



Regeneration of Heritage Areas in Melaka: Historic Urban Spaces for All

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Historic places play an important role in conveying the history and social background of a place. Cultural built heritage at these areas are the physical evidence of evolution and development of the place. Built heritage should be kept safe and revived to uphold its sense of place. Urban regeneration in Malaysia mainly focuses on introducing modern development to an area to initiate new means of economic activities, which will help revive the area. The aim is to create better living environment for the people by enhancing the social, cultural, environmental and economic characteristics of the area. These could be achieved through upgrading the infrastructure, providing funds and introducing modern public facilities to the place.

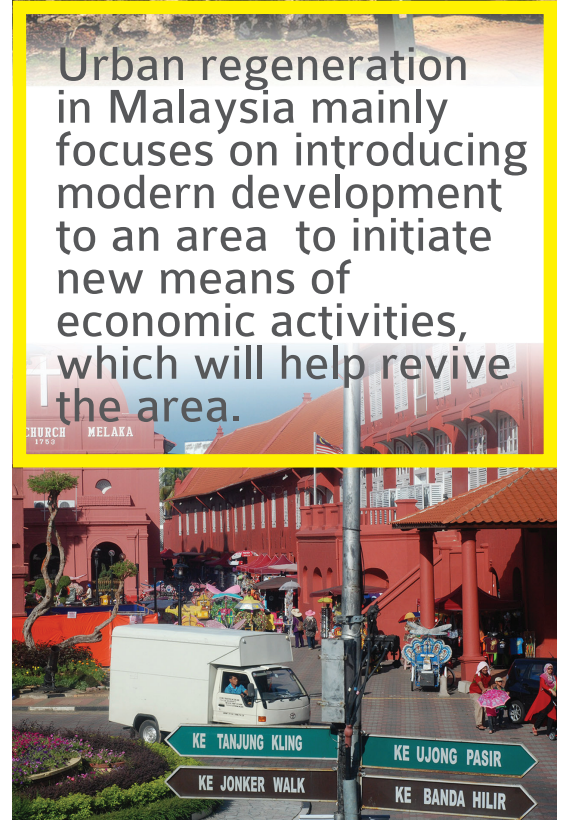
Generally, regeneration in Malaysia mainly focuses on introducing activities to revive a place, in order to gain social, economic and physical improvement. Nonetheless, a larger part of the regeneration schemes in the historic cities of Malaysia emphasised the redevelopment of the areas which often introduce new activities; whilst maintaining as much as possible the historic fabric. Providing new means to a

heritage area help value add the place and create opportunity for its people. One good example is the regeneration of the historic areas of Melaka City. In Melaka, the focus of regeneration is to increase its economic vitality through inbound tourism. The state government has allowed good tourist facilities to be placed in the historic area to make tourists feel and embrace the heritage ambiance.

Almost one third (30%) of the land use in Melaka historic area is related to business. The city's wealth of culture and tradition can be seen in the form of built heritage and residents' way of life. Regeneration scheme carried out in stages could provide insight into the historic area's economic transformation over the years. The local government's effort to pedestrianised the streets was aimed to add variety to the current local economy, by providing opportunities for traditional small businesses and new entrepreneurship. The change of use from old town hall to new office uses, warehouses to museums and retail outlets are one of the characteristics of the redevelopment scheme in historic Melaka. Beautiful, eclectic shop houses, mostly located in the historical residential and



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commercial zone of the city, are serving their function as residential space on the buildings' upper levels and as business space on the ground floor. Some town houses are converted to restaurants, cafes and hotels.

Besides heritage buildings, street improvements were also carried out by the local authority. Narrow streets in the heritage area of Melaka City are well-known for their unique characteristics. Promoting these closely-knitted continuous circuits of pedestrian routes would enable tourists and visitors to navigate quickly from one street to another in exploring and grasping the immediate urban space. It will help people experience the historic area as a whole – lively shopping streets, residential quarter and cultural landmarks.

A study on heritage-led regeneration scheme carried out at Melaka historic area from 2010 to 2016 indicates that regeneration schemes had contributed to the enhancement of its streetscape and provided better quality spaces for all. From the assessment made since 2010, many changes have taken place. Most of the streets were much improved than before. New economic activities were introduced to the area and had attracted a large number of visitors.

Moreover, since an internationally well-known brand, the Hard Rock Café Restaurant began its operation in 2013, a lot of improvement to the surrounding streetscape could be seen. The restaurant is located at the very beginning of Lorong Hang Jebat, which is the entrance to this unique heritage area, and has become a tourists' attraction.

The result of the observations shows that conservation, urban renewal, and revitalization schemes carried out since the mid-1980s have contributed to the economic growth of the area. The urban regeneration schemes carried out by the local authority helped uplift historic buildings in the area. According to Pendlebury et. al (2004) 'the quality of

historic environments as part of place-marketing/ city-image initiatives became increasingly evidence, as urban areas sought to use cultural policy as a strategy of urban regeneration'. Furthermore, the conservation of historic buildings as a flagship scheme in development projects is a good strategy for urban regeneration (Pendlebury et al., 2004: p19).

The assessment made in the study indicates that the peripheral areas of the heritage core zone have the best townscape quality. However the result also shows that, although most of the areas near the edge of the core area have good townscape, there are areas that need to be improved to ensure the overall condition and quality of the townscape at Melaka's historic core is at its very best. Proper conservation of the historic buildings and good quality streetscape can add value to the buildings and the immediate surrounding area. This can also spur economic regeneration and help sustain the tourism industry. This could create more employment opportunities for the local people, offers better services to the visitors and improve living quality.

This study has shown that over the five years of research, the outdoor public spaces have improved due to conservation and outdoor space enhancement efforts by the authority, local residents and business community. The evolution and improvement of the outdoor space quality and physical characteristics had attracted much local and global attention. The shopping streets and supporting activities have attracted an influx of tourist. The physical changes which include enhancement of façade and outdoor public space have attracted more visitors and this contributes to tourism development, improve city image and make city more lively. Public space is also a place for people to enjoy good facilities and services at the historic city. It is with hope that the outcome of this study could elevate awareness amongst the public and local authority on the importance of conservation initiatives and urban regeneration efforts to improve life and visiting experience in the historic area.