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Valuing Built Cultural Heritage in a Malaysian Urban Context

Aidatul Fadzlin Bakri[*], Norhati Ibrahim, Sabarinah Sh Ahmad,
Nurulhusna Qamaruz Zaman

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying,
Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Abstract

Built cultural heritage is a dominant urban component. Experts assess the value of built cultural heritage based on criteria set by a particular regulating organisation. This paper aims to ascertain the valuing process and how each stakeholder contributes towards valuing and decision making of built cultural heritage in a Malaysian urban context. The method of the study is qualitative in approach, which includes a review of current practices and interviews. This paper establishes the significance and conservation worthiness of a built environment that considers sustainable practices and in turn, provide guiding principles for policies in heritage conservation.

Keywords: Built cultural heritage; value; conservation; urban

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage is an asset that is uniquely rich with cultural significance, with built cultural heritage being the dominant component. Built cultural heritage is a dynamic urban resource that has adaptive potential continuously provide a place to live, play, work, study and experience life in general. Disclosure of principle knowledge to enable us to harvest these potentials is crucial, hence the need for the proposed study. There are three fronts in cultural heritage conservation. Past studies tended to focus on the economic, social or physical fronts independently, whereby very few have examined the integrated implications of these factors holistically. Any intangible or tangible cultural heritage must have its own

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[*] Corresponding author. Tel.: +603-55-444-210; fax: +603-55-444-353.
E-mail address: aida_fadzlin@yahoo.co.uk

value with cultural heritage significance. The integral impact of the three fronts must be viewed together when valuing cultural heritage in conservation in order to derive more sustainable practices and policies. Several overseas studies have examined cultural heritage values, but the multicultural nature of the Malaysian society warrants a re-examination to embed contextual needs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural heritage values

Culture enriches lives, give a sense of identity and very relevant in every aspect of people's life. It includes religion, language, mannerism, dressing, rituals, music, festival, food, norms, among others. In Malaysia, for example, culture is being practiced and expressed by its multi-ethnic groups. Meanwhile, heritage is often valued in many ways and driven by different motivations namely economics, politics, cultural, spiritual, aesthetics, and others; which could result in conflict of interest by the stakeholders.

The UNESCO's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) has defined cultural heritage by the following classifications: monuments, groups of buildings and sites. Cultural heritage as defined during the ASEAN Declaration On Cultural Heritage, Bangkok, Thailand (2000) included these connotations: 'significant cultural values and concepts; structures and artifacts, sites and human habitats, oral or folk heritage, the written heritage and popular cultural heritage.' Malaysia's National Heritage Act 2005 or Act 645, Part I Preliminary section 2. (1) has defined cultural heritage as "tangible or intangible form of cultural property, structure or artefact and may include a heritage matter, object, item, artefact, formation structure, performance, dance, song, music that is pertinent to the historical, contemporary way of life of Malaysians, on or in land or underwater cultural heritage of tangible form, but excluding natural heritage." Cultural heritage has also often been referred as something which has cultural significance (National Heritage Act, 2005; Burra Charter, Australia ICOMOS 1999).

Meanwhile, value is being defined as 'the regard that something is held to deserve, the importance, worth, or usefulness of thing' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Any intangible or tangible cultural heritage has its own value or normally mentioned as cultural heritage significance. Meanwhile, National Heritage Act 2005, Part I Preliminary section 2. (1) defined "cultural heritage significance" as cultural heritage having aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic or technological value.

