove the emerging gentrification phenomenon by identifying signs of the new-build gentrification in the context of Nusajaya. Meta-synthesis approach is a non-statistical technique used to integrate, evaluate and interpret the findings of multiple qualitative research studies. Such studies may be combined to identify their common core elements and themes. Meta-synthesis approach also involves analysing and synthesizing essential elements in each study, with the aim of transforming individual findings into new conceptualizations and interpretations (Polit and Beck, 2006). In order to reinforce the argument that gentrification happens in Nusajaya, the impacts that usually occurs because of gentrification are also gathered. Impacts are obtained from secondary sources.

4. Characteristics of new-build gentrification in Nusajaya

In IM, five flagship zones are proposed as key focal points for developments. Four of the focal point is Nusajaya – Johor Bahru – PasirGudang corridor known as the Special Economic Corridor (SEC). The five flagship zones are Johor Bahru, Nusajaya, Western Gate Development, Eastern Gate Development and Senai-Skudai. IM has received a total of RM43 billion from RM47 billion private investment target till late 2009 (Rostam et.al, 2011). Investment of IM is mostly concentrated in Nusajaya. It allows the establishment of firms, institutions, and professionals related to the knowledge economy to set up the value chain within the SJER as well as accommodating half a million inhabitants (Khazanah Nasional, 2006). Among the new developments are health facilities (AfiatHealthpark), education facilities (Raffles University Malaysia, Marlborough College Malaysia, University of Southampton etc.),

and tourism facilities (Legoland Malaysia, Johor Premium Outlet, Hello Kitty Town etc.) The target is to attract companies, institutions and knowledge economy professionals (ICT industries, R&D firms, universities, professionals, etc.) to raise the value chain in Iskandar Malaysia (Rizzo & Glasson, 2012). IM proponents are building more catalyst projects in addition to existing new development in IM. They are Gleneagles Medini Hospital, Motorsports City, Afiniti and Avira Wellness Resort, Ascendas-UEM Land Technology Park and Angry Birds Theme Park (Xian Yang et al., 2013).

As Nusajaya transformed from relatively new and green field area into high-end, new-build developments, it clearly shows that Nusajaya is experiencing new-build gentrification. New-build gentrification is in the form of the development of large-scale luxurious apartment blocks and their consumption by the middle classes (He, 2010; Davidson & Lees, 2005). In the context of Nusajaya, more luxury and exclusive residential area promising a quality lifestyle is built. Although housing development in Nusajaya does not focus solely on large-scale luxurious apartment blocks but still it is in luxurious form that can only be afford by the middle classes. Horizon Hills, East Ledang, and Ledang Heights are the examples of gated low-rise residential area provided for the wealthy (Rizzo & Glasson, 2012).

5. Impacts of new-build gentrification in Nusajaya

Gentrification is associated with both negative and positive aspects (Lees et. al., 2008; Slater et al. 2004). The minus side of gentrification is the loss of social diversity. The emerging wealthy enclaves are filling up the area. Due to the changing demand of these higher incomes, the neighbourhood business structure inevitably changes as it no longer serves the low-incomes (Atkinson, 2004; Freeman, 2009). In contrast, from the positive point of view, gentrifications counteract urban sprawl, limit crime rates, reduce vacancy rates and revalorize properties. Besides, the idea should also be able to revitalise problems of the old city. Sustainable city standard is achieved by creating a value-added activity to the central area and the surrounding by maximizing the economic activities (Ahmad Zaki & Ngesan, 2012). While gentrification has a number of positive outcomes, the negatives are overriding especially from the social point of view. Although the early stages of gentrification can contribute to a more socially balanced environment, its later stages result in the most socially exclusive neighbourhood arrangements (Levy, Comey, & Padilla, 2006). The next part of the paper accentuates the negative impacts of new-build gentrification in Nusajaya, Iskandar Malaysia.

5.2 *Involuntary relocation and social disruption*

Bunnell (2002) claimed the process of developing new federal administrative centre of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya has resulted in evacuation of Indians ethnic living in the LadangPerangBesar and several other farms (Rostam et al., 2011). A similar story is today replicated in Nusajaya, the new major growth centre of IM. Rostam et al. (2011) stated that IM development have taken up land owned by villagers. Most of the agricultural land involved traditional villages (Fig 1). 400 households in KampungBaru and GelangPatah were evacuated. Several families in eight traditional Malay villages namely TiramDuku, Pekajang, TanjungAdang, KampungPok, TanjungKupang, Ladang, PedasLaut and PayaMengkuang also had to move elsewhere. Some people were relocated to new settlement such as Taman Perintis 1. Villagers and fishermen communities are being relocated elsewhere in Johor Bahru, including to the periphery of the metropolitan region, to facilitate IM development (Rizzo & Glasson, 2012).

