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Cultural Sustainability in Regards to National

Architectural Identity in the City of Kuala Lumpur

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INTRODUCTION:

People associate themselves with the places where they reside and distinguish between dissimilar areas. Although there is an interrelation between these two sorts of identification, how a place affects individualistic and communal identity and how people recognise different places are not the same. (Adam, 2012)

Architects have a particular role to play in the transformation and creation of built symbols that contribute to the elaborate web of phenomena that form people's and communal identities. While a new or renovated structure or location may be distinctive, it may also detract from a location's character that a community regards as a vital part of their identity. (Lewis, 2002)

The identity and visual of the places we live are really just a seamless extension of our own; it is human nature for us to identify ourselves with our city, region, or country. Our concept of individuality extends beyond our bodies to include our families, neighbourhoods, districts, regions, nations, continents, and, ultimately, the human race. (Anholt, 2010)

The call for national architectural identity in Malaysia has been a winding road ever since we reached independence in 1957. Each person adopts three distinct identities which are his ethnic, national, and personal identities. All three identities will not be adopted simultaneously, and their main purpose is to establish originality when contrasted to others. Similarly, an architectural identity can be discussed in terms of its environment, location, time, and consumerism status. (Mohammad, 2001)

ISSUES/ PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Malaysian architecture has never been a definitive although many have come to various interpretations. The constant variable in most of these interpretations are often relative to the factor of Malaysian culture and heritage. In addition to that, cultural sustainability plays a critical role in shaping and preserving the national architectural identity of a country.

Unfortunately, we are often susceptible to imitate architecture from abroad instead of celebrating and embracing our local architectural language when practicing. Climate, context and other socio-cultural factors are disregarded completely by designers of today as their primary focus is on aesthetic and form. (Surat et al., 2010) Henceforth, the identity of our architecture scene seemingly does not express the diverse community and spirit of Malaysia as a result of our impertinence.

The education system also limits our ability to dissect and critique the means of current practices. The lack of architectural discourse leaves little to no room for us to develop our thinking skills. This is supported by (Surat et al., 2010) who stated that the graduates of this era are predominantly focused on being a skilled worker instead of being an analytical and critical thinker. In short, architects should be able to solve problems and issues that arise within the community through practice. This paper will contemplate the approaches to Malaysian architectural identity and its means to the urbanisation of the country.

OBJECTIVES:

- To appraise the significance of Malaysian architectural language in its affects towards urbanisation in developing countries
- To explore the stylistic characters of Malaysian architectural identity and its relevancy in the urban context.
- To analyse the perplexities in the nature of Malaysian culture in influencing the spirit of local architecture.

METHODOLOGY:

This chapter encompasses the fundamental means and method of research for data collection in which its purpose is to serve the main objectives of this research. The method of this research will be done by a case study methodological approach was used as well as an autoethnography. In order to meet the research issues and intents of this particular paper, this chapter also delves into several sub-categories to acquire a better comprehension of the subject matter.

This study was conducted through qualitative technique. In order to obtain the findings necessary for analysis and tabulation, a case study methodological approach was used as well as an autoethnography. Due to the subjectivity toward their abstractive interpretations of various subject matters in the context of national architectural identity, the participants' submitted data were intended to be guided in order to objectify the subjective answers. These variables are then analysed in order to obtain illustrative qualitative data.

The case study for this paper will be within the urban vicinity of Kuala Lumpur, particularly in Kampung Baru, the Malay enclave of Kuala Lumpur, Chinatown of Petaling Street and Little India in Brickfields. The regions of choice were selected due to its historical significance in influencing the national identity of Malaysia in the urban setting of Kuala Lumpur. This qualitative methodological approach will provide a deeper understanding of how the multiplex of cultures has shaped the identity of Malaysia in which will gradually evolve over time.

Autoethnography is a qualitative analysis method in which the researcher summarises the material to be analysed using self-reflection and personal experience. The strategy aids in a better understanding of how Malaysia's identity has been moulded by a multiplicity of cultures, which will continue to evolve over time.

FINDINGS

Name of	Chinatown	Kampung Baru	Little India
Attributes			
Typology	Shophouse	Dwelling	Mosque
Years	1870s	1900s	1900s
Architectural Style	Sino-eclectic	Traditional Malay	Mughal Architecture
Materiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber Brick walls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber Brick Zinc roofing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brick Glass
Spatial Organization	Linear	Clustered	Radial
Building Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Column shafts and capitals Parapet wall Louvre shutters Decorative transoms Canopy roofs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roof – Pitch Long Window Gable End On stilts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy ornamentation Bright colours
People	Predominantly Chinese	Predominantly Malay	Predominantly Indian
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rooms Second hall/Dining Terrace Verandah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serambi Rumoh Ibu Ajalung Kitchen Pelantar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prayer hall Ablution area Dining hall
Social Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales of goods Cooking Resting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking Socializing Resting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Praying Eating Interacting

CONCLUSION:

The sporadic amalgamation of cultures in Malaysia birthed unique architectural types in regards to the urban community. Hence, it developed the symbiotic relationship between building and context which is quintessential as it frames the narrative of the spaces we inhabit or choose to inhabit. In essence, locality or localisation is a relatively constant variable in a complex breakdown of identities. The initiative of this paper was to understand the meaning of cultural sustainability in regards to national architectural identity within the urban context of Kuala Lumpur. It aims to provide personal and observative insight on how culture is reflected within the architectural identity of Malaysia and how it influences our social status and ideologies.

This particular paper was intended to grasp three main objectives; to appraise the significance of Malaysian culture in its national architectural identity, to explore the stylistic characters of Malaysian architectural identity and its relevancy in the urban context as well as to analyse the perplexities in the nature of Malaysian culture in influencing the spirit of local architecture. The collective of diversity and resulting "cultural multiplicity" has favoured places where migrant ethnic communities have congregated, as it has boosted the quality of life. Cultural variety has become a distinctive commercial feature to attract "ethnic enclave tourism," according to the exotic tourist product.

In order to meet these aims, a literature review was done to ascertain an understanding regarding the subject of cultural sustainability in regards to national architectural identity within the urban context of Kuala Lumpur. A collective of writings and studies relative to the topic done by prior researchers were accumulated in this review. An observative case study was carried out at three cultural enclaves set in the urban vicinity of Kuala Lumpur. These sites were chosen as they are some of the oldest cultural terrains in the city.

On a final note, the search for an architectural identity is a multifaceted process in which we should strive to look for. Finding the true meaning of a national architectural identity grows deeper than just surface level research therefore it is imperative that we fully grasp the nuances that an architectural identity entail. The inquiry of identity is consequently built on the notion at which we find ourselves questioning the perplexities it is entangled to. The precarious inundation of political schemes has caused our local architectural language to be farcical and the essence of our architectural spirit to become scarce.