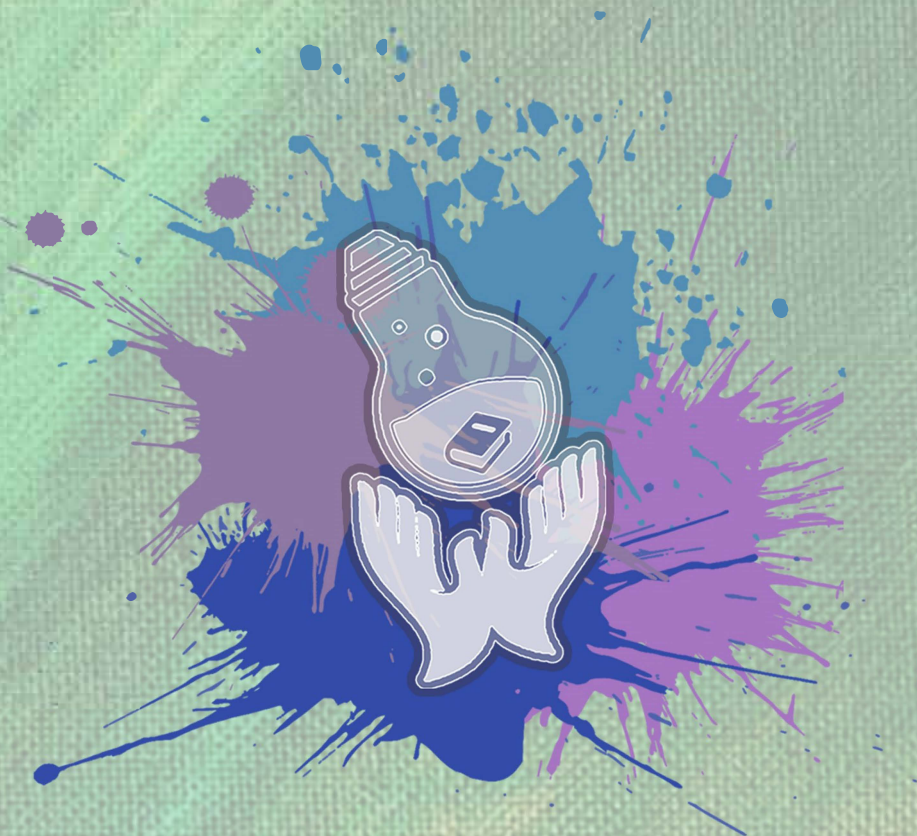




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SERI ISKANDAR CAMPUS

# AN OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT OF THE HISTORIC FISHING VILLAGE OF KUALA SEPETANG.

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## ***Abstract:***

Kuala Sepetang is a thriving fishing village in the north-west of Taiping. Used to be called as Port Weld, this small town is once a busy transit point to transport tin to Taiping. This paper unfolds the outdoor environment based on end-user's valuation using basic imageability and responsive environments analysis. Findings show that this historical fishing village has a distinct character that can be further exploited, subsequently improve the economy of this place.

***Keywords: Outdoor environment; imageability; historical; fishing village; character***

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Kuala Sepetang is a thriving fishing village in the north-west of Taiping. It is strategically located at the meeting of three important rivers namely Sungai Sepetang, Sungai Reba and Sungai Kapal Changkol. The main income for the population in Kuala Sepetang comes from fishing activities, followed by retail and tourism. Blessed with an approximately 40,000 hectares of Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve (MMFR), this village is rich in biodiversity (Ab Razak, Mohammad Afandi, Shuib & Abd Ghani, 2018).

The focus of this study is on the quality of environment, particularly the town centre where a lot of activities and human interaction take place. Although Kuala Sepetang has a significant history since the establishment of the first railway in 1885, the history part has somehow become neglected and forgotten. This may be due to the termination of the railway line in 1955, after 70 years of its operation due to the decline of tin mining industry. The 12.8km railway line was used to carry tin from mines in Taiping to Kuala Sepetang and transporter abroad. The railway line was then dismantled by the Keretapi Tanah Melayu berhad (KTMB) in October 1987 (Jee, 2014).

The closing of rail service and removal of the railway line have certainly affected the morphology and built environment of Kuala Sepetang.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to carry out this study, it is important to firstly develop the understanding on the imageability. According to Lynch (1960), imageability refers to the quality of the environment that has a strong image in term of shape, colors, or arrangement. He added that a highly imageable (apparent, legible or visible) city would seem well formed, distinct and remarkable. Using five types of elements namely path, edges, district, nodes and landmark, the physical form a city can be understood. While this approach is widely used in many urban design studies due to its relevancy and applicability, however it is important to note that there are of course other factors that influence the imageability. Lynch (1960) outlines that the social meaning of an area, its function, its history or even its name are among factors that contributed to the imageability of a city.

Interestingly, the theory on quality of the environment can also be found in the Responsive Environments book written by Bently et al in 1985. Whilst Lynch focuses on the five elements as mentioned in the previous paragraph, Bently et al. (1985) stresses on seven qualities that affects people's choice at many levels.