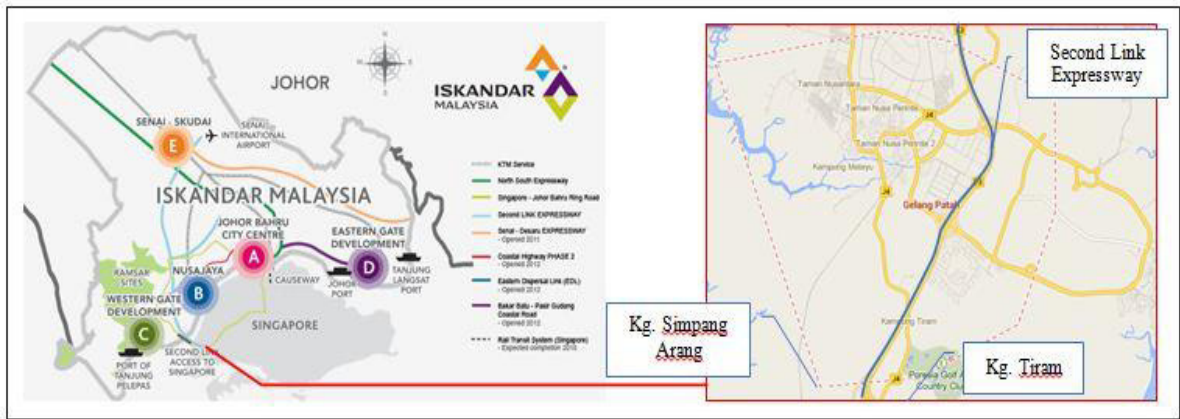


Fig. 1. Village affected by the development of second Link Expressway.

In addition to relocation, the development of IM has also resulted in economic resources disruption of an Aboriginal community living in KampungSimpangArang, KampungBakarBatu and Sg.Temun(Mat Nor et al., 2009). The communities depend on the nearby river for their livelihood. The construction of the Second Link (linking Johor-Singapore) to facilitate commuters staying in this area which involved the construction of a bridge near KampungSimpangArang, for instance, has reduced their catch. This situation causes their income to decline. Development taking place in GelangPatah and Nusajaya has resulted in the increased population of the area. The increasing population has also affected the market price. Nevertheless, the communities cannot benefit from the increased market price, particularly from the increasing fish price as their catch has declined. The low level of education and lack of working skill also limit their opportunities in finding job. Only a small number of them can work as a labourer in plantations or restaurant workers. The admission and recruitment of foreign workers in the industrial sector near to their village have further complicated their opportunities in finding jobs (Mat Nor et al., 2009).

5.2 Income distribution and employment pattern

A study in Nusajaya shows that, the original local people living in the area can be categorized as poor since the monthly income of most of the head of household (HOH) is still low. The average monthly income of HOH in 2011 is RM 1,022 a slight increase compared to RM 911 in 2007. However, the average monthly income of the household increased from RM 1,486.25 (in 2007) to RM 2, 094.41 (in 2011) (Rostam et al., 2011). In 2007, the number of HOH with monthly income below RM 1000 was 63.5 per cent. The percentage decreased further to 55.5 percent in 2011 (Table 1). Before the implementation of IM, Nusajaya was a rural area. Most of the household involved in agriculture and fisheries activities. The trends have now changed as the percentage of households involved in agriculture and fisheries activities have declined significantly. The rapid development of Nusajaya as a new town centre caused not only displacement and loss of agricultural land, but it also change the pattern of the employment sector.

Table 1.HOH and household income changes in Nusajaya.

Monthly income (RM)	2005		2010	
	HOH	Household	HOH	Household
< RM 499	12.5	11.5	8.0	6.0
RM 500-RM 999	27.0	25.5	13.5	14.0
RM 1000-RM 1499	20.0	27.5	14.0	14.5

RM 1500-RM 1999	17.5	11.0	20.0	20.5
RM 2000-RM 2499	6.0	6.0	14.5	14.5
RM 2500-RM 2999	6.0	6.0	9.5	9.0
RM 3000-RM 3499	3.0	4.0	7.0	7.5
> RM 3500	8.0	8.5	13.5	14.0

Sources: Rostam et al. (2011)

Table 2. The changes in main occupation of the household.

