



VIABILITY OF ADAPTIVE REUSE WITH SOCIAL
APPROACH: CASE STUDY OF ASIA HERITAGE ROW,
KUALA LUMPUR

BY

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ABSTRACT

Historic buildings maintain the local characteristics and preserve the culture and history of a country. This historical and cultural significances as a legacy can be passed to next generation by conserving the historical buildings. Nowadays in the process of conservation, Adaptive Reuse Practice has been necessary, especially when historical buildings are no longer functioning its original purpose. Moreover, adaptive reuse holds different dimensions of sustainability that of economical, environmental and social. In the pursuit of the sustainable development, social sustainability has been the new parameter to investigate the viability of adaptive reuse. There are not enough studies held to explore the social parameter. In this regard an attempt has been made to investigate the viability of adaptive reuse and its social sustainability. Asia Heritage Row located in Doraisami Street and Jalan Yap Ah Shak, Kuala Lumpur, is used for the hypothesis testing. The variables that are measured as parameters in achieving social sustainability are categorized into cultural, aesthetical, social and human comfort. The data is mainly collected from literature review, case study and questionnaires distributed to the end users of the Asia Heritage Row. The data is analyzed by determining the statically reliable relationship between adaptive reuse and social sustainability parameters. The associations between variables are examined by correlation. The findings show that adaptive reuse of Asia Heritage Row building has a significant value both; culturally and socially. It preserves the heritage significances as a place of social interaction and ensures its sustainability. Further research can be done on socio-sustainability of readapted heritage buildings including different building typologies, such as offices, hotels and other public buildings.

ملخص البحث

تعمل المباني التاريخية على إبقاء الخواص المحلية، والحفاظ على ثقافة البلد وتاريخه. وتعد إرثاً ذات أهمية تاريخية، وثقافية إذ يمكن نقله إلى الجيل القادم من خلال المحافظة عليها. وتعد ممارسات إعادة الاستخدام التكييفي من أهم الوسائل المحافظة على المباني التاريخية خاصة عندما تكون المباني التاريخية غير قادرة على أداء وظيفتها الأصلية. يضاف إلى ذلك، إن إعادة الاستخدام التكييفي تتمتع بأبعاد استدامة مختلفة، وهي: الأبعاد الاقتصادية، والبيئية والاجتماعية. وفي إطار البحث عن تنمية مستدامة أصبحت الاستدامة الاجتماعية الإطار الجديد لدراسة جدوى إعادة الاستخدام التكييفي، حيث لا توجد دراسات كافية تستكشف الإطار الاجتماعي. وقد تمّ في هذا الجانب الشروع بالتحقق من إعادة الاستخدام التكييفي، ومدى استدامته الاجتماعية وذلك كغرض رئيسي للدراسة. يقع صف آسيا التراثي في شارع دوريساميجالن ياب ايه شاه بمدينة كوالالمبور، حيث تمّ اختياره كمكان لاختبار الفرضية. ويتم قياس المتغيرات كمحددات تُحقق الاستدامة الاجتماعية، بحيث صنفت المتغيرات ثقافياً، وجمالياً، والراحة الإنسانية. جُمعت البيانات بصفة رئيسة من مراجعة الأدبيات (الدراسات المتعلقة بالموضوع)، والدراسة الحالة، والاستبيان الذي وزع على مستخدمي منطقة صف آسيا التراثي. خللت البيانات من خلال تقرير العلاقات الإحصائية المعتمدة بين إعادة الاستخدام التكييفي وبين محددات الاستدامة الاجتماعية. كما تمّ فحص العلاقات بين المتغيرات من خلال الروابط المشتركة. وأظهرت النتائج أن إعادة الاستخدام التكييفي لصف آسيا التراثي لا يحمل قيمة اجتماعية فقط بل يمتد عمله إلى حفظ الأهمية التراثية باعتباره موقع تداخل اجتماعي بالإضافة كونهضامناً لاستدامته. المزيد من الأبحاث المتعلقة بالاستدامة الاجتماعية لإعادة تكييف المباني التراثية يمكن اجرائها، بما في ذلك أنماط البناء المختلفة، مثل المكاتب، والفنادق وغيرها من المباني العامة.

APPROVAL PAGE

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*This thesis is dedicated to
My husband & my daughter and well-wishers,
who stood with me throughout this academic journey.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is focusing on the role of adaptive reuse of historic buildings for a social sustainable heritage. Heritage is something which is passed down from one generation to another (Prentice, 1994). People's identity is fundamentally defined by their inheritance. Thus, heritage building is one of the heritage objects which have to be held for the future generations. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2007) have considered the heritage building as a tangible man made environment with its cultural (heritage) significances. Cultural significance can be passed down to the future generations' through heritage buildings conservation.