The seven qualities are:

- Permeability: It affects where people can go and where they cannot.
- Variety: It affects the range of uses available to people.
- Legibility: It affects how easily people can understand what opportunities it offers.
- Robustness: It affects the degree to which people can use a given place for different purposes.
- Visual appropriateness: It affects whether the detailed appearance of the place makes the people aware of the choices available.
- Richness: It affects people's choice of sensory experiences.
- Personalisation: It affects the extent to which people can put their own stamp on a place.

All these seven qualities are believed able to make places responsive and that can be achieved in the design of buildings and outdoor places.

Based on the above explanation, this study takes the best of both theories and applies some of the important elements and qualities to be used as parameters for an assessment of outdoor environment of Kuala Sepetang. This will be further explained in section 3 of this paper.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

To accomplish this paper, there are four stages of the process needs to be followed and can be summarized as in Figure 1.

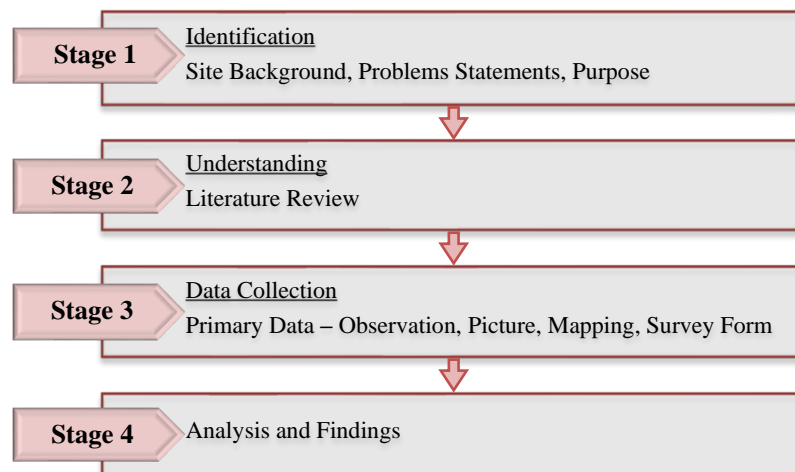


Figure 1: Summary of research methodology

To ensure this study can deliver quality analysis and sound findings, there are three major concerns identified, which are movement, urban space and form. All these three parameters are derived from the researcher's understanding on imageability and responsive environments, which then readjusted accordingly based on the contextuality of Kuala Sepetang.

### 4.0 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Movement

Observation on site reveals that the movement of people within and in-and-out of the town centre is quite busy especially at the intersection of Jalan Matang and Jalan Trump. People can be seen stopping by at the row of old shophouses to buy their needs while others just passing-by the road to get to other destination such as houses, mosque, police station and even to the neighbouring village across the river. This can be considered as one of the nodes within Kuala Sepetang. In terms of mode of transportation, the people in Kuala Sepetang are seen to be preferring motorcycle and bicycle over car, which is a typical scene for a fishing village. As this area is considerably small, hence the reason why the people here choose those type of transports as they are easier to navigate and use. Interestingly, despite the small scale of town, there are still very few people who walk probably because of the climate factor and the absence of a proper pedestrian walkway.

## 4.2 Urban Space

This second parameter covers four aspects; open space, landscape, nodes and landmarks because they are commonly representing objects or places. Overall, Kuala Sepetang's strategic setting has influenced the arrangement or distribution of spaces. Because it is an old fishing village and used to have railway line, hence there is no proper open space and landscape found at the town centre. People can be seen spending their time with friends while having drinks and meals at the coffee shops and restaurants. Though this makes the centre seems full of people, however the absence of greenery has somehow made this area dull, grey and hot. While the intersection at Jalan Matang and Jalan Trump is regarded as nodes in the previous section 4.1, there is another area that can be pointed out as nodes, which is the riverside area where numbers of fishing boats anchored along the river. The existence of a bridge that connects the town centre to another village provides visitor a picturesque view of the river, mangrove and rows of fishing boats. As for landmark, two structures are regarded as landmarks namely Masjid Taufiqiah and the Port Weld sign. The minaret of Masjid Taufiqiah can be seen from distance, which gives a good point of reference for visitors who are not familiar with Kuala Sepetang. Even though the Port Weld sign is located smack in between shophouses, housing area and parking, nevertheless it is still regarded as a must visit spot among visitors because of its history.



Figure 2: Snippets of scenery of Kuala Sepetang

## 4.3 Form

Kuala Sepetang's form is the typical linear development along road and river, very much influenced by the original setting as a place to transport tin. These two also represent as natural (river) and built (road) edges for the area. Because of its linear form, it is easier for people to understand the layout and navigate themselves around. An intercept survey with locals revealed that the row of shophouses at Jalan Matang is originally where the railway line took place before it was being dismantled. The decision to remove the railway line has changed the form of the town centre and the streetscape to what it looks like today.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

To summarize, the quality of environment in Kuala Sepetang need to be improved by injecting some interventions that can make this town looks green and vibrant whilst still maintaining and preserving the historical value. A quality design combine with the original and unique environment of Kuala Sepetang will make this historic fishing village a treasure to be cherished not only for the state of Perak, but also Malaysia.

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