Values need to be assessed so that if there is any decision need to be made to the heritage site, building or monument in the future, the decision will consider all the values and the need to retain it. Previous theories proved that cultural heritage are valued differently, often in conflict and depending very much on certain interest and motivation of the sector group (Ateca-Amestoy, V, 2011; De La Torre, Marta (ed.), 2002). Take, for example, the demolition of Bok House in Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur in 2006 (shortly after NHA 2005 been gazetted) has raised questions about how heritage is being assessed. This is because even though it has been proposed to be gazetted as a heritage building, the government did not do so because it does not meet the criteria and have no significant heritage value. In addition, ministers and heritage commissioner have also stated that the Bok House was not gazetted due to the high costs of conservation. Seven years later, at the end of 2013 came the shocking news of the historic temple (Candi no. 11) at the archaeological site of Bujang Valley, Kedah being demolished by a property developer. The developer claimed being unaware of the 1200 years old remains, which are related to the history of Hinduism and Buddhism in Malaysia, were on site. In addition to that, the Heritage Department stated that they have proposed gazetting Bujang Valley as a national heritage site. However, as there is no agreement with the state government, it could not be gazetted. The two examples of built heritage

demolitions are a clear evidence that all heritage assets should be properly assessed so that all actions in the future would not jeopardize the value of heritage or its significance. These are some of the consequences of different value judgment between stakeholders, and if it is not discussed, more problems will occur in the future.

2.2. Cultural heritage values typologies and its assessment

In Malaysia, the national heritage is protected under the National Heritage Act 2005, where the term is taken to include places of cultural significance. Although not described in detail, this Act is the main reference that categorizes cultural heritage according to the typology of values. Table 1 compares the types of value according to seven sources. Common types of heritage values among others are cultural, economic, informational, aesthetic, historical, scientific, recreational, linguistic and social. The typologies may be relevant for certain sites or objects only, and it varies from one to another. Values too can have many interpretations and meanings, depending on different yardstick and approach. Mazzanti,M (2002) stated that it could also be 'multi-value,' 'multi-dimensional' and 'multi attributes.'

It is very vital to safeguard the cultural heritage values and are to be conducted through the proper procedure in the Burra Charter (1999) stipulates the process of understanding cultural significance takes a three- stage procedure. The first stage is to identify the value of cultural heritage by gathering information through documentation, oral data and physical evidences. Next stage is to assess the cultural value significance and lastly to prepare a statement of significance. The assessment of heritage values could also be stated as the process of identification, elicitation and elaboration (De La Torre, Marta (ed.) (2002).

Table 1. Types of value which differ from different fields, knowledge and discipline

Reigl (1902)	Lipe (1984)	Frey (1997)	Burra Charter (1999)	National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645)	English Heritage (2008)	NZ Charter (2010)
Based on: Monument	Based on: Archaeological Site	Based on: Culture institution	Based on: Place of Cultural Significance	Based on: Place of Cultural Significance	Based on: Historic Environment	Based on: Place of Cultural Value
Age Historical Commemorative Use Newness	Economic Aesthetic Associative-symbolic Informational	Monetary Option Existence Bequest Prestige Educational	Aesthetic Historic Scientific Social	Aesthetic Archaeological Architectural Cultural Historical Scientific Social Spiritual Linguistic Technological	Evidential Historical Aesthetic Communal and symbolic	Aesthetic Archaeological Architectural Commemorative Traditional Functional Historical Technological Landscape Monumental Spiritual Scientific Social Symbolic Or any other tangible/intangible values

Sources: Adapted from Mason, R (2002) and revised by researcher (2014)

2.3. Involvement of stakeholders in valuing cultural heritage

Freeman (1984) defined stakeholder as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.' Stakeholders have also been referred as all individuals, group, organization, and association that has a common interest in heritage issue or can affect or be influenced by actions and non- actions taken to resolve the issue (Hall & McArthur, 1998). There are several ways of categorizing stakeholder, and some divide it into key stakeholders, primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those directly affected (positively or negatively) with an effort or action of an organization / agency, while secondary stakeholders are those who are indirectly affected (positively or negatively). Key stakeholders could be made or not made up of the two groups mentioned above, but they are also the people who could be affected (positively or negatively). Others divide the stakeholders into two categories, namely insider and outsider. Insiders are those who could take part in the process, while the outsiders are other people with a stake and hold a minimum or no influence in the process. However, in for this paper, the earlier categories mentioned were used. Stakeholders in the urban cultural heritage area are those with an interest of a particular connection to the urban cultural heritage, for example, the local authority, the non- government associations, local community, conservator, and others.