In order to understand and know how built environment has been prepared before, and if this built environment can fit in the future demands, protecting as much as possible the cultural resources such as historical buildings are needed. Adaptive reuse is a very important concept, when discussing the cultural preservation and it's response to the built environment in the current demands. Adaptive reuse is the process of retrofitting building for new uses, which allows structures to retain their historic integrity, while providing for the occupants' modern needs (Clark, 2008). Thus, adaptive reuse may be the most appropriate approach to keep the heritage significance of a historic building, if this cannot function anymore as its original purpose.

From the other hand, sustainability has become the global driver of urban land use, economic and social policy. Sustainable development is a visionary development

paradigm; and over the past 20 years governments, businesses, and civil society have accepted sustainable development as a guiding principle (Perris, 2013). Sustainable design is a philosophy of designing buildings to comply with the principles of social, economic and ecological sustainability.

Referring to Shishavan (2013), preserving and reusing historic buildings have long-term benefits for the communities that value them. If adaptive reuse is applied well, it can help to restore the building's heritage values, help to continue its existence, and to give social value to a site; that is, to give the chance for a place to act as a social interaction for all its community members, or visitors. Without understanding and prioritizing social sustainability, buildings, no matter how environmentally and economically sustainable, are not truly sustainable.

Several initiatives of adaptive reuse have been applied in cities like George Town, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and more. The typology of the historic buildings in Kuala Lumpur varies from government buildings to hotels, town and shop houses.

Asia Heritage Row is chosen as a case study for this research. Those are a 80-year old prewar houses, that were once abandoned and dilapidated structures, but after adaptive reuse application was turned into elegant and charming restaurants, cafes, bars, contributing not only in maintaining the heritage and identity of the place, but also increasing the activities around the area.

The objective of this research is to study the viability of Adaptive Reuse of the Asia Heritage Row towards social sustainability of heritage built environment in Kuala Lumpur. This research aims at showing that, by applying of adaptive reuse strategy the social life of historical buildings can be preserved sustainably in the long run and passed on to future generations. The historic building can be an evidence of the past history which can be carried out to future generations. Besides, it can create

visually creative and attractive streetscape. Furthermore it can improve the social life of the community by becoming a place where people want to live socialize and work.

1.2 BACKGROUND STUDY

Changing the function of existing buildings into a new one is not a new trend. Many historical buildings in the world have been used again and translated into new functions. From the industrial type buildings, churches, government buildings and agriculture buildings have been re-used to meet the current needs and to preserve the architectural style from being destroyed (Cantacuzino, 1989). Throughout the time, the buildings have been re-used to meet the current needs and functions. For example; monuments from earliest times altered their functions for new uses, at the same time, later on religious buildings were transformed into military or industrial uses. The adaption of Bankside Power Station in London to the use as Tate Gallery (Dodson, 2008) is one of the most successful examples how old building is reused again. Religious buildings during Ottoman Period were reused again as religious buildings but serving different belief. For example, the Hagia Sophia building in Turkey was adapted from a church to mosque and later to a museum contributing to the world cultural heritage (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality). These interventions, however, were done due to the needs of that time and the purpose of reusing the building was more functional, without aiming the heritage preservation.

Bie and Cleempoel (2012) think that adaptive reuse in the discipline of architecture, today by repairing the old buildings, and working with them in order to be used again has become a very creative challenge as well as fascinating. An example of fascinating and creative adaptive reuse in Malaysia is the former railway

workshop and depot for Keretapi Tanah Malayu, now it is a Performing Arts Centre known as KLPAC.



Figure 1.1: Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre
(Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/klpac-insists-singapore-ballet-application-was-rejected>)

Stratton (2000) said that in order to balance the surrounding changes and the trend of current developments, the old buildings need to be preserved by translating them into new functions. Adaptive reuse has been widely adapted as a conservation and redevelopment tool to revive old, dilapidated buildings, and to subsequently increase their architectural, functional and economic potentials (Ahmad, 2003).

In countries such as Canada, United States of America, North Africa, Hong Kong, and Australia, adaptive reuse of significant buildings is seen as fundamental to sound government policy and sustainable development. Regarding Malaysian context, it was Central Market building in Kuala Lumpur, a successful adaptive reuse in 1986 that opened the possibility for Malaysian to take into considerations the local heritage

and its conservation. Even though conservation application is quite recent, still, it has been a very important concern for policy makers in Malaysia (Harun, 2011).