Main occupation	2005			2010		
	HOH	Spouse	First child	HOH	Spouse	First child
Factory workers/private services	12.0	5.5	15.5	35.5	15.5	29.5
Fishermen & farmers	31.5	0.0	14.5	15.5	2.0	10.0
Merchants	4.5	3.0	2.0	7.0	2.5	5.5
Clerical & colleges	4.5	4.5	12.0	5.5	2.0	12.0
Retirees	5.0	-	-	4.0	-	-
General labor	17.5	4.0	12.5	2.5	-	15.0
Others	19.5	38.0	10.0	7.0	32.0	11.5
No permanent work	5.5	45.0	33.5	23.0	46.0	16.5

Sources: Rostam et al. (2011)

Most of the local households do not have high academic qualification and skills needed in the modern sector of the urban economy. Hence, the occupation of the villagers is among the lowest in social and economic hierarchy (Mat Nor et al., 2009). It is proven by the increase of service and manufacturing activities (Table 2) and the rapid physical development in Nusajaya (Rostam et al., 2011).

5.3 Land use changes

Over the years, due to extensive development, a lot of existing natural and agricultural land cover have been converted into anthropogenic land cover. Previous land use in Nusajaya was largely agriculture and green field occupied by villages and fishing communities. However, in order to facilitate IM developments, the villagers were relocated elsewhere in the district, including to the periphery of the metropolitan region (Nasongkhla & Sintusingha, 2012).

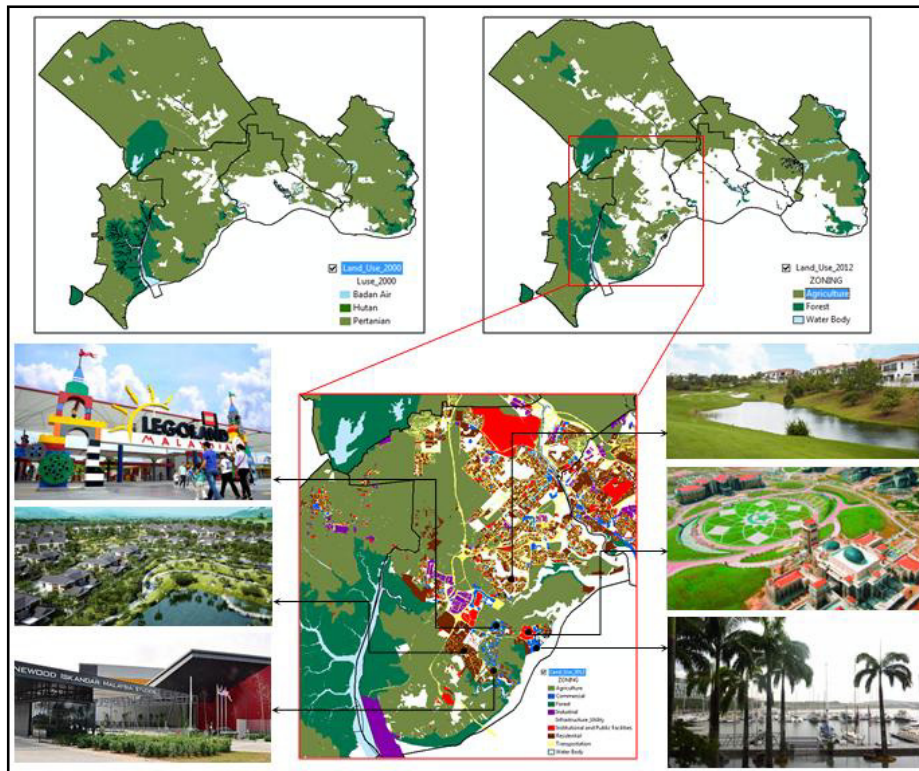


Fig. 2. Land use changes in Nusajaya Area.

Referring to new development occurring in Nusajaya area, the broad pattern of changes in land use suggests a movement toward purportedly higher purposes (Fig 2). Since the implementation of IM in 2006, almost half of land use in Nusajaya can now be categorized as commercial, institutional and public facilities. These include such uses as a private university, hospitals, retail and theme parks. This changes of land use will soon change the image of Nusajaya in term of cultural and ethnic background, personality, attitudes, motivation, income, age, length of stay, lifestyle, social class and socio-economic group (Suthasupa, 2011).