Value of cultural heritage also varies depending on the views of stakeholders. The value is normally being assessed by some experts based on criteria set by a particular regulating organization. Bakri, A.F. et.al (2012) stated that having too many stakeholders can also create conflicts due to the difference in directions, perspectives of seeing things and different approach in handling situations. For example, an architect may be more inclined to assess it based on the architectural and historical significance as compared to other values. By identifying all these stakeholders, it is important to ensure their participation in the process of heritage conservation.

The involvement of related stakeholders is encouraged in many charters and guidelines. It is also important that stakeholders understand the process of discovering the heritage, elucidating, and the importance of conservation (Burra Charter, 1999 and Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005). Participation in the context of heritage conservation is important because it can instill and share one's knowledge (English Heritage, 2008), assist in coming out with a solution and decision (English Heritage, 2008 and Hoi An Protocol 2005) and broaden the understanding of the value of heritage (Hoi An Protocol, 2005).

2.4. Motivation and interest in valuing cultural heritage

Motivation of stakeholders may also be derived from a desire to reveal about their opinions and show a sense of responsibility and interest in the site. Involving stakeholder means doing a participatory process, by involving as many of those who are affected by or have an interest in any project, initiative, intervention or effort. Each stakeholder interests vary and it may have to do with the economic, social, environmental, political and so on.The role and function of the individual and organizations can also determine their motivation and interest, thus giving more challenge on the process of valuing.

3. Purpose of Study and Study Area

This paper is a preliminary study, aims to ascertain the valuing process and how each stakeholder contributes towards valuing and decision making of built cultural heritage in Malaysian urban context. The study includes on how different stakeholders define cultural heritage and discuss on their function, interest/ motivation and conflict in valuing cultural heritage.

The study area is George Town World Heritage Site, Penang. Penang or 'Pearl of the Orient' is located at the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. George Town and Melaka are two cities in Malaysia, that which has been inscribed as World Heritage Site in 2008 with special Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). The task of safeguarding the values is not easy especially with the OUV. The values are as follows:

- Criterion (ii): represent exceptional examples of multi-cultural trading towns in East and Southeast Asia.
- Criterion (iii): bear living testimony to the multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia, and European colonial influences.
- Criterion (iv): reflects a mixture of influences which have created a unique architecture, culture and townscape without parallel anywhere in East and South Asia.

As a heritage site located in the city of George Town, this urban area is certainly faced with the challenge of rapid urban development. The rich cultural heritage should be preserved so that it can be enjoyed by the present and future generations.

4. Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach with one-on-one, in-depth interview to gauge the knowledge and interest of different stakeholders in valuing cultural heritage. Stakeholders were identified based on their expertise, roles, knowledge, experience and position in the selected site. A set of interview questions was prepared for relevant stakeholders who are supposed to be a reliable. There are many stakeholders listed, but for the purpose of an exploratory stage research, only three most important stakeholders of George Town World Heritage Sites are chosen. They are part of the committees in State Government and Local Authority Level in valuing process, with interest on a particular connection to the urban built cultural heritage. They are Municipal Council of Penang (MPPP), George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI), and a local Conservator.

5. Results and Discussions

The three important stakeholders of George Town World Heritage Sites, Penang, Malaysia are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of stakeholders of George Town World Heritage Sites, Penang, Malaysia

Stakeholders	Description of respondent
Heritage Department, Municipal Council of Penang (MPPP)	Heritage Architect who has four years of experience on heritage conservation project and architecture.
George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI)	Built Environment Research Officer. Has four years of experience in heritage and conservation projects.
Local conservator	Former Deputy Commissioner of National Heritage Department, Member of ICOMOS Malaysia, and Malaysian representative in World Heritage Committe. Has 20 years experience in heritage and conservation projects.