Gregory (2004) believes that adaptive reuse expands the useful life of existing buildings, and supports the sustainability concepts. Myers and Wyatts (2004) stress the importance of the building stock as economical social and cultural capital that should not be wasted. In contemporary conservation theory and practice, adaptive reuse is considered to be an important strategy towards conservation of cultural heritage. The adaptive reuse of a historic building has a major role to play in the sustainable development of communities. Henehan & Woodson (2004) also admit that numerous benefits can come if the building is adapted and reused. Foremost, it can be cultural, historic and visual fabric source; secondly, it will maintain the neighborhood quite vital and occupied; and third, it will increase the property prospect and value.

Social scientists reject climate, economic and technologic factors as primary factors in forming building and believe architecture is affected by culture and community (Niroumand, 2015). Thus the design of any research begins with a question. The question of this study is “what is the role of adaptive reuse on social sustainability?” to answer this question, Asia Heritage Row was chosen to be studied and will reveal the importance of social interactions in adaptable reuse.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The building heritage at Kuala Lumpur is at risk and there is a cultural demise (AM Journal, 2008). Most of the old buildings within the historic areas are left abandoned and later become derelict or suffer demolition because they cannot cater for today’s demand. The Star (2015), stated that Kuala Lumpur has lost many great buildings of

its past. A recent example is the famous Rumah Sultan Puasa, popularly known as Rumah Degil, in Chow Kit, which was built in 1926 by a descendant of Sultan Puasa, one of the founders of Kuala Lumpur. Bok House, a charming mansion that was demolished almost 10 years ago, is another example and the public outcry was a little too late. Another Example is the iconic Vivekananda Ashram, which is the last remaining heritage building in Brickfields. In the past two decades, city folk have witnessed the destruction of many such sites in the name of development and commercialisation.



Figure 1.2: The Death of Bok House on 15th December 2006 (Source: http://bumiputera.blogspot.my/2006_12_01_archive.html)



Figure 1.3: Abandoned shop lots along Raja Chulan Road. (Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/magmaster/5538760052>)

However, there are a number of initiatives taken in the recent years to save the heritage built environment by approaching those historic building with a new approach. Several initiatives of adaptive reuse has been applied on previous office buildings and now serving as hotels, or in several shop houses along Kuala Lumpur, such as Arian heritage Row, but there are not enough studies or research made to find out if adaptive reuse application to these heritage buildings is successful in terms of social sustainability.

As Douglas and Jonas (2006) said, in some cases adaptive reuse has been proven to be unsuccessful other options of its intervention might be better. Asia Heritage Row was adaptively reused from New Classical style pre war town houses into modern architectural pieces functioning as restaurants, bars and clubs. It is considered from PAM president as an excellent refurbishment case to be followed, (The Star, 2004) but from the other side, this kind of adaptive reuse was also criticized due to degree of adaptive reuse applied (PAM, 2007). This is because the building façade was basically lost into the new outlook of the outlet façade. Thus, there is an urge to study the relationship of Asia Heritage Row with the community and its contribution towards cultural, aesthetical social and human comfort enrichment. This urges to an objective analysis of adaptive reuse of Asia Heritage Row and its viability towards Social sustainability.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the problems mentioned earlier, this study will answer the following questions:

1. What is the contribution of Asia Heritage Row towards cultural and aesthetical heritage values after application of adaptive reuse?
2. What is the impact of Asia Heritage Row to social life of the end users and their satisfaction after application of adaptive reuse?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study aims to study the viability of adaptive reuse of the Asia Heritage Row towards social sustainability of heritage built environment in Kuala Lumpur. In order, to achieve the above aim, the following objectives have been identified:

1. To evaluate the contribution of Asia Heritage Row after application of adaptive reuse towards cultural and aesthetical heritage values.
2. To assess re-adaptive building impact to the social life of the users and their satisfaction after application of adaptive reuse.

1.6 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Most of the preceding studies held on adaptive reuse in Malaysia are mainly on environmental approach, economical aspect or services applied. Moreover most of the studies done towards heritage and conservations methods such as adaptive reuse focused mostly on cities, such as Malacca and Penang George town. Therefore, this study will be focusing on one of the most important tenants of sustainability; Social Sustainability.

1.6.1 Professionals

This research will assist all built environment professionals (town planners, architects, and landscape designers, etc.) to be more conscious and responsible in their field of work as their primary role is to fulfill the human needs. The construction industry, developers, and all the parties involved in construction industry will benefit by knowing the needs of the public and community and thereby providing the appropriate type of conservation.