5.4 Housing price and property ownership

Jaiyeoba & Aklanoglu (2013) claimed that the built environment is a product of human building activity, and housing is a sector of it. In the context of Nusajaya, newer residential schemes have transacted prices exceeding RM 600,000 (Table 3). The transaction of 2-storey terraced house located in SuteraUtama and Horizon Hills are in the range of RM 260 to RM 456 per sqft (in 2012) in average. East Ledang achieved a higher transaction value in the sub-sale market at RM480 per sqft followed by Horizon Hills RM400 per sq ft. Meanwhile, the PuteriHarbour Service Residence was launched at RM 625,000 to RM 2,300,000 per unit. The older single and double-storey terraced houses in Bandar Bukit Indah have however not increased at the same rate indicating that the price of the surrounding older residential schemes has not been affected by the Nusajaya development. Gated and guarded security and better management remained the main features for better popularity. Demand for bungalow land in JB has pushed up the transaction value on a year to year basis. Leisure Farm, Ledang Heights, Taman Ponderosa and Taman ImpianEmas are the popular housing estates that provide bungalow lands. Average prices in these estates range from RM 40 to RM 120 per sqft(William & Abdul Rahman, 2013).

Table 3. Prices (psf) for selected residential property in Nusajaya.

Location	Type	Price (psf)
East Ledang	Bungalow	RM 400-RM673
	Apartment	RM 320-RM 680
Horizon Hills	Double-storey terraced	RM 260-RM 456
Ledang Height	Bungalow	RM 325-RM 505
Nusa Idaman	Double-storey terraced	RM 222-RM 231
Leisure Farm Resort	Bungalow	RM 229-RM 558
Bukit Indah	Single-storey terraced	RM 206-RM 275
	Double-storey terraced	RM 212-RM 280
	Semi-detached	RM 375-RM 408
Nusa Bestari	Double-storey terraced	RM 224-RM 245

Source: Talhar et al. (2012) & <http://www.propertyguru.com.my/johor/>

Rising property values may be good for owners as well as developers but bad for the poorer households trying to purchase a home in the area. Similar consensus raised in studies of gentrification in the UK was addressing the loss of affordable rented accommodation in central London. In other cities, such as Washington, the loss of affordable housing is envisaged to create extreme problems for low-paid service workers (Atkinson, 2004). In the context of developing countries, the housing problem is more quantitative than qualitative due to the high rate of urbanization and the wide gap between the demand and supply of houses (Jaiyeoba & Aklanoglu, 2013). In IM, as most developer competes to build luxury homes, it raises some concern since there is already an oversupply of those types of homes (DasarPerumahan Rakyat Johor, 2012). If overbuilding occurs in IM, it can be detrimental to the mid-term overall physical market. Although such development may not pose an issue since foreign developers are attracting foreign buyers, it raises concern among the locals who have to purchase more affordable properties further away from this area. The non-Malay poor, particularly the ethnic Indians, cannot even afford low-cost housing due to increasing house price (Nasongkhla & Sintusingha, 2012). The property purchases by the foreign expatriates in Nusajaya have resulted in housing unaffordability for the middle and low-income residents. As Nusajaya consists of exclusive residential area, new-economic profile has emerged. Only people with higher socio-economic status can afford to buy such houses. This is evidenced by more than 40% of foreign ownership of properties in Nusajaya.

6. Conclusion

Gentrification is a process that refers to the displacement of people, but the process has gone beyond that. Gentrification has been adopted as a desirable urban strategy, striving to upgrade their places in the global urban hierarchy. New-build gentrification is the process that fit the situation in Nusajaya. Nusajaya formerly an agriculture and green field area have been transformed into high-end enclaves. Service and manufacturing replaced agriculture and fisheries activities. It is good to see the growth of mixed land use being developed rapidly in Nusajaya because it indicates a good economic development. Local people are left behind since they do not have suitable qualification and skills needed in the modern sector of the urban economy. Besides, the admission and recruitment of foreign workers further complicated their opportunities in finding jobs (Mat Nor et al., 2009). The objective of IM development that aspires to help strengthen the socio-economic of the local community is almost impossible to achieve. The new housing schemes are mostly unaffordable for local people showing that the new socio-economic profile with their specific preferences and lifestyle have emerged in Nusajaya. Knowing that most property owners are foreign expatriates from China and Singapore can be considered as one of the great achievement of IM development since it shows how valuable the land and real property are. However, this kind of property value cannot be purchased by the local community. The perception that local community cannot even afford to purchase a comfortable home at an affordable price is extremely unpleasant situation. This study also shows that new-build

gentrification has inevitably changed the socio-spatial structure of the region. Therefore, if no effort is made to countervail both positive and negative impacts of new-build gentrification, it is hard to achieve the objective of social inclusiveness as promised by the CDP.

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