5.1. Concept of cultural heritage values

The study found that the interpretation of the concept of cultural heritage values somehow differs slightly between the stakeholders (Table 3). Heritage Department of MPPP, for example, stated that it consisted of tangible and intangible heritage and part of it was the local culture that we could not get elsewhere. It may be in the form of way of life, buildings, its infrastructure and others. By understanding the values of cultural heritage, it would be helpful in giving MPPP directions in the process of reviewing, monitoring, reviewing and enforcing all development activities involved with Penang and its Heritage Site.

Table 3. Summary of stakeholders' understanding on the concept, their function, their interest and motivation in valuing the built cultural heritage of George Town World Heritage Sites, Penang, Malaysia

Stakeholders	Function	Understanding on the concept of Cultural Heritage Values	Interest and Motivation
Heritage Department, Municipal Council of Penang (MPPP)	To examine, monitor, review and enforce all development activities involved with Heritage Site and making sure that all are in control and compliance with the law.	Consists of tangible and intangible heritage, and part of it is a local culture that we cannot get elsewhere.	Tangible heritage of Penang and surrounding environment.
George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI)	To manage, monitor and promote the heritage of George Town and the city's World Heritage Site.	Relates very much on both intangible and tangible heritage.	Both tangible and intangible heritage of George Town and the city's World Heritage Site.
Local conservator	Getting involved in heritage and conservation projects.	Relates very much on historical, cultural and architectural values.	The tangible heritage of Malaysia and other World Heritage Sites. To share and apply knowledge that is more on the technical aspects.

GTWHI also stated that built cultural heritage related very much on both intangible and tangible heritage. For them, George Town's real value was simply too exclusive and exceptional to be described as there is no other site with the same qualities anywhere else in the world. Meanwhile, the local conservator stated that built cultural heritage of Georgetown related extensively with historical, cultural and architectural values. These values would later guide on the decisions on appropriate levels of conservation and urban intervention if needed.

All three of these stakeholders feedbacks led to a common agreement on the process and how built cultural heritage values are assessed, based on what is stated in the Special Area Plan (SAP) of Georgetown, National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645) and also the Burra Charter. They were also very concerned about issues related to the World Heritage Site especially on safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). In terms of roles in valuing built cultural heritage, all three stakeholders involved in Technical Review Panel (TRP) who are appointed by Penang State Government. Their roles are to review and provide comments / views / recommendations on the application of development plan and Impact Assessment Report submitted to the MPPP, for the area located in George Town World Heritage Site and area bordered on the lot (facing) with Heritage Site. In the case there are new nominations or any appeal to change the status of building category, both MPPP and GTWHI will discuss

and make further assessment to value the respected buildings, sometimes with the help of local conservator as well.

5.2. Interest and motivation in valuing built cultural heritage

The findings of the study further highlighted the stakeholders' interest or motivation in valuing cultural heritage. In terms of interest, in general, all stakeholders agreed that the value of built cultural heritage is related to tangible heritage, especially the built heritage. However, GTWHI had concerns on both tangible and intangible heritage.

Their role or function could be the most important factor in explaining their interest and motivation. Heritage Department of MPPP's function is to examine, monitor, review and enforce all development activities involved with Heritage Site. Another important function is to ensure that the development and development control of Heritage Site and heritage building under the administration of MPPP complied with existing guidelines and law.

On the other hand, GTWHI was established by the Penang State Government to manage, monitor and promote the heritage of George Town and the city's World Heritage Site. Their interest in intangible and tangible heritage could be said as equal, but the great motivation came from the Chief Minister of Penang who is the Chairman of GTWHI, and also holds the state portfolio for Arts, Culture and Heritage.

Meanwhile, the local conservator's motivation came from his passion and high interest in heritage and conservation activities for the past 20 years. His enthusiasm to share knowledge, especially on technical aspects has brought him all around the world presenting papers, doing consultations and become an international conservation expert. Even though his roles vary according to the nature of appointments by different institutions or committees, he believed that every building has its unique values which, of course, would require different conservation approach.

Even though all stakeholders feel personal value judgement could come into play during the decision making process, at the end of the day, they will decide based on their roles and function.

5.3. Conflict of valuing built cultural heritage

Conflicts in valuing cultural heritage are always expected, especially when it is valued by many stakeholders. Although the circumstances vary, but it has come to a common agreement that factors that cause conflict are political, social, cultural and economic factors.

In terms of the political factor, it is mainly due to the top-down administrative approach practiced by the government. In Malaysia, heritage is being assessed by a three-tier legislation system, namely: Federal Government, the State Government and the Local Authorities. Each tier is set with different roles and goals. Hence, all the guidelines, policy, act and other related documents are to be referred and obeyed.

Sometimes the decisions on built cultural heritage values might be changed, swayed or dictated by the politicians. Whether this intervention would be positive or negative, it is, of course, would be closely linked to their respective political interests. All three stakeholders agreed that the political influence could change the value of cultural heritage. Not all politicians share the passion, and ready to champion the preservation of built heritage. There must therefore be other forms of controlling mechanisms to deal with the decision making associated to heritage matters.

Other than that, social and cultural factor also embodies the conflict within cultural heritage. Moreover, the richness of multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Malaysia could influence certain stakeholders to value it differently from others. The new Special Area Plan of George Town has categorized all buildings in the Heritage Sites accordingly: Category I building (buildings, objects and sites with exceptional interest/ declared as ancient/ registered as National Heritage), Category II building

(buildings, objects and sites of special interest that warrant every effort being made to preserve them, and also building for compatible development (infill or replacement). So, how the stakeholder's value the building later on would relate very much to its future development. Acheen Street Mosque was built in 1801 and its neighbourhood, for example, has become a place where Muslims population clusters. It is a Category I building where prayers are still being performed and become a community node for religious activities. Due to an increasing number of people who came for prayers, the Penang Mufti has encouraged the mosque to be expanded. However, it is opposed by concerned non-government organizations who were worried that architecture and heritage buildings would be destroyed during the extension. In the end, the concerns of both parties were resolved with a satisfactory solution. So all factors should be taken into consideration when valuing cultural heritage

Economic factor also contributes to conflict in valuing built cultural heritage. A building that is listed in Category I, of course, would receive more attention and be valued differently by the public. Currently, there are some buildings that are in the process of upgrading their status as Category II building to Category I. This upgrade would increase their economic values as well.

6. Conclusion

This paper centres on the responses of three important stakeholders of George Town World Heritage Sites; as part of a preliminary study on valuing built cultural heritage. The research outcome is only indicative and could not be generalised at this stage. Hence, in future further interviews are needed from other various stakeholders and the public in order to see more concrete

In general, this study concludes that the stakeholders agreed that built cultural heritage should be valued accordingly and in reference with all the guidelines, Act and policy applied. Built cultural heritage is considered as an asset which has to be protected and monitored, especially when it is situated in the World Heritage Sites and proudly stands on its three Outstanding Universal Values. All stakeholders also agreed that their interest in valuing cultural heritage is strongly related to tangible heritage, especially the built heritage including building, monuments and site. Each of them also facing conflicts while valuing, especially on political, social and cultural and economic factors. However, values still need to be negotiated as it is being assessed by different stakeholders with different motivation and interest. So what is the best way to negotiate? Perhaps they need to hold strongly to the objectives, not be prejudiced or biased over their own judgment and take a consensus when making decisions. A win-win situation could be a nice ending at the end of valuing process, provided all stakeholders were given fair chance to raise their opinions and arguments.

It is hope that by understanding on how cultural heritage is being valued by its stakeholders, greater respect to cultural heritage assets and a more holistic and sustainable approach of urban regeneration could be achieved; for the betterment of our quality of life.

Acknowledgement

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